

# Frequent Flyer

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We have both good and bad news about our health. First, the good news: Anita joined Weight Watchers and has lost 31 pounds. She is also going to work part-time for the organization. Although I have not been as strict about following the Weight Watcher program, I have lost 10 pounds. More important, my most recent hemoglobin A1C reading, which measures the average blood sugar level over the previous 90 days, was 5.9, which is within the normal range.

The bad news is that we both came down with eye infections. After swimming in our apartment complex's pool one Sunday afternoon, I noticed some irritation in my right eye. By the next morning, it had swelled up. Anita tried a few country remedies she remembers from her childhood, but by Wednesday there was no improvement, so Anita drove me to my eye doctor. The doctor took one look at it and referred me to an eye surgeon and mentioned emergency surgery might be necessary that day. Anita drove me across town, where the eye surgeon ordered a CAT scan at the hospital next door. After a 3-hour wait during which I watched an entire episode of *Rosie* in its entirety, I had my first ever CAT scan. I found it surprisingly uninteresting. For the first batch of scans, I was lying on my back and almost dozed off. For the second, I was lying on my stomach, but was too uncomfortable to nod off.

We waited at the hospital for the pictures to develop and hand-carried them back to the surgeon's office. After examining the pictures and me, the surgeon diagnosed that my right tear duct was blocked, and the fluid build up was causing the infection. However, she decided it was not an emergency situation so she scheduled me for surgery. By the time you read this, it should be over. She also prescribed an anti-biotic and warm soaks and placed me under travel restrictions.

Two days later, unfortunately, my left eye swelled up. Then Anita's eyes became infected. Unfortunately, her primary care physician was on vacation, although her nurse prescribed an anti-biotic. After two days her eyes did not improve, so by this time, my eyes had improved to the point where I could drive her to an eye clinic that she had used a few years ago when she first developed floaters. They diagnosed her as having a bacteria infection and prescribed anti-biotic eye drops. Although our ailments should not be related, the coincidence is too great for them not to

have a common cause. In any case, we have both improved to the point where we are functional.

### Corporate Scandals—

I followed the Arthur Andersen trial with great interest, especially since I wrote my company's document retention policy. I had researched the relevant state and federal laws and applied them to the specific documents we use in the hotel and food service industries. The retention periods range from one year to permanent. Unlike that accounting firm, no one in our top management has ever given us a pep talk about the importance of shredding documents and deleting e-mails. Their pep talks usually involve subjects such as controlling costs, reducing employee turnover, eliminating sexual harassment, etc.

We do have an annual "Dump Day" in which we throw out those documents that we no longer need to keep and sent others to off-site storage. We wear old clothes or blue jeans, and lunch is catered. Since we do not sell shares to the public, we have no dealings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, so we have never been under investigation. Among the documents designated as "permanent", however, are all documents related to lawsuits or major insurance claims.

I have also had a strong interest in the World-Com scandal. About 15 years ago, we shared an office building with them in Jackson, Mississippi, although then they were known as Long Distance Discount Service (LDDS). We occupied the fifth floor, and they took the third. This coincided with a period of expansion for them and contraction for us, so they bought out our lease and we moved to less expensive accommodations. Since then they build their own office building in Clinton, and we build one in another Jackson suburb called Flowood.

Oddly, we have never done much business with each other. They marketed their long distance service solely on the basis of cost, but we never found their quality of service to be as good as AT&T's. Furthermore, we are big enough to negotiate long distance rates with AT&T that were in the same ballpark as LDDS. Of course, like many others, we use them indirectly since they handle most of the Internet traffic in the United States. On the other hand, they have never used our Jackson hotels to any great degree.

They prefer to house their people visiting from out of town in fancier hotels than the site of the 1997 Deep-SouthCon.

