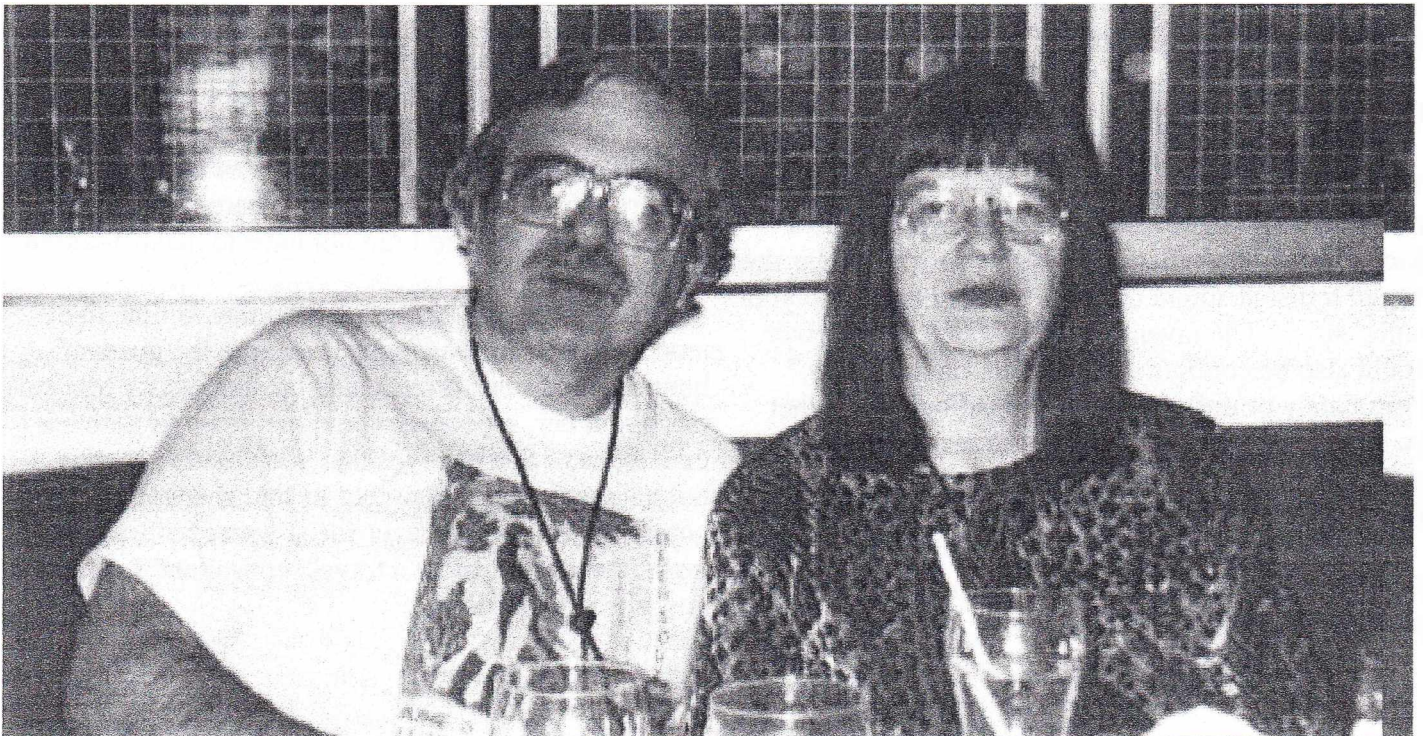


# Frequent Flyer

By Tom Feller

November 20, 2002

Po Box 68203  
Nashville, TN 37206  
Tomfeller@aol.com



## Frequent Flyer

The news for this mailing is that Anita and I are planning to build a house. It will be have 1700 square feet, three bedrooms, and a two-car garage with everything on the first floor except for a bonus room above the garage. The bonus room will become my office. We've looked at similar houses in two subdivisions, but did not like the locations.

September 11—

The September 16 issue of Risk and Insurance had an article entitled "September 11 Success Stories". One of the companies highlighted was Morgan Stanley, which had 2,700 employees in 2 World Trade Center and another 1,000 in 5 World Trade Center. When the first plane hit 1 World Trade Center, Rick Rescorda, the VP of corporate of security ignored all assurances by building management that they were safe and ordered an evacuation. It also helped that they had rehearsed how evacuate the buildings. Unfortunately, Rescorda himself and six other Morgan Stanley employees perished in the attack, because they were helping other people get out.

