

Comments 13

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CAN YOU BELIEVE IT'S THANKSGIVING?

Boy time passes quickly! Here we are still working on the house and it's already Thanksgiving. It doesn't feel like it, the temperatures are in the 70s and we haven't had any rain in weeks. It's more like the end of summer than the end of fall and if the trees hadn't already lost all their leaves I would find myself doubting the calendar.

Losing the leaves also reveals just how much the mountains around us have changed in the last year. Where we once could see a couple of dozen lights across the valley at night, now we can see a couple of hundred. No, I'm not exaggerating, this part of north Georgia is growing at a rate that I would never have believed. A mile or so away from us we can see an apple orchard being converted into a sub division. It looks like it will have at least 50 houses. A lot for this part of the world.

It's nice in some ways, there's a rumor that we might be getting an upscale restaurant in the near future, I'll believe it when I see it. In other ways it's not so nice. The local landfill is filling up and there's not much of anywhere to put a new one. We're even starting to develop something like a rush hour. I suppose if we wanted to really get away from the city we should have moved a lot further up into the mountains.

OUR REMODELING PROJECT

We have made progress. Since we moved, we've installed both a dropped ceiling and a laminate floor in our guest / computer room. The dropped ceiling is nothing new for us though this one was a lot tougher than most since we were using the steel I-beams that support the garage floor as the supports for the tiles. The floor was a whole new experience.

We used the "click" style flooring. It's interlocking "planks" that snap together. Pretty easy to do, if not quite as simple as the manufacturer would like you to think. One piece of wood had a neat, if unintended, addition. We've all seen pieces of amber with insects imbedded in them. Well we have a piece of laminate flooring with a mosquito imbedded in the top, transparent, layer.

The sheetrock work in the basement is done, we found a local guy who did a good job, and Suzanne has finished painting. Now we're putting up the drop ceiling and waiting on the flooring people to put down the tile. Both jobs should be done by the end of December and then we can start unpacking and get back to something like a normal life.

CHRISTMAS

I can't remember a time when I felt less like celebrating and when I needed it more. Yes, we seem to be "winning the war" at the moment but I fear the price is so steep that we may never get it paid. But never mind, I'm going to string lights, put up a tree, OK watch Suzanne put up a tree, and buy presents. We've gone through tough times before and we will, eventually, get through these. In the mean time all I have to say is I wish you all

Merry Christmas and Peace On Earth.

The Leonids

For the last 3 years Suzanne and I have tried to watch the Leonids. The first year we were out in Las Vegas for Comdex and hired a car and driver to take us out into the desert to watch the show. It was good but we only got to watch for an hour or so. The next year we watched it from here in Ellijay and conditions were pretty good, maybe a little too much moon light, but that year the meteors were mostly very high, fast and dim. Last year it was bitterly cold and about 90% clouds. We watched it anyway and saw a few meteors through breaks in the cloud cover. This year conditions were almost perfect.

It was reasonably clear, we are having some pollution caused by forest fires, and the moon was down well before midnight. It wasn't even very cold. Suzanne and I started watching well before midnight. We saw a few meteors, enough to make a good normal show, but the real show wasn't expected until about 5 am. We waited patiently killing time fiddling with our cameras. Then suddenly, about 1:30 the whole sky lit up as a fireball suddenly sailed across the sky. It was so bright you couldn't look straight at it and it cast sharp shadows across the hill. The light was so bright you could have read by it. Then it winked out with a blast like an enormous flash bulb leaving a trail across the sky that took over 15 minutes to fade. I've never seen anything like it and doubt I ever will again. It was worth weeks of cold windy nights watching the sky.

As the night wore on we saw more and more meteors. Some of them really nice and so bright they cast shadows. Others streaked across the sky in a second leaving only a faint trail. Then, around 4:30, the show really started. At some times there were over a dozen in the sky at the same time. Everywhere you looked there were shooting stars. Small dim ones, bright short lived bursts, long bright fireballs that shot across the whole sky, every type of meteor I have ever seen all in one spectacular display.

We called it quits just before dawn when the light got too bright to see more than the odd faint trace of a meteor. Very tired but still excited we crashed too tired to even look at the photos we had taken. We have never had much luck getting photos of meteors but decided to give it a real good try this time.



Suzanne had her digital set up to take 15 sec time exposures at one-minute intervals all night. I had a modified 35mm, it's set up so that the shutter stays open until closed, that I used to take 15 to 30 minute time exposures. As a back up for both of these, we were shooting 15 to 30 second exposures with Suzanne's "good" 35mm when ever things got busy. This whole outfit was tested

three days earlier to make sure everything was working. So where are the pictures?

Well the digital suffered some kind of seizure and went through all the motions of taking pictures but only stored blank images. My modified camera worked but, produced no useable images for a variety of reasons. Our fall back might have worked but the local CVS lab tossed the negatives because "they were all blank with just a few streaks of light." Which, of course, describes most star shots.

The two photos on this page are the only ones we got. I had shot off the last 3 or 4 frames on one roll outside the house and the CVS folks printed those and kept the last two "strips" of negatives. Needless to say, no meteors on either one. Oh well, there's always next year!