The specific charge against WorldCom, that its CFO classified expenses as capital expenditures, violates one of the basic principles of accounting, which is the expenses should never be understated. Whether to classify a cash outflow as an expense or as a capital expenditure has always been controversial in my company. Operating managers always want to classify items as capital expenditures, because it helps their bottom line. Our CFO and auditors want to classify items as expenses, because it reduces corporate income tax. I remember one of our managers bitterly complaining about one decision. His hotel had gotten new light fixtures, which were capitalized. However, he wanted to the new light bulbs that went into the new fixtures to be capitalized as well. Unfortunately, the CFO insisted that they be expensed, which reduced the manager's bonus.

I remember studying the books of a hotel we took over under a management contract. They had capitalized everything they possibly could, including pencil sharpeners. Technically that is correct, because you expect to get at least five years of usage out of a pencil sharpener. However, we have always required that a capital expenditure cost at least \$500. Anything less is not worth the trouble.

#### The Parthenon—

Like most people, we tend not visit tourist attractions in the cities where we live. When my parents came through on their return to Florida from a visit to Wisconsin, Anita suggested we visited the Parthenon here in Nashville. After five years of living here, I still had not seen the inside of the building. Situated in Centennial Park, it is a full-scale replica of the original in Athens. Replacing a temporary structure built for the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Exposition, it opened in 1931 and was renovated in 1987. Before the rise of country music and becoming known as "Music City", Nashville called itself as the "Athens of the South".

Anita has a personal connection to the Parthenon. Her grandfather installed the 7.5 ton bronze doors. When they arrived, he placed them on blocks

of ice. As the ice melted, he connected them to the hinges.

There are art galleries on the lower level. In addition to exhibits that change about every six weeks, the building houses the James Cowan collection of 63 pieces American art, which includes work by William Merritt Chase and Winslow Homer.

The 42 feet tall statue of Athena dominates the upper level and is the largest indoor sculpture in the Western Hemisphere. Sitting on a five feet high pedestal, she carries the goddess Nike in her right hand and supports a 17 feet shield and a 36 feet spear with her left.

Replicas of the Elgin Marbles align the walls. The originals were fragments of sculptures collected by the Earl of Elgin between 1801 and 1804, which now reside in the British Museum.

#### Wiscon—

Anita and I have gotten in the habit of attending a convention over Memorial Day weekend. Kublakhan took places on that weekend for a couple years and then Libertycon. The latter convention moved to July this year just in time for its hotel to burn down. Another consideration was our desire to visit my grandfather in Wisconsin. There have been no weddings, graduations, reunions, anniversaries, and, fortunately, no funerals in my family this year, so we decided to combine a visit with a convention.

Years ago when there was a little convention in Meridian, Mississippi, I stopped by to visit someone I used to work with and who had worked with the all-male con committee. "Do they let girls in?" she asked me. Of course, they did, but its strong gaming orientation attracted mostly males. Wiscon markets itself as the world's foremost feminist SF convention, so I was curious to see how it differed from the ones Anita and I attend in the South.

We almost didn't get there. Our Com Air (Delta) jet out of Nashville had mechanical difficulties, and they finally had to book us on the next flight to Cincinnati, where we had an even longer layover than we had planned. We did not reach the Concourse Hotel in downtown Madison until 10 PM on Friday night. Fortunately, registration was still open, and there were still panels scheduled. Anita and I visited

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the con suite, parties, and the dance before calling it a night. To his credit, Dick Russell was still manning registration at Midnight.

We found that Wiscon is not so much feminist as it is sercon. Panels started at 8:30 AM, broke for lunch and dinner, and continued until 1 AM. They ran for an hour and 15 minutes with a 15-minute break between. The panels included an academic track in which scholars read papers. There was no costume contest and no gaming. There were videos, but only during the lunch and dinner breaks and late at night. The dealer's room and the art show were good, but nothing special. A lot of the attendees we met were wannabee pro writers. They had an excellent, although dry, con suite where they served pizza and hot dogs, among other things. Anita especially liked a cheese spread, which is not surprising considering that we were in cheese head country. Unlike Kublakhan and Libertycon, Wiscon takes advantage of the extra day in the weekend to extend programming to Monday morning.

We did know a few people at the convention. Michael "Orange Mike" Lowrey used to live in Nashville, and he was a program participant. I've been in an APA with him as well as Ben Schilling and Andy Hooper. We found the people to be very friendly and had no trouble striking up conversations.