The Associated Press ran a story on the financial cost of the terrorist attacks in New York, which came to \$33 billion to \$36 billion in lost wages and business, property damage, and cleanup. The losses, estimated from October 2001 through June, include \$7.8 billion that the 2,795 people killed at the World Trade Center would have earned and \$21.6 billion to clean up the area around the WTC. New York lost 51,000 jobs in October 2001.

Our cyberpunk world--

According to the November 1 issue of CIO, "Two British design students have developed a prototype of a phone that would be fitted directly into a back tooth by a dentist. This filling in your molar then would transmit sound through your jawbone into your inner ear.... The inventors suggest that the receiver could also be configured to pick up radio signals." Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on whether you consider this a good idea, "the technologies required to make this phone actually work ... do not yet exist."

The November 10 electronic version of the New York Times had an article on surgically implanted microchips.

The chip, called the VeriChip, is about the size of a grain of rice, carries a number that identifies you and, the company says, may eventually provide a way to make sure that only the right people gain access to secure sites, corporate offices or even personal computers. The chip could also carry access to personal data, like medical information. Implantable microchips have already been used over the last several years to track pets.

The article was mostly tongue and cheek, but may have inadvertently stumbled on the attraction. "'It's cool to have one," [the article quotes] Matthew Cossolotto, the spokesman for Applied Digital Solutions [manufacturer of the chip], and one of the few people to already have a chip implanted under his skin." I suspect that if it becomes popular, it may become a status symbol as the ultimate development of body piercing.

Constellation—

This convention was in a new hotel, a Holiday Inn-Express, which had originally been a Holiday Inn, so it had meeting rooms. The hotel is located on University Drive, which is one of the main streets in Huntsville, so we had no difficulty finding it and checked in well before opening ceremonies.

After registering with the convention, we found the con suite. However, we found people tended to congregate in the pre-assembly and hotel breakfast area, so we found ourselves spending more time there. There wasn't much programming Friday night, except for a belly dancing demonstration, and no parties, so we went to bed relatively early.

The hotel provided complimentary breakfast, so I walked down to the breakfast area each morning and brought food back to Anita. There was a coffee maker in the room, so I did not have to make a coffee run.

We finished breakfast Saturday in time to attend the Roast for Sandy McDade, the fan guest of honor. Her sister Phronsie and brother Bucky told stories about her, especially about her dealings with her ex-husband. She believes that you should get even, not get mad. Sandy also told us that she worked as a hotel reservations manager for 10 years before becoming a travel agent (now a travel "consultant"), which is how she makes a living.



After spending some time in the breakfast area talking to people, we joined Robert Edwards, Pat James, and Adrian Washburn in search of a real meal. We walked a few blocks down the street before finding an Olive Garden restaurant, where we had our lunch. This was a big advantage over the Sheraton Four Points inside the Huntsville airport terminal, where the convention took place for the previous five years. Unless you ate in the airport itself, you had to drive miles to find a restaurant.

I attended two presentations later on Saturday. The first was by a NASA representative, Brad Carlson. He himself is working on the third generation space shuttle engine, but admitted that it would be only an incremental improvement over the ones currently in operation. Instead, he informed us that NASA is funding at a low level some research into Faster-Than-Light travel. He mostly talked about wormholes, which appears to be the most promising line, but also discussed a concept called a "warp drive".

Bruce Gehweiler, head of Marietta Books, talked about small press publishing. He is a print-to-order publisher and said he can make money on a print run as low as 500 copies. A member of the audience said that he prefers to read books on his Palm Pilot, which is a hand-held computer, and subscribes to Baen's service that allows him to download four books a month for a fee that he describes as reasonable.

The masquerade was small, but lively, and Anita and I could dance to the music at the dance. We have found this to be increasingly rare at conventions. The following morning, I thanked Pat McAdams, the disk jockey. There was one party Saturday night, an elaborate one thrown by some Huntsville area fans who are not members of the con committee. They decorated extensively and served beer and a lot of food. We finished the night by watching the last 30 minutes of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Ironically, there would have been one big advantage of last year's hotel inside the airport terminal. This year, I had to be in the Atlanta area early Monday morning for a meeting. After saying our good-byes to the other fans, Anita dropped me off at the airport before heading home to Nashville.

## Comments on #229

SFPA sightings—

I saw Toni Weisskopf at the Southern Festival of Books in Nashville and Randy Cleary at Constellation.