The Northern Lights In North Georgia

A couple of weeks ago Suzanne and I went to watch a meteor shower. Not a well-known shower but we like to lie outside in our hammock at night and watch the stars. This time we had just gotten ourselves tucked into the hammock when I noticed two very strange looking glowing red clouds just above the horizon in the north. It looked just like something out of a horror movie. You know the one where the characters look at a strange glowing cloud and say something inane like, "What do you think that is?" And then the cloud monster eats them all.

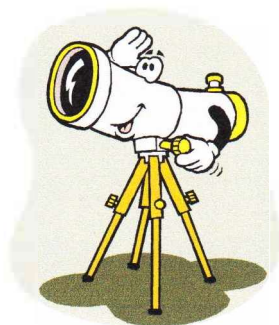
We spent several minutes discussing what it might be. Fire, there are several forest fires in the vicinity, reflected off clouds seemed like a good choice or maybe the light of the full moon, which was just coming up, filtered through the low haze creating a "red skies at night" effect. Suzanne did suggest that it might be an Aurora but this far South it really didn't seem all that likely.

After watching it for maybe 30 minutes the vague cloud like shapes suddenly formed into two curtains of deep red light with vertical shafts of brighter red, almost white, light. It looked just like the pictures of the Northern lights. A few minutes later it faded away and was gone.

We went into the house and logged into the space weather web site. Sure enough, the Aurora was visible all the way down to Florida! An enormous solar flare, perhaps the largest ever observed, had created the most spectacular Aurora on record. I have always wanted to see the Aurora but had always thought I would have to travel to the far, frozen north to do so. Amazing that all I had to do was walk out into my own front yard and look north.



These two photos were shot near Statesville, NC by Chuck Adams. They show exactly what we saw in Ellijay. The printer does not do justice to these shots so you might want to check out the originals at http://www.spaceweather.com/aurora/gallery_06nov01.html. The spaceweather site is a good place to pick up information on space phenomenon if you're interested in such things.



A Wedding

Late last June Suzanne and I drove down to Orlando for a very special event: the marriage of an old friend. I've known Guy for well over 30 years and still remember meeting Rose, literally a kid at the time, in New Orleans.

The Porcher House, decorated in a Mardi Gras theme, was a great setting for a wedding. Guy and Rose, standing at the top of the stairs waiting to take their vows, made a very elegant couple. The grin on Guy's face, she really did say "yes", when the ceremony was over was priceless.

We all had a great time at the reception enjoying the food and the dancing. Some wedding receptions can be a little difficult, you often don't know many of the guests, in this case there were enough fans present to keep the conversation lively.

I can only hope that Guy and Rosy will be as happy in their marriage as Suzanne and I are in ours.



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Mailing Comments

The Southerner #223

I like the idea of just going ahead and making all mailings priority mail. If that's not acceptable, then having two tier dues is also a good idea. Lots of other organizations do that to allow members to get newsletters faster.

Good sized mailing!

The New Port News 199 Ned Brooks

I think I can confirm your speculation that the Dodgson book of child photos might be kiddie porn by our current standards. Someone on a bookbinding list I subscribe to recently reported that a copy had been confiscated from a local library. Based on a mother being arrested, yes it was on the news a while back, for taking naked photos of her 6-month-old daughter, I suspect I might be in danger of arrest. I have photos of my niece at age 9 months that I took for my sister, sans garments.

Isn't it amazing how government officials can push anything beyond sanity? I can think of few things more offensive than real child pornography and yet I find myself thinking the current law needs to be repealed. That is, of course, why it's so hard to write good laws.

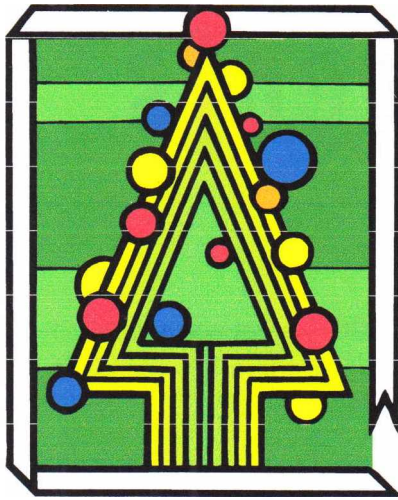
Should the government subsidize the post office? Probably, as time goes by and first class mail volume drops they will have to do something. Email is already draining a lot of revenue from the post office. What I don't think is a good idea is deprivatizing (is that a word?) the post office. It's performance has been much better since it stopped being a civil service job.

Let's face it most "important" mail already bypasses the USPS via FedEx and their competitors. Add to that the growing numbers of people who are paying their bills thru direct deposit and you have a major loss of volume for the USPS. Raising rates to offset lost volume just drives more volume away. The bright side to that is that it will get much cheaper to subsidize the USPS if it's volume is low.

There is a positive aspect to land mines: they create some safe havens for wild life. We saw penguins on beautiful beaches in the Falklands and no humans to bother them. The beaches were mined by the Argentines and the penguins are too light to set them off.

Seriously though, land mines are a big problem mostly because they are so cheap that almost any military organization can afford to deploy lots of them. They are also easy to deploy, just dig a small hole, drop in the mine then shove a little dirt over it. Anyone can put them in the ground. Retrieving them is a lot more trouble so most people just don't bother.