The first panel I attended on Saturday was "The Problem of History in Historical and Time-traveling SF" in which Karen Joy Fowler, Kage Baker, Jeanne Gomoll, Ellen Klages, and Justine Larbalestier explained the importance of doing research but then not overwhelming the reader with it. Bill Humphries, Gregg Noggle, and James Leinweber are all computer professionals and SF fans who discussed "Technologies of Freedom, or Big Brother." They especially recommended John Brunner's *Shockwave Rider* as amazingly prescient. Lee Schneider, Carl Marrs, Kathleen Massie-Ferch, Kay Kenyon, and Winifred Halsey debated "Will Plagues Replace Bombs as Weapons of Terror?" They felt smallpox would be the most effective disease for terrorists to use, but mostly felt that bombs were still the most dangerous weapons.

In "Fantasy Religions from Conan to *Curse of Chalion*" on Sunday, Cynthia Joyce Clay, Gregory Rihn, Leah Rose Cutter, Magenta Griffith, and Naomi

Kritzer discussed how religion is used or not used in fantasies and complained about stories in which religion plays little part in the lives of the characters. Jed Hartman and Mary Anne Mohanraj answered questions about electronic magazines in "Electronic Magazines Q and A". They operate the Strange Horizons web site that is nominated for this year's Hugo Award. They pay for stories through donations, including their time for maintaining the site. Jan Schubert, Carol Emshwiller, Ellen Klages, Karen Joy Fowler, Kristine Smith, and Lauren Ann Yourke discussed the use and overuse of detail in "The Devil in the Details."

Also on Sunday, Anita and I watched the original British version of *Max Headroom*. Neither of us had ever seen it, only the American version, which kept the original concept but substituted American actors and had slicker production values.

The parties all took place in parlor rooms on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, where the con suite was also located, and there were about 5-6 each night, including Sunday. To show you how well organized the convention was, the parties were listed in the pocket program. TOR books on Saturday night had the best food, and the Club Vampire party that night had the best atmosphere and a place to dance. They also had door prizes, and both Anita and I won paperbacks. At the Apa-Alpha party, a Madison-based APA, I discussed apas with people and looked at some of their old mailings.

All weekend Laurie Marks had been handing out quizzes in honor of her new book *Fire Logic*. The quiz determined what kind of logic your personality followed. Mine was Earth Logic, which means that I like to fix things. Anita responded, "Since when?" The other logics were water and air, after the four elements.

Because of our diets, Anita and I skipped the dessert buffet on Sunday night but instead drove to the Madison suburb of Middleton to have dinner with my Aunt Roberta. My grandfather was there, too. The last time we had seen them was for my grandmother's funeral, so our visit was much more relaxing this time around.

We returned in time for the guest of honor speeches by Nina Kiriki Hoffman and Nalo Hopkinson. Hoffman spoke of the camaraderie of the on-line service of Genie, especially how she became friend with Jo Clayton before her death. Hopkinson, a black

Canadian woman born in Jamaica, spoke about race issues. When she was a girl, she read the *Daredevil* comic book and imagined that the character became black when he put on his costume because of the way he moved and talked. She was a big fan of Samuel R. Delany even before she discovered he is black.

We noticed that several of the parties had beer brewed in nearby New Glarus. After a quick breakfast in the con suite on Monday morning, we drove to that village to visit my grandfather. He lives in an assisted-living facility in which he has an apartment. (See picture on page one.) After lunch at a local tavern, we drove him around the area. Among the sites we visited were the cemetery where my grandmother, one of my great-aunts, and his parents are buried, the farm where he was born, one on which he worked when he was a young man, and the first farm he owned. He also showed us a creek where he once trapped 68 muskrats during one winter. After some ice cream, we finally returned to his apartment where he showed us old photographs. He was walking well for a man 89 years old, although he had difficulty getting in and out of the car. Mentally, he is still alert, although he mixes up the generations. Because my grandmother died last year, he is lonely, but doesn't really want a roommate.