*Fail Safe*—

Since both the movie and book did not deal with the consequences of nuking Moscow and New York, I am not inclined to consider it science fiction, but rather to retroactively classify it as a techno thriller with an unhappy ending. In a thriller with a happy ending, the world is exactly the same at the end of the book as it was in the beginning. Of course, if a thriller is any good, happy ending or not, the characters are different at the end.

9/11—

I doubt whether the hijackers considered the date to be important. It is more likely that they choose a Tuesday, because there is less business travel than on a Monday or Friday. This meant that there were fewer passengers to deal with.

Liz Copeland—

Allie would not have liked my alma mater, Ripon College in Wisconsin. It's located in a town of about 8,000 in the middle of Wisconsin farm country.

Steve Hughes—

You reminded me that an IRS audit over 20 years ago nailed us on the expense vs. capital expenditure issue. We had expensed the cost of wallpaper in our hotel rooms, but should have treated them as capital expenditures. The confusion was a result of our correct classification of paint as an expense, although a good paint job should last more than one year.

Janice Gelb—

Condolences on the death of your ex-husband. Several people have recommended the *Left Behind* series to me, although none of them are SF fans.

Sorry we missed your party, but Anita had to work on the Tuesday following Worldcon. Anita's first Worldcon was also Suncon.

## Frequent Flyer

I've written in a previous mailing that we changed to a new payroll system this year. I was wondering why reports run faster now even when I'm connected using a 28K dial-up than they did on the old system when I was connected directly to the network. The old system first used a SQL database engine and later we upgraded to Oracle. I discovered that the new payroll system uses the old Dbase file format, now called Xbase, of your former employer Ashton-Tate.

The SeiuN awards only took 12 minutes this year? They seemed endless.

David Schlosser—

Re Uncle Owen not recognizing C-3PO. If you remember from Episode 1, Annakin built the robot himself and made it unique, so one would expect Owen to recognize it 20 years later.

Guy Lillian—

The man on the cover of my zine two mailings ago is my grandfather. He looks good for a man 89 years old, although of course I remember him when he was much more vigorous. After retiring from farming, he worked drove a truck until he was 70 and only then started to collect Social Security.

Mike Weber—

I don't know about the original Elgin marbles. The ones in Nashville are copies.

I agree that the Sherlock Holmes story "The Resident Patient" is one of the less memorable ones. Neither of us could remember the story.

Richard Dengrove—

Thank you for your kind remarks about my physique, but I was over 200 pounds when you saw me at DSC. If I joined Weight Watchers, they would want me to lose over 40. My doctor does want me to exercise more. Strictly speaking, diabetes is an incurable disease. It is treatable and controllable, but there is no cure. There's some promising research involving stem cells, but even that is for Type I, and I have Type II.

Don't buy Worldcom until it emerges from bankruptcy. There will be plenty of time if you think its long-term prospects are good. The MCI and UUNET divisions are worth a lot, so something will survive.

Hank Reinhardt—

In the hotel business, one of our safety concerns is the spread of blood borne pathogens by means of hypodermic needles left in hotel rooms or in trash receptacles in rest rooms. Each of our hotels has a sharps container and a set of procedures for dealing with such items.

I was passing through security in Nashville's airport recently, and a Hispanic man was pulled out of the line for more thorough searching. He vociferously complained about profiling.

Sheila Strickland—

You have to pay to attend River Stages, although I guess you could stand outside the fence and hear most of the music. Dancin' in the District is a series of free concerts on Thursday nights during the summer, and the Independence Day celebration is also free. Of course, as a consumer in Nashville, I am paying sales tax which helps fund them.

Gary Robe—

Boy, you do have a strict document retention policy. We consider our policy to be more of a set of guidelines rather than rules. The tone is more "You may throw these documents away" not "You must". We just had one of our semi-annual dump days. As usual, I did not touch my pending lawsuit files. We are not required to purge any of our electronic files, and I have ones as old as ten years archived in zip files. Last year I retrieved a Lotus file that dated back to 1993, which saved me the time of rebuilding it from scratch in Excel.

Unlike the voters at jumptheshark.com, I always thought that the original *Star Trek* peaked with "The Trouble with Tribbles". Although there were good episodes afterward, the plotting became formulaic, and the characters stopped growing. Actually, I have always had some affection for "Spock's Brain", although it represents the show at its silliest. The decline had set in well before that episode, however.

Gary Brown—

As I wrote in the natter section, Anita and I plan to build a house. Like you, we have lots of stuff, although it's mostly mine. She is not an accumulator of books, comic books, and fanzines.