Tyndallite Vol 3 Number 97

Norm Metcalf

Tarzan on Mars? Sounds like something that even ERB would have had a tough time writing. I loved the Tarzan books when I was a kid and liked the Mars series. Still there is a limit to how far you can carry a character without losing relevance. I think there must be some kind of natural limit to the number of novels that can be written about a single set of characters or in a common setting. The "Saint" series comes to mind as a good example. I wonder what the longest running series is? Maybe the Shadow pulp novels?

What technologies in the *Nautilus* were outside the limits of current technology when it was written? Well batteries to start with, electric

motors with the power needed to move something that size, a navigation system that would allow prolonged running under water, air cleaning systems to control CO₂, I also suspect that you could not have made metal castings big enough to build something like the *Nautilus*. I know that was a major problem for people trying to make large gun mounts for battle ships in that era.

Humm...reading your comments to Toni on the last YNGVI makes me want to read that zine, if, of course, I ever find that mailing.

Markstein is

Rich Lynch

Ok, now I do have to find that mailing!

Twygdrasil And Treehouse Gazette #72

Richard Dengrove

Your problems with Sears installers is far from unique. They use a wide range of "independent contractors" to do their installation and home improvement work. That means who you get is pretty much random and you can't take other people's experience with Sears as any guide to the service your going to get.

All the warnings in the manuals are another problem. It's getting to where you can't tell what's a real warning and what's just legal CYA. It gets real bad when you're using chemicals since they all have bunches of warnings and you can't tell which are real. Interesting side note there, it turns out asbestos isn't nearly as bad for you as everyone thought. Turns out you have to have long and continuous exposure to significantly increase your risk of cancer.

I never take the rental companies insurance on cars unless it's outside of the US. Most credit cards provide secondary insurance, which covers what ever your own insurance doesn't, and my normal policy covers me when I drive a rental car. What you do want to do is carefully inspect a rental car *before* you drive it off the lot. If there is damage the company missed before they rented it to you, you may have to pay for it if they notice it when you check back in.

Regarding your interpretation of my comments on your comments on Kosovo, yeah it does get a little involved, no I do not consider Milosevic as being "basically a good guy." He seems to have been a pretty nasty political type with very little regard for what we call "basic human rights." My point was that in this particular case, his government had every right to defend itself against terrorism.

Your last comment to me about letting political views break up friendships is very germane. I'm afraid we are in for a period when people's political views are going to become very polarized. It's hard to keep your perspective when emotions run high. On the other hand there are people who can argue passionately without it's becoming personal. Just the other day Suzanne and I visited Hank and Toni and I got into a very intense discussion with Toni. Intense and heartfelt as it was, I don't expect it to affect our friendship.

The very basis of a free society, or a real friendship, is the ability of people to allow others to hold opinions that they really disagree with. Unfortunately I'm afraid that the "politically correct" movement is likely to do away with a lot of that freedom and then we will really start to have terrorist problems in this country.

Variations on a Theme #8

Rich Lynch

Gee, I never knew you were a chemist. Most patents are never followed up on and expire before anyone ever uses them. I recently got a call from a gentleman, he works for a company that searches for patents that are still in force and that have become relevant, asking about my audio response patent. It covers systems that put computer controlled speech output and touch tone input into a single package. Sounds familiar? At the time it was granted there were very few applications for that sort of thing and the company that holds the rights to it never noticed when such applications became common. At this point it's pretty moot since it expires in only a few months.

The famous Markstein porno bust is fiction? I clearly remember it's being widely discussed at the time and never heard him repudiate it. Still there are lots of myths in fandom.

I just heard, the TV is on, that Clinton is advertising for interns. My what a lot of interesting comments that bit of news could generate but I think I'll pass this time.

A Page for SFPA...

Mike Weber

Nice cartoons, we've stopped getting a paper and I do miss some of the cartoons.

Spiritus Mundi 185

Guy H. Lillian III

Sorry to hear you didn't get the Hugo! I do believe that if you keep at it you will win.

Millions of spiders and snakes? And here I thought we have a problem with our plague of ladybugs. Last week we literally had thousands of them crawling on the house and, unfortunately, quite a few of them found their way in to the house. At this point its down to only a few hundred and in the next few days the plague should end.

The real economic damage on Sept 11 was not done by the planes that hit the World Trade Center but by all the planes and trunks that stopped moving afterward. The insurance companies took a big hit but they have funds and reinsurance arrangements to minimize the



effect of real disasters. Unfortunately the airlines were already in pretty bad financial shape before the attack and the huge losses they took due to grounding the fleet was the last straw. Was it really justified? Don't know and don't know how anyone could ever know.

What we do know is that they lost an incredible amount of money due to direct expenses related to all those planes sitting on the ground and all the stranded people; that security expenses are skyrocketing, while security will stay pretty much the same; that people are finding that a lot of the travel they were doing was unnecessary. All this adds up to a bleak outlook for the airlines.

Then there were all the trucks stopped at the Canadian border. Most of the large manufacturing companies in America use an inventory system called "just in time delivery" which means that the parts needed to build today's widgets are delivered in the morning of the day they are needed. When we stopped the flow of goods from Canada and, to a lesser extent Mexico, all that fell apart.

It wasn't just the lost production, now those companies have to rethink the whole system in light of knowing that it could happen again. That will probably lead to a lot of unnecessary spending on inventory and process redesign.

