

## CHALLENGER 24

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for consistent and reliable data collection processes to support informed decision-making.

# CHALLENGER 24

**SUMMER 2006**

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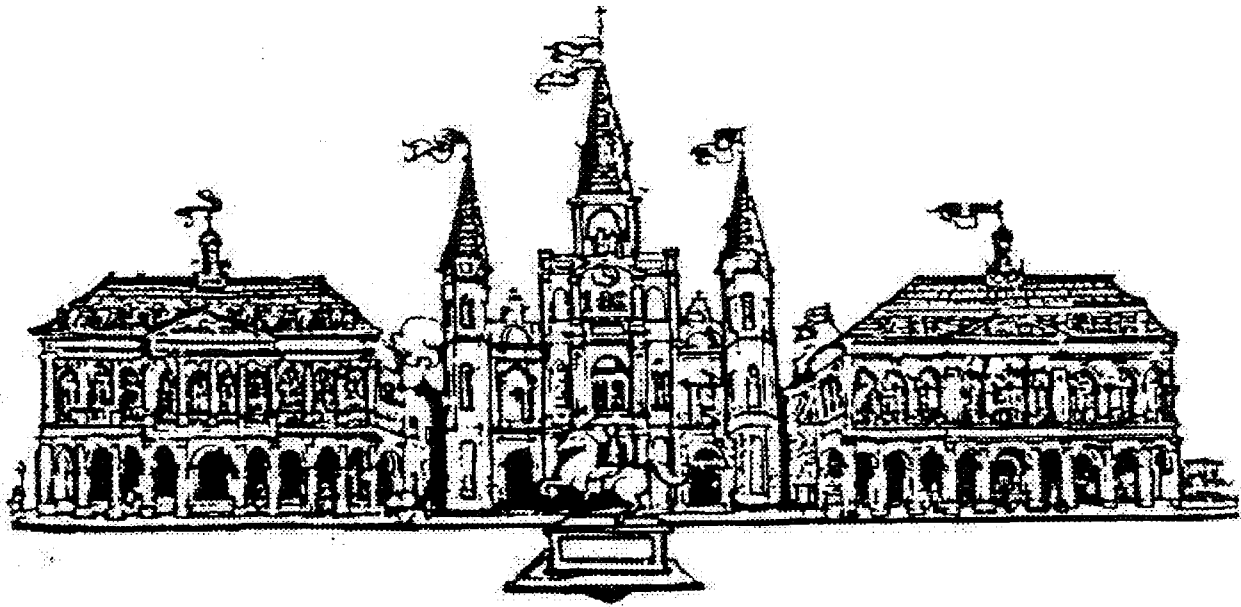


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# THE BIG UNEASY

*Gregory Benford*

*Brother Jim* and Elisabeth and I returned to where Jim & I grew up — to the extent that we did — for March 13-24, 2006: back to good ol' Fairhope AL. I felt the old ease that comes from returning to places known all my life. Fairhope is pretty and getting pricey as the wintering “snowbirds” come down permanently after retirement. The town was a utopian community based on the tax ideas of Henry George, and still retains some of that quality.

Hurricane damage was common—wrecked piers, houses blown out down at Gulf Shores, groves of pines snapped off halfway up. But the big show was New Orleans, where Elisabeth & I spent two nights. The wreckage is vast, many square miles of homes flooded or roofs blown through. Signs on walls: LOOTERS SHOT; on a roof: HELP; a plaintive WE'RE HERE; an amusing FOR SALE: SOME WATER DAMAGE on a condo completely gutted. Canal Street businesses were pillaged and most are still closed. Trucks filled with scrap rumble along the roads. Red-shirted crews wheelbarrow dark debris out of good brick homes. Blue tarp covers breached roofs. Water line marks of scummy yellow remain at head height.

We took a bus tour of the destruction and saw many square miles totally lost—and we couldn't go into the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, the poorest, at all; still searching for the missing 400 bodies with scenting dogs before bulldozing whole blocks at a time. The guide told us that after the Feds and National Guard took over from the police, around 2000 looters and gangs were killed and dumped without ceremony into the river. He told of a nurse he knows at Tulane Hospital who left work in her car and found at an intersection a man standing beside the car, pointing a pistol at her head. An instant later he went down, hit at a range of over a hundred meters by a sniper. With low buildings common, a trained shooter can command a wide area. So a Fed force cleared the city. The surge of illegal Mexicans into the Gulf Coast, which we heard a lot about, has brought a migration of the some tough gangs from California.

They use the illegal worker infrastructure as shelter, and are in the last few months occupying the drug niches left open by the Fed clearing. Killings in NOLA dropped from an average of 3 or 4 a day before Katrina to zero, until mid-March, when they began again—apparently turf wars and immigrant heist artists of the type who prey on small stores.

Meanwhile, a chicken-&-egg problem besets the legitimate reconstruction. We saw trailers occupying the parking lots of factories, put there not by FEMA (whose name is now a common curse word, along with ACE, the Army Corps of Engineers) but by the factory owners. Their employees live there to keep the companies running.

But employees with school children are reluctant to return unless they can get their children slots in the decent schools, i.e., the private and largely Catholic ones. Catholic schools are 85% back to enrollment, whereas the NOLA public system, rated the lowest big city system in the USA, is only 15% back. Along with water, power, stores, phones (none of the central NOLA system is back, though our cell phones worked fine), these are the essentials that must go into place nearly simultaneously to lure many back. And some are gone for good. NOW HIRING signs abound everywhere and restaurants are understaffed. Even Galatoire's and NOLA, my favorites, were undermanned and not full but still wonderful. The town is starving for business—go!

Political leadership is confused. Height minima for rebuilding were not issued until April 13: 3 feet between floor and soil. The spotty reclaiming work is nearly all private. Those clearing houses wear red shirts: volunteers, mostly from churches around the country. Mold has run up the walls of flooded homes and covers the ceilings with musty brown. A new election year promises high rhetoric and low achievements. Axes grind as the bulldozers grunt. Illegals do a lot of the grunt work.

The utterly foreseeable failures of aid mechanisms, from city to Federal level, have disabused many who expected the promised, flowering restoration. Louisiana Senator, Mary Landrieu (D), is asking Congress for \$250 *billion* to rebuild New Orleans! If you are one of the former 484,674 residents of New Orleans (every man, woman, child!), you each get \$516, 528. If you have one of the 188,251 homes in New Orleans, your home gets \$1,329,787. A family of four? – you get \$2,066,012. The New Federal Rich. Never happen...

I believe the region will come back, but another heavy hurricane season would drive many away for good. I believe the best use for the flooded areas of NOLA, and the wrecked downs along the coast, may lie in not repopulating them very much. Turn the low areas into golf courses or other recreation. Let people live further inland. Pump the economy with tourists and vacationers and revitalize New Orleans.

Think of it as a city like Las Vegas, not like Houston—fun and sun. Real estate in Fairhope has climbed as buyers come in from the other Gulf Coast states. Our parents' home, now owned by Jim, is worth about twice what it was a year ago. Our father built well and back from Mobile Bay; still, holding on risks loss in another hurricane.

Some businesses in Fairhope have closed because they thrived on tourists, who aren't coming. Though "snowbirds" seek to move to the warmer clime, and save on heating bills, there may come to be a different bill to pay, one that will threaten every late summer. The whole coast seems to be holding its breath, and holding on.

*Dr. Gregory Benford is the Nebula-winning author of **The Sunborn** and **Timescape**, and a frequent contributor to **Challenger**.*



*The stasis* you sense from Greg Benford's New Orleans postcard is still, more or less, the way it is in the Big Easy. Rosy and I have visited New Orleans half a dozen times since Katrina. As we close in on the anniversary of the cursed hurricane, the sense we get from the city is still one of *waiting in the ruins* – in anticipation of reconstruction, in anxiety of the new hurricane season, or simply more days, weeks, months of decay and indecision, take your pick: both are true.

New Orleans has *not* rebuilt. Of 37,000 “pre-K” businesses, as of the beginning of summer, only 2,000 have reopened. Only three out of the Easy's 11 hospitals are – heh – operating. 25 public schools are open out of 128 a year ago, serving only 12,000 students out of 60,000 in attendance before the hurricane. The city's police force is down to 200, from almost 1700, pre-K, and the legal system, my particular concern, is in chaos. New Orleans is in no way whole – it won't be and it can't be, not until some coherent strategy is found, and adopted, among the property owners and the insurance companies and above all, the government. No one imagines that will happen soon.

But in the midst of anarchy and confusion, New Orleans' people have not surrendered. Along “the sliver on the river” – the high ground along the Mississippi crescent – Orleanians survive, even celebrate. Though the city remains crippled economically, the Big Easy spirit endures. Mardi Gras 2006, as I hope to depict in this issue, was small but exuberant. As you'll find in Don Markstein's “Rebuilding New Orleans, a Party at a Time”, a few pages along. Jazz Fest was a success. Even the 2006 Symphony Book Fair, noted in *Chall #22's* “A Symphony of Books”, was a noisy, crowded, defiant expression of the people's determination to live ... and keep reading.

These are not all people who are wealthy, or even well off. Among them are folks who lost everything to the wind and the flood. But among them, alas, you will find few of the truly poor. Those were scattered to the four corners of America by Katrina – where their desperation and anger caused immediate crises in raw human need and the crime nurtured by that need. When the poor began to return to New Orleans, the old ways and the old disorders came with them. Gang violence resurfaced. Murder soared.

There must be a way to share the hope we've seen at Mardi Gras and the Book Fair with the poor. To start all over again in New Orleans ... to make it a city secure from nature and safe from despair ... to insure that New Orleans' joy is, this time, universal.

Fighting despair and understanding nature – the underlying themes of *An Inconvenient Truth*. I voted for Al Gore, like most Americans in 2000, and I hope to vote for him again. If I get that chance – and, prayerfully, see him inaugurated – his filmed lecture on global warming will stand as the strongest positive rationale to date for that choice. As you know, the film is a lecture, hitherto delivered to live audiences, on Gore's lifelong cause: the perils of CO<sub>2</sub> pollution and the global warming it is causing. Its message is alarmist; bolstered by unarguable facts and trenchant argument. Gore establishes that a terrible threat is abroad upon the Earth – as if he had to tell an adopted Orleanian. I asked last issue: what part did global



Craig Miller © 1988

warming play in the tragedy of Katrina? Gore answers that question, and the answer is, plenty.

Gore is a terrific teacher, well-versed, convincing, and passionate – he gives a splendid performance. One leaves *An Inconvenient Truth* convinced of its accuracy, baffled and incensed by the refusal of politics to deal with the issue, and curious to the point of tears as to how much better this country would be had the sleaze not been allowed to steal the 2000 election. If the film has a flaw, it is in its implicit politics – the biographical material on Gore and his family. Nary a mention of Tipper, but plenty on his sister, who lost her life to lung cancer and, much later than is admitted, caused Gore's father to abandon tobacco farming. That stuff, and Gore's own musings on the reprehensible election, seem transparently partisan and unnecessary.

But they also add drama and pathos to Gore's crusade. His lonely progress, airport to airport, classroom to classroom, armed only with a laptop and a mission and the truth, needs such a human touch to succeed. Imagine, we think: this solitary traveler, in a just world, would have been the most powerful human being alive, and his ideas of sanity and probity would have been national policy. He is a man of erudition, passion, and principle – some contrast to what we got.

It's probably too late for Gore to achieve the rank he won but was denied. The devil has America by the throat, and as this benighted country flails into its 231<sup>st</sup> year, sunk in a pointless war, spewing heartless bigotry and sophistry, I have my doubts that Satan will ever let us go. A man of erudition, principle and passion might never have a chance in a country dominated by the corrupt and the ignorant and the smug – but who knows? America never has been anything but surprising. Half of any election is imagination. What sort of leader will America imagine it needs in 2008?

While we wait to find that out, *An Inconvenient Truth* and its author are out there, telling their truth. Al Gore's example in the never-ending fight for truth and justice – and against despair – is one to cherish. I hope they give the movie the Oscar. I hope they give the man the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1969 the Jets won the Super Bowl, the Mets won the World Series, Ronald Reagan invaded People's Park, Armstrong and Aldrin invaded the Moon (on my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday). I lived through that selfsame People's Park, survived Hurricane Camille, went to my first Worldcon, divested myself of my most useless distinction, *ahem*, and ... did my first fanzines. 1969 ... No year before or since has so formed me.

Often have I spoken of that year. In *Chall* #1 I described St. Louiscon, the '69 Worldcon. In issue #2 I talked about People's Park, the event that created my social conscience and made me a lifelong liberal. In #5 I interviewed Leslie van Houten; in 1969 she took a life, and destroyed her own, on the orders of Charles Manson, the ultimate creature of the sixties. In issue #16 I mourned the genius I discovered – and met – that year, Ray Lafferty. Now it's time to talk about my life in fanzining, begun in 1969 ... because of a personal milestone.

This issue of *Challenger* is GHLIII Press Publication #999, and such a number can't help but cause me to introspect about myself and this hobby. Check out "*The Barrington Bull*" if you're interested in my earliest days as something of a faned. I rather enjoy zining, so I hope David Williams' "Better Late than Never" isn't correct that its writer bears the kiss of death for publications in which he appears.

Mentioning David's funny article prompts a rundown of the other non-GHLIII writing in this issue. I rarely run fiction in these pages, but Taral Wayne's two-part piece is too rich to pass up. Check also Mike Resnick's account of the genesis of some of his many and varied novels, Joe Major's impassioned tale of the molested child who wasn't, James Bacon's paean to a great comics writer and the city that informs them both, and the demands of my brother and sister SFPAns, Rich Lynch and Toni Weisskopf Reinhardt, for a sympathetic ear – each in their own way. Rosy and I offer our deepest sympathy, by the way, to Toni on the death of Jim Baen.

I'll have more to say later – in the meantime, enjoy.

**GHLJJJ**



*The 2004 TAFF delegate was an incredible hit at Noreascon 4. Here he shares a joy of his native turf – one shared by comics fans everywhere.*

## March was **MOORE** **MONTH**

*James Bacon*

*Moving* to London was a big thing for me, and I was worried about finding myself with too much spare time on my hands. Back home in Dublin between science fictional pursuits and being involved with things in England, I was always on the go.

Here in London I had expected to be bored on my days off, especially with the shift work pattern of 6 days on and 4 off and a further 28 holiday days a year.

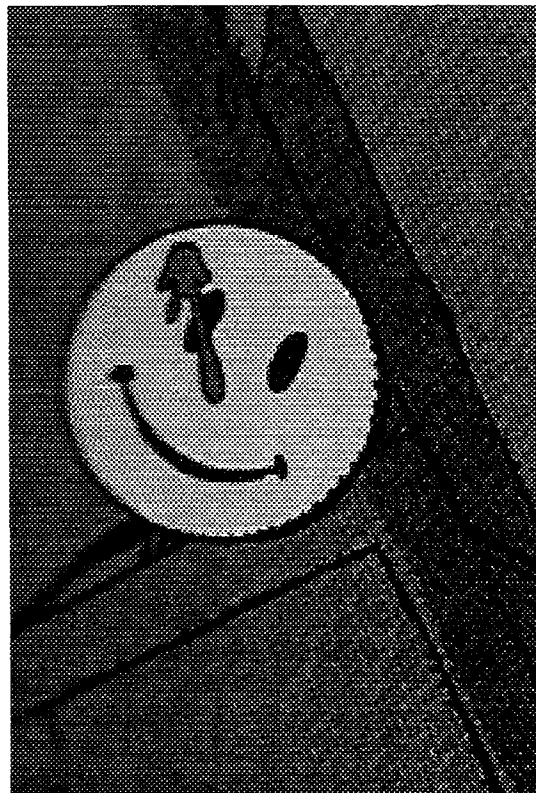
How wrong could I have been?

I know now and understand why its difficult to get something started or organised here in London, there is just too much on for the average fan, to even contemplate spending time setting up something new, fresh or different, not that the average Jo should feel the requirement. In fairness though I have plans as usual.

In Dublin it felt like if you wanted something to occur, then you would have to get your finger out and make it happen, here it's a case of someone is already doing something like that already anyhow, and by the way, something is clashing!

I like to try and get to social events, things that would be common with my interests in Science Fiction and comics when I am not working for the railway company that employs me, in London Paddington, a central terminal.

Only in London, does one find such a cultural and literary reference. As everyone knows, Paddington is really the name of a fictional bear, from darkest Peru, whom the children's author Michael Bond wrote extensively about. There is a wonderful Bronze statue commemorating the bear from where the station takes its name. There is a special stall with Paddington Bear wares, and



I always feel a bit special when I see the statue, its nice to have some sort of literary context to ones job, and the Brunnell statue is just so severe in comparison.

The slow burning build up to this year, when the release of *V for Vendetta* has created some sort of crescendo of appreciation or opportunity to appreciate Alan Moore. Some nice products were released, I got *The Absolute Watchmen* for Christmas, along with a set of metal watchmen figures, an original *Watchmen* badge and a V mask, from my girlfriend, who seems to be able to find anything on e-Bay, for very little.

Despite having read a lot of this "new" publication of *Watchmen* it contained from Stefan Lancaster's Graphiti version, I was impressed greatly with John Higgins's colouring job, he is a master and I spent some time comparing, and appreciating his efforts. Then there was the Hardback of *V for Vendetta*, again with some nice added extras, it felt like DC were doing everything they could to squeeze every penny out of my pocket and into their coffers, tempting me with wares by Moore. Of course, it's a love/hate thing, I love it, Alan Moore hates it, I Love His work that I hate being the punter as DC's pimps his work.

I first got the inclination that March would be really special when I received word about the

Tate Gothic Nightmares exhibition, and then shortly afterward fellow Croydon fan picked up a copy of *Mustard*.

*Mustard* is a UK zine, of very professional calibre that is about humorous stuff, they have interviewed Michael Palin and Terry Gilliam, and have had a feature on the likes of Douglas Adams. Jim de Liscard found this zine, no 6. It had an amazing Alan Moore interview, with a fresh and new perspective on Moore, possibly cause it wasn't so comic focused, and maybe because he seems to have been in great talking humour.

Its over nine pages of very small type, which goes on many tangents and was fascinating, a real peep into Moore's thoughts, and these guys did a terrific job of striking the right balance between those who know and want to understand the work of Moore, and those who don't know or are just sycophantic psychopathic fan boys.

Anyhow, I highly recommend it, it's a great publication, and I found back issues at *The London Fanzine Symposium* in Russell Sq. They were pretty impressive, although I was most impressed to find a Fanzine about the Red Army Faction at the symposium, but less of that now.

Then Alan Moore appeared on the British Broadcasting Corporations programme, *The Culture Show* on 9th Mar, at 7.00pm. Now being on the Beeb, in my books is impressive, but when you consider how much influence Moore has had on the literary world of comics, and subsequently on celluloid, I think he sometimes gets missed; this programme briefly did justice to Moore.

It was really nice to see Iain Sinclair and Johnathon Ross contributing to the programme, and although its pales in comparison to the *Mustard* interview, it was a nice introduction to what Moore is about.

Working in central London and travelling through every day, has somehow exposed me to goings on that I might have otherwise missed, and if I were in Dublin would have been blissfully ignorant of.

In the *Guardian* newspaper, apparently a bit leftie but an enjoyable read I personally find, although no where near as good as the newspaper of record, *The Irish Times*, I found mention of a Talk and exhibition. It was a simple advert stating that David Lloyd would talk with Steve Bell on March the 13<sup>th</sup> at 7pm.

The comic *V for Vendetta*, by Alan Moore and David Lloyd which has recently been released as a movie, and at the time being hyped led to the

Newsroom art gallery in Farringdon, in the city of London (that's the business part in the centre to the east, as opposed to the west end, which is the party part) putting on an exhibition of *V for Vendetta* artwork and paraphernalia. To my glee, David Lloyd was going to give a talk, on one of the evenings, with booking requiring nothing more than an email.

So off I traipsed with tickets for friends, Steve, Stef and Robert and we went and saw a brilliant talk and slide show. The tickets were free. The various unseen notes and workings that had obviously been the genesis of the character prior to the publication in 1982 of the story in the black and white anthology comic, *Warrior*, awed me considerably. I learnt quite a bit and at the end of Lloyds talk, he answered a great selection of questions, and I was really pleased to hear Lloyd's opinion of the movie, which at the end of the day can be paraphrased as such.

"It's as best an adaptation as I could have hoped for, and go and judge for yourself."

It was really quite pleasing to see artwork, colour proofs, sketches, notes and even an extended LP based on the comic, on display, in such salubrious surroundings, and afterwards, it was to the pub, where after a few beers, we bid adieu to David, and went our own ways

I realised that this year has a lot of "Alan Moore" stuff going on and I decided that March was defiantly Moore month. But what of this enigma of a comic writer?

Now, Alan Moore is a brilliant writer, but more than this, he is considered to be the best comic book writer in the world, since about 1984. Now, there are many comic book writers whom I personally love as much, Brian Michael Bendis, Frank Miller, Mark Millar and of course my all time favourite, Garth Ennis. The difference is that all those guys go to conventions – but not Alan Moore.

I have met some of these guys, I have met many comic guys, I have many pieces of comic art and sketches, and I have hung many in my house, including two treasured pages written by Alan Moore, but I knew I could never meet him.

He had a bit of a nightmare experience, and this story, is near legend now, so it probably bears little truth except the result. At a London comic event sometime in the eighties in Westminster, Moore had suddenly become huge. He used to hang in bars, and chill like many others, but suddenly he was propelled into superstardom by comics like *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta*, which had then been published by DC.

So, Moore gets harassed by some fan boys, usual stuff, but it goes a bit Beatles, and a few turn into a throng, then a crowd, a large unruly crowd, he's suddenly surrounded, suffocated, he makes a getaway, and is chased by hundreds of fan boys, he hares up back stairs, round and round and locks himself into a toilet, screaming hordes outside. Or so the story goes. The result, he doesn't like conventions.

He doesn't do conventions at all. I know this as a fact, I have asked him to two, and both times he politely turned down the offer through friends.

So my opinion of Moore was twisted by the perception that he just didn't like fans like me, and of course, not knowing any better, I must admit resolute disappointment.

Then I become much more interested in actually seeing or meeting Moore. You see, I had heard an interview online, from the BBC 4 *Chain Reaction* series. Alan Lee interviewed Alan Moore, and it was a wonderful interview.

I had just bought into the mysticism of Moore. I presumed he must be fairly bitter, grumpy genius, who seems to fall out easily with comic and film companies and not have any interest in fans. Shunning conventions easily, surely a surely bloke, unpleasant even. Its easy to picture someone negatively when they turn down an invite to a convention, easier to believe that his principles, were just tantrums.

Hearing the interview, I knew I had him totally pegged wrong, I was forced to pause and to ponder on my misconstrued maligning manifestation of Moore in my mind.

Apart from being very entertaining, funny, enlightening open and erudite, he was well able to poke fun at himself, he sounded really really nice, his soft Nottingham accent and deep laugh, the sounds of a good bloke. The difference between reading this interview and listening to it, cannot be underestimated, what reads harsh, comes across wry and comedic. So from that point I was keen to meet him, to correct somehow my unfair character assassination, by paying some sort of homage to him, by seeing in the flesh, this nice man, but deep down I knew it wouldn't happen.

But then I had a chance to see Moore:

Pages From Chaos - A Homage to William Burroughs Thursday 16 June 2005, 7:45 pm Queen Elizabeth Hall, With Matthew Shipp,

Marc Ribot, Jason Spaceman, Patti Smith, Alan Moore and Iain Sinclair.

The stage had a trestle table, and lot of stuff around, and places for musicians and what not. It got started with Patti Smith talking and introducing Iain Sinclair and Alan Moore and Marc Ribot, and out they came. Ribot is Tom Waits guitarist and was pretty awesome on an acoustic guitar, very weird, but not exactly heavy. He even used a fan to strum the strings, a master of his axe, gently slicing the air with amazing jazzy poetic sounds, like a surgeon. As he gently quietened, like a sea, just rolling away with the tide, Moore started to read, no.

Moore started Orating a biography of Burroughs. Tempo'd with Ribot's music in the back ground, both chasing and quickening.

Moore had written this himself, and it showed, as he barley read the lines. He commanded the stage, his voice strong but not booming. His emphasis good, clear, understandable. It was easy to listen to, but it was spiralling upwards, with verses broken, BANG BANG!

He has loads of hair, black curly hair, falling in a huge triangle. It gently wafts around his shoulders as he strided onto stage, a superb Victorian looking suit, and fingers clad in huge metal rings akin to a knight's glove. His beard is equally awesome, but with the greying of parts, again soft and easy.

His eyes, are gentle, Stef agreed, yet they were sharp, focussed, but laugh lines and his look was far from the hard northerner I once had imagined, here was a friendly happy set of eyes, piercing through the crowd with words strengthening.

BANG BANG!

I was in awe; this was brilliant. I was not twenty feet from him, and tried to take in as much as I could, nearly sucking in the ambience and tense effect that he created through out the theatre. The audience were wrapped up in his words, and I was wrapped in his presence. Occasionally, "this is greats" were passed, but otherwise, I relaxed, soaked up and smiled.

He concluded, too soon, way too soon, no that's not fair, I was selfish. Ribot powered up, then gently powered down as Iain Sinclair started his tale, which immediately caught me, as it began in my own fair City, Dublin.

So I knew that Alan Moore the man was not the same at all as Alan Moore the grumpy non con going creator who had a chip on his shoulder about the movies.

I am sure many fans share the pleasure of enjoying an authors work even more once they have shared a beer with them or enjoyed their company, and as much as I can enjoy the company with Alan Moore, I must admit I love his work all the more, sounds terribly vain, but I hopes its more humanistic than self gratuitousness.

So when I heard that Alan Moore would be giving a talk on Blake and Fuselli as part of the Gothic Nightmares exhibition in the Tate Britain, I told my mates and immediately bought some tickets.

Alan Moore on Gothic Nightmares, Tate Britain, Gothic Nightmares Exhibition, Superheroes Room, Saturday 25 March 2006 15.00-16.00

"Gothic Nightmares explores the work of Henry Fuseli and William Blake in the context of the Gothic – the taste for fantastic and supernatural themes which dominated British culture from around 1770 to 1830."

And Alan Moore was going along to talk about it, in the superheroes room, which sounded like an absolutely perfect tie in, and of course, I went and booked tickets, and told many a friend.

I was initially worried that there didn't seem to be any system of booking a ticket specifically for the talk, but was assured by the Pleasant Tate staff that people were only allowed entry at specific times, so there was always a flow. They obviously underestimated the perseverance of the comic fan.

The exhibition itself was wonderful, I had booked a time early enough to gain entry and learn what was going to be a talked about, and as I went around the superhero room, I was drawn to certain pictures, Henry Fuseli's *The Oath on the Rütli* (*Die drei Eidgenossen beim Schwur auf*

*dem Rütli*) 1779-1780 which was Oil on canvas was a representation of a "Team Up" as 3 cantons of Switzerland join forces to fight against the evil tyranny of Austria.

Henry Fuseli's *Othar Rescuing Siritha from a Giant* is a Classic image of our Hero rescuing a damsel in distress; it could easily have been Kal El and Lois Lane.

John Hamilton Mortimer's *Sir Arthegal, The Knight of Justice, with Talus, The Iron Man* Oil on canvas, has everything the Superhero would need: Sir Arthegall is the personification of Justice, he is accompanied by his sidekick Talus who is armoured from head to toe in invulnerable iron. How many comic book stereotypes does that play into, and we wont make mention of the Man in Iron. I was amazed by the sheer size of the picture, and spent a long time taking it in.