As we expected, he became tired by the late afternoon so we drove over to my brother Tim's house for dinner. It was the first time we had seen the house, where he lives with Wanda, his significant other. She designed it herself using a computer program, although a licensed architect did check its structure. We were especially amused by the His and Her laundries. She refuses to wash her clothes with Tim's farm clothing.

#### A Sherlock Holmes Trilogy—

For the fifth time since I have lived in Nashville, Chaffin's Barn, a local dinner theater, produced a play based on the stories of Arthur Conan Doyle. This year, John Chaffin, the owner, adapted "The Adventure of the Resident Patient", "The Adventure of the Final Problem", and "The Adventure of the Empty House."

Due to a mix-up, the Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem, Nashville's Sherlock Holmes club, was unable to book a group reservation. Consequently, we

had to book individually on separate evenings. Three of our fellow members attended the same night as we did, and we sat at adjoining tables.

Your only option for dinner is a large buffet, so Anita was concerned about maintaining her diet. She watched what she was eating and only took a sampling of desserts. As a diabetic, I avoided the dessert table entirely as well as starchy vegetables. Unfortunately, we both still ate too much.

I could not remember the first story they adapted, "The Resident Patient" and decided the reason is that the story is one of the less memorable ones. It involves two criminals getting revenge on another who had betrayed them. I did not have to be reminded of the other two, however. "The Final Problem" and "The Empty House" are two of the key stories in the Canon. The first was Doyle's attempt to kill off Sherlock Holmes and the second is where he brought him back to life.

"The Final Problem" is also important, because it was the story that introduced Professor Moriarty. Most of the actors who have played the character in the movies have gone over-the-top. Rodney Pickel, who doubled as our waiter, deliberately underplayed the character yet was able to convey an aura of danger.

This was Jim Wright's fourth outing as Sherlock Holmes, and he was excellent as usual. Although Adam Burnett, John Chaffin's son-in-law, has been involved in every Sherlock Holmes production there, this was his first time to play Doctor Watson. (Last year he directed *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Holmes novel and the best adaptation we have seen there, although none of them have been bad.) The other actors were good as well. We enjoyed ourselves once again.

#### Aftermath of September 11—

The June 10 issue of The Tennessean, our local newspaper, had an article on revamped security procedures at Nashville International Airport. The National Guard is gone, including the humvees parked in front of the terminal. Airlines are installing ticketing kiosks for passengers who are not checking baggage so that they can get through security, and Southwest is now issuing boarding passes at both the ticketing counter and curbside check-in up until 20 minutes before the flight departs. They also issue the passes 90 minutes before the flight rather than just one hour.

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People parking in the short-term parking garage can now use the entire garage, including the portion that is less than 300 feet from the terminal. A blast study determined that a car bomb exploded anywhere in the garage would not affect the terminal.

Conspiracy theories started to fly before the dust settled on 9/11. One of the most widely believed in the Islamic world was that 5,000 Jewish workers called in sick that day. Another theory that has gotten widespread attention France claims that a missile hit the Pentagon and that the planes flown into the World Trade Center were programmed to do so. No Muslims were involved in the attacks. According to Thierry Meyssan, the attacks were planned by a right-wing group within the U.S. government to advance their oil interests. According to the June 22 electronic issue of the New York Times, his book *The Horrible Fraud* has sold 200,000 copies in France. By the time you read this, an English translation is supposed to be available.

### DeepSouthCon/FanHistoricon—

I took the entire day off Friday so that we could get an early start. We had lunch at the Shady Lawn Truck Stop just north of the Alabama state line. It is the home of the Big Chicken. (See picture on right.) We arrived around 3 PM and, unlike others, had no trouble getting into our hotel room. After picking up our badges, I touched base with Sam Smith, Mike Kennedy, who used my Confederate cavalry saber for an exhibit of Rebel Awards, and Doug Lampert, who was in charge of programming. I myself was running the FanHistoricon portion of it.