One point relevant to your comments on the last page of your zine; I didn't notice a lot of Democrats voting against the "curtailing of civil rights." In fact at the moment they seem dead set on using Sept 11 as an excuse to expand the federal government by adding all the airport security workers to the government payroll. But enough of this, there are other things to talk about than party politics. I was cheered up by the apparent cooperation between the Democrats and the Republicans right after the attack but that didn't last long. At this point it's pretty much politics as usual.

Peter, Pan & Merry #39

David Schlosser

Good luck growing grass on your expool. We're trying to get grass to grow in our front yard with mixed luck. The places where we put a lot of grass seed isn't doing as well as one would hope while the places that were planted by the wind blowing seeds off the other part is doing great!

You're right about the stock market and the economy being interlinked. They are in the same way that breathing and being alive is linked. You can stop breathing and still be alive but not for long 😊.

The scary phrase in the financial world these days is "synchronous decline." What they mean is the way all the major, and most of the minor, world economies are sort of quietly sinking in lock step. This effect was first noticed the middle of last year and it's slowly starting to take center stage.

Why it's surprising people is a surprise to me. What did they think would be the result of all the interlocking economic relationships? I suppose an optimistic view would be that advances in others would offset declines in one economy. I think the reality is that declines in one economy are likely to *create* declines in others.



Revenant #8

Sheila Strickland

I'm not sure you're not better off never having seen the World Trade Center towers in person. I've been there quite a few times and all during the first few days after the attack I kept remembering times when I was in one of the towers. The last time I visited there was

for lunch with a guy who was helping me install network nodes. He wanted to do some sight seeing and the observation deck was high on his list.

Fortunately, I don't believe anyone I know worked there on Sept 11.

Your cable works better if you watch through the VCR? Sounds like you either have a defective tuner in your TV or the cable signal is too strong. You might try buying one of those cheap Radio Shack splitters and putting it in line with the cable. It might fix the problem.



Confessions of a Consistent Liar 75

Arthur D. Hlavaty

Sorry to hear you lost your job! I know it doesn't help but you're in good company. Over 240 thousand job cuts were announced in October alone. I guess the good thing is that you have a skill that lets you do contract work.

Trivial Pursuits #97

Janice Gelb

I'll start off by admitting that, on the flight back from Copenhagen after the attack, I was looking at the obviously Middle Eastern passengers on the flight differently than I would have before the attack. Actually I think one would have to be more than human not to. Ethnic profiling is a bad thing but like stereotyping it's also some times necessary.

Should security guards look more carefully at travelers simply because they look like they might be from the Middle East? I remember an Arabic business acquaintance of mine bitterly complaining about how the Israeli security guards at checkpoints would pass Jewish tourists with only a cursory glance but interrogate, his word, anyone who looked Arabic. I pointed out that an Israeli tourist was very unlikely to have explosives strapped to his body and that the guards were aware of this.

"Profiling", that hateful word, is essential to most law enforcement and, especially, security screening. You can't usually afford to spend the same amount of time on every person so you develop, formally or instinctively, ways to decide who needs a little more scrutiny and who can be safely ignored. This is great until the "needs more attention" group has some distinctive racial or ethnic or religious characteristic then it suddenly is considered discriminatory. Truly "a policeman's lot is not a happy one!"

What's so disappointing is the number of ethnic hate crimes that have been reported. I suppose it's inevitable that hate for a specific group, the terrorists, will bleed over to people who share some of their characteristics but you'd like to think we would be starting to outgrow such things. Unfortunately it's almost bound to get worse.

As we pursue the military campaign in Afghanistan we will end up with ground troops involved in combat operations and that will produce American casualties. Casualties will intensify the negative feelings and result in more hate crimes. At the same time, more and more potential terrorists will find all the justification they need for future attacks in the US in the deaths of Afghanistan civilians. It's a vicious circle and I fear we will be riding for a long time.



Is America partly responsible for the attack? Yes, I think so. Our attempts to respond to attacks against our people outside of the US, like the USS Cole, in a balanced manner have convinced our enemies that the price they will pay for atrocities will be relatively light. Up to now that has been true.

Blowing up a few empty “training camps” does very little damage in the short run and none in the long run. Nor did America’s policy of outlawing assassinations; which must have been very comforting to our enemies. Now we are paying for that tolerance.

It has truly been said, “violence is the last resort of the mentally incompetent.” What is seldom pointed out is that violence, properly employed, is often the best answer to some problems.

On a lighter note, I too failed to finish *Wind Done Gone* and don’t think it is in any way a parody. Of course I also suspect the whole controversy was carefully crafted to create a market for a book that would otherwise only have been not finished by the authors friends and relatives.

Philly Follies

Janice Gelb

Good report! Since Boston won the WorldCon bid, we will be attending it. Which is one way of saying that Suzanne thinks it’s a great excuse to slip in an extra trip to Boston. In some ways, I’m a little sorry that Charlotte didn’t get the bid. It is, after all, a Southern city.

Suzanne and I just got roped into a convention committee. The Atlanta Stereo Society is hosting the national convention in 2003 and we’re going to be helping them.

Offline Reader

Irv Koch

Sorry to hear you’ve fallen victim to the market problems. Most people these days are doing good just to maintain net worth without income much less grow both. My nephew, who has been very good about putting money in his 401k plan, has been rewarded, like a lot of other people, with a net loss in value. So much for long-term investment. Suzanne and I are doing OK for the moment mostly because of the percentage of our portfolio that’s in Treasury bonds. In a couple of years when the short term ones start rolling over the picture could change drastically. At the moment interest rates are at almost exactly half what I’m getting from the bonds.