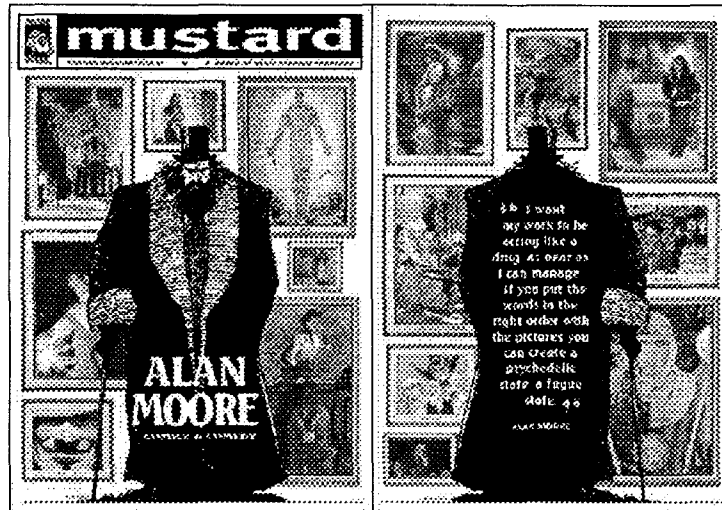
William Blake's *The Good and Evil Angels Struggling for Possession of a Child* circa 1790-4 Pen and watercolour on paper, is simple yet beautiful and again, we have angels, or beings with the power of flight, fighting above us for the soul of a child.

To me the correlation between the work in the gallery and comics that I love so much was obvious, and I thought that Moore would touch upon these common subjects that

pervade through time and have seemingly always been with us, the stories of heroes, and good triumphing over evil. How wrong I could have been.

As the Gallery slowly filled up, it was apparent that people had booked tickets at every possible time, and hung around to see Moore, and when he arrived, the room was absolutely rammed, there must have been at least 200 people standing, listening, much to the concern of the curator, who immediately described her surprise.

Of course Moore started by saying that he reckoned he was asked because of the perceived link between the work of Blake and the work of Graphic Novelists, but immediately dismissed the idea that comic creators are the inheritors of



Blake's legacy by drawing a very solid line between the work that modern creators do for money, and the work that Blake created for no reason except its creation.

He spoke about Fuselli's nightmare, and how it brought him great fame and comfort.

He also spoke of the true freedom that Blake had, due to his insanity, and mentioned how he lived in abject poverty and at times was found to be eating pieces of terrible meat by Fuselli, who himself then admitted could never achieve what Blake had, because he was too used, or perhaps tied to comfort, which Blake didn't require.

It was interesting as the talk then went onto what Romanticism is, was and who is creating it, including in his own perverse way, George Bush who he described as a romantic due to what he visualises and therefore has gone on to do. It was rather surprising then to hear have hard Moore only compare two comic creators to Blake, and Jack Kirby being the only one I am au fait with.

Moore went on to brilliantly and deeply describe what he sees and understands to be consciousness and the thoughts and place in the mind compared with the world outside it, and the difficulty that the consciousness places on scientific thought, as it is impossible to empirically measure or understand what truly goes on in ones consciousness. That there is a separate world in our consciousness, which may have the genuine tactility in ones mind as the world that surrounds us is a deep and philosophical route to explore.

The talk then turned to the matter of commercialism and materialism, Moore seeming to eschew materialistic values, and at one stage call for people to look around and understand what is wrong with our world.

There were a number of questions, I off course wanted to ask him why he doesn't consider himself a romantic, given his definition of the word and how he has brought about exactly that, through his works and if he truly depreciates himself thus, given the crowd and surroundings, but alas, there were better and worse questions. With only about 45 minutes gone despite the depth and provocations of the talk, the curator ushered Alan Moore away after mentioning her concern that the crowd had essentially closed the gallery Exhibition, a wonderful acclamation of Moore's own popularity.

I went to the pub, with my friends and I contemplated and pondered about the world in my little mind, compared to Moore's vast vista that he can pull stories from and smiled at the

thought of Sir Arthegal, The Knight of Justice and his trusty Man in Iron, his sidekick Talus.

I have been considerably taken aback by the amount of things to do. I always expected to do so many things, while I lived in Ireland, if I ever lived in London and now I am here, its incredible how much there is to do.

I am very surprised by the amount of value that is accredited to the subjects and media that I enjoy and love, here in London.

I was underwhelmed by New York when I visited it, as London for me, has so much more to offer, now I live here in London, its beyond



belief just how much there is to do, and of course how much of it seems to be of interest to me, so many people willing to make things happen and I can understand how people find it difficult to get to everything and even worse, to run things themselves.

When I discuss what I do, with work colleagues, they boggle at me, as they see me as some sort of cultural expert, art galleries and book gatherings, and not a water pistol or zombie in sight, and it makes me realise how culturally acceptable some of my pursuits have become with a move to this metropolis.

Even, in a weeks time I will go to Lambeth Library writers and readers festival, as part of

their Graphic Novel weekend, on Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, where in a Movie Theatre in Nettlefold Hall, West Norwood only a few miles from here, there will be a screening of *The Mindscape of Lan Moore* and following that a talk and Q and A session by Dez Vilenz the director.

To add to the intrigue, Nettleford hall was a location for Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*.

London: It's a grand spot. I haven't even scratched the surface.



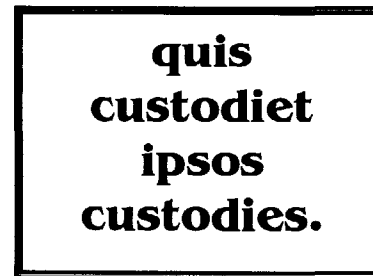
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<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/gothicnightmares/>

<http://www.mustardweb.org/>

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/LeisureCulture/Libraries/ReadersWritersFestival.htm>



## a poem off the internet

(author unknown \* thanks to **mike weber** and "Stacy")

give me a king cake smear  
give me a beignet kiss  
give me a french quarter  
morning that looks just like this  
give me the endymion krewe  
give me the *times-picayune*  
give me a drunk and lazy crawfish boil  
in muggy sticky june

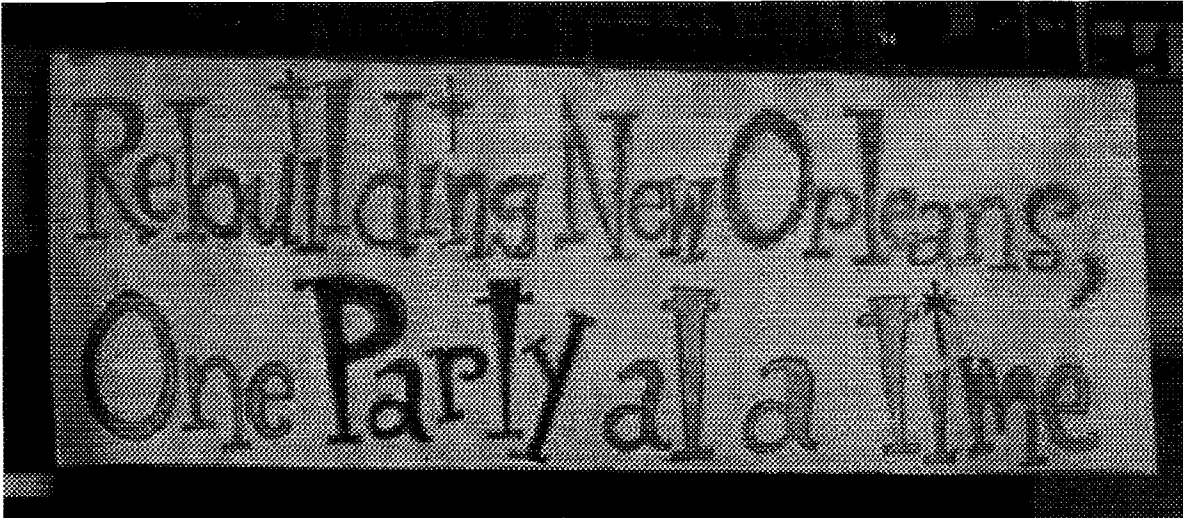
give me a six pack of dixie  
give me some assorted abita beers  
give me a city where it only snows  
once every ten years  
give me a green neutral ground  
give me a Mardi gras ball  
give me a medium rare burger  
at my grand old Port of Call

give me a glittery drag show  
give me the streetcar line  
give me the Hosue of the Rising Sun  
give me a Tchoupitoulas sign  
give me a shrimp and oyster po'boy  
give me lovebug season in May

give me back my New Orleans  
I will definitely stay



The creator of *Toonopedia* -- author of last issue's "Roe vs. Wade" -- returns to his native city.



sign in an internet café at Carrollton & Oak

**Don Markstein**

I *just* got back from an unexpected trip to New Orleans, my first since the Great Disaster. My brother Robert drove there for the Jazzfest, and I hitched a ride. I stayed with Justin and Anne Winston, and it was great reconnecting with them, as well as with the city itself.

Despite limited Internet access, I managed to get a little work done (even wrote four *Toonopedia*<sup>TM</sup> articles), and kept up e-mail with GiGi. The bulk of this issue will be a heavily edited version of my side of that correspondence, plus a few pictures I took.

I'll start the editing by tossing out everything from the way there, which took three days. We went sightseeing in Roswell, NM (a one-industry town, as you might guess) and Austin, TX (where I lived for a year a long time ago), but you don't want to read about them.

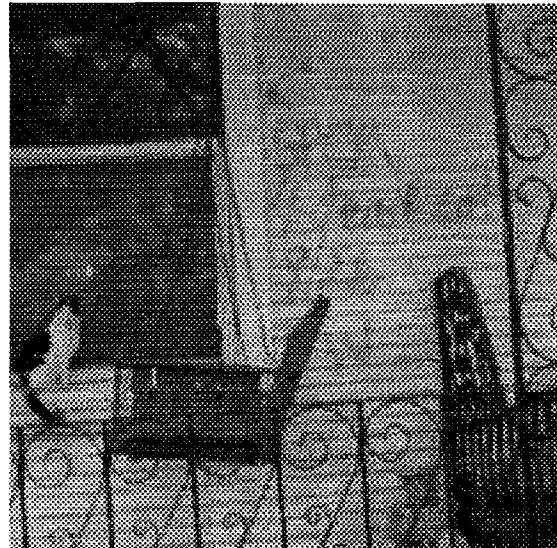
By the way, the whole time I was there, I didn't eat a single hamburger or pizza slice. Why? 'Cause I was in Noo Awlins, Dawlin'!

### ***First E-Mail from N.O.***

I'm at an Internet cafe a few blocks from Justin's house, as close to facing a wall as I can get, so I don't make too big a spectacle of myself with the tears and all. Their neighborhood looks awful, with trash all

over, and damaged houses and stuff. A few doors down is a house with "4 dead cats" spray-painted on the front. FEMA graffiti.

We came in on the coast road. Rob got pulled over for speeding, but talked his way out of a ticket. The cop gestured at an empty expanse across the highway, where they'd hauled away most of the debris, and described the houses and stores that had been there. I don't think we saw a single undamaged building until we got a few dozen miles inland.



We crossed the River into the metro area on US90. The bridge (named after Governor Huey Long) is structurally sound, I'm sure, or

it would have collapsed by now, but looks amazingly dilapidated. And the huge, shady live oaks you see as you cross the city limits are trimmed within an inch of their lives. Elsewhere, where the flooding was worse, I understand they mostly drowned.



Live oak, severely trimmed (formerly a shade tree)

Streets are in amazingly bad shape. Potholes to the point of Great Chasms. Apparently, the floods damaged them underneath. I guess there are higher priorities than fixing them. But the city is very much alive — vibrant, even. There's life everywhere you look. Damage, too, but it's still New Orleans. It just may not ever be quite the same. Some so-called experts expect the population to level off at about half what it was, which, if nothing else, will make a lot of infrastructure expansion unnecessary. I heard speculation that in a few years, Baton Rouge may be the biggest city in the state.

Trash is everywhere. The whole city looks trashed out, and I haven't even seen the bad parts yet. Corners that I remember as bustling with business now look like a war zone. Not too much garbage, though — looks like they're staying on top of that, which I take as a sign (one of many) that the city hasn't given up on itself.

### *The Second*

Right now, I'm in a quaint little Internet cafe in the heart of the French

Quarter, where they're charging me by the hour. Fortunately, I wrote this stuff early this morning, when (as usual) I was the only one up.

After sending off yesterday's letter, I walked along Carrollton Avenue to the River. It got better the closer I got — better neighborhood, though still not a wonderful one. The houses are gorgeous, but the inhabitants have de-gentrified over the years. This area was a separate town as recently as 1873, and a lot of it goes back about that far. The St. Charles Ave. streetcar, only line left as of about 1964 I think, made a turn onto Carrollton at the River, then went as far as what used to be a major drainage canal, now covered over (though the canal is still underneath) by Claiborne Ave., aka US90, the road we came in on.

Anyway, the streetcar line (survivor of the 19th century New Orleans & Carrollton railroad, by the way) isn't back up yet. But I saw buses of several different lines along the way, not one of which came along that route before. (Carrollton Ave. is grand and broad, but there's only room for one lane plus parking on each side of the neutral ground, and every time they talk about widening it, even by making the neutral ground smaller, people count how many of those beautiful, ancient live oaks will have to come down, and anyway, who wants more traffic on their neighborhood street?) I'll probably hop on one of those buses today and go downtown, then look for a hot spot to send this and do my business and stuff. I'd like to see Downtown. Last I saw of it was those people on TV, in front of the Convention Center.

(By the way, let me mention something FEMA is doing that actually does help people. They're picking up the transit tabs. It's going to end soon, but for now, anyone can hop on a bus any time, and FEMA will pay the fare. Which may not sound like a big deal, but a lot of people lost their cars and can't buy new ones.

Justin, Anne and I went out to dinner last night, at one of those bar-and-seafood neighborhood dives that are so different from the neighborhood dives anywhere else in the

world. I'd never been in this particular one before, but it was still perfectly familiar.

I ordered a Dixie, and was shocked when they didn't have it. Everybody in New Orleans has Dixie. This place even has signs for it. But the brewery, it seems, was under six feet, and hasn't come back yet. They say they're going to, but no word on when. Can Dixie Beer actually die?

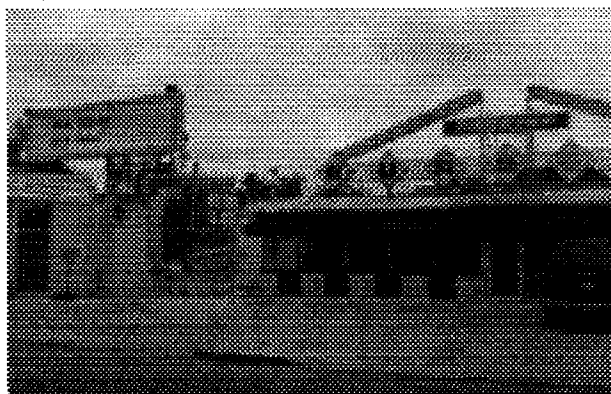
The Katz & Besthoff drugstore chain did die, several years ago. They'd already closed their soda fountains, but I'm still pining for one of their trademark Nectar Sodas. It may be that other places have the flavor, but I wouldn't know how to ask for it. Last time I saw the city to any great extent, a couple of other local soda fountains had picked them up, but now they're gone too. I understand they can still be had at a few local restaurants, as dessert, but I want to just sit down at a counter and drink one.

I did drink a Barq's root beer in its traditional long-neck bottle (their own distinctive design), but it wasn't the same — tasted like Barq's does everywhere else, whereas real Barq's used to be available only in Louisiana and Mississippi. Cross a state line, and it was different. Now, even New Orleans gets the licensed version. Used to be, they marketed T-shirts calling it "Your New Orleans Heritage", and did TV commercials (some pretty funny) where people argued over whether or not Barq's was a true root beer.

D.H. Holmes and Maison Blanche, the Macy's and Gimbel's of New Orleans, are gone too. But even so, everywhere I've looked so far, New Orleans is still New Orleans. Time does march on, and it's very damaged, but the people I talk with are still New Orleans people. I even remarked to the waitress last night about what a pleasure it was to pronounce "mayonnaise" correctly (in telling her not to put it on my oyster loaf) and not have her look at me funny.

People really curse the Army Corps of Engineers, and everybody seems to know detailed technical stuff about how the destruction of the wetlands has made the city vulnerable. But then, people would get informed in a situation like this. And of course, the destruction is still going on —

they haven't learned a damned thing, or maybe they don't care.



This joint has been there about 50 years, but the root beer mug used to be on top

### *Third*

After I closed off at the quaint little Internet cafe in the heart of the French Quarter (just wanted to say that again), I undertook the long trek back to Canal Street. I'd walked that far down Chartres Street, past St. Louis Cathedral, following directions I'd gotten at several places where I tried for a connection, only because downtown New Orleans doesn't seem to have any Internet cafes and none of the many hotel lobbies have connections for anybody but paying guests, even a guy willing to pay a reasonable amount of cash.

But the walk wasn't a total loss. Halfway back, I stopped at The Napoleon House (est. 1797) for a muffuletta. It appears they now make the best in the world. When I lived here, it was one of my regular haunts. I once remarked it was third best, after Central Grocery, which invented it, and Progress Grocery, Central's first plagiarist; and a waiter indignantly corrected me. Second, he said, tied with Progress. Well now, Progress is gone and Central, a waiter assures me, has declined horribly (he detailed their deficiencies, wrinkling his nose), so they're #1. All I can say is, it sure did taste good.

Then I walked back via Bourbon St., and felt like such a tourist, walking up Bourbon St. and snapping pictures all over. Interestingly, the first block, which used to consist of a blank wall (the side of a block-long Woolworth's) across from another blank wall (side of a block-long Holmes department

store) is now more like the rest of Bourbon St. And one of the new businesses located there is a Krystal hamburger joint (White Castle imitator) with the word "Internet" plastered all over the front. >groan< I'd walked within a couple dozen steps of it, two or three times, and never even turned the corner.

Canal Street is recognizable only in outline. The only businesses I noticed, that I recall from before, were the Walgreen's at Canal & Baronne and Rubinstein's at Carondelet. There are even more gift shops now. But they're better, with more local-themed stuff, whereas many from before were the kind you can see in any mall. Downtown is bustling, as always, and the Quarter is very much like it always was. The city is alive, all right.



The Camellia Grill, an ancient Uptown institution, not (yet?) re-opened

#### ***Fourth***

I spent the day with family (three siblings, an in-law and a nephew, all temporarily in town like me). We went out to a section I hadn't seen yet, the Lakefront. Maybe I spoke too soon about survival. There, it's mile after mile of empty houses. The only people actually living there are in FEMA trailers, and those are only where they have electricity. At least, though, former residents are working on their houses — in every block, there are one or two small construction sites, where people are taking whatever time they can spare, and trying to make them habitable again.

Of course, some are lost causes, just as some cars look okay after an accident, but the insurance company totals them. It was both hopeful, seeing people work on restoration, and depressing, to realize how much restoration won't be done. But on the other side of the nearby levee, things look almost normal. We ate lunch at a surviving Bucktown restaurant, Bucktown being a very non-scenic region just across the parish line that has a lot of places to eat pretty well but usually not too expensively.

We got a huge platter of seafood for the table. Oysters, crawfish balls, shrimp, catfish, with a couple of soft-shell crabs on top. They listed those Nectar Sodas I mentioned as a dessert, so of course I had that. Turns out somebody's bottling the soda like a soft drink, and they just poured one of those over ice cream. Not the same at all. I guess the real Nectar Sodas are gone. Glad I tried it, though.

After some more disaster tourism (I assuage my conscience with the fact that I wasn't getting in anyone's way), the others wanted to carouse all night in the Quarter. Being an early-to-bed type, I asked them to drop me off. Justin was about to go out and pick up Anne, who had gone to the Jazzfest and was at a party in the neighborhood, where she was hanging out until the traffic went away. Since he doesn't like to stay up late, I figured it was safe to tag along, and hoo boy, am I glad I did!

Anne introduced me around, mentioning the Toonopedia™, and one guy got really interested — he's a fan of it! Discovered it looking for Col. Bleep and has since been all over the site. (Later, I Googled Col. Bleep, and sure enough, I'm #1.) He had no idea they knew me. What an absolute pleasure to meet him! We talked and talked.

It's the first time that's happened — just running into someone who never knew me personally, likes my stuff, and met me just by chance. A couple of people there thought they were the lucky ones, getting to meet this, like, minor celebrity or whatever, but no, the pleasure was all mine, and I made sure they knew it! The Toonopedia™ is just this thing I do. I know there are strangers who like it, but

to actually meet one by accident is really something! This wasn't a con, where you kind of expect that sort of thing, creators meeting fans. It was just a party.

Best thing about it, I think, is that this party wasn't full of waitresses and bank clerks, though that would be good enough. Justin and Anne hang around with creative, interesting people. This guy (name of Tom Hackett, by the way, and that's him at right) is a graphic designer who works on costumes. A lot of the people there are members of a Mardi Gras marching club (i.e., they walk along a set route through the French Quarter on Mardi Gras) called The Ducks of Dixieland, which is reasonably well known locally, so this isn't Joe Fanboy off the street — he's got fans of his own!

That section of town (near Bayou St. John) survived as well as my own Uptown. And so did many of the old, established ones, which tend to be on higher ground (because the relatively dry outlying areas got built on first). So the places where the neighbors have lived there for a dozen generations, which, to a native like me, constitute the real New Orleans, tend to be the ones that are still there. Except, of course, the Ninth Ward (or as it's pronounced around here, Nint' Wawd), which is where so many of the TV pictures come from.

Being back among New Orleans people, after so long an absence, made me realize something. Black, white and in-between, we're a distinct ethnicity. Sociologists don't realize it, and probably never will, but we are. If they ever do catch on, this will be remembered in history as the Great New Orleans Diaspora.

The Jazzfest still has a day to run before shutting down for the week, but I wasn't planning on going. After all the walking I've done, I didn't feel like paying \$40 so I could walk some more. But my sister is getting free passes, so at least the price is right.

### *Fifth*

Well, I went. And partially as a consequence, I didn't make an Internet

connection all day. Sorry, but if it's any consolation, I had a great time!

The Jazzfest is held at The Fairgrounds, which is usually a racetrack, in other words a large tract of land. Must've been a dozen or more stages, and the place was big enough that they didn't interfere with one another. Great music wherever you went. I think my favorite was The Preservation Hall Jazz Band, a regular around town (fixed location in the Quarter, but they also go on tour), consisting of old black men playing old-time jazz. Maybe I liked it best because it was inside a tent, with chairs, but I also like the music a lot. But the rest was really good too. And the crowd was the friendliest I've seen since my last Mardi Gras. New Orleans people know how to have a good time without interfering with anyone else's.

One of the younger acts had a new song, a bittersweet thing about Katrina, and I just couldn't hold the tears back. I can't hold them back now, thinking about it, but at least nobody's around me (It's 6 in the morning at Justin's house, and he and Anne have already gone to work). The audience was about 60% local (estimated from the number of hands that went up whenever a performer asked, "anybody from out of town?"), so at least I wasn't the only one. The singer was very obviously addressing her own people.

And the food! The place was jammed with booths selling practically every kind of New Orleans dish. I ate mostly crawfish, though I also had a big plate of chopped-up alligator (not bad, but very chewy). One of the things I ate was a crawfish enchilada. I also had crawfish strudel, if you can imagine such a thing. A sign touted crawfish beignet (ben-yay). I can't even guess what that is since beignets are basically puffy bread with powdered sugar, and I couldn't check it out because they were closed. Portions were small, but prices were in the \$4-6 range, so it was possible to try a variety. And lemme tell ya, I did. All packaged to eat while walking around, of course. It seems like half the people I saw on the walkways at any given time were eating.



But when the place closed down at 7 PM, it really closed down. You couldn't even



Streetcar tracks after months of disuse

buy a bottle of water. In fact, walking to our meeting place just after the close of the act I was watching, I was aiming toward a nice little place where you could walk through a fine spray of water, then past a large fan, and they cut off the water just before I stepped in.

Afterward, we stopped for a glass of wine at The Columns Hotel on St. Charles Ave., far, far away. It's a striking building, even by the standards of the neighborhood, which is full of striking buildings. I've passed it countless times, by foot, bike, automobile or streetcar, but this was the first time I'd sat on its porch and had a glass of wine. The four "old folks" had a great time talking about family stuff, with the one next-generation guy trying to soak up the info.

We stretched out that "one" little glass of wine (actually, we went through about three or four bottles) much later than I usually like to stay up, and that, after a tiring day. So I'm wiped out today. My plan is to take a leisurely stroll to that Internet cafe on Oak Street, send this off, tool around the Internet until my battery runs down, then stroll back and take a nap while it recharges. Tomorrow, it's headback-home time.

### *Afterward*

That concludes the e-mails, or at least the parts of them that are worth revising and publishing.

I'm really glad to have re-connected with Justin and Anne. He's one of the most

intelligent people I've ever known, with a sideways way of thinking and talking that I always did relate to. And Anne is as sweet and as fun as ever. What great people!

Leaving town, we passed through the Ninth Ward, and it was awful! Nowhere near as many people working on their ruined houses, though there were some. (Maybe that's because the damage was worse, or maybe because their economic resources are nothing like those of the Lakefront folks.) It's not an area that used to be on my regular tracks — in fact, I'd have been afraid to walk through parts of it even in broad daylight — but it was a vibrant, thriving neighborhood, and now it's just plain dead. And now I'm getting all weepy again.



Don Markstein's Toonopedia is the best reference to comic characters on the web. Check it out at [www.uncadonald.com](http://www.uncadonald.com).





W O S T O R  
O S &  
W O S T O R

Rosy and I spent the first week of June on a long drive through Texas, Louisiana and Florida. In New Orleans we paused to visit the **Symphony Book Fair** with its #1 patron, **John Guidry**, shown inspecting wares *beneath* a table.



We had just come from **Texas A&M University**, where I had just left a substantial piece of my life: 36 years' worth of SFPA – my collection of the Southern

Fandom Press Alliance. I donated 21 boxes of mailings to Professor **Hal Hall**, at left with me, and below, with *la belle*, in the heart of the university library's marvelous SF collection. That's a near-complete set of *Weird Tales* by Rosy's shoulder. Elsewhere in the magnificent stacks, manuscripts from George R.R. Martin and Michael Moorcock, the voluminous notes of SaM Moscovitz, and acres of other goodies. My SFPAs could not be in a better locale. I did Professor Hall another small favor – clued him in to the real identity of *Analog* writer "Winston P. Sanders". Never heard of him? Try jumbling the letters in his name. You'll get "P[oul]. Anderson's twins".



One of only two winners of Southern fandom's three major awards, "T.K.F." exercises her musical side...