Doug showed me where the room was, and it turned out to be just about ideal. It was big enough that we never ran out of seats but small enough to be intimate. Sam and I figured out how to run Kerry Gilley's video camera. Once started, it operated itself, but occasionally I need to pan to either the right or the left. Ken Moore once had to get up to demonstrate a story, and the people at the "Tribute to Meade Frierson III" stood up and talked about how fine a person Meade was.

Most of the panels repeated information already found in The SFC Handbook, but the one that featured new information was one that Anita sug-

gested, so I made her moderator. "Tales from the Nashville Sardine Can" gave her, Allen Steele, Dan Caldwell, Ray Jones, and Ken Moore the opportunity to tell stories from the days when they crowded into hotel rooms at conventions. Allen's first published article, for instance, concerned a flat tire and a dead possum and appeared in a zine of Irv Koch's. In the "History of Huntsville Fandom", Toni Weisskopf described her first encounter with Harlan Ellison. In "The Legend of Wigwam Village", Guy Lillian revealed that he has actually stayed at the motel, and Patrick Molloy said that they stopped making bids before they actually won one. Attendance was strong until Sunday. Unfortunately, no one came to the last panel on the origins of the SFPA, DSC, and SFC, but the subject matter had already been covered in previous panels. My only disappointment was that Ned Brooks was unable to attend due to illness. I'm sure he would have made some solid contributions.

In other programming, Anita and I attended Opening Ceremonies and the Meet the Guests party in



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which they served a cake in the form of a space shuttle. We also attended the dance on Friday night, but overdid it as Anita had sore knees when we got up Saturday morning. Our favorite parties on Friday night were the Memphis in 2004 DSC bid and Baen Books. The Huntsville Hilton turned out to be more than adequate for a DSC. With only four floors, elevators could keep up with demand.

Anita and I only left the property once during the weekend. Since George Wells does not have any Arby's restaurants near where he lives in New York, we drove him and Rich Dengrove to one to have lunch on Saturday.

In the guest of honor speeches Saturday afternoon, Allen Steele took a clue from the congressman who represents the Huntsville area. The congressmen suggested taxing science fiction to fund NASA. Allen recommended taxing Tom Clancy novels for homeland defense, Dale Brown for the Air Force, and Susan Sontag for mental health. Allen Steele and Julie Wall won the Phoenix and Rebel Awards, respectively. Rosie Lillian won the Rubble for transforming Guy Lillian, her new husband, from a windbag to a giddy windbag.

Then we went up to Toni Weisskopf's suite for an SFPA party where we drank beer, ate cookies, and produced a one-shot fanzine. Anita and I went back to our room to rest and then attended the masquerade. The highlight occurred when Jim Woosley and Carlo Deshouten appeared in a martial arts contest. The highlights of the Saturday parties were the Xerps in 2010 party and the Charlotte in 2004 DSC bid.

Julie Wall did not stand for re-election as President of the Southern Fandom Confederation, but was elected VP instead. Randy Cleary will be our new President. Judy Bemis and I were re-elected Treasurer and Secretary respectively. We also voted to allow Randy to obtain a bulk mail permit so that I can retire mine.

In the DSC site selection, Greg and Dana Bridges from Memphis made a better presentation and won. Many people thought the Charlotte bid had a better date, but Dan Caldwell, the presenter, could not answer basic questions such as whether the con suite would be dry or wet, the amount of square footage of the hotel's meeting rooms, and what the membership rate would be.

Anita and I left around 2:30 PM and had lunch again at the Shade Lawn Truck Stop before getting home about 4:30.

George Alec Effinger—

George was the first professional SF writer I got to know personally. He was guest of honor at the first two Chimneycons and was supposed to be GOH at the Jackson DSC until he came down with hepatitis. He took a nap in my apartment in Jackson once when we had brought him up from New Orleans to make personal appearances. Although everyone knew he could go at any time, it was still a sad event.

Bruce Pelz—

I first met Bruce in the pages of LASFAPA and FAPA in the late Eighties. He will be missed. The May FAPA mailing had one of his trip zines. It was eerie to read it while knowing he was dead.