The Sphere

Don Markstein

You and I have not been on “speaking terms” for years and I’m well aware that you probably care nothing for my opinion, but you are going beyond what is reasonable in your comments. I do somewhat understand since I do it myself from time to time. The difference is that I usually delete the worst part of my rants before I print my zines.

I suspect there must be something going on in your personal life that you’re not mentioning poisoning your outlook on life and coming out in your zine. What ever it is I hope you resolve it. If you want to take this as condescending it’s not its intent.

The Shot Heard Round the Worldcon Various Miscreants

Sounds like fun, sorry I missed it. Oh, nice illos for a one shot.

Frequent Flyer Tom Feller

My condolences on the death of your mother-in-law. My own father-in-law died a few weeks ago. Although he and my mother were married for almost 20 years, I barely knew him.

The funeral was held at a local funeral home in Blue Ridge so that he could be buried in the Harper family plot. This meant virtually all of my mother's family showed up. You must understand that, other than my grandfather, I saw very little of my mother's family when I was a kid. The Hughes and Harpers had the same basic relation as the Hatfields and McCoys. Since I left home, back in 1968, I have seen none of these people. So here I was trying to make small talk with a bunch of strangers that were all my relatives!

It was pretty trying for a while then I shifted into 'business persona' and things went fairly well. It was nice visiting the graveyard and showing Suzanne the tombstones of relatives going back to before the ~~War for Southern Independence~~ Civil War. Humm..I seem to be slipping back into mountain mode. And we spent the afternoon at one of my Aunt's houses having an old fashion family get together. Funny the things that bring people together.

You're right about the *Hundley* but I think its failure is an argument against the *Nautilus* being possible. It was a technical marvel in its day but a long way from a practical submarine. Among other things, it was human muscle powered because there was no other practical power source.

Werewolf With Fleas George Wells

And I thought your titles were getting weird!

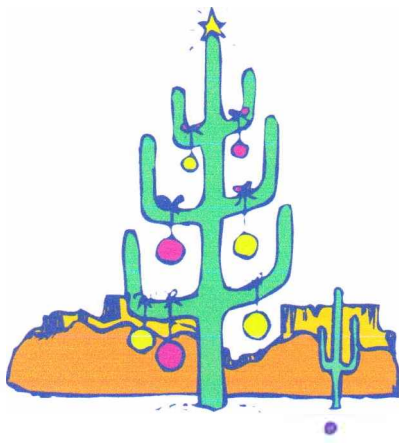
Avatar Press Randy B. Cleary

Nice cover!

I haven't been to a Dragon*Con in years. I went to the first 3 or 4 then didn't go back until one weekend, about 5 years ago, when Suzanne and I were downtown on business and noticed the convention. It was Suzanne's first con and I went to some lengths to make sure she knew this was not what fandom in general looked like. Reassurances were needed because we walked straight into a group of latex freaks when we went to register.

I like the scanned title of the zines in your comments. I used to occasionally scan the whole cover but got tired of the time it took. I just got a new Epson scanner and when, if, I get it set up, I may go back to scanning zines covers. It uses either Firewire or USB 2.0 to connect to the PC. Unfortunately my system does not





support USB 2.0 and the Epson drivers don't support Firewire under *Windows 98se*.

Speaking of Buffy, I'm really looking forward to *Buffy the Musical* episode. I'm saying how I'm looking forward to it, in dread or anticipation, but I am looking forward to it. I've been watching the reruns on FX and, yes, the first year's worth of episodes were just as good as I remember.

Now I hear they are bringing the entire first season out on DVD the first of the year. I was going to tape the episodes off satellite, now I'm not going to bother.

Oh, how do you like the way they are making Willow's character

take off on a magic power trip?

Cleary Clip-Art Collection II

Randy B. Cleary

Very nice!

"YNGVI IS A LOUSE" AND OTHER GRAFFITOS #73

T.K.F. Weisskopf

Thoughts about your "random thoughts":

Being "on". The strain of being "on" all the time is not appreciated by people who don't have to do it. I used to come back from business meetings totally exhausted and ready to drop. It used to drive me crazy when someone would comment, "But all you did was lean back and talk to people." Yes, that's all I did. That and watch every muscle twitch and facial expression, every tone change in every person's voice, every sideways glance and carefully analyze every word said. All in real-time while changing my approach and, sometimes, totally rearranging my arguments if necessary. Very few people have any idea how much hard work there is in business "entertainment."

Hank's pneumonia. Just about the worst I've ever been sick was a case of pneumonia I got on a sales trip. It was one of those 6 cities, 18 meetings in 3 days tours and I started out with a mild cold. Then it turned into flu which I fought with massive doses of caffeine and cold medicines. When I got home it was pneumonia and almost got me. It's always amazed me how people can override their health problems when they really want to. Then, as in most things, mother nature gets really pissed at you and lowers the hammer.

The "unbelievable" aspect of the Sept 11 attack. Constantly hearing that phrase used was getting to me. Especially when it was people who know, or certainly should know, better like the CIA. Not only has the idea of using commercial planes as weapons popped up in countless movies and books but the White House even had, has?, a stinger based defense system to shoot down small private planes. Nor can I buy the "Who would have thought people would be willing to kill themselves in an attack?" argument. Have these people never heard of WWII and the Japanese Kamikazes? Or all the people who strap explosives to their body so they can be human bombs? I mean don't they ever watch the news?