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS:

## Notes Towards a *Symphony*

T.K.F. Weisskopf Reinhardt

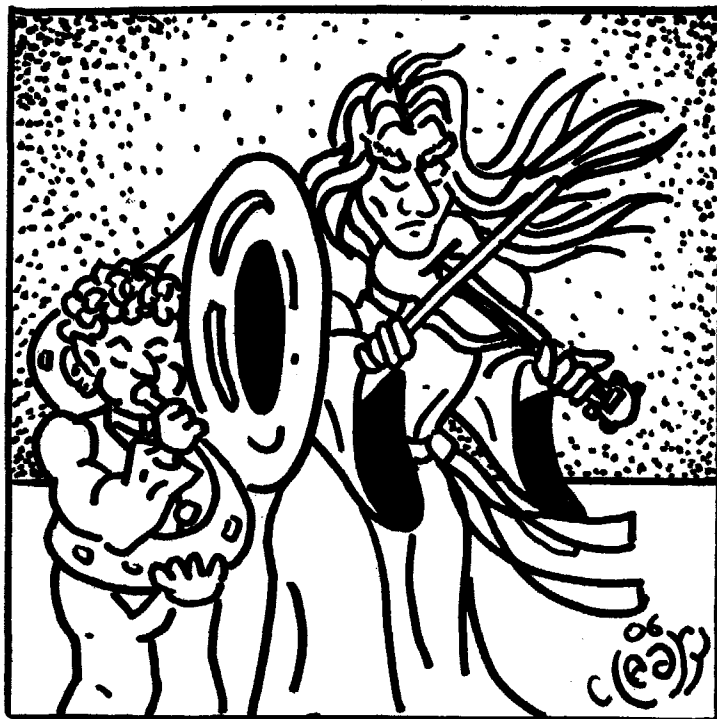
Illo by Randy Cleary

What I don't know about music and scoring and orchestration is a lot, but I know what I like ... I was at a concert the other day and while listening to Elgar's **First Symphony in A-flat Major** and not particularly enjoying it, I thought about what I would do if I had an orchestra to play with. I like programmatic music, and it started coming to me how I could put together a symphony based on Tolkien's **The Lord of the Rings**.

There's too much action to have the music follow everything exactly as it occurs, but I think the major exchanges can be seen. And, no offense to the composer of the movie music – it worked fine in the context of the films – but that New-Agey stuff just doesn't sound like my soundtrack of the books. There is a LOTR symphony/multi-media extravaganza traveling the country, but it's based on the movie music, so it doesn't count for my purposes.)

So – I suspect if anyone ever does such a thing (and if I win the lottery, I'll commission it done!), the liner notes will have to read something like this ...

The OVERTURE introduces us to the major themes of the work. The idyllic opening in strings, primarily violin, supported by cello, establishes the pristine, down-to-Earth beauty of the Shire. Frodo's theme, played by the oboe, is introduced briefly, as is that of Gandalf, initially played by bassoon. That beauty is shattered as the violent minor tones of the nine Dark Riders is introduced, only to be chased away as the triumphant chords of Strider's theme are played, leading with the French horns.



The FIRST MOVEMENT (of four – couldn't fit in all in three) again starts with the strings in the Shire; in addition to Frodo we meet

Merry and Pippin (bright, high, playful sounds in the flute) and Sam, similar in sound to Merry and Pippin, but played by a clarinet. Think Mozart's incidental music. The movement moves on through the wilderness, with the scene again set by the string section, the characters in wind instruments darting over and around, Gandalf's bassoon leading the way. A clarinet echoing Sam's theme in a minor chord skirts behind – Smeagol. The fog on Barrow Downs slowly turns the major themed music minor, and a fight with the barrow wights (tubas and basses, bass drums) ensues. A wild gypsy music, a folk tune played by violin and piccolo with both major and minor tones reminiscent of Dvorak, overcomes the wights and sends the band on its way. It is joined by the strong major tones of a French horn – Strider's voice. The dark riders make their entrance and a wild exchange between French horn and the tubas and basses of the dark riders ends with a ride across water and into Elrond's keep – signified by two harps. The movement ends peacefully, but with the hint of Smeagol's minor clarinet spoiling the harmony of the harps.

In the **SECOND MOVEMENT** we start more slowly, and meet the other members of the Fellowship: Gimli, a trombone, Legolas, harp & flute, and Boromir, baritone. In this movement we march into the mountains, mountains signified with a sound reminiscent of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" and "Night on Bald Mountain". Gimli's trombone leads the way, with Legolas' instruments echoing playfully. The goblins attack and Gandalf's bassoon pushes them back. The music speeds up as the band is chased, and the movement climaxes with the fight at Khazad-dum, as the ancient demon Balrog, heard in the basses and tubas underlined by bass drum, defeats the bassoon of Gandalf as he falls into the fiery pit. The movement moves, *adagio*, through the sad harp tones of Galadriel's Lothlorien, and ends dissonantly as the French horn and baritone clash.

The **THIRD MOVEMENT**, though *andante*, starts brightly, in a spirit of hope, in contrast to the dissonance of the previous movement. We see the flutes of Merry and Pippin in the forest of the ents (woodwinds, obviously – bassoons and clarinets moving in strong rhythm); echoes of Tom Bombadil's gypsy theme are heard in their music. An intrusion of orcs – dissonant notes in cello and bass and kettle drums – into the beautiful glade is quickly defeated by the woodwinds, including the oboe of the transformed Gandalf. The movement strays into melancholy, however, as the celebration after the orcs are defeated melds into the journey of Frodo and Sam into Sauron's lands. The movement ends darkly, with the introduction of Shelob – basses and tubas again, her movements signified by the bass drum – with the Dark Lord theme and hints of the goblins and wights, overcoming the high woodwinds of Frodo and Sam.

In the **FINAL MOVEMENT**, the thematic clashes between Fellowship and Dark Lord finally are resolved. We start quietly with Smeagol's theme, leading the flute and clarinet of Frodo and Sam through the wasteland music signifying Sauron's lands. Their light march is transformed into a louder, more martial march *con brio* full of French horns and trumpets and snare drums – the rallying of the riders of Rohan and the men of Gondor. We also hear a piccolo in the march representing Eowyn. Boromir's theme is heard in the trumpets – it is now Faramir's theme. This proud theme is answered by the Dark Lord's music. The Nine Riders are back, with their forces of orcs and Calormen with their own minor war theme, with vague overtones of Chinese dissonance. They are answered by the lighter march, the light march is overcome, and then the light march is supplemented by a wild, eerie music in harp – signifying the ghosts of Cirith Ungol and also the elven forces. Sauron's theme is heard again, but much more quietly, as the march of Frodo, Smeagol and Sam continues, up the mountain, and climaxes as the clarinet of Sam and its minor echo fight, ending in the triumphant fiery destruction of the Ring with a clash of cymbals and triangles. The movement ends with the major sounds of the Shire triumphant, with oboe, trumpet and all the instruments of the Fellowship in accord and finally, harp tones echoing, fading in the background.



# The Barrington Bull

Jan. 29 1970

SPECIAL RIDDLE ISSUE!

1970 # 3/8



Pat Yeates' cover for the 1-29-70 issue of Berkeley's *Barrington Bull* poses a question which I offer to the wits of the *Challenger* readership. At the time it seemed mind-crogglingly clever. An article about my stewardship of the *Bull*, that venerable fannish outlet, may be found later in this issue.

Oh, what the heck – each of them is a *torus* (Taurus)! Get it? HAHAHAHA ...

*THE CHALLENGER TRIBUTE*

**MARTINA  
KLICPEROVA  
BAKER**

Once again, *Challenger* steps outside the strict boundaries of science fiction and its fandom to find its tributee – this time a genuine patriotic revolutionary, scholar and academic who in the years before Katrina, filled Orleanians' lives with joy.

We first met Martina when, on the urging of the late S.F.er Zetta Dillie, the Czech professor – devout anti-Communist and friend of Vlacev Havel – came to New Orleans to visit. To the right, her first encounter with Spanish Moss. Martina made even Louisiana's state fungus beautiful.



On that same trip, Martina posed at Dennis Dolbear's house with a Confederate cap and one of DD's gats. That's a real gun, by the way. Yih

Martina made such a hit with us Orleanians that we begged her not only to extend her visit, but to *defect* and *stay*. Indeed, it wasn't too many years until her country threw out the Reds and put Martina's friend, Vlacev Havel, into the presidency. And it wasn't too long after that, that she returned ...





Possessing a Ph.D. – and some weird degree *above* a Ph.D. – Martina is fascinated by culture, and it was inevitable that she should come to a Mardi Gras. Here she is with ye editor and my neighbor, Cynthia Snowden, at a Carnival parade. Cindy adored Martina, who returned her friendship with infinite kindness and patience. No doubt other feelings came to play on Bourbon Street, below ...

Every time Martina left our environs, she broke our hearts, but never so much as when she married James Baker in San Francisco. The Bakers live out west, now, but we keep in touch – always hoping Martina will grace us with those three little words ... *Moose and squirrel*  
*See you ... soon.*







*Our man Mike addresses one of the questions Hugo-winning writers hear all the time ...*

## WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR CRAZY (NOVEL) IDEAS?

*Mike Resnick*

*Illos by Rotsler*

*It's* hard for a science fiction writer to go anywhere without being asked, at least once, "Where do you get your crazy ideas?" The number of facetious and/or contemptuous answers, at least that I'm aware of, is nearing the thousand mark, and yet it seems to do nothing to discourage the endless recitation of the question.

Guy Lillian gently suggested that I answer them here once and for all. I agreed, and suggested he print 400 million copies of the fanzine so he can mail one to every English-speaking fan and then I'll never have to answer it again.

I'm keeping my end of the bargain. Now it's up to Guy.

### ***THE SOUL EATER***

I hate college. Always have, always will. But after we got married and I started making a living freelancing, Carol suggested that since I only needed something like 12 hours for my degree I go back and get it. (That was more than 40 years ago. I still need 6 hours, so you can tell how much a degree means to me.)

Anyway, I enrolled in an English course at night school. One week we were studying *Moby Dick*, and I'd been so busy delivering stories and articles that I didn't have a chance to read the required pages. But our professor was madly in love with the book (as I am, these days) and I knew if I got her talking she'd forget all about asking questions or making assignments. So I suggested, perhaps five minutes into the class, that Melville had begged the question, and the book would have been more interesting if we'd seen what happened to Ahab if, after a quarter

century of megalomania, he'd actually killed the white whale. What would he have done with the rest of his life, now that his only goal had been achieved?

The ruse worked. She and I argued it for two hours, and she never did ask me about the section I hadn't read yet.

But when I got home I started thinking about it, and eventually I decided that Melville had indeed missed a more interesting story, so I wrote *The Soul Eater*, about a hunter who is obsessed with killing a creature that lives in space and feeds on cosmic dust.

It was Carol who pointed out while I was writing it that it may have used *Moby Dick* as a jumping-off point, but by the end it owed at least as much to the legend of the Flying Dutchman. And it was Dick Geis who concluded that it was "the damnedest love story" he'd ever read.

### ***BIRTHRIGHT: THE BOOK OF MAN***

This book was directly inspired, in an ass-backwards way, by a movie called *Alice's Restaurant*. Had to be the most incredibly boring film we'd seen in years, and after half an hour of this drivel, I muttered, probably more to myself than to Carol, "Why am I wasting my time with this turkey when I could be home doing something interesting, like writing the history of the human race from now until its extinction?"

And Carol whispered back, "So let's go home and get to work."

We walked out of the theater in the middle of the movie, and that night I plotted *Birthright: The Book of Man*, which not only sold here and in a few other countries, but created the future in which I've set perhaps 25 novels and more than a dozen stories.

Which just goes to show that you take your inspiration where you can get it.

### ***WALPURGIS III***

I spent a couple of years during my starving-writer days writing a weekly article on the supernatural. I don't believe in it, of course, but by the time I was done I knew an awful lot about it.

One night Carol and I had one of our few major fights (we've had maybe three in 45 years). I stormed out of the room thinking she was the most evil woman in the Universe -- and suddenly I had my plot. I went right back in, kissed her, and thanked her for giving me a novel.

What happens to a world populated exclusively by covens and Satanists who give sanctuary to a man whose deeds are far more heinous than Hitler's? What happens to people who give lip service to Evil when confronted by Evil Incarnate, a man who tortures and slaughters because the alternative to torturing and slaughtering never has and never will occur to him?

And just to make it interesting, I had the planetary government hire an assassin to take him off their hands before he kills every living thing on the whole planet. If the assassin can actually get to him, past his layers and layers of defense, it poses another problem: who is the more evil -- a man who kills passionately, from compulsion...or a man who kills coldly and emotionlessly, from calculation?

### ***SIDESHOW***

I get a lot of my ideas from books, plays and screenplays where I feel the author has missed a better story than he told.

Like *The Elephant Man*, for example. Play (brilliant) or movie (a cut above mediocre), take your choice. They both got me interested in reading about John Merrick, the Elephant Man, and I finally came across his autobiography -- and found something so unusual, so aberrant, that they left it out of both the movie and the play.

It seems that the carnival owner, the man who knew full well that Merrick was a sensitive and artistic soul but treated him like an animal for more than a decade, came by the hospital where Merrick had found sanctuary. He was dead broke, and asked Merrick to come on

tour with him until he could put together a grubstake. Sir Frederick Treves and all the other hospital staff assured Merrick he didn't have to go -- and yet Merrick did go back on exhibition, touring the freak shows of Europe all summer before returning to the hospital to die.

Now, that's the story that *should* have been told. The more I thought about it, the more I kept wondering: what hidden virtues were in that man to make Merrick willingly humiliate and endanger himself when he could have refused?

Finally, I decided the only way I could figure it out was to write the story, and since I'm a science fiction writer, I created Thaddeus Flint and *Sideshow* -- and when I was finished, the grudging affinity between Merrick and the carny owner finally made sense to me.

It seems to have made sense to a lot of other people as well. My editor, Sheila Gilbert, asked me to turn it into a series, and while I was doing so, Signet published *Sideshow* in October of 1982. It went through four quick printings and got universally favorable reviews.

***EROS ASCENDING***  
***EROS AT ZENITH***  
***EROS DESCENDING***  
***EROS AT NADIR***

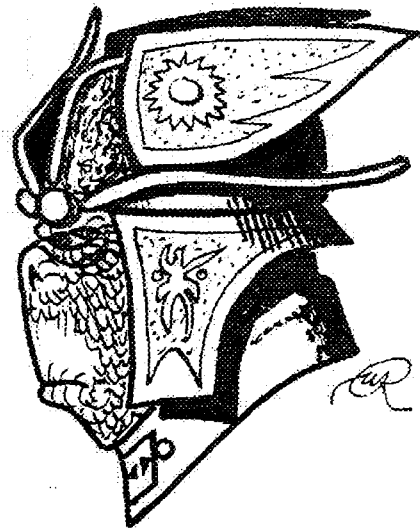
One day in the early 1980s Carol and I decided to take a vacation up to the Lake Tahoe area. In preparation for it, I picked up a copy of *Nevada Magazine* in the hope of finding an ad for a nice resort. As I was thumbing through the pages, my attention was caught by a photo of a lovely naked lady, which on average is just about the very best way to catch my attention.

It turned out to be an ad for a limited-edition silver statue of a lady, leaning against a brass headboard. The plaque at the base of the statue said that this was Julia Bulette, who rose from the ranks of the working girls to become the madam of the biggest whorehouse in Virginia City, Nevada. She donated large amounts of money -- *not* bribes and payoffs, since prostitution was legal -- to the local police and firemen, and when a cholera epidemic broke out she turned the whorehouse into a free hospital. It wasn't until after a customer stabbed her to death that the local ladies decided she wasn't good enough to be buried in the local cemetery, so they planted her in Boot Hill, with only the brass headboard of her bed as a tombstone.

How could anyone read that and not want to write a book about it? So I proposed it to Sheila Gilbert, my editor at Signet, and she said she wasn't empowered to buy a mainstream or Western novel about a whorehouse, but she *could* buy a science fiction novel about one.

So I started working out stories to tell about an orbiting brothel called the Velvet Comet, and at some point Carol suggested that by that point in the far future we should be all through with sexism and the Comet had better appeal to *both* sexes. Furthermore, the cost of flying there from halfway across the galaxy would be prohibitive, so it made sense to make it the most luxurious location in existence, and make it a *complete* experience: not just a brothel with the most beautiful and best-trained prostitutes of both sexes (and a few aliens thrown in), but a two-mile-long shopping mall which would be the future equivalent of Rodeo Drive, a dozen five-star restaurants, and a lavish casino. No one would come to the Comet just for a roll in the hay.

I came up with four stories (the fourth after it is bankrupt and in drydock), and so I wouldn't feel I was telling the same thing over and over, I set each one about fifty years farther up the road, so the only continuing "character" was the Comet itself.

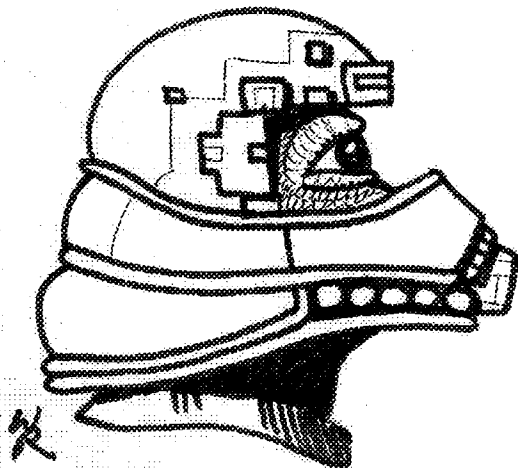


## **THE BRANCH**

*The Branch* came about because I had a broken chair when I lived in Libertyville, Illinois. I took it in to get it repaired, and was confronted by a shawl-wearing Orthodox Jew who got furious at me for some reason -- maybe I was gnawing on a ham sandwich at the time; I honestly can't remember. At any rate, he started pointing out how all the non-pious Jews, of which I was a prime example, would suffer when the true Messiah finally arrived.

I was trying my best to be pleasant, since he was the only antique furniture repairman I could find in the phone book, so I suggested that things were looking up for him, since he was in excellent health and there was doubtless a very good chance that he'd live to see the Messiah and would he please give me a receipt for the chair? His eyes widened, his pupils dilated, and he explained to me that while he planned to live a long and happy life, he much preferred to be dead before the Messiah came, for -- and he quoted chapter and verse to me -- the Messiah of the Old Testament was not a prince of peace, but would come with sword and the fire to destroy civilization before building his new kingdom in Jerusalem.

And suddenly, instead of mollifying him, I began questioning him in earnest, and that night I began writing *The Branch*, the story of the true Jewish Messiah, who shows up about half a century from now.



## **ADVENTURES EXPLOITS ENCOUNTERS HAZARDS (in progress)**

Lucifer Jones was born one evening back in the late 1970s. I was trading videotapes with a number of other people -- stores hadn't started renting them yet, and this was the only way to increase your collection at anything above a snail's pace -- and one of my correspondents asked for a copy of *She*, with Ursula Andress, which happened to be playing on Cincinnati television.

I looked in my *Maltin Guide* and found that *She* ran 117 minutes. Now, this was back in the dear dead days when everyone knew that Beta was the better format, and it

just so happened that the longest Beta tape in existence at the time was two hours. So I realized that I couldn't just put the tape on and record the movie, commercials and all, because the tape wasn't long enough. Therefore, like a good correspondent/trader, I sat down, controls in hand, to record the movie (which I had never seen before) and edit out the commercials as they showed up.

About fifteen minutes into the film Carol entered the video room, absolutely certain from my peals of wild laughter that I was watching a Marx Brothers festival that I had neglected to tell her about. Wrong. I was simply watching one of the more inept films ever made.

And after it was over, I got to thinking: if they could be that funny by accident, what if somebody took those same tried-and-true pulp themes and tried to be funny on purpose?

So I went to my typewriter -- this was back in the pre-computer days -- and wrote down the most oft-abused African stories that one was likely to find in old pulp magazines and B movies: the elephants' graveyard, Tarzan, lost races, mummies, white goddesses, slave-trading, what-have-you. When I got up to twelve, I figured I had enough for a book...but I needed a unifying factor.

Enter Lucifer Jones.

Africa today isn't so much a dark and mysterious continent as it is an impoverished and hungry one, so I decided to set the book back in the 1920s, when things were wilder and most of the romantic legends of the pulps and B movies hadn't been thoroughly disproved.

Who was the most likely kind of character to roam to all points of Africa's compass? A missionary.

What was funny about a missionary? Nothing. So Lucifer became a con man who presented himself as a missionary. (As he is fond of explaining it, his religion is "a little something me and God whipped up betwixt ourselves of a Sunday afternoon".)

Now, the stories themselves were easy enough to plot: just take a traditional pulp tale and stand it on its ear. (The titles should give you a notion: "The Best Little Tabernacle in Nairobi", "The Insidious Oriental Dentist", "The Clubfoot of Notre Dame", "The Island of Annoyed Souls", and so on.) But anyone could do that: I decided to add a little texture by having Lucifer narrate the books in the first person, and to make his language a cross between the almost-poetry of *Trader Horn* and the fractured English of *Pogo Possum*, and in truth I think there is even more humor embedded in the language than in the plots.

So far Lucifer has made it through Africa (*Adventures*, 1985), Asia (*Exploits*, 1992), Europe (*Encounters*, 1993), and after an eleven-year hiatus is currently working his way across South America (when there are enough stories to collect as a book, it'll be *Hazards*; *Intrigues* will take him to the South Pacific and Australia, just in time for World War II.)

If I could write only one thing for the rest of my life, it'd be Lucifer Jones stories.

### **SANTIAGO**

In his finest novella, *Space Chantey*, Ray Lafferty wrote the following:

"Will there be a mythology of the future, they used to ask, after all has become science? Will high deeds be told in epic, or only in computer code?"

It made me realize that I wanted to spend at least a part of my career creating myths of the future, peopled with larger-than-life characters possessed of colorful names and pasts – but I was stuck for a plot for the first one.

Then Carol saw a movie on television one night, a Sergio Leone film called *Duck, You Sucker!* (which is titled *A Fistful of Dynamite* these days), promptly rented it, sped ahead to a speech she wanted me to hear, and made me sit down and listen to it. James Coburn, playing a disillusioned IRA explosives expert who has been betrayed by those he trusted most and is now fighting as a mercenary in Mexico, gives a short speech about how once he believed in God and country and freedom and justice and nobility...and now all he believes in is the dynamite.

"Now go write the book," said Carol.

I did, and more than 20 years later it's still in print.

### **STALKING THE UNICORN**

In America, where the works of J. R. R. Tolkien have spawned literally hundreds of usually-dreadful imitations, the term "elf-and-unicorn trilogy" has become a pejorative among my fellow writers.

And, since I am a contrary kind of guy, when I finally sat down to write a fantasy novel after more than a dozen science fiction novels, I decided to write a book that featured both an elf and a unicorn, but had nothing to do with Tolkien or with anything else that was currently being written in the fantasy field.

I decided to set my fantasy in New York City, which is as bizarre as any mythical kingdom I've ever read about. My knight-errant is a private detective from "our" Manhattan, and his quest involves a stolen unicorn.

Since I didn't think the reader would willingly suspend his disbelief for any great length of time, the entire story takes place in the course of one evening, between nightfall and

sunrise -- and since fantasies tend to celebrate what is best and worst in us, I chose to have my story take place on New Year's Eve, perhaps the finest night of the year for celebration.

There is a great deal of humor and charm in *Stalking the Unicorn*, perhaps too much, because for some critics and readers it obscured the fact that, despite all the invention and surprises, this is a pretty bleak world that my detective has entered, certainly different and probably more interesting than his own world, but just as riddled with the effects of human frailty. The honorable people in this book are, alas, no more effective than the honorable people in Mallory's world; and while the dishonorable people may be charming and witty and engaging, that does not make them any the less dishonorable. When Mallory finally confronts his ultimate opponent, a demon known as the Grundy, he is also confronting the only explanation that I have for why our world is the way it is.

The book had a couple of printings, and Mallory has come back half a dozen times at shorter lengths. One of these days I'll put him in another novel.

Historical sidenote: This is the only title I've ever changed at editorial request. My original title was *Yes, We Have No Nirvanas*. My editor, Beth Meacham, convinced me that no one under the age of 40 would understand the reference, and I'm sure she was right -- but I still prefer the original.

### ***THE DARK LADY***

We were invited to the wedding of Dick Smith and Leah Zeldes up in Michigan. I don't remember my function -- it wasn't Best Man and it wasn't just a member of the audience; I participated in some very minor way -- and I needed a tux, and this took place before I owned one.

So the wedding party got my measurements and thoughtfully rented one for me -- even the shoes.

As we were getting dressed for the wedding in our hotel room, I realized that while they got the tux right, they'd messed up the shoes. I wear a 13, and these were about a 10. And they hurt like hell. I kept trying to find a way to stand or walk comfortably in them, and I couldn't, and I guess I started muttering and bitching, and finally Carol said, "Stop growling at me. I'm not the Dark Lady."

I'd never heard of the Dark Lady before, and I found the term so evocative that I forgot all about my shoes and started writing notes on a hotel scratchpad so I wouldn't forget about it. Turns out it was from Shakespeare -- count on Carol never to use a mundane reference -- and by the time I got home I had the book pretty much mapped out.

### ***IVORY***

In 1984, in a security vault deep beneath the British Museum of Natural History, I was permitted to inspect the record tusks of the greatest mammal ever to walk the Earth, an animal known only as the Kilimanjaro Elephant.

Everything about this animal, from his life to his death, is shrouded in mystery and legend. His ivory was almost twenty percent heavier than the second-largest recorded set of tusks; he was a monster even among his own kind. No white man ever saw him. If any black man saw him during his lifetime, the fact is not recorded. Historians think, but do not know, that he died in 1898; they think, but do not know, that he died on the southeastern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro; they think, but do not know, that he was killed by a runaway slave. And that is the sum total of their knowledge of this awesome creature.

The moment I first read about the ivory in the early 1980s I knew there was a story to be told -- many stories, in fact; as many stories as there were people whose lives had been touched by the pursuit of the ivory. I became obsessed by it, and finally outlined a mainstream novel.



Then my agent, Eleanor Wood, always more level-headed than I, reminded me who and where my audience was, and suggested that I follow the tusks not just until they were locked away by the museum in 1937, but out into space over the next few millennia.

So I did. And got a Nebula nomination here and a Clarke nomination in England.

### ***PARADISE***

I knew after I'd been to Kenya and had previously read a ton of books about it that I wanted to write a novel about its history -- which in my case meant an allegorical science fiction novel. But the history I wanted to cover took place from about 1890 to the present, and the obvious choice was a "generations" book. I hate obvious choices, and besides, the early history was all made by whites and the more recent history was all made by blacks, and since whites and blacks don't intermarry in Kenya, I couldn't tell a generations novel even if I wanted to.

So I put off writing it. Then, on my next trip to Kenya, a 20-year-old white Kenyan girl that Carol and I were dining with offered the opinion that Kenya, pleasant as it was, was probably a much nicer place to visit just before her birth, when Britain still controlled it and government services were much more efficient and the poverty was, if not less widespread, at least less visible.

Perry Mason, our 52-year-old private guide, who was also at the table, said that no, she was mistaken. He had been in Kenya since 1952, having come there to fight the Mau Mau and stayed on to become a white hunter and then a safari guide, and in his opinion Kenya was probably at its best in the 1940s, the so-called Golden Age of East African hunting, before all the racial conflict began.

The next night, while visiting with Ian Hardy, an 80-year-old retired hunter who lived up in the Aberdares Mountains, the subject came up again. He had arrived in 1935, and thought Kenya must have been just about perfect a decade earlier, before the great herds were decimated and the farmers began fencing off the land and the hired help started getting notions of independence and equality.