## Comments on #227

SFPA sightings—

I saw Randy Cleary, Richard Dengrove, Steve Hughes, Guy Lillian, Richard Lynch, Gary Robe, Sheila Strickland, George Wells, and Toni Weisskopf at DSC.

Richard Lynch—

I've gone completely to electronic ticketing. Then again 99% of my travel is in the Southeastern United States.

Janice Gelb—

I received my copy of Ansible after I heard about the controversy with Harlan. My reaction was "Is this all there is?" To use a cliché, it was truly a 'tempest in a teapot'.

Arthur Hlavaty—

I can't speak for other males, but when I was in the seventh grade, I could have appreciated a stripper. I remember that my year in the seventh grade corresponded to the first season of *Star Trek's* original run on NBC, and the mini-skirted female crewmembers impressed me at the time.

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Charlotte Proctor c/o Toni Weisskopf—

What I did not like about *Proof of Life* is that Russell Crowe's character says at the beginning that Kidnapping & Ransom specialists don't do rescues and then proceeds to rescue the kidnappee and that his insurance company covers the kidnapping and then finds out that it does not. The film wasn't playing straight with the viewer.

David Schlosser—

Re the "using drugs helps terrorists" campaign: Since most of the Al-Qaeda funding comes from Saudi Arabia and other oil rich Arab countries, aren't we helping terrorists every time we fill the gas tanks of our cars?

The cheapest times to vacation in Orlando are the periods between Easter and Memorial Day and then between Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

Guy Lillian—

I've driven through Thibodeaux. My company once had a management contract in Houma. I recall that the roads were poorly marked. I wondered if that meant that anyone who needed signs to navigate was not welcome there. Several of our people got lost in that part of Louisiana, and I wasn't sure where I was on a few occasions.

You are not the only one to object to Lana Lang's hair color in *Smallville*. On the other hand, I am not aware of anyone complaining that they turned Pete Ross from Nordic to African-American.

Assuming Glasgow wins the 2005 Worldcon, the Nasfic vote will not come until 2003.

I am not crazy about the proposal to allow pilots to have guns in the cockpit. At the very least, they would need special training on how to use firearms in a confined space so that passengers, like myself, are not shot accidentally. Strengthening the door to the cockpit is a much better solution.

Jeffrey Copeland—

The scene in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* in which Annakin drops into the Sandpeople camp reminded me of the scene toward the end of *The Searchers* in which Jeffrey Hunter drops into the Comanche camp. It also reminded me of an essay on the latter

movie explaining why Hunter rather than John Wayne was the one to sneak into the camp to rescue Natalie Wood. If Hunter kills Scar, the Comanche chief, or any of the Comanches, it would be to defend himself or Wood. If Wayne were to kill Scar, it would be out of hate and anger. Of course, Annakin succumbs to his anger and wipes out the entire camp, which puts him on the path to the Dark Side.

I belong to a Sherlock Holmes e-list that is very active, although not 100-200 messages a day, more like 25-50 daily. Even that was too much for me, so I switched to the digest option in which I receive the messages in increments of 25, which made it much more manageable.

Richard Dengrove—

I haven't seen a Matt Helm movie in many years, but I don't recall that they were parodies, just second-rate imitations of James Bond.

The man who was upset that Tommy Dorsey was not at the concert featuring the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra might have been even more upset if Dorsey had been there, considering that Dorsey died in 1956. A corpse would have a terrible stage presence.

If Silverstein, leaseholder of the World Trade Center, were to succeed in lobbying the local, state, and federal governments to limit liability for 9/11, it would not do GMAC any good, because they wrote the property insurance, not the general liability. GMAC's position in their lawsuit is that the money advanced so far is for rebuilding.

Strictly speaking, Southwest Airlines has few amenities to cut back on. They do not serve meals on any flights, although on the ones longer than two hours, they give you a sack lunch.

Don Markstein—

I've occasionally seen and enjoyed *Gilmore Girls*, because it is the show on the Warner network before *Smallville*.

Gary Brown—

I know who Eddie Haskell is, especially since I was a fan of *Leave it to Beaver*.