The way the WTC collapsed. I can't agree with you that the design of the WTC helped to alleviate the death toll by the way it collapsed. If everyone wasn't busy being patriotic and not doing anything

that might shift any of the blame from the terrorists, we would be hearing a lot of criticism of the WTC design. For one thing, it didn't have enough stairs to handle a complete evacuation of the building. Wait a few years and we will see some very critical reviews of the steel tube system used in its construction.

Sept 11 as a reason to not build the missile defense system. Yes we are hearing that argument and it's another of those where the opponents neatly ignore that part of the missile defense system is a super radar system capable of tracking all the commercial flights in the US. Today we need several AWACS planes in the air all the time to do it and they can only cover part of the country.

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I loved Randy's cartoon con report!

Hank's comments to Don show he's just as well armed sitting at a keyboard as holding a broad sword. The problem is that neither weapon should be necessary in the confines of a small group like SFPA. I wish there were some way of getting politics out of the APA and, instead, talking about something off topic like science or technology or space travel or, silly idea I know, science fiction.

Passages #10

Janet D. Larson

I'm not surprised you liked Anguilla. Suzanne and I went there for our honeymoon and loved it. We had the same experience with the food. After a week of really great food you find yourself craving a hamburger. I'm not sure, but I think we were staying at a resort fairly close to your villa. Nice place and we plan to go back there some day.

I agree with you that the famous Autobahn wasn't as intimidating as I-285 around Atlanta. Nor was the traffic going any faster! Did you notice all the tiny little cars or the way the Germans tend to park just any old way including on the sidewalk? As far as the low percentage of fat Germans, it's been our experience that everywhere we go people are much thinner than the average American. Here at home I usually consider myself normal to only slightly over weight, outside the US it's a completely different story.

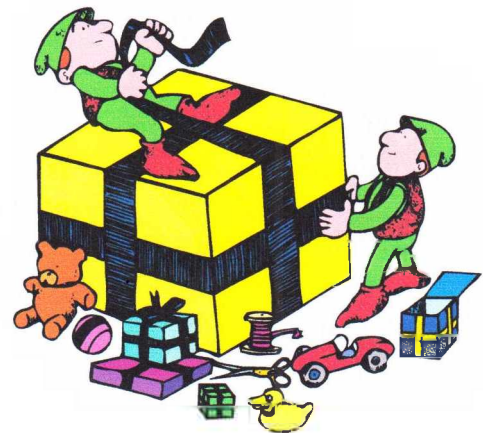
One thing that did strike me was the large porno store in the Frankfurt airport. I saw it on the way into Germany and said, "OK these people do have a different idea about sex than we do." The hard-core porno channels on the hotel cable and the adult video stores located in normal shopping areas confirmed my thoughts.

How did you like Neuschwanstein? We walked up to it, dodging the people in horse carts, and got some great pictures. King Ludwig may or may not, there's a lot of controversy, have been mad but he did build some neat places.

Tennessee Trash #43

Gary R. Robe

The people I talk to, mostly via email these days, report very different air travel experiences. Some, like you, have seen very few differences others tell horror stories of 5 and 6 hour waiting times to check in. Our only flight since the attack was the trip back from Copenhagen the week after.



Security was intense, they searched every passenger after they went through the metal detector, and the line to get through security was at least 2 hours long. They were confiscating anything that even looked like it had a blade. I saw a small child's plastic scissors being taken. It's going to be awhile until things get standardized and we know what to expect when we travel.

One thing I do like is the new "one carry on" rule. That's needed doing for years. The amount of luggage people used to carry on was way more than the planes designers ever intended. On the other hand a lot of photographers are worried that new checked baggage x-ray machines will trash their film. There is reason to worry.

The trip sounds like fun. Suzanne and I have been talking about driving out West next year but I'm not sure we're going to do it. Too much stuff to do here.

Another Rude Supergirl Cartoon

Mike Webber

Neat zine if a little out of order. By the way, printing a zine on the laser printer then filling in the color on an ink jet is a lot more trouble than you might think. I do, used to do, that a lot and it was a pain.

All DVDs from major studios have a form of Macrovision copy guard. It not only messes up attempts to copy DVDs to tape, not that I'm sure who would want to, but means you can't route the signals from a DVD through a lot of switches. A know people who get around the regional coding by owning multiple computer DVD drives each set to a different region. Then there are some of the early Apex drives that can be changed if you know the secret code.

Shocked and Sleepless with the Armadillo #49

Liz Copeland

I liked your cell phone offensives reprint. I hate the people who take phone calls in nice restaurants or, yes I've seen it on more than one occasion, in a movie theater while the movie is playing.