But Karen Blixen had left Kenya in 1931, mourning the passing of her beloved country, which she felt must have been pristine and beautiful just before she arrived in 1912.

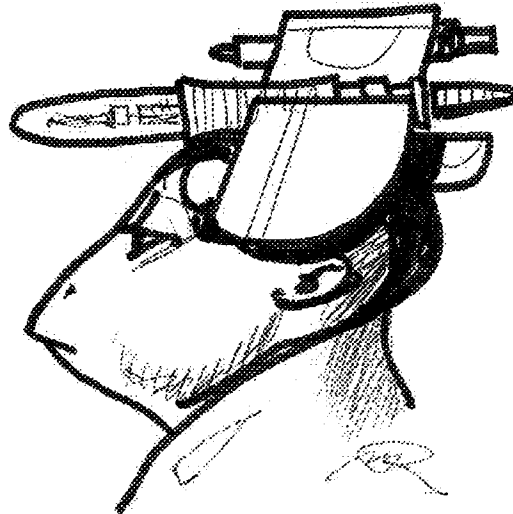
And, of course, F. C. Selous, Teddy Roosevelt's white hunter, left Kenya in 1910 because they had already ruined a once-perfect country.

Later in the trip, I spoke to a couple of black Africans, one a student and one a minor political office-holder. Both were sure that Kenya, although it certainly had its problems, was well on the road to becoming a Utopia.

And finally I had my fictional structure -- the vision of a receding or forthcoming Golden Age that in truth never was and never will be.

### ***SECOND CONTACT***

There are not many authors that I'm addicted to, but one of them is Robert Ludlum. I love his intricate plots, and his unique brand of fictional paranoia. In a typical Ludlum book, by the halfway mark everyone is trying to kill the hero -- the bad guys, the good guys, his friends, his



enemies, his lover, his family, the government, everyone...and the second half of the book is a race to find out *why* before they can pull it off.

I decided that I wanted to try to bring that particular form of paranoia to science fiction and see how it worked. I was looking for a crossover audience, so my future of 2065 reads a lot more like 1990 with a few bells and whistles added, so as not to scare that hoped-for readership away. I like to think I pulled it off. I do know that halfway through the book only one person in the entire world *isn't* out to kill the hero (and pretty soon everyone's out to kill her too).

### ***SOOTHSAYER***

One day I was being interviewed by some fanzine editor, and he was asking me who the most lethal character I ever created was -- Jericho (from *Walpurgis III*) or perhaps the Angel (from *Santiago*)?

I don't remember my answer, but I know he started me thinking about who the most dangerous person in a fully-populated galaxy might be, and what skills might he possess? Would he be built like Arnold Schwarzenegger, or master his weapons like Clint Eastwood's Man With No Name? Or would he be as brilliant as one of A. E. van Vogt's mutants or supermen?

And the more I considered it, the more I kept thinking: wouldn't it be interesting if the most dangerous, lethal character in the galaxy wasn't a warrior or an assassin or a genius, but a very frightened little 6-year-old girl?

So I wrote the story.

And by the time I finished *Soothsayer*, I knew that I'd never be able to draw anyone more dangerous and deadly than little Penelope Bailey, whose greatest desire was to be anyone else.

### ***THE WIDOWMAKER***

#### ***THE WIDOWMAKER REBORN***

#### ***THE WIDOWMAKER UNLEASHED***

#### ***A GATHERING OF WIDOWMAKERS***

One night I was in the conference room at the late lamented GENIE -- there will never again be networks or conference rooms half as good -- and people were discussing clones, and stories about clones, and it occurred to me that I was tired of clones coming off the table (or out of the vat, or wherever newborn clones come from) and functioning as if they'd had a lifetime of experience and knowledge.

So the framing device for the first three Widowmaker books was that the Widowmaker, a top-notch bounty hunter with scores of kills to his credit, able to defend himself better than anyone alive at the time, comes down with a disfiguring, debilitating and eventually fatal disease. And shortly before it can kill him, he has himself frozen in a cryonics lab/chamber until such time as they discover a cure for his disease.

But inflation eats away at his principle, and after a century he's out of money and it looks like they're going to have to wake him and toss him out -- but then someone hears that he's still alive and offers enough money to keep him frozen for a few more years if they'll clone him and send the clone out to clean up a very hazardous situation.

They no longer have to grow them up from embryos and babies -- who the hell wants to read about the Widowmaker wetting his diaper and learning to eat solid foods? -- so the clone is created as a 22-year-old man with the Widowmaker's physical gifts, and after a month's intensive training he is as skilled on offense or defense as the original...but he's *not* a 22-year-old man. In terms of emotional maturity and experience, he's a 2-month-old child in a 22-year-old man's body, and as such he doesn't fare too well. He falls in love with the first woman he meets, he believes everything everyone tells him, and so on...and in the end it proves his undoing.

Well, I couldn't tell the same story twice, so for the second book I decided that cloning had progressed to the point where they could imprint all of the original's memories and

experiences on his clone. This clone *is* the Widowmaker, cold, crafty, competent, and cunning, possessed of the original's memories -- but the original has been in cold storage for 106 years, and those memories are a century out of date. Imagine an Abe Lincoln or a Doc Holliday trying to function in 2006.

For the third book, they developed a cure for the original, who is an old man and wants nothing more than to be left alone and tend to his gardening. But the two clones made hundreds of enemies, enemies the original has never seen and doesn't recognize, and they all want him dead.

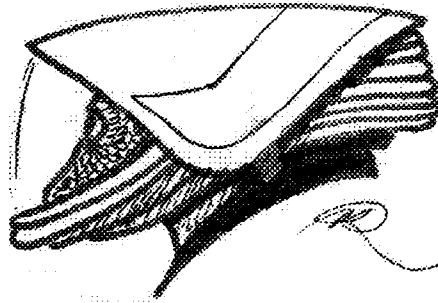
Years later, I thought of another story. I think everyone assumes that if you could actually meet your clone you'd get along just fine with him. But when I got to thinking about it, I had to admit that I never saw siblings that didn't fight, regardless of their underlying love for each other -- and when you're a trio of the most dangerous killers in the galaxy...

### ***A MIRACLE OF RARE DESIGN***

I find the story of Sir Richard Burton -- the Victorian explorer, not the Elizabethian ex-husband (sorry about that) -- fascinating. Here was a man who threw himself into his travels, totally assimilating the exotic cultures he visited. He was the first Christian to participate in Islamic services in Mecca, he lived with the Maasai and the Kikuyu, he and John Henning Speke had a race to discover the source of the Nile, he translated *The Arabian Nights* and a number of erotic Arabian works, he learned the languages and customs of every group of people he visited, and wherever he went he always lived like a native.

And each time he came back to England, he was less and less comfortable as a Victorian gentleman. He'd seen too much of the world, experienced too much, ever to be happy in his "own" milieu again. He wound up as the governor of an almost-unpopulated Caribbean island, translating works than no one else wanted to read.

And since I found his story fascinating, I decided to science-fictionalize it and put my own twist on it. My "Burton" is a man who undergoes cosmetic surgery to *become* each of the races he is studying. Each time he is changed back he is less and less human in his outlook and interests, until at the end there is nothing human left at all, just a unique creature that appropriates the most fascinating features of each race he has temporarily joined.



### ***A HUNGER IN THE SOUL***

I think I saw or read one too many heroic epics about Henry Stanley, intrepid journalist, finding Dr. David Livingstone in the dark heart of Africa, and I finally lost my patience with this drivel.

Stanley, Spencer Tracy's saint-like film portrayal notwithstanding, was not a nice man. He was a glory hound who wantonly wasted more black lives than just about any hunter or explorer in African history, and his two major missions were both unnecessary.

David Livingstone wasn't lost. He was an explorer and cartographer who knew exactly where he was, and since he was also a doctor and a tireless campaigner against slavery, he preferred to stay where could do the most good. (Stanley may have found him, but Stanley couldn't convince him to come back to civilization.)

Then, having found a man who wasn't lost, Stanley went on another mission that cost hundreds of more black lives, this time to rescue Emir Pasha, a man who didn't want to be

rescued. Since no movie or literary popularization had ever felt compelled to make even the slightest genuflection toward the truth, I decided to tell the true story, thinly disguised as science fiction, in *A Hunger in the Soul*.

### ***THE OUTPOST***

I had always wanted to write a book about a bar that was frequented by interesting people. Strange, perhaps, since I don't drink, but whenever I read the tales of Sprague de Camp's and Fletcher Pratt's Gavan's Bar, or Larry Niven's Draco Tavern, or Craig Rice's Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar, or Ross Spencer's Wallace's, whenever I saw Rick's Cafe Americaine in film or the Gold Monkey on television (back in the bygone days when I actually watched television), it made me want to write about the kind of bar *I'd* like to hang out in.

And one day I finally decided it was time. So I populated it with bigger-than-life characters like Catastrophe Baker and the Reverend Billy Karma and Silicone Carny and the Cyborg de Milo and Hurricane Smith (and his insectoid bride) and a bunch of others. Each of them would tell heroic stories about themselves or some other equally colorful characters, with obvious embellishments, and there'd be a lot of fun poked at science fiction, from adventures such as "The Ship Who Purred" to such observations (this one graciously loaned to me by the late George Alec Effinger) as "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from doubletalk".

But along with all that I needed a unifying theme that made it more than a bunch of humorous tall tales and parodies held together because of the location. So I divided it into three sections. Part 1 is Legend, in which these heroes swap their difficult-to-believe stories at The Outpost while a war is getting closer and closer; Part 2 is Fact, in which they have to go out and fight the enemy, and most of them do not begin to fare as well as the stories in Part 1 would lead you to anticipate; and Part 3 is History, in which the war is over and the survivors gather again at the Outpost to exchange the tales of their adventures in Part 2, embellishing and editing like crazy, and since they are the survivors, you realize that of course their accounts will eventually be accepted as history. The point of the book is not only that history is written by the winners, as we all know; but also that the best history is written by the best embellishers and storytellers, and that colorful history, whether true or false, always forces out uncolorful history, whether true or false.

This is not my most important science fiction novel. It is not my best. It was not my best-received. But it is far and away my favorite science fiction novel. Except for Lucifer Jones (who isn't really science fiction), I never had as much fun writing anything in my life.

### ***LARA CROFT: THE AMULET OF POWER***

I wrote this because I owed a book to del Rey from an old contract, and this is the one they wanted. To this day I have never played any of the Lara Croft games or been able to sit through a Lara Croft movie all the way to the end without falling asleep despite Angelina Jolie's 40-inch bustline and tight t-shirts.

Del Rey had the game-book franchise; someone else had the movie-book franchise. They told me that the current game ended with Lara, who was kind of a female Indiana Jones (only prettier) buried in the rubble beneath the temple at Edfu, and the next game, which would come out shortly after the novel, would begin ten months later with Lara showing up alone and disillusioned in Paris. My job was to get her from the temple to Paris in the most exciting way.

Well, I've been to Edfu, and indeed I've been all the hell over Africa (and Paris as well), so I made it a mystical quest book -- she's after an amulet with supernatural powers, and, in true Robert Ludlum style, everyone wants her dead. The guys who want the amulet think she has it and keep trying to kill her; the guys who don't want the amulet to ever be found think she's on the track of it and keep trying to kill her; the creatures produced by the amulet don't want her to learn. When all is said and done, the book is actually a Resnick travelogue. If she sleeps in a hotel

or lodge or tented camp and no one tries to kill her, Carol and I stayed in that hostelry and enjoyed it; if they put a snake in her bed or threw a knife through the window, I'm gently suggesting that you *not* stay there on your next safari or trip to Paris or the Seychelles. Ditto with the restaurants: if she enjoys her meal, this is a Resnick-approved restaurant; if someone tries to poison her or shoot her, I am suggesting that when you're in that vicinity you give that particular restaurant a pass.

Hardly classic work, but it was a lot of fun.

### ***LADY WITH AN ALIEN***

Watson-Guptill is a high-class outfit that publishes coffee-table art books and the like. Recently they realized that their readership was aging, so they decided to start a line of young adult novels, each about the creation of a famous painting, to interest the next generation in art.

My agent, Eleanor Wood, heard about it, and sent them a copy of *The Dark Lady*, which had recently won France's biggest prize -- but more to the point, it's narrated by an alien art critic who is dubbed "Leonardo" by his human co-workers because they can't pronounce his name.

A couple of weeks later we heard from Watson-Guptill: they wanted a YA science fiction book about any of Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings.

I had no idea what to write about, so I began looking through the Leonardo's paintings on the internet, and suddenly a science fiction story fell right in my lap. Leonardo created a famous painting titled "Lady With an Ermine"...but Leo's ermine didn't look like any ermine I've ever seen. So I wrote *Lady With an Alien*, which was well-enough received that I promptly signed for three more YA art novels. Added bonus: I got a great cover artist for free.

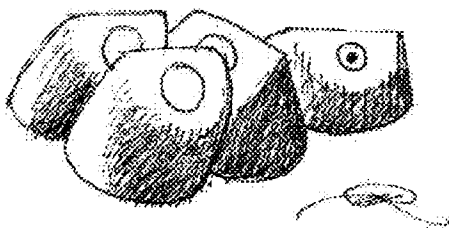
### ***STARSHIP: MUTINY***

#### ***STARSHIP: PIRATE***

One of the things I've noticed is that our greatest military men, men like Douglas MacArthur (I'm talking of skills, not personalities) and George Patton (ditto) and Tommy Franks (who actually seems like a very nice guy), do not make history by toeing the company line or thinking in standard patterns.

So when it came time to write a military book (*Starship: Mutiny*) I decided to make my protagonist a thinker rather than a standard hero type. In fact, I think maybe four shots are fired in the whole damned book, only one by him, and that one at a target which to this day he cannot identify. I also think the press is the greatest enemy our military has had for the past half-century, and I saw no reason to assume it'll get any better three millennia up the road. My protagonist is bright enough to use the media to his advantage whenever he can, but in the end it bites him in the ass, which is only to be expected.

For the second book, I came up with a real conundrum when reading some of Kendall Foster Crossen's old mystery stories that he wrote under the pseudonym of "M. E. Chaber", to the effect that even half a century ago the average price a jewel thief could get from a fence for stolen merchandise was about five percent of market value. Which gave me an interesting problem for *Starship: Pirate*: once you become a pirate, how do you support a starship and crew on five percent of market value for your plunder? Clearly you don't -- so what *do* you do? Once I answered that, the book practically wrote itself.



# Better Late Than Never

David B. Williams

In 1960, CRY OF THE NAMELESS, one of the leading fanzines of the day, published my first letter of comment and I received an official Cry Letterhack Card. I had arrived! As a fresh-faced neofan, I couldn't have been prouder.

Then in 1962, at Chicon III, I saw CRY's lettercol editor, Wally "Wastebasket" Weber, and grandly presented my Cry Letterhack Card for his autograph. Weber looked at the card in wonder and remarked that he hadn't seen one of those in a long time. I guess two years can encompass an era in fandom. The glory of possessing a Cry Letterhack Card lost some of its luster when I learned that the CRY lettercol editor had almost forgotten them. I may have been the last CRY letterhack to receive one. *Sic Transit Egoboo.*

By 1970, I was a faithful reader of Richard E. Geis' SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, perhaps the leading fanzine of the day. I didn't contribute many locs; the battles in SFR were far too fierce for a diffident soul like me. But when the prozine review column didn't appear for a couple of issues, I wrote to Dick and urged him not to neglect the SF magazines. He wrote back and, noting that I was bright and articulate, invited me to take over the prozine review job. Yeek.

Well, I banged out a column and sent it in. Dick published it with a really great masthead drawn by Tim Kirk. Wow. I had a byline in one of the most widely read fanzines of the 1970s. With swelling enthusiasm I composed another column and it appeared in the next issue, which was also the last.

Dick Geis was one of the greatest faneds of all time, but he had one character flaw (well, one that is relevant here). Sizzling with energy and ambition, he would create a focal-point fanzine, win a gaggle of Hugos, and then become introspective and decide that he wanted to do more with his life. So he would kill his award-winning fanzine, to the despairing shrieks and wails of his vast readership. Then a few years later he would miss it all and begin again. He did it in the 1950s with PSYCHOTIC (retitled SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW), in the 1970s with SFR, and in the 1980s with THE ALIEN CRITIC (also, inevitably, retitled SFR).

So just as I was on the verge of becoming a Big Deal as a regular columnist in one of the top fanzines of all time, *poof*. And just to make sure that the last drop of egoboo was drained away, a review of SFR in LOCUS declared that the prozine review column was crap.

I managed to stay out of fanzines for the next 25 years, but in 1998 I suffered a relapse after attending the local con here in Indianapolis. InConJunction was my first convention since the 1969 Worldcon. Hmmm. A lot had changed (not necessarily for the better). But I joined the sponsoring SF/F club, and to introduce myself to the group, I began writing an essay for the club newsletter on the changes I had witnessed from medieval to post-modern fandom.

When I finished the first draft, I looked it over and decided that it might rate a better venue than the local club newsletter. So I boldly sent it to Rich and Nikki Lynch, who published "That Was Then, This Is Now" in MIMOSA 26. Woohoo! I was a contributor to another Hugo-winning fanzine. And to top it off, Rich informed me that as a MIMOSA contributor, I was now entitled to the status of Life Subscriber.



In the next issue, of course, Rich and Nikki announced that they were cashing in their chips, and MIMOSA 30 would be the last. Oh well, after forty years of arriving late at every party, I was becoming philosophical. But for old-time's sake, I made sure to provide a second contribution for the final issue of MIMOSA.

Then, just as that *Götterdämmerung* was pending, I received a complimentary copy of BURSTZINE #1 from Michael and Nomi Burstein. Gosh. I felt like Harry Warner. Back in my neofan days, no one sent me the first issue of their fanzine unsolicited. Michael and Nomi included an appeal for contributions in that inaugural issue, and I felt obliged to respond.

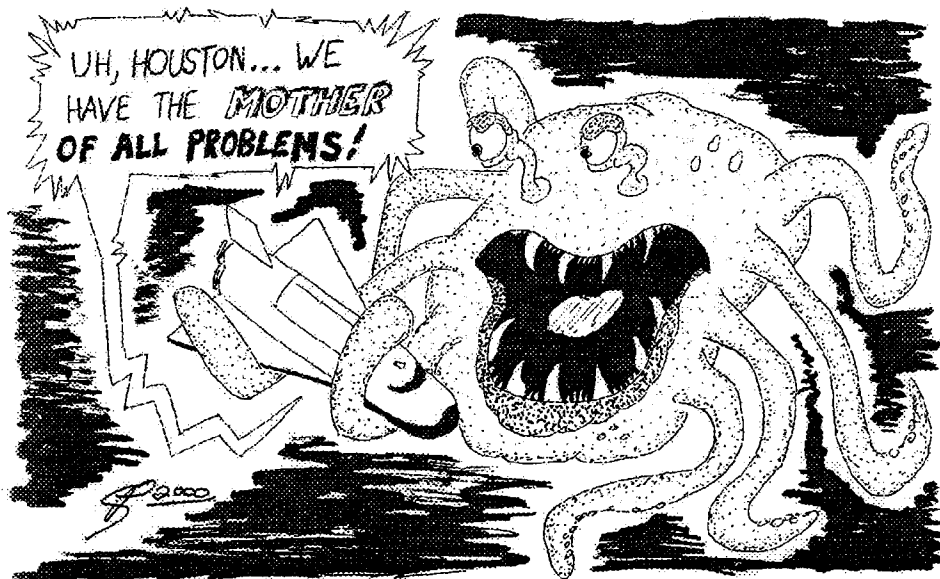
My essay titled "Napoleon, Tucker, and Me" in BURSTZINE #2 again earned me the rank of Life Subscriber. Elated, I began writing this memoir with a future *Burstzine* in mind. Alas, it has now been three years since *Burstzine* #2.

Note that my second column for SFR appeared in its last issue, and my second contribution to MIMOSA appeared in its final issue. Now it seems that the mere act of preparing a second contribution is enough to kill the targeted fanzine, even before submission.

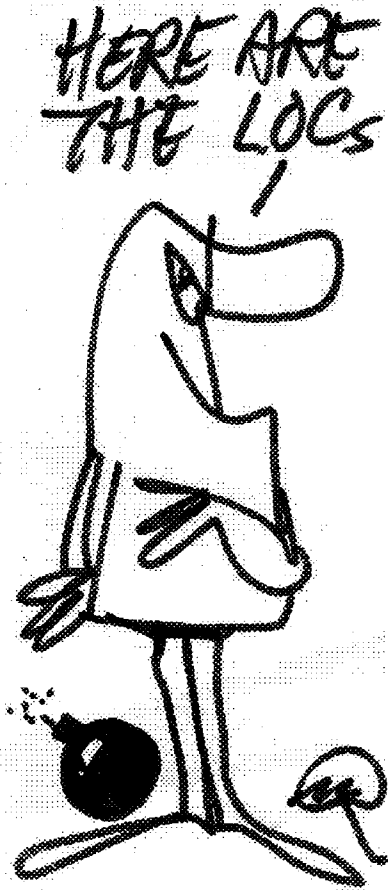
It is therefore with the deepest foreboding that I am submitting this essay to Guy for *Challenger*. If published, this will be my second contribution to this estimable fanzine. I suppose its mere appearance should be considered a triumph of sorts, after what happened with *Burstzine*.

Then again, let's look on the bright side. My locs in CRY, my columns in SFR, and my essays in MIMOSA all appeared in Hugo-winning fanzines (hell, even the dismissive LOCUS review of my SFR column appeared in a Hugo-winning fanzine). So even if this does prove to be the final, doomed issue of *Challenger*, maybe lightning will strike and Guy will at last find himself barred from the Hugo Losers' Party.

And while I'm thinking about it, I need to figure out a way to get a couple of contributions published in LOCUS (heh heh heh).



Scott  
Patri



# THE CHORUS LINES

Heard Also We Did From, We Did, We Did: Roger & Pat Sims, Kevin Smith (that DSC was in '75), Brian Comnes, Ms. Ruby Bernstein, Earl Kemp, Quinn Yarbro, Charlie Williams, John Pelan, Joe Green, Mike Resnick, Joe Celko, Ditmar, Elst Weinstein, Sandra Burley, Fred Chappell, Joyce Worley Katz, Joe Perez, Rodi Culotta, John Hertz

**Mary Ann van Hartesveldt**  
**209 Oak Street**  
**Fort Valley GA 31030**

The most recent *Challenger* was your best ever.

Dennis Dolbear's account of his Katrina ordeal was eloquent and moving.

Mike Resnick's stories of third world bathrooms remind me of one of my own. At age 19 I visited Nigeria's University of Ife with a student group. The architect who designed the girls' dorm had put in a latticework of bricks on one side of the bathroom, but no other screens. At night the lights attracted thousands of lovely African moths followed by scores of unlovely African spiders, toads, lizards and snakes. It looked like an Indiana Jones movie. We had sentries posted, saying things like, "Sue, you've got a toad approaching your feet. Mary, watch that spider on the ceiling over you. Jane, snake! Run!"

Your editorial about what liberals should do was great. As chair of the Peach County Democratic Party I'd like permission to distribute it to my executive committee members. *[Of course.]* One small quibble: political correctness. My high school driver's ed teacher ended his explanation of his grading policy with "and of course anybody kills a nigger gets an automatic 'A'." It was the political correctness movement that made such speech unacceptable now, and rightly so.

Finally, thanks for giving Fred and me a chance to know Cindy Snowden.

*You and Fred (your husband) were never anything but kind to Cynthia, inviting her (and me) into your home during Hurricane Georges, allowing her to call and bend your ear whenever she wanted, exchanging Christmas cards, taking her to lunch when you visited New Orleans – being her friend.*

*Phil Dick once said that the true measure of what it means to be human is kindness.*

*Through your kindness to Cindy you proved what I've always known: that you are a full and great human being.*

**Chris M. Barkley**  
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I must admit upon reading it, *Challenger 23* is your finest hour.

Having been only been once to the Big Easy (for NolaCon II in 1988), I had very little to offer in the way reminiscing about what a wonderful city it was.

What I do remember most is that New Orleans, street for street, block for block, had more ambiance and excitement than any other Worldcon venue I have ever visited. And now, having read the trials and anguish of Dennis Dolbear, Peggy Ransom, Don Markstein, Joe Major, John Guidry and Linda Krawecke brought tears to my eyes.

Most affecting were Dennis' harrowing tale and your remembrance of the late Cynthia Marie Snowden, a kind soul who deserved a better fate than what she was dealt.

I have been following the continuing coverage on the recovery efforts (mostly through National Public Radio) and the attempts of people to return to rebuild. While I am not very assured by what I have seen and heard so far, I have a faint hope that the people of New Orleans will eventually come together and rebuild their community. I only wish that I were in a position to go help myself. I'm also glad you and Rosy weren't caught up in this disaster.

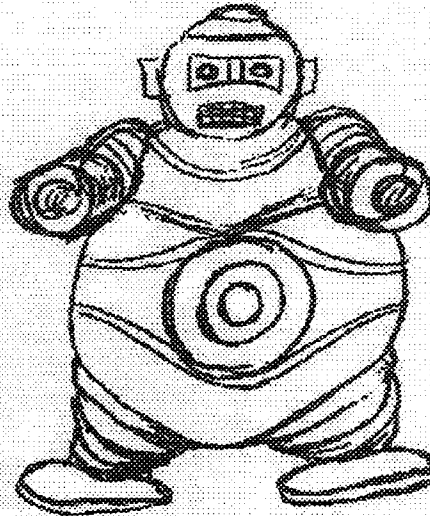
Joseph L. Green's "Our Five Days with John W. Campbell", Jr. was fascinating as well. One of my regrets in life was that I never had the opportunity to meet him because I'm sure we would have had a very interesting encounter. Having read quite a bit about Campbell, I am sure that for the most part he was not overtly or consciously racist in debating the advantages of slavery with Mr. Green, he was just being provocative to test his meddle. Joe's descriptions of Campbell's visit to the Vertical Assembly Building were riveting.

I also must praise Alan White's cover; howcum he hasn't won a Hugo for Best Fan Artist yet? I'll be sure to remember him on my ballot this year.

*I wish more fans had done so.*

**Jeffrey Copeland**  
3243 165th Ave SE  
Bellevue, WA 98008

*Challenger 23* is an amazing issue. The "dispatches from the front" in the aftermath of Katrina are all just amazing. Linda Krawecke's sadness as she watched the city she loves in danger – and unable to do anything about it – mirrors exactly the reaction I had on September 11th, as I watched the World Trade Center (whose construction dominated my teen years) fall. And similarly, Don Markstein's criticisms of our "leaders" in Washington is well-put, and to the point. Peggy Ransom's dispatch from the ground in the aftermath is just amazing. In calm terms, in paragraphs of "here's what happened," she gives a very clear picture of what life was like through the autumn in New Orleans.



And then, there's Dennis Dolbear's wonderful piece. It's the scariest thing I've read in a year or more – and I've been reading the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal and some blogs by soldiers on the ground in Iraq. Dennis just reports, but the fear and frustration and danger come through. His simple observation, "Of all our angels, I hold these dearest, with a gratitude that is profound and a debt we never really repayable," is moving beyond words. His is the real story of triumph, of people helping each other because that's just what we do,

it's what makes us human. It didn't do any good, but I added Dennis to my Hugo shortlist for best fanwriter because his was the best piece of fanwriting I saw in 2005.

*I completely agree. Awesome work, DD!*

Your editorial in "Two Four-Letter Words" provides a wonderful twelve-step plan for a liberal political revival – "Respect suffering... Care for the uncared for... Adhere to the Bill of Rights... Torture is unacceptable... Mind our own business... Forget political correctness... Rebuild the infrastructure... Develop fiscal sense... Practical environmentalism... Support science... Rekindle conversation on race relations... Honest and Intelligent War... A decent respect for the opinions of mankind..." That is a good and necessary policy statement, but is insufficient as long as the Republicans:

- control who gets on the voter rolls, as they did in Florida in 2000 and 2004, and also in Ohio in 2004 when they disappeared a quarter of a million voters from the rolls of the three largest (and most Democratic-leaning) cities in the state, and now with the new poll tax in Georgia;
- are free to commit absentee ballot fraud as they did in numerous counties in Florida in 2000 and 2004, and with military ballots in Florida in 2000;
- are allowed to suppress the votes of blacks and the urban poor by means such as threatening voter registration drives, challenging black (but not Hispanic) voters, and setting up police roadblocks outside of minority polling places, shorting those precincts of voting machines;
- control what voting district everyone is in, as they did with the illegal redistricting in Texas and Colorado;
- control what votes get counted, and launch *ad hominem* attacks when they lose by small margins, as they did on (Republican) secretary of state Rob McKenna after losing the Washington governor's race;
- control the voting machines themselves, and they companies who build them;

- and control the courts who rule on these issues by appointing judges for their political purity and fundraising prowess, not for their legal scholarship.

It will continue as long as we liberals are insufficiently dogged in our pursuit of what is right, as long as we believe that the only way to beat them is to join them, as long as we screw up on strategy, as long as we allow lies to be told without shouting the truth from every rooftop.

I want a candidate who will adopt the rhetorical flourishes of the Right and say things like: "Restricting the liberties of our citizens for hyped enemies under the bed is not something the voters should tolerate from their government. We must repeal the onerous domestic spying provisions of the Patriot Act immediately. And lest anyone suggest that I sympathize with the terrorists, I do not, but rather I stand with every right-thinking American and believe that the way to defeat the enemies of liberty is to push for more of it."

So yes: your platform is good. But to win, I'm afraid we may need someone as amoral and vile as Karl Rove to work behind the scenes, and I'm not sure I want to win enough to be that much like them. If we have to nominate Hillary Clinton and Joe Lieberman, who are Republicans in all but name, in order to win we've won nothing. While I don't believe in Howard Dean, per se, I do stand with him in saying that I am from the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party. The way to win back Congress is not for Democrats to pretend they're mini-Republicans, it's for them to be Democrats. I believe in the values that came out of the liberal wing of the party – even if not all the excesses of the McGovern apparatchiks – and your list encompasses those values.

The problem we're going to face, however, is exactly the struggle between Dean and the imbedded functionaries in the Democratic party. When Paul Hackett, an Iraq War veteran, ran in the 2005 special election for the second congressional district in Ohio, he wanted to take ending the war as a campaign issue. The Democratic congressional campaign committee tried to

stop him, and wouldn't fund his campaign. Their attitude was that opposing the war wasn't an issue to win seats in Congress. Nonetheless, after raising his own money, Hackett came within 3% of beating the Republican candidate Jean Schmidt. As long as the national committee hacks keep trying to run the party like Karl Rove runs the Republicans, we're going to miss by narrow margins like this.

Meanwhile, I'll support any candidate – on either side of the aisle – who is willing to stand up to President Frat Boy and say "You and your boys screwed up both the war and the peace in Iraq. The Iranians wanted diplomacy. The North Koreans wanted diplomacy. I won't be party to a blanket authorization for you to invade Iran, for you and your cronies to steal more oil, until you've really tried diplomacy. And sending John Bolton to rattle sabers doesn't count."

However, that all said, there is the redistricting problem. Congressional districts are drawn to be safe for incumbents. Even with the level of voter disgust with the crony capitalism, the lying, and the outright bribery of the Republicans, is there enough play in the population on maps they've drawn to make a difference? I don't know, but I sure hope so.

*Maybe – just maybe – Americans are tired of having their country ruled out of ignorance, impulse and brutality. We shall see.*

**Richard Dengrove**  
**2651 Arlington Drive #302**  
**Alexandria VA 22306**

I liked *Challenger* #23. You started out depressed over the destruction Katrina wrought on your New Orleans. Then you got further depressed because you foresee a totally yuppified future for the city. I am not certain the future is that bleak.

What may save New Orleans is that everyone knows it is prone to flood. What incentive would the big corporations have to come in, and homogenize it? What incentive would yuppies have to set up shop there? I suspect that the people who remain in Nawlins will be committed Nawlineans. It

may yet have more soul than ever.

I believe this because I can empathize, though vaguely, with committed Nawlineans, like Linda Krawecke. I come from the most rootless State, New Jersey; the State its citizens love the least. However, every time I visit the old hometown, walk its boardwalks and gaze at its faux Spanish style, a little of my youth comes back. For several days my life is bright and wonderful again.

Of course, Linda must have ten times the commitment to Nawlins I do to New Jersey.

Speaking of roots, Joseph Green writes about one of our science fiction roots, John W. Campbell, Jr. While Campbell told us about the future, he was obviously a man from the past. Maybe that is why he was able to us about the future.

He smoked, something no longer fashionable among our set, although it is right now fashionable among a younger set. Also, he made pro-slavery remarks. While they were ostensibly an attack on the p.c. of his time, I bet they had something to do with the way he was brought up. The world he came from was that long ago.

Other people's motives are not apparent either. It's a widespread belief that the War in Iraq was instigated by Big Oil. However, I doubt that, and what Morrie the Critic says about Iraq backs me up.

No, the Bush Administration invaded Iraq for Pie in the Sky. It deluded itself that that invasion, and others, would solve all our problems in the Middle East and make Bush, Jr. more popular than George Washington. That is why, as Morrie points out, advocating postwar planning and sufficient troop strength indicated a lack of faith.

Another thing that has taken faith, besides the Iraqi Invasion, is going to the bathroom. That was Mike Resnick's experience in different places, mostly Kenya. That is astonishing. I knew that when animals feed, things can be dangerous. However, going to the bathroom? Mike proves that it can be.

You could get killed showing up, or, like Woody Allen said, you can fall into the

embrace of the bitch goddess Success. He said 80% of his success was just showing up. I have to tell Dick Jenssen, I'm sorry, but his success had to take a lot more talent than just showing up.

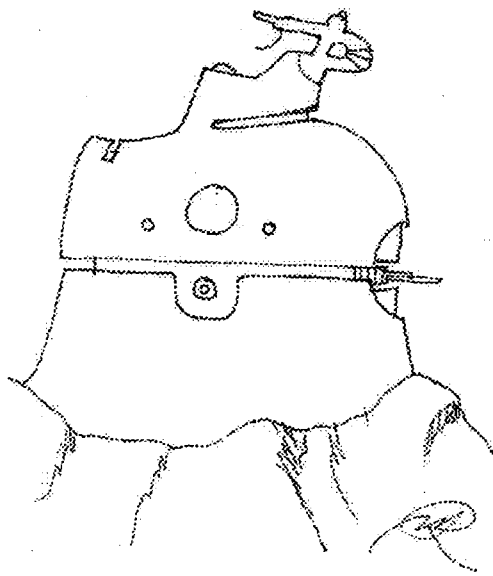
Of course, what talent you need depends upon the endeavor. Greg Benford needed method and goshwow for science. He only needed goshwow to write science fiction.

Some talents are not apparent. Mike Resnick does not understand that Gene Stewart has a talent for political rhetoric.

Yes, it is not for convincing Republicans; but for playing to the choir, the liberal Democratic choir. It gets out the faithful; a political talent not to be sneezed at. The Republicans won because of it, and the Democrats may yet.

The way to get out the faithful is not with facts but a visceral attack. Political rhetoric is not aimed at the head but the viscera. The faithful respond to that better. In fact, if politicians don't give them that rhetoric, the faithful make it up themselves.

Of course, even with a message of political rhetoric, you have to find some way to get it out. Guy, you were wondering about some way affordable to get out *Challenger*. Maybe, a return to mimeo, like you muse. It was cheap. Of course, it was messy too. On



second thought, maybe PDFs e-mailed in installments might be better.

Over the years, we liberals are getting our own buzzwords. You're approaching buzzwords: decency, Bill of Rights, respect. Maybe it's preparation for us finally being re-elected again. You can't be re-elected without emotions.

All those things you want, law alone can't provide. I have come to the conclusion ideologies are just a smokescreen. There are decent people, savages and degrees in between. Even when we want this to be a nation of laws, it can't be unless enough people are willing to apply them. The highest good in politics is to have a decent electorate that elects decent officials.

I disagree with your subtle distinction between free speech in Stalin's constitution and free speech in ours. The distinction is not that the State grants free speech. It's that free speech in Stalin's constitution was a lie. There was no free speech under Stalin by any stretch of the imagination.

It's as I said at the beginning, we are a government of people we hope with some law attached. To eliminate pork, we need a less venial more honorable Congress than we have, and a less venial more honorable constituency. Otherwise, no legislation gets passed.

"Survivor": Yeah, you surpassed the reality show *Survivor*. For one thing, unlike the *Survivor* show, you weren't prepared. You didn't volunteer to be a survivor, you were drafted. You had lived, up till then, in good times, and it was hard to believe that anything can happen at any time: hurricanes, floods, serial killer. But of course, a hurricane and a flood did.

On the other hand, you were all working together and not working against being voted off the island. In fact, that was the one thing good about a situation like that: people get more helpful. It is clear they are all in the same boat, and they will sink if they don't bail. You were helped by neighbors, helped by nurses – helped by Hell's Angels for Christ's sake! That's great!



**Randy Byers**  
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Seattle WA 98103

I've just read much (but not all) of *Challenger 23*, and I feel a bit overwhelmed by the hurricane coverage. I feel that I learned a lot about both you and the city from your piece. I've read a lot of post-Katrina stories, but yours was one of the best I've seen at personalizing it. Likewise for Linda Krawecka's story of watching the events from the UK while worrying about what was happening to her family.

Both of these stories brought back the horror and anger and distress I felt in the aftermath of the hurricane. At the time, the destruction of New Orleans seemed worse to me than 9/11, because my own country was failing its people. Both my sister and my mother went down to the area with the Red Cross afterwards, and listening to their stories helped me feel that decent people were working to fix things. But the Bush administration's stall tactics with the congressional hearings are in the headlines today, and just this morning I overheard a woman in a coffee shop talking about how she's just been down in New Orleans and how devastated it still looks.

I hope you continue to give your perspective on the aftermath in the years to come. As you say, it will take years to see how well the city can survive this disaster. It seems like the soul of our nation has been laid bare, and it's hard to look at. It's not a pretty sight, and yet you can't look away, because it's you, too.

Don't know if this makes any sense. Reading the stories in *Challenger* was like grabbing onto the live wire again. I feel like I've been jolted.

**Milt Stevens**  
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A large part of *Challenger #23* deals with the aftermath of Katrina. Of course, the media had lots of coverage on Katrina, and nobody could doubt it was a world class disaster. However, the media coverage only

lasted between one and two weeks before they got bored and went away. The articles in *Challenger* get the idea across that this is an ongoing disaster. It didn't just end in two weeks. I suppose it might be compared to the Blitz in London where bodies were being discovered for years afterward. Except that the citizens of London had more chance to prepare for it.



As far as FEMA's incompetence is concerned, it isn't exactly a new thing or limited to the Bush administration. Elsewhere I've explained why I think, FEMA was never worth anything. I first became aware of them after the 1994 earthquake in Los Angeles. They arrived with a whole bunch of people and a whole bunch of equipment. Some of their gear was pretty good. At one location my colleagues and I visited, they had all sorts of boxed equipment like about 50 PCs, color printers, plotters, etc. None of their people knew how to connect any of it, and this was in the pre-LAN era. We offered to set the whole place up in exchange for a couple of PCs and a color printer. They declined our offer, and as far as I know, they never got their computers set up.

A couple of years later, FEMA came back with a bunch of money to loan to people with earthquake damage in South-Central Los Angeles. The epicenter of the 1994

quake was in the Northwestern San Fernando Valley. That's a long way from South-Central, and there wasn't any earthquake damage in South-Central. That didn't even slow them down. Once they had determined to loan money, they were going to loan money no matter what. By analogy, I suppose you can expect FEMA to show up in Shreveport in a couple of years with lots of money to loan. Take it, it's cheap money.

As Greg Benford says, science has become the emblem of truth in our society. From studying the commercials, I have noticed this has even had an influence on cat food. There is a cat food named Science Diet. They say it has all the nutrients every cat needs. Unfortunately, it has one minor problem. Cats won't eat it. There seems to be a difference between the nutrients cats need and the nutrients cats want. I can sort of see the problem. I don't like all the stuff I'm supposed to eat any better than the cat does. Even at that, science has enlightened us in a way. Now I can share a pizza with a cat knowing that it is equally bad for both of us.

Joe Green gives an interesting account of five days with John W. Campbell. His article made me realize something I hadn't thought of before. Campbell was only 61 when he died. When I was John Campbell's age I'd already been dead for two years. That's a sobering thought.

*Indeed.*

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When Hurricane Katrina hit with all its force, we were glued to the television the same way we were when the *Challenger* exploded (a sad anniversary a few days ago), or when Mount St. Helens redrew the geography of Washington state. The coverage of Katrina stayed with us a little longer because the storm was so strong, it drenched Toronto and area, and eventually became just another low pressure cell around the maritime provinces. It also reminded us that just because we are so far north in comparison to the tropics, [it doesn't matter;]

we can still be touched by that kind of disaster. In 1954, Hurricane Hazel came to Toronto, and tore it up, and changed this city forever. Check [www.hurricanehazel.ca](http://www.hurricanehazel.ca) to see how Toronto, and indeed, the province of Ontario, was affected. (Hazel destroyed much property, and killed hundreds. Hazel doesn't stand up to Katrina's utter destruction, but we know of what you speak.)

Mardi Gras is less than four weeks away, and New Orleans is a shadow still rebuilding. Some say rebuild, others say rebuild elsewhere. Time will tell if people use sense or spirit; there's good argument in both. I remember NO from Nolacon II, and we had a great time in the French Quarter; it's up and going again, but things have changed so much. I hope you and Rosy find the old joy you remember on that Fat Tuesday. This place must live on in more than just fond memory.

*This year's Mardi Gras showed that New Orleans does live on, in righteous spirit.*

The news regularly brings us examples of how the US sends millions of dollars overseas to help banish hunger and poverty. Its generosity knows no parallel. Yet, when the US was offered by many countries help in recovering from Katrina, the response was an almost overly-macho silence. You helped us before; can we return your generosity now? This heart-felt offer to help was often rebuffed, and often in an abrupt fashion. Later, when the incompetence of the Bush regime and the head of FEMA was revealed, help was accepted, grudgingly and in near-silence. A Canadian Armed Forces task force helped with temporary housing and clean drinking water. They did their job, stayed a little longer than was required or asked for, and then left. Bush later did his clumsy PR job with public thanks for the help received, but it seemed to have been shamed out of him.

When I saw the title "Survivor", I thought of that cubic zirconia of all ridiculous reality shows. What a stupid and abused phrase that is, reality show. Katrina and the evening news was a reality show; people surviving through impossible conditions and odds. How is a scripted show

like Survivor more real? How is it more real than the experiences Dennis Dolbear relates? What about Peggy Ranson's e-mails of adventure and travail? I cry for their losses, and smile for their triumphs. I do not watch the pap and nonsense of *Survivor*; after Katrina, I am surprised that anyone does. But then, I'm not into escapist television. For me, reality television consists of documentaries and the news. (Saw on TV that New Orleans just endured a tornado. What an insult after such an injury.)

Yummy Soylent! Just remember, you are what you eat! And soon, perhaps you'll eat what you are...

Bravo to Don Markstein on his good words. For so many people, the character of New Orleans is a stereotype of good times, party, drink anywhere, etc., they know nothing of what New Orleans is all about. They know nothing of its history and origins, of the Acadians banished from the good farmlands of Nova Scotia and sent to the hot swamps of the American south where they slowly became Cajuns. (Why do so many people understand others only through tired old stereotypes?)

I think it's been worded otherwise elsewhere, but Ditmar names the reason for enjoying SF that really appeals to me...it offers intellectual pleasures, perhaps an expansion of the imagination, an exercise of the brain. Like a muscle, it needs that exercise to thrive and grow, to learn to imagine and create ideas and images outside its experience. No wonder those with ideas and imagination are perceived as weird and dangerous in this unimaginative age. I have received publications from the Melbourne club since the late Ian Gunn was the editor of *Ethel the Aardvark*. I still receive it, which means I probably have more issues of *Ethel* than most of its members. (I try to remember to give my thanks from time to time to the members of a club that sends me a copy of their clubzine. I know that my copy is subsidized by the dues of its members, and sometimes, I feel like a freeloader. I loc those zines as much as I do any other, and I hope that my contribution has enough value to

offset the costs of the issue, and the costs of getting it to me.)

If indeed liberal politicians need to get reorganized to regain the White House, I think they need to say that more than being Americans, we are humans. We have friends all over the world, and we haven't treated them very well. We have a lot of wrongs to put right, and we will do that. We won't lie down and turn over, but we will have a slice of humble pie, and admit our failures. And why? Because it takes true strength, of morals and character, to admit being wrong. America needs to regain its place of defender of the right, and not be an example of a superpower gone wrong. (I saw a report of a very popular Turkish movie where American troops in Iraq are portrayed as the bad guys. Ah, to see ourselves as others see us...) America must also embrace the world and be a part of it, instead of depicting itself as an island of right and morality in a unknown world of depravity. I honestly doubt that the Bush regime knows how hated they are in the rest of the world because of its acts, and if they know, I doubt they care. That's the key word ... America must care. Thank you for this essay, Guy ... once America can regain its human face to the world, perhaps the world will hate it less, and perhaps America might begin to understand why 9/11 happened. British journalist Robert Fisk summed up the reasons for 9/11 very succinctly...see

<http://www.aliraqi.org/forums/archive/index.php/t-16102.html>. He said basically that 9/11 happened because the East had had far too much of the West's interference. Please read that transcript.

*You owe it not only to yourself, but to your American compatriots, to see An Inconvenient Truth, if for no other reason than to strengthen any faith you may have in the decency and passion of your neighbors.*

*Sleaze has owned America since the 2000 election. Maybe – maybe – its influence has run its course.*

I am sitting here in front of my computer, wiping tears from my face. I teared up a little reading about Dennis Dolbear's efforts, Peggy Ranson's

adventures, and John Guidry's losses, and now I read about the death of your friend Boo. You saved the most powerful for last. I don't know what to write, you've got me stalled. How could one not be moved by this human tragedy, and not angered by the government's incompetence? Too many precious lives, lives of honour and sunshine, lives of honesty, were taken by Katrina, and many more have gone to waste through the Bush regime's rank acts and vast negligence.

I will dry myself off, and thank you kindly for a publication that this time has been much more than just a fanzine. Thank you very much for smiles and tears, and much to think about and consider. I am certain the response will be worth reading in the next issue, which I look forward to very, very much. Take care. The discussion will be memorable.



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I think I've managed to make my way through all of the new issue. I'm still getting the hang of this on-line zine stuff. I've noticed that the zines that pop up in PDF format things have an actual page count at the bottom of the screen, so it gives some idea of how much material there is, just like getting an actual print zine. More web-oriented zines like you've set up *Chall* are another matter, I'm not sure if I'm still missing parts, since sections re set up independent of each other, and some are even on other hosted sites.

It was interesting, saddening, enlightening, and hopeful to read all the various accounts of New Orleans from yourself and so many of the other contributors. That's a story that is going to be going on for a long, long time.

Enjoyed Joe Green's memories of having John Campbell as a house guest. And on the travel theme, Mike Resnick's "Bathrooms" article was funny, but probably the wrong thing for a travel-wuss like myself to read. I've always considered Nature as something you pass through from the air-conditioned house to the air-conditioned car. Indoor plumbing is a given in all my travel plans!

And a very lovely tribute to your friend Cynthia to wrap things up.

*Cynthia is interred in Hammond, Louisiana.*

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Thank you for *Challenger* #23. The obvious theme was New Orleans the Hurricane Katrina disaster, and the different takes on it were dramatic and moving. If there was an aspect that troubled me, it was the generally nasty tone of the Bush-bashing. Much of the criticism appeared fair, and I hold no brief for Mr. Bush (except that, as an honorably discharged veteran, I still feel oathbound to "protect and defend the Constitution," and thus respect the office even if I have substantial differences with the incumbent or his policies). The side of it which concerned me was the problem of *Chall* becoming the anti-*Fosfax*, a mainly political zine of the left, as *Fosfax* is a mainly political zine of the right.

*In her play Watch on the Rhine, my onetime teacher Lillian Hellman had a Nazi tell a guy "You're too cynical to be really dangerous."*

*I never want to get that cynical. Of course, in person Hellman once told me, "Somebody's got to stop them." No doubt who "them" was, or is. I regard her comment as a charge.*

I was really interested by Joseph Green's article on John W. Campbell. I never had the opportunity to meet Campbell;

he was before my time. As you probably know, Bob Sabella's *Who Shaped Science Fiction* lists the three most important figures in SF history as: Campbell, Wells, Heinlein, in that order. It also took me a moment to realize that the shy teenager mentioned in the article is the charming lady whom I had the pleasure of meeting briefly in Chicago!

Richard Dengrove: I had never heard of G. Pope before, and I think of myself as moderately well read in SF. But certainly E.R. Burroughs was a pulp hack of the times – even Tarzan was not a greatly original concept; so it's certainly possible he might have been influenced by the earlier work to some degree. A good sercon piece.

Gregory Benford: Even if we are confining the conversation to fiction, I would have second thoughts about "I don't think you should write anything unless it is fun." Down that road lies "You shouldn't read anything unless it is fun," which would rule out 80% of the world's great literature, and probably a higher percentage of SF. Then there's the questionable overlap between what's fun for the writer, versus what's fun for the reader.

*"Great literature" got that way because it was fun -- satisfying -- enjoyable -- stimulating -- compelling to its audience. Hamlet and Huckleberry Finn and Moby Dick and Ulysses are all of those things to me. What "fun" means to a writer is another story—art flows from deeper waters than mere diversion.*

Mike Resnick: Whether Jefferson was "devout" remains to be seen.

*Since T.J. died in 1826 – on July 4, according to legend – there doesn't seem to be much that isn't known about him. His deism may be questionable, but on one subject he certainly was a true believer: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the mind of man." On that point he was devout. Are we?*

Lloyd Penney: I read an interesting observation that one of the reasons boys enjoy video games far more than girls is that failure at them is private.

Joseph Major, and Guy: I have decided not to have a birthday this year. The custom simply bores me.

Sheryl Birkhead: I'm with you. The Hugo rules ought to be clarified to prevent double-dipping for both "fanzine" and "website." Not that I really care, except abstractly.

Guy, on politics: A good, fair-minded, liberal rant on how the system should work. Much of your take is admirable, much less of it is feasible. You assume that congress-critters should want to govern fairly and for the benefit of the nation as a whole. That is just not the case.

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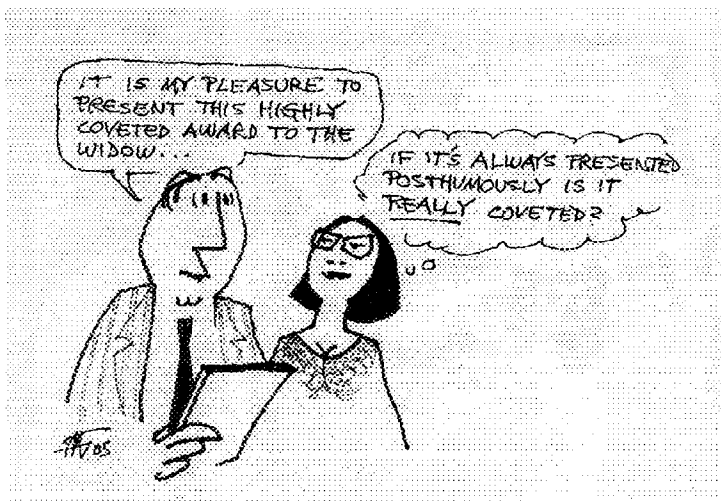
Well, this is odd. Or weird. Or, more likely, reflects my failure to pay detailed attention to your e-mails announcing the availability of recent issues of *Challenger*.

That is, I received an e-mail from you back in, er. I obviously noted that another issue had been posted to the web, but (on reflection) must have failed to do anything about it (such as follow the link and read the contents). But when I received another e-mail from you, more recently, and did follow the link, I ended up where I would have been had I followed the link in the previous e-mail.

I'm sure this isn't because your links were all over the place; it's more likely that, as I said a few lines ago, I wasn't paying detailed attention. For one thing, I got promoted at work at the end of October/beginning of November 2005 and (although I do all my fanac at home) the upsurge in my work responsibilities inevitably meant that I had less energy over for reading and responding to fanzines (never mind doing anything else – in fact, the last two months of last year were so fantastically busy that I didn't manage to address anything other than work). (I shall spare you a detailed resume of the reading backlog.

Suffice it to say that I'm about five months behind on my history magazines.) Of course, this doesn't quite explain how I managed to get the letter column for *Challenger 22*, dated August 2005, muddled up with that for *Challenger 23*, dated December 2005, but there was a response to me in the former, from Henry Welch, to which I certainly should have responded in turn – viz:

“If Joseph Nicholas is indeed correct that the exploration of space is dead,” said Henry, “that is indeed unfortunate, as that also represents the end of human evolution.” This is a very old-fashioned, and indeed entirely superseded (almost nineteenth century) view of evolution – firstly of evolution as something with a sense of direction and an overall purpose, and



secondly of the human species as evolution's finest achievement to date but still at some intermediate stage in its development, partway between the plains of Africa and the gulfs between the stars. Yet if the debates of the past fifty years have taught us anything, it's that evolution is quite the opposite: not a teleological process but a dynamic response to changing environmental contingencies, with no favouritism given to any species and all equally malleable and vulnerable. Niches open, species radiate to fill them, the geology or climate changes, and species go extinct. Humanity is no exception -- not evolution's finest achievement, but just one in a long list of the many species it's thrown up during the past four billion years of the Earth's history,

and as likely to be replaced, in turn, as all our predecessors.

If evolution were re-run from the pre-Cambrian, there's not only no guarantee that after four billion years it would produce us, there's no guarantee that the vertebrate principle on which most life on Earth is organised would be the dominant one either. The only thing one can say for certain is that, drawing on the evolutionary record to date, the average lifespan of any species is ten million years – and that because this is an average, the actual lifespan of complex species such as ourselves is much less, around one million years. (Meaning that we're just about at the end of our run.) Evolution won't stop with our disappearance – indeed, our disappearance, and the disappearance of the biodiversity we've eliminated in our rise to global dominance (“the sixth extinction” which is currently in train), will clear the stage for a new wave of biological experiments which in time will repopulate the world with something else.

Whether our successor species will be as intelligent as us, or even have any intelligence at all, is questionable. Big brains helped us in the past, allowing us to overcome our environmental obstacles and alter the niches to fit ourselves rather than vice versa; but big brains could be a hindrance in the future because of the energy they consume – energy which other species devote, and which our successor species may have to devote, to the business of survival: food, shelter, procreation.