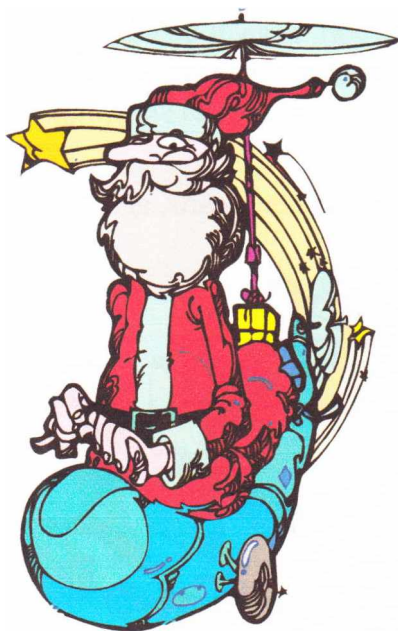
My own general attitude toward security has not changed. I've always been paranoid. No that's not a joke, I saw a study once that showed that most successful network ops people were clinically paranoid. Now, using the "you're not paranoid if they really are out to get you" rule I'm starting to look merely well informed.

Words Fail Me

Jeffrey Copeland

For the most part I agree, which must be some kind of first, with the opening comments in your zine. The thing I don't agree with is that the airlines should be held liable for the attack. If any part of the attacks success was based on some failure of the airlines to enforce security procedures then, yes, they could and should be held responsible. But, so far, I haven't heard of any lapse in airport security associated with the attack.

They all had some form of legal ID and the weapons the terrorist used were, as far as we know, all legal carry on items. After the



hijackings started, the pilots followed regulations in dealing with the hijackers.

I admit it would be very comforting to be able to say, "If only those stupid, greedy airline executives had done X then this wouldn't have happened." Unfortunately I don't think that's reasonable. What could they, with in the limits of the law, have done to stop the hijackings?

If you're thinking of the Israeli airlines idea of security, forget it. Even today the measures they use would be illegal in the US. Our open society does not allow for things like extensively interrogating members of select ethnic or religious groups. Nor would FAA regulations have allowed locking pilots in their cabin or arming them.

What could we have done? Not much.

Multiple armed air marshals on every flight might have helped or it might not have. A well trained, even if unarmed, commando group has a very good chance of taking down one or even two armed men. Especially if those armed men are not prepared to recklessly endanger civilians. Remember that until Sept 11 the strategy in handling hijackings was to do nothing that might endanger the passengers.

Were armored cockpit doors the answer? Nope, before Sept 11 all a terrorist would have had to do was kill a passenger and the captain would have opened the door. Then again passengers were allowed to carry a wide range of hand tools on planes in those, now seemingly distant days, and planes are not designed to resist a determined assault. In fact they are made of the lightest materials possible and interior bulkheads are very flimsy. Cutting through the bulkhead the cabin door is mounted in would not be that difficult on most planes, especially the newer ones.

There were really two events Sept 11th. The first was the hijacking of 4 commercial airlines. How that could have been stopped I don't know. Then there was the use of the hijacked planes as weapons.

Most people don't, or didn't, know that the system we use to track the location of aircraft in the US is purely voluntary. The plane has a radar transponder that broadcasts it's ID when it sees a radar sweep. Turn it off and the plane becomes virtually invisible to air traffic control radar. Military radar can still track it but we did not normally do that. Note the tense in that last statement. This means a plane could deviate from its flight path and it would be quite a while before anyone noticed.

Once hijackers are flying a plane, there is nothing anyone can do to stop them from crashing it. All you can do is affect where it crashes by shooting it down. Right up until the first plane hit the WTC no one in the US would have done that for the simple reason that no one would have believed the hijackers would really do it.

So are we safer now? Depends, do you mean we airline passengers or we the American public? If you mean the former, no not really. If a determined group like the Sept 11th terrorists decide to take over another plane they will probably succeed. Will they crash it into a high value target? Probably not, since we will shoot it down. I suppose that makes the general public a little safer but it doesn't exactly give me the warm fuzzies.

But maybe you're right and we should imprison the airline executives for giving us the kind of open, easy to use system that our culture demanded and our laws required. That actually sounds a lot nastier than I intended. Sorry.

On your comment to Toni about taxes, first back in the Fifties, when the top marginal rate was over





70%, the average high-income person paid... wait for it... less than 15%. If you go back and dig up the same kind of numbers for 1950, what percentage of the people paid what, you will be amazed to find that the tax burden has shifted *toward* people with high incomes. There were so many ways to shelter income from taxes in those days that the paper tax rates and the real tax rates had nothing to do with each other. That's what the AMT, alternative minimum tax, was all about. It came into existence to try and make sure that the super rich paid *something*. It sort of worked; in fact it worked so well that lots of middle income Americans are going to get to pay it real soon now.

Second, it was tax *burden* not income tax rate being talked about. That includes things like social security, unemployment insurance, sales tax, real estate tax, luxury tax, inheritance tax, road tax, airport use tax..... the list just goes on forever. It's been awhile since I saw the break down but for many, if not most, low income Americans income tax is only a small percentage of their total tax burden. An 8% sales tax, like many states have, hits hardest at the lowest income levels.

You asked why I dislike Clinton. Well I first became aware of politics in a serious fashion when I was about 15 years old. That means I have been following it with various levels of involvement for almost 39 years. I've never had allegiance to any political party and switched my support to whichever candidate best represented my own views regardless of his political affiliation. I've marched against segregation in my very active days, first supported, then, when I realized it was just a political exercise, turned against the Vietnam war and contributed money to help bring down Nixon. I've actively supported dozens of causes and candidates.

In that time I have observed many politicians good and bad from a chicken restaurant racist turned governor, and not a bad one as governors go, to a 2nd rate actor turned into a fine president. In that time I have never known any man less worthy of holding high office than Clinton. Why? The reasons why you dislike someone are personal and may not even make sense to anyone but yourself but I'll take a shot at explaining mine.