(The late Steven Jay Gould once argued that there was no evidence to demonstrate that intelligence conferred an evolutionary benefit – we had survived so far, but the real judgment would be history's, which could have an entirely different opinion.) But to speak of this as “the end of human evolution” is quite meaningless, because (much though it's misused in this way) evolution is not a synonym for development. For example, there is nothing about our brains now (size, capacity, neural connections) which differs from the brains

we had when our ancestors left Africa to populate south Asia 80,000 years ago, and nor is there any reason why our brains should differ – is there anything materially different about our forms of social organisation (family – social clan/tribe – work group/cadre), our political structures (parliaments – senates – royal dictatorships), our economic relationships (buyers/sellers – employers/employees), and/or our religious beliefs (apart from the replacement of one deity with another)?

The problem with evolution as a term is that it's become enslaved to or incorporated within the now discredited and abandoned Whig view of history – that is, a view of human culture which sees it as brutish and nasty to begin with but one which has advanced through various stages to ever-higher planes of sophistication and learning: an advancement which will continue into the indefinite future. Yet Darwin himself never liked the term “evolution”, and continued to argue for the use of “descent with modification” long after the point at which “evolution” had entered common usage (in chief part because it fitted with late Victorian ideas of progress). Recapturing our understanding of the word, and breaking free of the widespread misperception of it as a synonym for progress/development, seems to me a crucial task. Whether it is possible to do this in the face of such anti-scientific assaults as “intelligent design” (a.k.a. garbage) is another matter entirely. But, to respond more directly to Henry: evolution (and the Earth) won't notice if we don't spread through the galaxy, and neither will the galaxy.

Meanwhile, in issue 23, Gregory Benford recalls my comments a few issues back “downplaying the chances for a manned exploration of the solar system”. “All seemingly plausible,” he continues, “until one notes that over 20 billion dollars goes into space programs already, the majority of it for manned.” But what proportion of total annual global GNP is \$20 billion? Answer: bugger-all. Even if the annual expenditure was \$200 billion it would still be bugger-all as a proportion of total annual global GNP.

The notion that space tourism – which is highly unlikely to ever be available to other than the super-rich, as now – will make up the funding shortfall, and transform our current fiddling about in Earth orbit for a couple of months a year into a full-scale colonisation of the solar system, is just daft. Space tourism won't even provide follow-on vehicles for the shuttle and the international space station, and why should it? Taking the super-rich for jaunts to view the curvature of the Earth is an entirely different proposition from sending a crewed mission to Mars. (Or even the Moon – although this hasn't stopped some US start up company claiming, as recently as last autumn (fall in US terminology), that sending tourists to photograph the far side would have a scientific purpose and so justify the whole venture, even though a robot probe would obviously be far, far cheaper. And safer.)

As I've remarked several times previously, here and elsewhere, the real impediment to the continuation, never mind the expansion, of crewed spaceflight, is the lack of political will by governments to meet the costs involved. Space enthusiasts who wish to see the continuation – and expansion – of crewed spaceflight have no option but to address this issue directly: to explain how they propose to overcome governments' reluctance to spend the money, and then put that explanation to work to achieve their goals. For space enthusiasts to avoid this, by falling back on patent nonsense about space tourism, is effectively to concede that they have no idea how to overcome governments' reluctance, and prefer instead to retreat into wish fulfillment. (Not even private industry will make up the funding gap – do you see private industry lining up to help NASA out with the International Space Station, originally budgeted to cost \$8 billion and be complete by 2003 but now expected to cost \$100 billion and not be complete until 2017 (a “completion” which will entail dropping many of the science modules in the original plans)? No; and for the very good reason that private industry only funds projects on which it will get a guaranteed return, not bottomless what-if space-exploration-for-the-

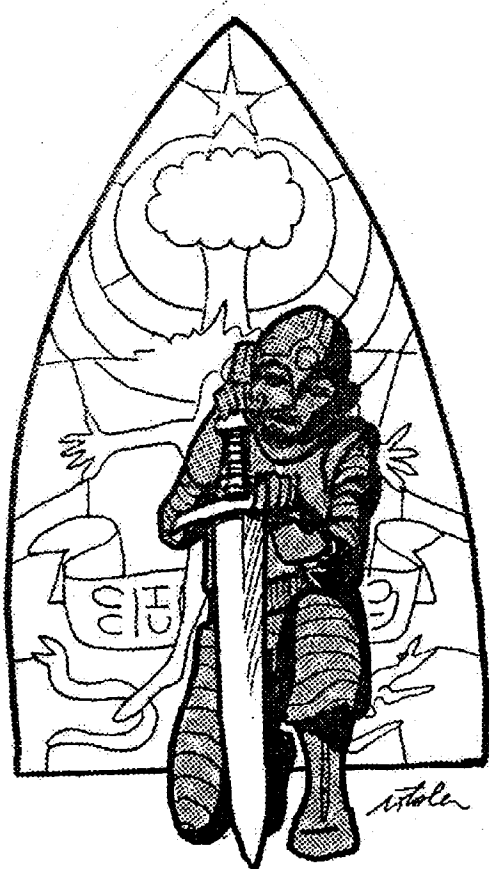


hell-of-it.) But wish-fulfillment is no substitute for rigorous argument.

[Re:] the Hurricane Katrina-related material:

Of course, none of the other commentary comes remotely close to Dennis Dolbear's story of surviving the hurricane and its chaotic aftermath. If anyone were still publishing annual fanthologies – Corflu seems to have abandoned the exercise, possibly over a decade ago – his article would be a natural inclusion. Even though one is left with some questions at the end of it, inconsequential though they are by comparison with the events he relates – such as: what happened to his house? And his possessions? Were they insured? Come to that, how many of the inhabitants of New Orleans had the contents and buildings insurance which will allow them to rebuild and recover? Answer: probably none, if they were inhabitants of the Ninth Ward ...

*Dennis and his mother are living in a FEMA trailer outside of a second house they own, which escaped flooding, and which they plan to renovate.*



A little over a week ago, as I write, we watched a programme in the *Horizon* series of science documentaries on BBC 2 which reviewed Katrina's impact on New Orleans, focusing on not just what happened but (more importantly) why – the force and track of the hurricane itself, the disappearance of the coastal marshes and offshore islets which might have absorbed some of the storm surge, the damming and canalisation of the river which had reduced the silt loading which contributed to the maintenance of the islets. But perhaps the most startling piece of information was that concerning the flood defences, many of which – because they were situated on ground which had sunk since their construction, or were founded on ground where the water table was only a few inches below the surface even in the driest years – were revealed to have been incapable of withstanding even a category 1 hurricane. In other words, they could have been overwhelmed at any time before now, and it was pure luck that they weren't. Pure bad luck, even – because if they had, they might have been rebuilt to withstand stronger forces. As it was, said one of the US Army Engineer officers overseeing the reconstruction of the flood defences, they weren't being funded to do other than rebuild what Katrina had demolished – so vastly increasing the risk that the next hurricane will just knock them down all over again.

The wider question is whether New Orleans should be rebuilt at all. As Don Markstein (and others) remark, all major rivers have port cities on them at or about the point where they reach the sea; New Orleans and the Mississippi are no exception, and in this particular case the Mississippi is so important to US commerce that not rebuilding is not an option. But should one rebuild more than the port facilities? There's probably an argument for keeping the French Quarter and the Garden District, both of which were on higher ground so were less affected; but what about the rest, given that much of the city sits in a bowl below sea level and will almost certainly be hit by another hurricane at some point in the future?

(Echo answers: well, \*I\* certainly wouldn't want to live there. And if the neocons who are salivating to turn the New Orleans Reconstruction Area into another fully privatised ultra free enterprise zone get their way – having failed in Iraq, why shouldn't they fail at home too? – few people would either want or be able to live there.) A number of experts (geologists, flood management specialists, marshland ecologists, river engineers, and others) are saying that as much as 80 percent of the former city area should be abandoned, left to revert to wilderness and swamp to provide storm protection for the rest. This will indeed reduce the city to a tourist rump of its former self, but on the other hand it would also ensure that the next hurricane doesn't do as much damage or kill as many people. Anyway, as history and archaeology have shown, no city lasts forever!

*Easily said – when the city in question isn't one's home, and its destruction didn't injure or kill people one cares about.*

*I invite – no, I beg – other Challenger readers to let us hear their ideas and opinions on rebuilding New Orleans.*

**Greg Benford**  
*clo Challenger*

Mike Resnick's article ["Bathrooms I Have Known"] is one of the funniest I've ever seen in a fanzine. I've been in some terrible johns in this world, mostly in Asia or the old Soviet Union. The worst was in a marbled conference center in Soviet Georgia cloaked with huge banners proclaiming the wonders of socialism, where the Soviet Academy of Sciences held a big meeting. I was a foreign guest and marveled at the alabaster wonder of the place – until I went to the loo. Clearly, as in much of the unlamented Soviet Union, maintenance was a problem. The toilets had overflowed and delegates had taken to voiding in the booths, so the marble room assaulted your nose upon entering. Keeping up a face before me (The Enemy), one elite professor from Moscow apologized, saying it was a "momentary" problem. He turned to a colleague, not

knowing I spoke Russian, and said, "It's always like this here, a pig sty!"

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Ya know a curious little "addendum" struck me tonight about the whole Katrina thing. A little history. I'm PLAGUED with pigeons. They build their nest over my windows and poop all over the front porch and the acid eats away at my front porch. I even have those plastic needles up and it doesn't work. When I was driving home from Memphis I remember thinking "well, at last, the pigeons will be gone." And what was the FIRST thing I saw when I drove into my driveway???? A few pair of happily cooing pigeons right where I left them and pooping away. I was screaming NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO when I got out of the car. I thot at least this one little problem would be gone and I was thunderstruck to see them still there.

This little incident left more than a few of us at the Paper wondering. WHERE DO THE WILD LIFE GO???? And believe me they know before us all how bad it's going to be. Bear with me, cos City Park reported one tree being absolutely dense with squirrels. For some reason they only picked that one tree. Who are we to question.

About 10 days ago I finally got in touch with the guy who had, out of goodness of his heart, boarded up my windows for "the thing." I was pretty desperate cos the guy I usually use and who had cut the plywood was incommunicado. Greg usually washes my house and cuts a few tree limbs for me. He was laughing hysterically that I was actually leaving. Hell, he said, I went thru Betsy. What's the big deal? In the background his wife was yelling at him "You were FOURTEEN during Betsy, you moron. It was an ADVENTURE!!!! You're a f--king old man now! Get over it!!!!" At any rate he rustled up a friend and they came over and boarded up my house and my friend Mary's.

I had been back about a month when I tried to call him. It was the only call I made in the city where the operator came on line to say due to the storm the service would not be

back to this area in the foreseeable future. Greg and his friend had refused to take the money for boarding up saying pay us when you get back. (!)

Well, as I said I finally got him on his cell phone a few days ago. A really great guy and I was SO afraid of the worst. Yes, they lost everything. But here's the real story (back to the animals). They had stayed till the last minute. Then his father in law called who lived in New Orleans East. He told Greg he realllllly had a very bad feeling about this so Greg said come and stay with me. He said he went and got his father and brother in law and brought them back to his house. Later that night or early morning he went out to the front yard. He said, "Peggy, it was soooo strange. Not a sound. Not a bird, a dog, a car not nothing." That's when he knew. He absolutely knew that hell was on the way. He went back into the house and told everyone they were leaving right then and there. He was totally creeped out. "The thing" was already beginning to hit so they had no traffic to deal with. He said they barely made it out.

But it was the animals, the birds, the silence. Like the howling of dogs before an earthquake. Where do they GO????

Where in hell did my pesky pigeons spend the storm?

I really want to know....

**Larry Epke**

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It's difficult to know how to respond to the many personal stories about New Orleans that fill *Challenger* #23. I find myself filled with a whole range of the Kubler-Ross stages of response to tragedy: Anger, Depression, Acceptance. (I never felt Denial; I'll leave that for the Bush Administration, since it was their only response.)

To Dennis Dolbear's "Survivor" my reaction was Shock and Awe. It's like a bad Made-for-TV movie, but Real. I do hope you'll be able to update us on Dennis' post-Katrina recovery – naturally all of your readers will want to know. (And I don't want this missive to neglect to give my "requiescat in pace" to John Guidry's mother, Anne

Winston's grandmother and Cindy Snowden.)

New Orleans won't be the same, of course – it can't be after what has happened. Entrenched powers now seem to be willing to leave the poorest people to fend for themselves, while corporations gain reconstruction funds. Some parts of the city will rise, but the poorest part of an already poor city may stagnate for decades before any improvement – benign neglect in action.

Even as I write this (late March 2006) the Bush Administration is claiming the 11,000 unused trailers in Arkansas are the result of bureaucracy, but won't admit that they've been running that bureaucracy for the past five years, and it's overlords are the people Boy George insists are doing "a great job." Their ideology is that government can't do anything, and they intend to prove it! Public monies, as they see it, exist to be given to donor corporations that may or may not do the job they've been contracted to do. It is a true kleptocracy – government of thieves.

I don't blame the hurricane on the Administration, and I don't blame the destruction of the levees on the Administration – but when given a chance to act to help thousands of Americans in need, the Administration found themselves too busy with other things. They could do nothing because they don't believe in expertise. If you think only YOU have the answers, then those who don't agree can't be right. They routinely disparage other views, and then fail miserably – all the time insisting that things are going fine!

For those with an interest in views of NOLA after the horrors, I'd recommend the blogs posted at <http://afterthelevees.tpmcafe.com/>

There was indeed more in Issue 23 – I was interested in Alexis Gilliland's article on Iraq. He's convinced Bush will pull out when the generals tell him to, but I'm dubious. He's not shown much connection to reality in the past five years, and there's always a sycophant on hand to assure him he's right (which assurance he doesn't need anyway). He may destroy the Army to save

his skin. (Right now in *Doonesbury*, the Army is getting the new slogan, "Remember the November Elections!" Seems about right.)

Re: Don Markstein's reference to: "...semi-literate Yankees." In Ohio, my Maine family are "Yankees." In Louisiana, Ohioans are "Yankees." In England, Don would be a "Yankee." The meaning of the term varies by the speaker's location. (Of course, my family, Don and I all *far* surpass the "semi-literate" state.)

*You lived in the Easy for many years – and have been much missed since you left. Be no more a stranger!*

**Robert Kennedy**  
1779 Ciprian Avenue  
Camarillo CA 93010-2451  
robertk@cipcug.org

Your commentary on New Orleans and the various personal commentaries about hurricane Katrina and the flooding were outstanding and very much appreciated.

The John W. Campbell article by Joseph Green (your father-in-law?) [yep] was quite interesting. Mike Resnick's "Bathrooms I Have Known" was hilarious. Hilarious if one wasn't there.

We've been having quite a bit of rain which is very much needed. (Actually, to be up to normal we need another three or four inches.) No flooding here. But, further North levees broke and there was flooding. A few weeks ago I was informed that my area has now been categorized as a 100 year flood plain. I do not have any intention of obtaining flood insurance. The earthquake insurance premium is quite high. Adding flood insurance on top of my homeowner's policy and earthquake insurance is financially out of the question. Anyway, there is a solution. There is a narrow bridge that goes over Calleguas Creek to the Seminary (it's called Seminary Bridge for some reason). This bridge is the problem because of what it does to the flow of water. Remove the bridge and my area is no longer a flood plain. It's being considered and the sooner it is removed, the better.

By the way, Camarillo did have a flood on February 6, 1998. My street turned into a river, the water was way up onto my lawn, and the back yard was like a lake. No damage. But, other areas of Camarillo were not so lucky. We made the TV news.

If we really want to get levee rebuilding right we should bring in Dutch experts.

A thoroughly enjoyable issue. Thank you.

**Terry Jeeves**  
66 Red Scar Dr.  
Scarborough, N. Yorks.  
YO12 5RQ U.K.

Very many thanks for the magnificent issue of *Challenger* which arrived here safely a couple of days ago.

A super cover on C23, but no word of how or what in its creation -- was it a photo, a drawing or a computer graphic? Whatever, it is a striking work of art.

*Alan White provided a highly entertaining explanation of*

*the creation of his cover art for **Chall**#15 five years ago; what say we ask him for a sequel about #23? And check out his cover to **The Antipodal Route**, our DUFF report.*

"Gone with the Wind" was a fascinating piece of nostalgia, how is it that past event in one's childhood are so much more interesting than contemporary events – I have read the type of Con Report which is a mess of "I met so and so, I had a meal with x, y had a sore throat and so on. You avoided that trap.

"Survivor" was a real tour de force and deserves a wider audience than a fanzine. What a determination and refusal to submit to horrible events. It was, *is* marvelous



writing, which did a far better job than newspaper or media breast-beating.

I also enjoyed the meeting with John Campbell, I had the pleasure of meeting him at the 1957 Worldcon in London. I was sitting quietly minding a Hieronymus machine made by Eric Jones when JWC came by and stopped to talk about it. I was too in awe to make a proper set of responses, but *I met him*.

The piece on toilets reminded me of some unusual ones I have met. On the Frontier mail from Bombay to Delhi, a 24 hour trip, the toilet was a small cubicle with two painted footprints which told you where to crouch and hope your aim (and that of the last person) was true. A similar hole in the ground was standard on 356 Squadron aerodrome where I lost a full cigarette from the back pocket of my shorts. Then there was the time when in a Barcelona toilet I was peacefully standing and minding my own business when an old crone came along whisking a twig broom around my feet. The most unusual was on a troop ship going to India. Two long planks were above a gutter down which ran a constant stream of water. It was uncomfortable to sit on the planks but it got even more so when some joker set fire to a bit of old newspaper and dropped it upstream to make its way past half a dozen hot bottoms!

The New Orleans hurricane was a disaster but I'm not so sure that the rescue services were at fault in coping with it. They too had their problems and communications must have been chaotic.

Much more to say, but my back is getting tired. A great issue GUY and like you, I am not a lover of e-fanzines.

*It may seem like we're tooting our own tuba, but one fanzine's review of Challenger #23 must be reprinted, if only to offer thanks to the author - Sue Jones, of Tortoise (available for the usual at Flat 5, 32-33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, U.K.).*

I knew that Guy Lillian's *Challenger* 23 would be bound to be concerned with the recent

devastation of New Orleans and its aftermath. And so it is. Not a zine to skim through lightly. The articles are often grim, but full of real stories of real people, with direct and powerful writing. It moved me to tears more than once. *Chall* 23 is a fine lament for a drowned city, but it is also a hymn to the human spirit and its will to survive. Go read.

*Art for this section* provided by Wm. Rotsler, Jerry Burge, Craig Hilton, Sheryl Birkhead, Alexis Gilliland, Trinlay Khadro

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Says the author: "We rightly hate those who abuse the weak and helpless. What then of those who steal our righteous wrath by lies?"

# THE LIFE OF TONY

*Joseph Major*

In *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979) Brian is captured during the daring raid on Pilate's palace and thrown into a Roman dungeon. His new cellmate is less than reassuring. "Proper little gaoler's pet, aren't we?" he says contemptuously from his position chained to the wall, and proceeds to give his fondest wish. "My idea of heaven is to be allowed to be put in manacles . . . just for a few hours. They must think the sun shines out o' your arse, sonny." Later on, when Brian is among the members of the day's crucifixion party, he curses them, "Lucky bastards! Lucky, jammy bastards!"

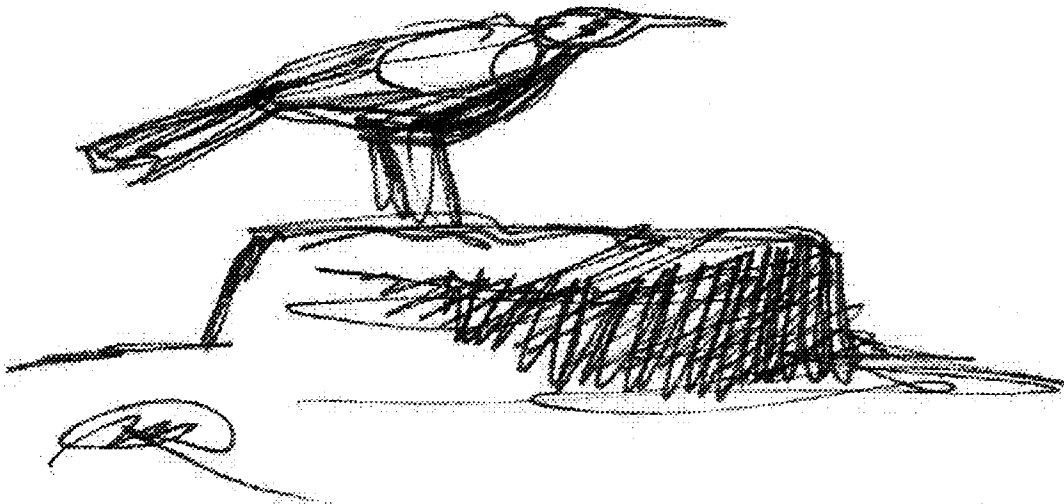
You'll recall that in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), Harry lives in a windowless room under the stairs of his aunt's and uncle's house; he is ignored and slighted in favor of their son Dudley. Four years previously, a book was published whose protagonist could say to Harry, "Proper little jailer's pet, aren't we? They must think the sun shines out of your ass."

Tony was born in 1977, three years before Harry Potter's given birthdate. His parents were very friendly — except, perhaps, to him.

He was denied a proper bed, clothes, even a toothbrush. At age five he got a letter from Santa saying that he had been a bad boy and wouldn't be getting any presents.

Two years later his mother offered him a way to earn presents. She introduced him to her friend Jake who in turn introduced the boy to the joys of pederastic sodomy. Tony's parents were, it seemed, associated with a ring of homosexual boy-lovers and Tony was just fresh meat. Often needing to be tenderized, it seemed.

One day after a particularly harsh beating, Tony decided to escape irrevocably. Before he committed suicide, he did call a hot line, and got directed to go to child welfare. There, he met a friendly counselor, who adopted him and persuaded him to stay alive. Which was hard, since he had syphilis and fifty-four broken bones. His health deteriorated after that, beginning with a stroke, drug-resistant tuberculosis, bouts of pneumonia, medical complications that required the amputation of one leg and removal of a testicle and his spleen, shingles, neuropathy, and then, just when you'd



think it couldn't get worse, he came down with AIDS in 1991.

Tony had applied himself, managing to earn a high-school diploma by the age of thirteen. In spite of this final blow, or perhaps because of its nature, he began to reach out, and began a correspondence with AIDS activist, writer, and fellow-sufferer Paul Monette, author of *Love Alone* (1988) and *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* (1988).

He had a gift, an inspiration, and a stimulus, and under this loving tutelage Tony began to write. The result was a memoir of his horrible life, *A Rock and a Hard Place* (1993). The book became a bestseller. Tony got many more friends, from the humble to the famous. Fred Rogers, the host of the children's show "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" became his endorser, comforter, and after-word writer, for example. The Make-A-Wish Foundation couldn't help him fast enough; they gave him a computer.

In all this paradise there was but one serpent. Nobody saw Tony.

His adoptive mother, that kind counselor Vicki Johnson, had plenty of reasons. Tony was so dreadfully dreadfully sick, he was a hazard to others and others were a hazard to him. Beyond that, there was the gang. Tony's father had been killed in prison, after a trial where the judge had been so horrified at the evidence that he had permitted Tony not to have to testify, but there were other friends of Tony's parents out there. Rogue cops, who would kill to silence this critic.

So, all the facts in Tony's story were . . . fuzzed. And more to the point, he would not dare let anyone see him, lest they work for . . . them. Yet for someone who needed to lay low, he had a remarkably wide circle of contacts; he would reach out and touch them on a daily basis. One of his other counselors, for example, would "tuck him into bed" every night by telephone. Tony even took his name, after a fashion; he was named Jack Godby and Tony became "Anthony Godby Johnson". Yet Jack never met Tony in person either.

The first investigation was by Michele Ingrassia, for *Newsweek*, in their May 31, 1993. She reported all the problems with Tony, all the people who knew him but had never met him. Tony wrote in and answered her concerns. He felt rather put out that he had to prove that he

existed.

And so it sat for eight years. In 2001, *New Yorker* writer Tad Friend picked up where Ingrassia had left off, in an article published in their November 26 issue. Tracing Tony's past and present led him into a wilderness of mirrors. Crucial people in his life either did not exist or were not what they said they were. His beloved stepmother, Vicki Johnson, had married and handed Tony over to another stepmother.

Technology had advanced in the past few years, and Tony had a website and a strong e-mail presence. He even sent e-mails to Friend. Yet he was still so crucially ill that he could not see anyone, still in mortal danger from his parents' friends, still annoyed that he had to prove himself to exist.

Ingrassia and Friend raised a number of points in their articles. Ingrassia had argued that his health was not so utterly endangered that he could not be seen — and indeed, he was "seen" by not only a more positive writer but by a camera crew, filming him for the Oprah show. Friend described his health problems to a doctor, bit by bit, ending with the doctor saying somewhat cautiously, "This is one unique individual." But people with improbable health problems can survive: I recall Blanche Taylor Moore's last fiancé, who ingested *several* toxic doses of arsenic and lived.

Ingrassia commented on Tony's writing style and, particularly, references being far more mature than should have been the case for the teenaged writer of *A Rock and a Hard Place*. I would not want to say that someone who earned a high-school equivalency diploma at age thirteen, after long neglect as well, was necessarily limited in intellectual background.

Again, Friend made a personal investigation of the neighborhood where Tony supposedly lived. No one remembered anything of the sort. But then, if he were so threatened, it would be prudent to fictionalize the details of his life.

Improbabilities have been known to occur. One of the methods of crime investigation is the convergence of evidence; no one item can be conclusive, but the convergence of many items of evidence leads to a conclusion. If the convergence is on improbabilities, each unlikely,



and their combination even more so, the conclusion is as obvious.

Tracing this, getting confirmations, is also a problem. So many of the key people of Tony's life are dead or unavailable. Friend kept on running into dead ends; doctors with no licenses anywhere, Vietnam prisoners of war not on prisoner of war lists (this looks like a job for Jug Burkett: see *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History* by B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley (1998)), and so on. Note that no one who had dealt with Tony during his many hospital stays, for example, wrote in to describe how moved she (or he) was by the example of this so gallant, so battered boy and his perseverance under this cruel burden, his fortitude in the face of a so hideous death.

One comment that Friend makes is more revealing than he says, or even may know: "I began to hear from a number of people in Tony's inner circle whom I had tried to reach earlier; many of them sent me E-mails that were copied to Tony's agent, Wendy Weil. Often, a question I had asked one person was addressed or dismissed in an E-mail from another person." This comes across as suspiciously like "sock-puppeting" -- creating e-mail correspondents who just happen to support you in a Net debate. And careless sock-puppeting, at that.

Neither Ingrassia nor Friend touches overmuch on the most credibility-straining part of the story. They both made a brief pass at the New York City prosecutor's office, which denied ever having prosecuted any case as Tony had described. That assumes that the case was in New York City; if Tony had blurred his background, it probably would not have been.

However, the trial supposedly took place at the end of the nineteen-eighties. That is to say, at the height of the child-molestation controversy; the McMartin Preschool case in California was dragging on (after a grueling string of trials, the defendants would be acquitted), the Wee Care case in New Jersey had just ended with defendant Kelly Michaels being convicted on 115 counts of abuse and sentenced to 47 years in prison (overturned on appeal), and not long before that, the Fells Acres case in Massachusetts had come to a verdict (but is still, even today, not settled) and Grant Snowden had

been sent away by a devoted District Attorney in Florida (who had to see her case thrown out on appeal, in 1998).

That wasn't the era of CNN, Fox, and all that 24/7 news-hungry cable. However, all the cases listed above had ample and even overwhelming coverage in the press and media then. It seems highly implausible that such a lurid case -- parents prostituting their son to a ring of gay cops and even more important people -- could not escape notice. Particularly with the long string of appeals that would follow when, as Tony reported, the judge was so disturbed by his parents' behavior that he excused Tony from testifying. "Confronting one's accuser" and all that -- which has caused reversals in other such trials.

So much of the reported behavior ascribed to Tony seems to be convenient. He was too sick to see anyone who has questions, but friendly people get access. He was in hiding from this secret, powerful gang, yet he called and e-mailed with impunity.

Recent literary hoaxes have given this story a revival. Gritty novelist J.T. LeRoy, chronicler of his own life as a prostitute and drug addict, turned out to be a middle-aged woman named Laura Albert. Here was a mysterious, hidden figure who appeared in public. But then, he only had AIDS. (Which seemed to have cleared up after a while, particularly the Kaposi's sarcoma lesions. Now here's a newsworthy item!) Another Oprah confidante, James Frey, turned out to be a hoaxer himself. And so on.

It all seems to come back to Vicki Johnson -- or, as Friend found out, her real name is Joanne Vicki Friginals. Friend recounts how in 1997 she left Tony, moved to Chicago, and married a child psychologist in Illinois named Marc Zackheim. Friend went out there to interview them. Dr. Zackheim answered the door, told him to wait -- and then the police came to take Friend away. (They didn't, but one wonders what grounds they had for coming.)

In 2004 Dr. Zackheim was indicted for abusing child patients at a treatment center for troubled children in Indiana. Vicki Friginals Johnson Zackheim was not said to have commented.

Tony's website, "Tony's World", has

been "under construction", apparently ever since the Tad Friend article came out. *A Rock and a Hard Place* is still in print, though, and people are still praising it on, for example, Amazon.com.

Child abuse of any kind strikes at a particularly sensitive point in human nature. The organization of society is intended to protect the helpless; the young in particular. Tony's case seems designed to combine a number of the most hideous and disturbing forms of abuse, to produce an ultimately doomed, ultimately helpless, ultimately sensitive victim. The reader will be rightly and even righteously revulsed over such unspeakable, abominable actions, and be heartened by the bravery of the victim.

In the fifties, child-abuse stories were unthinkable, but war hero-abuse stories were acceptable. The famous writer Quentin Reynolds came upon one, the story of Canadian secret agent George du Pré, who had been sent into France as a spy. His cover had been that of a village idiot; he hadn't cracked under Gestapo torture, but it took him two years under

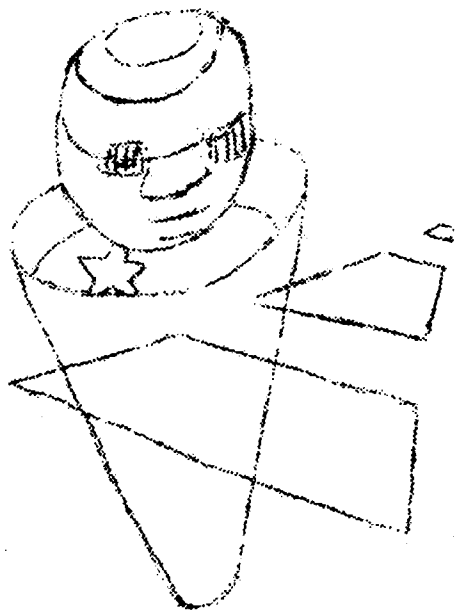
psychiatric treatment to recover. Reynolds thought that was just crackerjack and wrote up his story, *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* (1953). With almost embarrassing speed, du Pré was shown up as a hoaxer. For the bad timing of all this, see *My Life In Court* by Louis Nizer (1962), which contains the story of the libel case *Reynolds v. Pegler*, which was coming to trial just about then. For the details of du Pré's career, see *Counterfeit Spies* by "Nigel West" [Rupert Allason] (1998).

Reynolds promptly brought *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* out again -- as a novel. It was a cracklingly good story about triumphing over adversity. *A Rock and a Hard Place* is, or so it seems, a very moving story about triumphing over adversity. But is it a novel?

Author's note: I am grateful to Kenneth Irvin for providing me with a copy of *Newsweek* with the Ingrassia article, and to Martin Morse Wooster for providing me with a copy of the Tad Friend article in the *New Yorker*.

## NOTES ON CHALL PALS

Our great friend, frequent *Challenger* contributor, and Melbourne host **Craig Hilton** is both doctor and cartoonist, and as "Jenner" is doing a comic strip called "Doc Rat" at <http://www.docrat.com.au>. Check same out.



**Joe Green**, NASA pro and Rosy's father, has been gratified by the fan response to his article on John W. Campbell, which ran in our last issue -- but even more so by the cheers from his fellow professionals: "Our Five Days of JWC Jr." is being reprinted in the *SFWA Bulletin*. Joe's trying to get the editors to mention *Challenger* in the credits.

**Joe Major's** book on Heinlein is out and available through him, and his cool alternate history of Manfred von Richtofen is at a prominent SF publisher. I'm reading it on line, and it's choice.

Those of you who see this *Chall* before the Worldcon, or at it, be sure to find us and say hey, and be sure to pick up a copy of *The Antipodal Route*, our DUFF report detailing our trip downunder in 2003. All profit from such sales go to the Down Under Fan Fund. If you're reading this after the convention, contact me for the price and *buy* one! It's in a good cause.

The editor of *Mimosa* waxes eloquent on the paranoid state of modern life ...

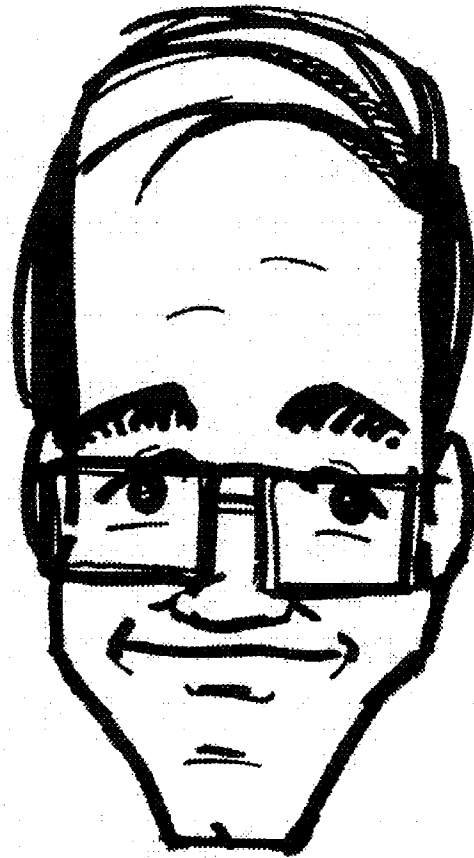
## THE LAW OF CONSERVATION OF KARMA AND OTHER CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Rich Lynch

You know, until about a decade ago, I never used to be a believer in conspiracy theories. I'd always thought that the Warren Commission was right all along with the "single bullet" theory, and that the Boston Red Sox lost game six of the 1986 World Series because of the unpredictable bounce of a baseball. No longer! There have been way too many unlikely things that have happened to me since then. Too many, I'm beginning to think, for mere coincidence to explain.

Let me give you a few examples. Many times, here in the traffic-rich D.C. area, I've been caught in traffic tie-ups caused by minor accidents, but they always seem to occur in the lane I happen to be in. And I've lost track of the times I've had to endure a lengthy wait at a street corner waiting for traffic to clear, where if I'd arrived at that corner just *ten seconds* earlier the intersection would have been clear. And there's more. Supermarket checkout lines I'm in are *always* the slowest; I never seem to have a dollar bill crisp enough to work in a coin changer; the Metrorail train that arrives at the station first is *always* the one going in the wrong direction. It goes on and on and on.

Oh sure, I can imagine you saying, all this is minor stuff, hardly worth mentioning. But there have also been some larger events that have followed this pattern. Two of them happened back in 1992. One was at the Hugo Awards ceremony at the 1992 Worldcon (perhaps the topic of a different essay), while the other happened a couple of months earlier that year, the only time I've ever attended a high school reunion (which turned out to be an alumni dinner for all graduates – it was a *small* school!). It was



Bryan Norris

a long way to travel, way up to a small village in the northern frontier of New York State, but I wanted to go because it had been 25 years since my high school graduation and I felt almost *compelled* to find out what had happened to the other 16 people in my graduating class. One of the few advantages in attending a school that small is that you get to know everyone of your classmates pretty well, and I thought if *any* of them would go to an alumni event, it would be on some special anniversary like the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Well, it didn't turn out anywhere near what I'd expected. I *did* meet several people I knew from other graduating classes, and also a few teachers (including even my Kindergarten teacher), but there was only one other person from my graduating class present that evening. I'd wanted to give him one of my business cards, but there wasn't any way he was going to look at it. Only a few years after graduation, he'd had surgery to remove a brain tumor – and was now blind.

I only bring this up to support my growing belief that there *must* be some cosmic consciousness out there that seems to enjoy playing tricks on me. The most recent evidence was the last weekend in January, when I finally got around to replacing the balky and leaking kitchen faucet. The new unit is much, much nicer but it took an amazingly long time to get the job done. Most of the difficulty was in trying to extract the old faucet. All the connectors were located in places where only someone the size of a hobbit could get to, and the thing was fighting me every step of the way. One of the water supply line valves was stuck, and when I did manage to get it closed off, it started to leak. And when the new unit was finally in place, it turned out that the rubber gasket in one of the water supply lines had broken. I couldn't get a new one because the home supply store had closed just ten minutes earlier. Just about everything that could have possibly gone wrong, did. The faucet replacement was finally completed and the leak got fixed the next morning, but for days I was still checking practically every hour in the morbid expectation the leak would return.

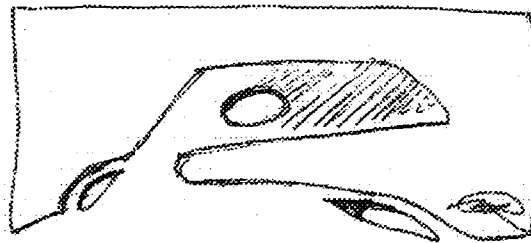
(It didn't – but the faucet almost immediately developed a slow drip that I was only able to fix by getting the manufacturer to send me a new valve cartridge. Sheesh!)

After all that, I think I've about decided that there just might be some kind of impish force at work out there which uses Murphy's Laws as its charter. But every once in awhile, this vast cosmic conspiracy shows you that it can be benevolent as well as mischievous. The very next day, Nicki and I were at Borders, and even though we had a coupon for 25% off the price of one book, it turned out that we didn't find anything we wanted. So we gave the coupon to the next person in the checkout line, who was a bit surprised at the unexpected good fortune. A bit less than an hour later we were in Sears, getting ready to spend one of the gift cards we'd received for Christmas, and as I was heading for the checkout line there, a guy walked up to me and gave me a \$5 Sears coupon he'd just received for having some

work done on his car. It was good only for that day; he wasn't planning to buy anything else, and I happened to be the first Sears shopper he saw. The funny thing is, when we were in Borders, when I gave the

discount coupon to the next person in line, I saw that the book he was buying was a thick trade paperback, the kind that sells for about \$20. And 25% off that is ... five dollars.

I guess there must be some kind of Law of Conservation of Karma as part of this great cosmic conspiracy. Or, geez, maybe something even *larger* is in play. All I know is, the next time I'm in Borders I'm going to see if I can find some books by Charles Fort!

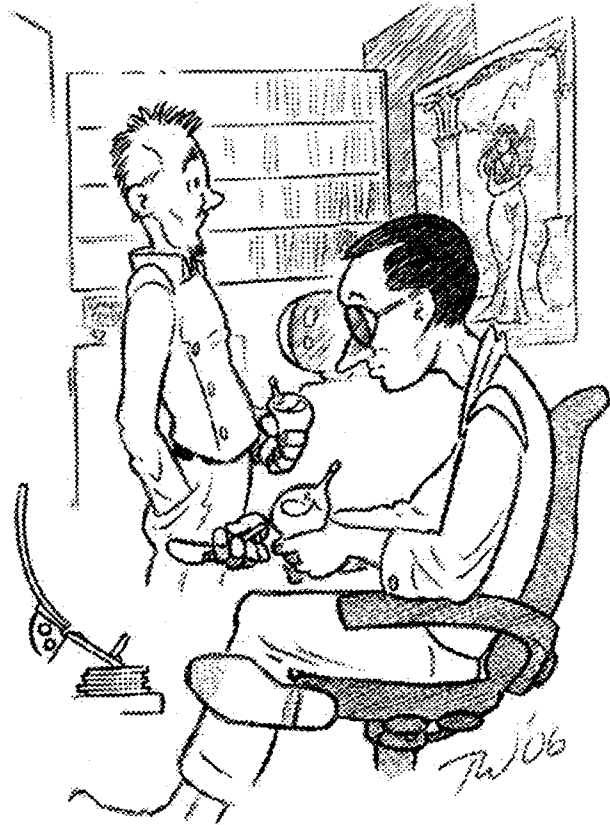


# The More Things Change...

(A Prequel) See "Not a Moment Too Soon"

Tara Wayne

*Some time in the middle of the next century, two book collectors meet. They were born well after the baby boom, and have no old fashioned notions about their hobby. Most likely they wouldn't recognize collecting as we know it. For the sake of argument their names are Sidney and Floyd, and they're in their middle fifties.*



"Siiiiid! Hi!"

"Floyd."

"Great to see you. So this is the apt. Too good of you to let me invite myself over."

"Well, you'd dropped enough hints that you wanted to see my collection. Could I refuse you?"

Sid ushered the other into a modern state-of-the-art, urban multi-occupant standard three room res. (UMOS/3) Although a confirmed bachelor, he had all three hundred and seventy-five square feet of it to himself.

"How could I not drop hints? You only have the best collection of fantasy literature and kiddy porn on the East Coast."

"You flatter me Floyd. There are at least three larger collections in institutions. Two of them better than mine in their own way. Can I offer coffee? Soft drinks? Drugs?"

"Hell no, dude. We can observe the amenities later. There's WWF Championship Mud Wrestling on the wall screen at seven, too. Now I want to see... *The Collection!*"

"I'd be disappointed in you otherwise Floyd. C'mon."

Sidney closed the door behind Floyd, reset the alert-sensors and armed the doorway mine again. Ten steps took them through the UMOS to the spare room entry. (Eighty-one square feet, no window, \$900 a month extra.) Against the far wall was a plastichip-board cabinet, waist high. A smart new computer library array with quad-drive and chargers held up to six handheld readers. There was a four by three wall display as well, across from a comfortable looking chair.

Sid opened the cabinet. Floyd squeezed into the room and watched respectfully as Sid removed a soberly hued plastic snap-lid box about eight by eight by two. (Inches. First quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup>. century or not, this was still America after all.)

"Here it is." Sid flipped the top, exposing a two and a half inch square blue wafer with some minute black arabesques in one corner: the contact head. "I've spent half my life compiling this. Isn't it a beauty?" He fingered the aluminized read/write slide like a metal panty covering great treasure inside.

"Awesome Sid, totally awesome. Looks like the original peel-off 3M-brand label too. Not a scratch on the case. First scannings and virgin downloads? All?"

"Everyone of them, f'sure. No later posts or pirates, no reverse translations, nothing but the original legit sites."

"You know, I hear some people say there were hard copies of some quite famous books *before* the text tiles. How do you like that for a chicken or the egg puzzle. Ever thought of that?"

"Sure. I suppose there has to be some sort of raw input before you save a text file, sort of like a rough draft except on paper rather than a note-pad, y'know? Doesn't matter to anyone but academics or museum curators, who seem to have a hard-on for paper copy, just as an object. Couldn't care less about using text like it's meant. Instead of the plasticity of the data, they only seem to care about the stone or parchment or whatever it's put on, y'know?"

"The scholarly mind, I suppose. To be fair, it isn't just the medium, they're hung up on one supposedly more authoritative version, as though no one should change a text to suit themselves! I'm satisfied to leave obscure questions of derivation to semanticists or whoever. I'm satisfied to be a simple bibliophile."

"Just takes the touch of smooth plastic and that vague stickiness to take me back to twelve, Floyd, when I read *Harry Potter And the Satanic Rapture* for the first time. Everyone's Golden Age is twelve."

"True, too true." Floyd handed back The Collection. "It brings back memories every time I hear the \*snick\* of the disc when it goes in the drive." They sighed together.

Sid woke from the reverie first. "Here, let me call up *Neuromancer* and show you how I've reformatted it. You'll like my choice of font and chapter breaks. I mapped in illos from a Japanese edition as well."

The disk slid with smooth precision into the drive slit. An LED flashed as it read. Then Sid took a reader from its plug and called up a display for his friend.

"Hey, love that light Neo-Uncial. Minimally traditional, but modern. Is it an import or a default – "

Abruptly the lights dimmed. Then flared as an upstate nuclear plant went on line to take up the slack.

"Fucking hell!" screamed Sid. "The filter'll be saturated! Get the disk!"

It was too late. The drive whined like a drunken banshee and the reader blanked. In the time it took to blink an eye, 30,000 volumes of hard to find fiction vanished.

"Oh well," said Floyd after a moment of stunned silence. "You can always upload most of it again from the public library net. I'll copy for you what I got, and maybe you can get the rest from those institutional collections. Or a payload from a dealer-site. You'll be up again by the end of the week, right? You can reformat and accessorize in your spare time later."

"No," he sighed, "won't need to. Only a momentary scare. I have all my first editions and custom add-ons backed up. It's not as though I lost anything with value, like property or something... "

Don't you love a happy ending, dear reader?

# Not A Moment Too Soon

(A sequel to "The More Things Change...")

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*Tara Wayne*

*One crisis* shrugged off, Floyd and Sid returned to the front room. While relatively large as most apts go, Sid's spare room was a tight fit for two chairs and a work station. As well, the lease stipulated no food or drink to leave the food preparation area of the front bed-sitting room, and after the scare of momentarily "losing" 30,000 volumes of hard found fantasy, science fiction, alt, media, and porn, Sid wanted a drink.

"I'm having a gin and meth, what about you?"

"Ice tea or cola's fine, unless you have caffinated soy milk?"

"Does the pope have tits? Sure I got caffe milk." He took a couple of plastic bubbles out of the wall fridge by the front door security panel, and squeezed the mouth bulb, popping it before handing the egg-shell coloured milk to Floyd. He popped a bubble of gin next and pezzed in a gel of meth before drinking. "The building grocer stocks my fridge every week, same menu as everyone. Though, I hear some grocers will leave more fats or carbs if you let them double-debit you under the table. Wouldn't do it myself, mind. Totally bad enough having a "listed" hobby, let alone asking for trouble with Lifestyle Enforcement."

"Y'think? They're mullahs all right. Sister of mine got in trouble once with the white-coats and had her calorie intake slashed by half until she reduced to the official slimline. Everyone knows that's a joke. Twenty pounds under ideal if an ounce. But it looks good on the city calorie sheets at the end of the month, if they can get enough people down to the official body fat index."

"Better than the *fat farms*." Sid suppressed a shudder. Neighbour down the hall disappeared one night, and wasn't seen for six months, and when his sentence was up he reappeared a skeletal hundred and twenty-five pounds -- for a five foot eight inch man now the official *norm*. It was best not to talk about such things.

"Y'know," said Floyd, "couple of days ago I ran across a Robert J. Sawyer title in a very late index that's not in the Library of Congress"

"I know the name... uh... well can't be American then. A *Canadian* writer? That must have been very near the end! Almost all of them made their reps in the last decade or two."

"You can't guess how late!"

"Twenty-ten?" hazarded Sid. Seeing no reaction in his friend's face, he guessed again, wildly. "Not twenty-twenty?"

"Oh hell, no. The last known skiffy text that can be dated for sure, not counting later massaging and spins, is twenty-eighteen. This is the last book in an octology about proto-humans apparently, and was actually published *on paper* in twenty-seventeen."

"Not! That beats me. Last text in my collection was a second edition in twenty-fourteen. There can't be half a hundred texts in the genre later than that. Can I copy?"

Floyd looked away and was silent a moment. "Wish I could let you, but I found the list on a dealer site, and the guy wants to sell the actual paper hard copy. He won't sell a payload. Figures he can get a lot more for it if it's the only access, than if he sells it as just some curious object. I can't afford it."

Sid's face grew a sly expression. They both knew Sid was born with a cleaner credit line than Floyd, who's parents had both run up debts by living beyond their basic gerontal coverage. "Maybe I could. It would be awful weird having a lump of paper around. I can hardly imagine reading such a thing. Print on non-illuminated surfaces hurts my eyes."

"Gives me a headache. But if you scan it for actually reading, you can burn me a copy."

"Just think of that or have it in mind all along?" Sid laughed. "No kidding. What's the guy want for it, paper and all."



Floyd got that far away look again. He seemed to look into a Maxwell Parrish print called "The Muse" that Sid hung on the wall, and think about another time, when all books were paper and were the common heritage of all readers, rich and poor. A simpler more humane time was the twentieth century. Then he shook himself out of it. "A hundred a ten thousand Yuan. Or three hundred something thousand Euros, I think."

"Uh, what's that in Eagles?"

"Jesus, I don't know. Who sells anything on the internet in U.S. funds any more? That's just for your protein and rent; toys and servers."

Sid picked up the housekeeper. Like most, it came with the apt and controlled everything from the microwave auto-cook, telecom bundle, home shopping routines, media pick-ups, security settings, personal scheduling, to setting all the clocks, but was useless for anything that wasn't built in when he moved there. He brought an internet site up on the front room wall screen. "I know a conversion page."

"Never mind" said Floyd. "I worked it out with my celtel. It's about eight million dollars. Eight million two hundred and fourteen thousand."

Floyd and Sid both stared at the print on the wall for nearly a whole minute.

"That *is* rather a lot," said Sid finally.

"Tell me about it. At the rate I'm payloading as it is, I'll use up my natal credit line before I'm sixty-five. And I wasn't counting on retirement before the minimum seventy-two."

"Well, it was only a thought. I don't really have anywhere for a bulky useless object anyway." Sid brightened suddenly. "I could eebay it again after scanning; get most of my credit back right away. Only lose a few thousand in interest and charges."

"Wishful thinking, much?" Floyd said, disgusted. "You and I are already on the watch-list for keeping unusual collections, you want to be actively monitored for owning an actual, physical *book*. Putting it on the eebay would draw instant attention."

Miffed with being told the obvious, Sid stood up and took the two steps to the wall fridge for another gin and meth. "Aw, *somebody* with more credit and better norms will buy it, and it's only a matter of time before freeloader are on the net."

"Here's to freeloading," Floyd toasted the other, raising his bubble of milk.

\* \* \* \* \*

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The lights came on automatically. This time of year, there was not much sunlight to saturate the roof panels and distribute illumination through the miles of optic fibre that lit the building. Sid's apt looked rather dingier in the true spectrum, dim as it was, than it might have in the brave yellow incandescence of the twentieth century. Not at all warm. More like a tool cabinet, with its human occupant neatly stowed away along with his few compact possessions.

"Ever thought you'd like to have been born a hundred years ago?" said Floyd.

"What, before universal credit? And have to work all your life first, for all the things you needed in your life? That wasn't the only way they were backward either. To see the Louvre or the Himalayas you had to actually go to one of those weird places, instead of a convenient casino sim. People in lots of parts of the world didn't even speak English or Spanic like everyone in America. You had to have a celtel programmed to translate something vile... like French. Most recreationals were illegal, f'Christ sake. People stuffed their faces with pie and sausages instead, courting heart disease."

"It wasn't all like that," persisted Floyd. "I mean, it's true we didn't have all sorts of things we take for granted now, but most things were available in a rudimentary form. People watched vid on a simple display screen called teevee. It wasn't interactive or accessible to your computer or workpad or anything, but you could watch things. Isn't that the point? You had to lug around a paper book, but you had texts to read. Music came on large black platters originally - did you know that? - but you had something to listen to. When you come right down to it, *what* would you have to do without if you were born in 1950 instead of 2050, really? I think even the very last planetary photos, the ones from the Zhang Heng Venus Surface Lander, were in that lifetime."

"Mmm... how sad is that?" Sid had been an avid follower of space exploration as a child, but there had been no missions since he was fourteen or fifteen. "Even Kashmiristan has about a dozen first strike

satellites, not to mention the orbital depth reserved for corporate uses, but no one bothers with deep space any more.”

“That’s exactly what I mean.” Floyd continued, “There’s hardly anything new any more. Hair fashions, novelty food colour additives, sound bites from the vid, but nothing with substance. It’s as if the human imagination ground to a stop, what, forty... fifty years ago?”

“That’s not fair. Creativity is as common as ever. Just not in the same... um... art forms. That’s all.”

“Name some.”

Sid pulled at his chin a few times. “Politipop. Adspin?”

“Seriously? Do you really consider making rhymes from old campaign buzz to be an art form? Or adding somebody’s advertising graphics to your family photos? Here’s me and the guys, and Toyota-Daimler’s All New Three-Seater Sollis, with Pre-Installed Smart Nav, Standard Road Guide Quad Reader Heads, All Starting at Only \$12,495,000. This is Granny and me and the \$198 McCombo TVP Lo-Carb Meal. You even have programs that’ll choose from that month’s defaults and punch up the photo for you. Art? So’s decal-tagging your apt then!”

“Okay, so none of that is exactly Shakespeare or Andrew Lloyd Webber. It gives people a sense of self-expression.”

“Yeah,” snorted Floyd, “a *sense*.”

They’d had this discussion many times more, but Sid had never seen Floyd as upset as he was now. It was as if his old friend had groped for a long time for an understanding of something just out of reach, and was on the very cusp of grasping it. Frankly, it was rather unsettling to watch. New almost always meant unconventional, and trouble.

“People, these days,” Floyd went on, “are satisfied with only thinking they think, with substituting phoney experiences for real ones, with connecting the numbers to simulate real creativity! We’re all copycats, every dot accounted for and never a line astray!”

“Oh, you *think*? We’ve gone over this before, more than a few times!” said Sid, loading his voice with sarcasm. “We both know there’s nothing inferior about the modern mind. We just live in modern times, and pretty much everything has been done already. Every idea has been gone over again and again, every intellectual property long ago trademarked ... That’s all.” He petered out sullenly, unsure where to go with that thought.

“That’s all? As if that weren’t indictment *enough* against society. How can we go on, what kind of future lies before us this way, our lives a lame remake of past epics?”

“But don’t you see? That’s why there’s no new creativity. We have nothing new to say. Its all been said and done, so why loop the same track? Now that humanity has built for itself a virtually inexhaustible supply of culture, our role has evolved into connoisseurs, not creators.”

“Consumers, you mean. Culture is marketed to us like soy-flakes or designer cornea implants. Culture was once something people did for themselves, that they didn’t pay for pre-packaged and sanitized.”

“No. That’s where you’re wrong! They did pay! *We* don’t have to pay for culture today!”

Floyd stood dumbstruck. This was not where he wanted to go with his thought at all.