First there was the first election. You may or may not remember but he wasn't doing very well in the polls. One of the hottest issues was taxes, not unusual, and he was advocating a tax increase for the "wealthy." That turned out to be a real vote loser so he did a complete turn around and came out in favor of a tax cut for the "middle class." Now there's nothing unusual about a politician changing his mind when he sees his position is unpopular. Politicians are *supposed* to represent the wishes of their constituency. That's the basis of a representative form of government. Of course when he was elected he went right back to his original position and pushed through one of, if not the largest, tax increases in American history.

Yes, all politicians try to tell people what they want to hear. The bad ones lie, the good ones just make statements that seem to say what you want to hear but really don't. If your not listening close enough that's your problem. **I don't like politicians who actually lie to me.**

Second there was his complete disregard for the will of the people. Two years into his first term the American people sent him, and the entire Democratic Party, a clear message that they were not doing what the people wanted in time honored fashion by voting in a Republican majority for the first time in something like 40 years. Did he get the message? No, instead, like a petulant little kid, he did everything possible including shutting down most of the Federal government to avoid letting a single

bill he did not approve of pass. **I don't like politicians who put their personal agenda ahead of the clear wishes of the people.**

Third there was his treatment of Monica Lewinski. She was a young intern, barely 21 years old, and Clinton was not only twice her age but arguably the most powerful man on earth. By his own admission, he used her for the cheapest sort of sex, "She had sex with me, I didn't have sex with her." **I have nothing but the deepest contempt for men who sexually use women like a public urinal as a cheap source of relief from a physical need.**

I would actually have thought better of him if he had simply had the Secret Service bring in one of the diplomatic core prostitutes. That would have at least have had an element of honesty.

Fourth there was his infidelity. I know it's popular these days to treat adultery like a speeding ticket: a minor nuisance and only a problem because you got caught at it. I don't think that way. To me marriage is a serious thing and fidelity in marriage is a test of a man's character as well as his love. **I despise men who cheat on their wives.**

Fifth there was his abuse of power. Pulling hundreds of confidential FBI files on his political opponents was a gross abuse of power. No, I'm not going to argue about who knew what when so don't bother. Even if I believed he didn't know about it, which I don't for a minute, the boss is the boss. What I do know is that information from those files later mysteriously turned up. Abuse of power for personal gain, financial or political, by the person who is primarily charged with protecting the rights of Americans citizens is unforgivable. **I dislike Clinton because I believe he abused his power as president to his own personal gain.**

Sixth there was his arrogance. When I read about his sitting on the end of the runway at, I've forgotten the airport now, holding up air traffic delaying flights and costing the airlines over \$200,000 so he could *get his hair cut* I was furious! **The idea that a president should behave like royalty putting his trivial needs before those of the general public is abhorrent to me.**

Seventh he did nothing during a critical period in American history. Clinton came to power at a critical time. He was lucky enough to serve during a period of unprecedented economic growth and foreign tranquility. What did he do? Nothing! Other than his failed plan to nationalize the health care system in this country, there was not one major policy program put forward. He could have worked toward energy independence, cemented ties with Middle Eastern governments, heavily promoted education, significantly updated the military, or down sized the Federal government. Instead we got a succession of proposed expansions to entitlement programs and foreign military ventures that did nothing to further American security. **I don't like incompetent, or lazy, it's sometimes hard to decide which, managers.**

Eighth, and most of all, he was a divisive influence in America. One of the most important jobs a president has is to hold together the diverse and conflicting needs and desires of the American people. We are a country of widely varying beliefs from religious to political. There are always forces, self-interest, hatred, and religion to name a few, trying to tear us apart. The last time things got out of control it cost this country blood and agony that we are still feeling.

Clinton choose, choose, to let this country fall into a deep and passionate debate about his guilt or innocence when he could have ended the whole thing by simply saying, "Yes, I made a mistake and



I'm sorry." Instead he maintained his "innocence" spending millions of tax dollars in the process until physical proof came to light.

For a president to take actions that further polarize the public merely to hide his infidelity places him beyond the pale!

There are probably at least eight more reasons, if not eighty, but I think this is enough for you to get the idea.

So why was he so popular? He had unprecedented good luck. A combination of technological advances and low energy prices sent our economy into overdrive and most people do not look far past their paycheck. The fact that he had nothing to do with the good economy is true but irrelevant. A lot of people give him credit for balancing the budget despite the fact that Federal spending went up all though his term in office. **He did not balance the budget; unprecedented tax revenues from the stock market bubble did that.**

I will give him one thing: he has a positive gift for being in the right place at the right time. Beyond that I can see no redeeming qualities at all and I can usually find something nice to say about almost anyone.

Gee I think that may be my personal best for comments to a single person☺.

Oblio No. 136

Gary Brown

Nice zine as usual. No comments but nice zine.

Guilty Pleasures 20

Eve Ackerman

Funny I help design a convention registration system and most people who bought it did so because we could print large names on badges. Your observation, that the convention dealer's room seemed to have less variety, is mirrored in other conventions I go to. People at the national 3D society meeting were complaining about the same thing. I suspect Ebay is the main culprit.

Good to hear you've got a complete draft of your new book. Mine is on hold while we try to get settled in Ellijay.