“We have broken out of the need to pay for our common artistic heritage now,” Sid continued relentlessly. It’s alllllll at our fingertips – Mozart, Beatles, Blake, Lao Tze, Hobbes, Surak, Vermeer, Picasso, Voltaire, Hitchcock, Spielberg, Herge, Rushdie, Sophicles, Ovid, Chaucer, Tolkien, Twain, Melville, Miyazaki, Tezuka, Dickens, Dante, Roddenberry, Aristotle, Freud, Moore, Gilbert & Sullivan ... “ Sid stopped to take a breath and continued, “Da Vinci, Disney, Mucha, Van Gogh, Nuriyev, Kelly, Guinness, Bogart, Omar Kayyam, Carroll, Baum, Bacon, Debussy, Doors ... “ Another breath, “Sinatra, Caruso, Sondheim, Hiroshige, Hokusai, Watterson, Wells, Verne, Asimov, Freas, Pleger...”

“All right, all right!”

“ – and all we have to do is google for it. Nobody to pay a dime to, nothing to prevent us from enjoying all the greatest intellectual achievements of history! And you want to go back to a time when you had to charge up a week’s or a year’s worth of credit whenever you wanted to enrich your life? Unless you were very rich, people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century must have led lives that were culturally impoverished compared to ours!”

“All the same... “ Floyd paused, searching through his misgivings for a loophole in Sid’s logic. “...people did create brand new things, all the time. Maybe not everyone could enjoy all that came of so much creativity and originality, but it was so plentiful that everyone had access to all they wanted.”

“With it costing a week’s budget to see *Cats* on Broadway? Or a whole days’ budget for an old-fashioned hard copy book? I doubt it.”

“Yet there must have been large enough audiences to support a cast of actors, not to mention cameramen, film editors and all the rest. Or support writers, agents, editors, printers, and booksellers.”

Sid conceded there was a time when the cost-benefit equation worked better in favour of the consumer. “But it all changed, sometime a little after the Second Millenium, didn’t it?”

“It’s one of the big mysteries of the Pre-Digital era. Just as it was finally possible to make all artistic endeavours universal, removing every financial obstacle from between artist and audience, the culture seemed to come to a dead stop.” Floyd threw his empty milk bubble over his shoulder, a contemptuous dismissal of the irony. “Well, look, it’s nearly twenty-one double-oh, I’d better get going. There’s work tomorrow, and they power down the transit for the night, shortly. Seems earlier every year.”

“Yeah, the power assistance for the lights goes out at twenty-four hundred too. In fact, the building’s fuel cells are over ten years old and a little wonky. Sometimes they brown out even before twenty-three. I guess we’d both better think about packing it in.”

“Still,” said Floyd, “it vexes me. Why on the verge of utopia does the human genius go dumb?”

“We’re lucky at that.”

“How’s that, Sid? Lucky there hasn’t been much of anything new for most of our lives? Wouldn’t you like to read a book, see a vid, or download a piece of eye-candy that wasn’t forty years old? Or wasn’t the product of some embarrassingly amateurish community arts centre?”

“I think I totally wouldn’t know what to think of such a novelty! Ha ha. But at least we have the past. It’s all preserved for us, forever, thanks to the revolution in digital storage media and the net. It came as just the right moment. Imagine if there had been no digital formats or hard drives for another twenty years. When the technology finally arrived, it would have been too late. With only a finite number of paper books and magnetic tapes to preserve the works of the Modern Age before it ended, we might have lost who knows how much invaluable art. It could have gone the way of lost Elizabethan plays and ancient Greek tragedies. But the timing was perfect. You’d almost think there was a connection; that one caused the other.”

“Now that would be crazy,” laughed Floyd.

But suddenly Sid seemed to see something his normally more thoughtful friend and fellow collector had missed.

“Just in time... just when all art and literature was freely available to everyone at the push of a button... artists everywhere stopped creating. It’s as though art having a cost had somehow... *caused art?*” But no, somehow that couldn’t be quite right. But it was too hard for the 21<sup>st</sup>. century man who was too used to cradle to grave security (of a sorts) to wrap his head around a variety of unfamiliar concepts, and he let the thought go.

“Now who’s being silly?” said Floyd on the doorstep. He gave Sid a high five, and took five on the rebound. Seemingly of one mind, they both looked back into the apt, eyes lingering on the wall poster. The Muse in her nimbus of taffeta and brunette tresses mesmerized them with her elusive smile. What wisdom did she possess that she withheld from them? Then they broke the spell with a shake of their heads. Floyd headed down the hall, a little drunken still from the moment of hypnosis, and Sid closed the door to the apt behind him. Both silently wondered, puzzled by the same disturbing thought. Just what was it they, heirs to the future, had done to deserve *The End of Art?*

Perhaps fortunately they never worked it out.



**BARRINGTON BULL**

BARRINGTON HALL

Number Six  
January 14, 1970



**Who Will Is Us - Us**

*On pages that follow find drawings by Patricia Yeates of Barrington Hall, 1969-1970, for the house newsletter, **The Barrington Bull**. Note how each is based on a stupid bovine pun. Remarkable art, especially when you consider that she was drawing on mimeograph stencils with no instrument more sensitive than an empty Bic pen. I wonder where she is now ...*

THE BARRINGTON



As said before, this Challenger is GHLIII Press Pub #999. So where did it all begin? Why, with



### GHLIII

Now, *why* did I switch to the co-ops from the Berkeley dorms? I don't remember – but I know that Barrington Hall wasn't my first choice. I wanted to live at the University Students Co-operative Association's Ridge Project, on the north side of the UC campus. It was new, it was modern, it was cheaper than the dorms, and it was *co-ed*, all of which would have marked a definite step up from high-rise Griffiths Hall, the official, sterile dormitory where I'd spent my first two years at Cal.

Barrington wasn't a step up from anywhere, except maybe the dumpster in its parking lot. It was a block-wide three-story stucco-sided heap, with ragged furniture and rotten carpet, running with crashers and dogs from the street. But still, I preferred it to the dorms. True, Barrington was south of the campus, old, and dilapidated, but it was still cheap, and it *was* co-ed, and talk about your revolutions in human consciousness...

The reason Barrington and the other co-ops were cheap had to do with the very nature of the facilities. "Co-operatives" required that each inhabitant perform X number of scutwork hours per week in a workshift to cover part of his rent. When I checked in, in September 1969, I was given clean-up duties at the Central Kitchen at Ridge Project – basically, scrubbing out the enormous pots in which the ghastly meals they fed us were prepared. I did the job, but yearned for one of the soft jobs back at Barrington itself – what residents called "graft." House President, or Council Member, maybe. Or ...

Barrington's switchboard had a microphone from which the co-op officers could make announcements, and well do I remember the night that the current Prexy, whose name I forget, finished his evening's pronouncements about the next council meeting with "Oh yeah -- we'll be selecting a new *Bull* editor."

Since I'd been at Barrington, I'd plastered my walls with a Peter Max poster and a hippy tabloid proclaiming Paul McCartney to be dead, endured my roommate's atrocious Mexican weed (the smoke of which gave me headaches) and hashish (the smell of which I liked), met the Napa girl who would soon become the Booful Babe (and the Workshift Manager who would eventually marry her), and seen two issues of *The Barrington Bull*.

The *Bull* was the house newsletter, and these issues were truly dreadful stuff. Clumsy revolutionary rhetoric, striving to be strident. Apparently the editor had run out of clichés to spout about the class struggle, so a new Pulitzer had to be tapped.

In New Orleans the previous summer I'd leech off my parents, survived Hurricane Camille, watched men walk on the Moon, and read about the Tate-LaBianca murders – little dreaming that I'd someday talk with principals in both events. I'd also hung around with members of the New Orleans Science Fiction Association – and at one of its parties, typed on a *oneshot*.

You know about oneshots, don't you? Party-goers taking turns hacking at a stencil with whatever blather they want to write? They set me down – and created a monster.

For I *enjoyed* it! I enjoyed lots of things I did for the first time in the summer of 1969.

So I went to that council meeting and presented myself as a candidate for *Bull* editor. I'd been editor of my high school newspaper, I said, and had *vast experience* with science fiction fanzines. Backed by such credentials, I won easily. Being the only candidate might have been an advantage.

Goodbye pots and pans. Hello, mimeo stencils.

I don't recall approaching my first *Bull* with an editorial philosophy in mind. I do know that beliefs I still hold dear came forth – for instance, acknowledgment that nobody likes text without art. I had been given several additional workshift hours to hire a staff, which meant an illustrator. Which meant Patricia Yeates.

Pat was a tiny blonde remarkable for two things – no, not *those* two things: her hair and her art. She stands tied in my memory with a girl from high school for the title of Longest and Most Beautiful Hair I've Ever Seen. Pat was about 5'2", and I swear her hair made up about three feet of that. She kept it smooth, straight, and lustrous, and it was amazing.

A lot of the rest of her was talent. The kid loved to draw. I approached her with an offer: do cover illos for the *Bull*, and forget about mopping floors or whatever other work they had her doing. She was, of course, amenable.

Now that I had an artist, I needed something to write about. Work schedules and council minutes were all well and good, but now that I had a zine of my own to edit, with stencils and a mimeo and paper provided by the co-op's Central Office, I had freedom and license. I saw those stencils as a *tabula rasa* from which I could *soar*. The previous editor had wasted his opportunity howling about the revolution. I would expend my chance ... howling about the revolution.

Gimme a break: this was Berkeley at the height of the '60s. And reading over "Sergeant Santucci and Me", my lead article in that first *Bull*, I'm actually pretty pleased. Short months before, Berkeley had been the site of the battle for People's Park, the most violent moment in university history. Lou Santucci was a huge, beefy deputy with the Alameda County "Blue Meanies", head of the tactical squad that shotgunned its way through southside Berkeley on May 15<sup>th</sup>. They shot 35 people and killed one guy who was watching their rampage from a roof. In the years since, of course, my feelings have mellowed: times have changed, police have become more professional. However, my opinion of Santucci has *not* changed. He was a brutal thug.

And my writing was not that bad – ridiculously pugnacious, of course (gimme another break: I was 20), but defiant in the face of the Establishment savagery Santucci embodied. At 57, I may be more tolerant of cops, but I'm still proud of that.

That took care of the first three pages. I followed with an editorial page asking for contributions, for which I promised workshift hours, and a request for loan of an *italic* typewriter to break up the font monotony. (The days of Selectric typewriters were yet to come.) I printed a poem by the Booful Babe (rather depressing, as is the way of 17-year-old ladies), and one by myself (inexpressibly pompous), dedicated the issue to a lady back in New Orleans (I always dedicate my zines), and added two pages on Cesar Chavez' grape boycott, brought to me by a staggeringly beautiful blonde. I finished the issue with a page of gross jokes, one of which still strikes me as hilarious, if lamentably juvenile and counter-revolutionary.

Such was my first Barrington *Bull* – my first fanzine – GHLLI Press Publication #1.

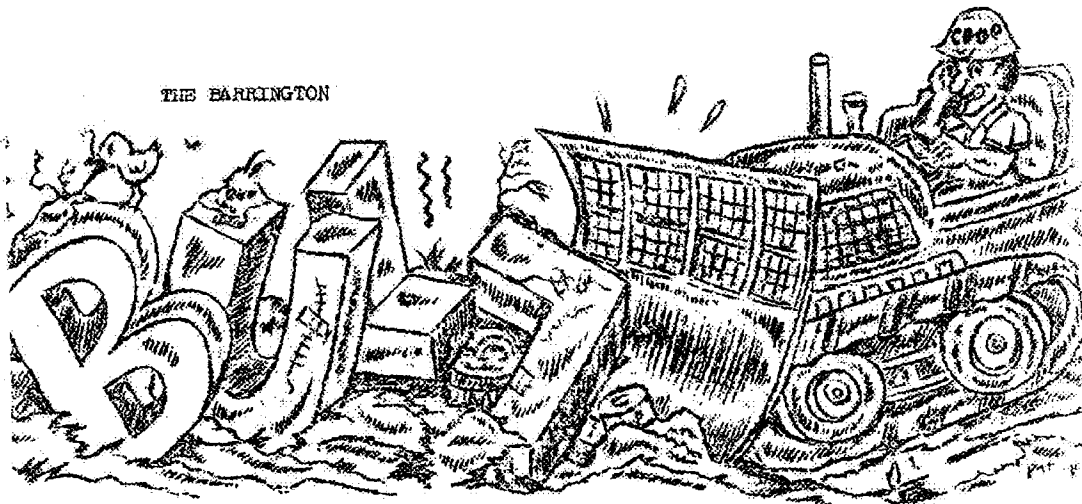
When I printed the thing, one thing became clear: *none* of it was clear. My printing was dim and uneven. Pat's drawing of Sgt. Santucci was barely perceptible. Only the strike stuff was nice and legible. The reason was obvious: those pages had been typed on an *electric* typewriter. For my next *Bulls*, I borrowed an electric typewriter, racking its copy setting up to 12. Of course, I wrecked the thing and had to pay for its repair, and pissed off the guy who lent it to me, *but ...* the text was legible!



So what was my text? My second *Bull* was a pretty good zine. It opened with a letter from a Vietnam-bound former resident to a current one, reflecting not on that issue, but another torment to the national conscience: race. I don't know his last name; no way to discover how he came through. An unknown contributor provided "Fragments of Unauthored Writing" ("...seminal fluids disengage, a shudder, a pause, o apolyptic invasion, o benign opulence, devour me unto thy hilt, immolate me in exuberant exultation ...") and another a comic questionnaire/application for Barringtonians seeking sex.

My own contributions included a prose poem about a traffic death I witnessed in the Mojave Desert, bad but sincere writing, and two more pages of Gross jokes. These got me into mild trouble. Pat Yeates had provided an illo, but was so disgusted with the jokes she vowed she'd thenceforth restrict her art to the *Bull* cover. At least one other girl sought me out to ream my butt over a Tarzan story – fortunately, that wasn't my last impression on her. Now that I mention it, thank heaven those days preceded the orgy of political correctness which later turned Berkeley, and many another college campus, into quasi-fascist concentration camps. I'd never have been allowed to graduate.

I did yet another *Bull*. Responding to my request for bull puns, Pat ... well, take a look:



Within, I reported, with deliberate vagueness, on a house meeting where marijuana was banned from public areas, and described in flowery prose a wedding held on the Barrington rooftop. (The bride said she was 28. She was 38. The poor guy, 22, was somewhat upset when he found out, and I don't know what happened.) NOLA's Carolyn Dilworth sent a poem. Pat Yeates said it made her cry.

**PETER**

I remember standing against hospital-glass  
 Watching you tell your infant troubles to the air.  
 Clutching raisin-fisted unfamiliar air,  
 Lungs expanded the size of small, green apples.  
 (The doctor held you in a single hand.)

I felt my breasts respond  
 With a premonition of sweet milk,  
 As a shrouded figure wrapped you in a blanket  
 The color of tears.  
 (I already knew I'd lost you.)

The zine worked. Even my Gross joke was a success – I told a girl named Claudia the story of “The Wrestling World’s Championship” en route to print the issue, and she cracked up. Let me kiss her, too, although that was as far as it went.

That was it for my first quarter as editor. One guy ran against me for the post, but I made an interminable speech re-nominating myself for the job and won re-election.

When we returned for the January quarter, I asked Pat to expand her cover work to a full page. Scattered on pages that follow find most of her work for the *Bull*. Note how each is based on a stupid bull pun. Inside, I wrote about redheads, cops, stag movies (they showed one to the assembled membership, inspiring this Yeates illo and the timeless quote “That’s as big as my forearm!”), the Oscars, a resident’s arrest ... and published others’ poetry and letters and articles (one bozo’s “How I Ripped Off the Establishment for \$1200” dealt with his skimming from his

job at a McDonald’s). Since the house secretary was hotter than a match, I made sure to publish her council minutes in full.

Reading these issues over, I am actually fairly impressed. The writing is pretentious and juvenile, of course, but there’s *verve* to these zines, energy – I was obviously enjoying myself. A couple of my pieces don’t read too badly – even now.

In the rest of the *Bulls* of that academic year I published a lot of poetry and articles including goodbyes to the co-op by Tony S., a friendly English guy who crashed at Barrington, and the funky maniac known as Spooky Sonny J. Edwards – who also provided some righteous jokes. For some reason, Pat Yeates stopped doing *Bull* covers – that’s her last one, her masterpiece, on the back cover. So over *Bulls* that held council minutes and poems and paeans to and from redheads I began drawing the covers myself – a sketch of a tear gas canister, a sketch of Paul McCartney’s face, stolen from a girlfriend’s poster ... and, in mid-May, a clumsy tracing from Picasso’s “The Tragedy”. That issue came out after everything changed again -- the week after



Kent State.

I wrote about watching the street battle in Berkeley over the Cambodian invasion and going out into the suburbs to collect signatures against the Vietnam War (I went with my writing teacher, the late and magnificent Jackson Burgess), and the surprising response we got from the people we met there – even the G.I.s. Trying for something more, I also wrote about the times I’d seen our absolute enemy, Richard Nixon, in the flesh ... and yes, just as the legend goes, in his underwear. (Boxers and a sleeveless undershirt.) I guess I was trying to make sense out of the schism that would forever divide his America from mine. It fell to Joshua Chaykin, a Barrington “crasher” (i.e., a non-resident who loafed around in our lounge area) from CCNY, to say it all. He wrote a poem about Kent for my last *Bull* of the year. You know – I’ve seen 36 years pass, and more precious blood spilled, at Columbine and in Iraq. I’ve even been to Kent State, to the

*spot*, and driven away from the place, thinking that I'd put the sixties and Berkeley all behind me. But I can't do that. It still infuriates me to the pit.

Corn four feet high in July,  
Two feet high in May,  
Two feet high in Akron on May fourth;  
Corn two feet tall in Ohio,  
Murder five foot two in May,  
Murder four abreast in Ohio.  
Don't forget Allison Krause  
    or I'll kill you  
You sleeping motherfucker;  
I'll feed your guts  
    To my hungry dog  
    If you sleep easy tonight.

Jeffrey Miller's father  
    Never closed a fist  
    Or chanted pig,  
But he won't forget,  
And his Sunday papers  
    Will never be the same.

William K. Shroeder.  
From Eagle Scout to ROTC,  
No sideburns,  
Maybe logistics in his brain  
(175 millimeter gun; 32 degree launch  
angle) –  
Maybe I called him a pig last week,

But he's dead now,  
And as he crumpled,  
Tasting his own blood,  
He became Brother,

Thus we went home for summer, 1970. Some of us would never be the same.

During my summer break in 1970, I continued pubbing, taking on the newszine for the New Orleans Science Fiction Association. My first issue, *NOSFAn* #9, is still probably my most famous fanzine. Courtesy of an overseas cable from our great friend Dan Galouye, it was the first domestic zine to report the Heidelberg worldcon's Hugo awards. It won NOSFA, and me, a mention in P. Schuyler Miller's book review column in *Analog*. In the incredibly sloppy follow-up issue, I preened over this triumph, and mentioned a vague thought of mimicking Rick Norwood and Don Markstein and joining an *apa* ...

Back at UC, and Barrington, I continued my *Bull* career. It was a frustrating time. The Kent State murders had accomplished Nixon's goal, and silenced protest against the Vietnam War. While I kept running council minutes and poems and articles, it just wasn't the same.

But I did discover something. I discovered a stash of "very old *Bulls*."

I talked about them in one of the best-received issues I ever did. The front part was taken up with genuine science fiction. It began "The time machine left in Barrington by a brilliant

Part of Che's testament.

And if you forget him,  
I'll fry your fucken balls  
    In my filthy oven:  
I'll play marbles with your blind eyes.

Who was Sandra Scheuer?  
The New York Times says,  
"Pretty girl with long dark hair" –  
People are always pretty  
    After they're dead –  
Maybe she was funny-looking,  
Maybe not:

But she's dead,  
And she didn't vote for Nixon or Rhodes  
or troops –  
She couldn't even buy beer in Ohio;  
Twenty years old –  
As cold as My Lai corpses.

Maybe corn will grow six feet high from  
her grave  
But I don't get  
    Any consolation from that –

And if you forget her,  
    And May fourth  
    And Kent State  
I'll kill you.



though crazed summer crasher aroused great interest ...” and ended with a bewildered GHLIII, stuck in the 1936, meeting the editor of the very first *Bull* and getting arrested for beating up Lou Santucci, age 8.

All this had been inspired when Mark Gary, the president of the USCA, had told me about a box of ancient, foxed papers he’d found in a dark, dank cranny of Cloyne Court, another co-op on Berkeley’s northside. It was filled with house newspapers from the first days of the co-op system. *Lemme at it!*

I found ancient issues of the *Bull*, including that very first edition, from 2-13-36. I brought home every duplicate of the *Bull* and its alternate title, the *Barbarrington*, and instituted the *Bull* Archives. I began pestering former co-op residents for old issues they

may have kept. And I found some gems.

Those old Bulls were a wonder. The hall was all-male back then, but grossness on the order of the 1960s was still beyond their pale. They did promote a “house song”, in 1936:

We are the men from Barrington  
 You’ve heard so much about.  
 The other houses envy us  
 Whenever we go out.

We are too shy to talk about  
 The many things we’ve done;  
 The tricks we’ve played, the records made,  
 The many girls we’ve won.

As we go swinging,  
 O’er the floor so slick and smooth  
 Rah! Rah! Rah!  
 You can hear us saying  
 All for one and one for all!

For some reason we weren’t singing that in 1970. There was more of interest – for instance, an account of a 1941 visit to Barrington by the Japanese consul, who explained why Japan invaded Manchuria (he didn’t mention their plans for Pearl Harbor). I was distressed that the editor

merely reported the facts and gave no opinion about the talk; around December of that year he probably had more to say. Those of you who know something of Barrington's fame in fandom may see where this is going.

I had joined the Little Men and let it be known that I lived at Barrington. From Alva Rogers and Poul Anderson and company I learned that fandom was not unknown to its crumbling walls. In fact, a Hugo had been won from there. Snooping around a rusted filing cabinet in a back room, I found a stack of nine-year-old house photos ... among, pictures of those Hugo winners: Terry Carr and Ron Ellik.

Ellik's death had been announced at a Little Men meeting at Poul's house - I remember it vividly; Anthony Boucher gave a talk. But Carr was still around, publishing the Ace Science Fiction Specials which had already brought us Lafferty's *Past Master* and, to his immortal credit, LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. 21 years old, and blissfully free of shame, I wrote Terry in New York, asking him if he had any of his old *Bulls*.

He wrote back.

Dear Guy:

Your letter gassed me - ye gods, another sf fan editing the **Bull**! Good to hear from you, and I'll try to fill you in a little on some of your predecessors.

Actually there were 4 fans editing the **Bull** before you, not 2, & all of us came in one spate. Pete Graham was the first member of what was once known as Fabulous Berkeley fandom to move to Berkeley to attend Cal; that was in Fall 1956. He got the **Bull** job shortly after moving in & edited it till the summer break in 1957. Then he was planning to move out to room with a friend of his Northside, but knowing that I was moving into Barrington in Fall 57 he got Macchiavellian & didn't tell the House Council that he wouldn't be around next semester. So when I got there in September the job was still open, & with Pete's recommendation I was given the job. (In those days **Bull** editors & the House Council had a strong love-hate relationship; is that still true? We'd criticize & satirize the Council & they'd bitch & censure & threaten to fire us, but **Bull** editors usually got what they wanted when showdowns came.)

Ron Ellik moved into Barrington that same semester, & I made him assistant editor. We did the thing together for a year, then in summer 59 Ron moved out to get his own apartment. Jim

THE BARRINGTON  
BULL SPECIAL Edition  
ISSUE !!



WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN ... (!)

Caughran joined Berkeley fandom that September & became the fourth fan in a row to be on the **Bull** staff, again as assistant editor. I continued as editor till late that semester, when I got married & moved out; Jim published the last issue or two himself, I think ... or maybe not; I ought to check my files on this stuff, but they're at home & I'm at the office. No, I remember that Jim & I published a final issue together, putting in as much profanity & council satire as possible, so I must have been long enough for the final **Bull** of that semester.

(One of the contributors to that last issue, with a devastating satire of the Council, was Mike Tigar, who later worked for KPFA for awhile & most recently was heard from as one of the lawyers for the Chicago 7 who were tromped on by the judge.)

Anyway, Jim Caughran was still at Barrington for the Spring 59 semester, but after that last issue we'd done the Council was having no more of it & rejected his application for the job, giving it to some non-entity. I think Jim left the hall after that semester, & for a couple of months roomed with Ron Ellik. Ron later – in 60 or 61, I think – moved back into Barrington for a semester, but had nothing to do with the **Bull** then.

So, for 2 ½ years the **Bull** was edited by crazy no-good fans, with Pete Graham & me as editors & Ron & Jim as assistant editors with me. That was during the period Ron & I were editing **Fanac** weekly & everyone was marveling at our productivity, not knowing we were also turning out the **Bull** weekly. I did a collection of editorials by me & Ron from the **Bull** which I published in FAPA, & after another semester Ted White published my final six months of editorials in **Void**.

TERRY CARR

Within a very short time Terry sent me a jetpak. Within, treasure. Terry sent me a complete file of his own *Bulls*, from '57 and '58, and those of the previous year, when Pete Graham held the editorial reins. Said I at the time, "As if I were Christian Barnard juggling the heart of Guy Lillian III, *that's* how I handled those old *Bulls*."

I'll let my 12-17-70 description of those issues stand: "They were pretty short, consisted of two running cols [columns] by Carr and his assistant Ron Ellik, hilarious and increasingly obscene cover drawings by William Rotsler ... who didn't live in Barrington but gave the *Bull* the soft aroma of pure, clean, wonderful filth that has remained its stock in trade to this day."

One cover, not Rotsler's, resounds in memory: "a guy and girl dancing, the lad sweating blood and gulping fit to be damned and the girl staring in outrage down at the poor fellow's belt-line." Carr wrote later that he was embarrassed when copies of this gem were left lying around the hall during a dance. No girls living in Barrington then, note.

Things had changed in the 12 years between Terry's *Bulls* and mine, as he noted in another LOC: "Looking at the more recent issues I find myself breaking down every page or two. 'No dealing downstairs, please.' 'Crashers gotta pay for their peanut butter.' 'The fuzz know Barrington as a hangout for dealers this past summer.' Oh my. It was nothing like that when I was there. No girls, either, of course. All of which is too bad; sounds more interesting now."

At the 1976 Worldcon I had the pleasure of strolling past Terry and shouting out, "Long live the Barrington *Bull*!", earning a look of croggled astonishment – and the chance to thank him personally for his kindness.

After a boring stab at the all-co-op newspaper (The Co-op *Crust*) I returned to the *Bull*. I wrote pieces about redheads and a million-strong peace march in SanFran and lots of other things, and traced illos by Elizabeth Atkinson, a delightful, quirky crasher, for the covers (see thataway →), but my heart was elsewhere.

On 1-1-71 I'd liberated some co-op stencils and co-op paper and committed, like a crime, *Spiritus Mundi* #1 for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. That began a membership that still continues, 35 years later. In other words, I'm still in SFPA; I left Barrington in June of 1971.



# The Barrington



APRIL 10<sup>th</sup>  
1970

Issue

Tom  
Pete  
DEFEND  
YOURSELF  
AGAINST

DEFEND  
YOURSELF  
AGAINST

#2  
SP 70  
People's  
Gang