

# GUILTY PLEASURES 20

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## Philadelphia Story

### How I Spent My Summer Vacation

I had a great time at MillPhil, even if I saw very little of Philadelphia. But what I saw I liked.

I arrived Wednesday afternoon and ran into Janice in the lobby of the Marriott, something I took as a good omen. After getting settled in our room on the top floor I headed over to the Convention Center to register and check out my Green Room facilities.

If there was one complaint heard non-stop at the Con it was about the badges. The names were in what looked like 12 pt. type and impossible to read at more than 6" away. Huge artwork, with of all things row houses, the name of the convention in giant letters and teeny tiny fan names. Ghu forbid you should forget what convention you were at!

Over the course of the con many explanations were offered for the badge screw up, my favorite being the fan in charge wanted a good reason to be able to get up close to women and look down their blouses as he tried to read

their badges. There was also the "admission ticket" vs. "ID" debate--were the badges meant to identify you to other fen, or simply be a means of admittance to the convention sites? In addition all the badges were attached to chains that kept flipping over, and the normal option of getting a pin or a clip wasn't offered. Now, these may seem like little concerns but if you have to wear the stinkin' badge for six days you want it to be as convenient as possible. And it's not like these people haven't been to a WorldCon before, so they knew what fen like.

On the other hand, I was pleased and impressed by what Programming had secured for me. The MillPhil Green Room was a huge expanse with a bar and kitchen at either end, and a glass wall of windows that looked out over what would be the Art Show and Dealer's Room when the convention was



underway. Cozy couches ringed the wall beneath the windows and plenty of tables and chairs were in place.

Much cheered I walked down the hall to Admin to strongarm some money out of the Treasury office. I made arrangements to take a shopping crew to the Reading Terminal Market the next morning and then it was back to the hotel to join Janice for a dinner expedition.

With Philly fan David Axler as our native guide a bunch of us set out for a recommended seafood restaurant not far from the Marriott. The food was good but poor Janice kept getting shafted by the waitstaff--wrong orders were brought, food was late, and the restaurant seemed oddly unresponsive for a facility that was trying to get a reputation as a fine dining establishment.

I made an early evening

**Just the facts, ma'am**

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of it. You know you're getting old when you say to yourself "I've had too much to drink. Do I a. have another drink or b. go to sleep?" and opt for "b".

But the next morning I was up bright and early to make the Reading run. And what a run it was! We had truly lucked out with the Green Room. I had been budgeted for a relatively bare bones affair catered by the \*shudder\* Convention Center. Shades of MagiCon! But thanks to the outstanding efforts of Facilities Liaison Elaine Brennan we had a corkage waiver for the Green Room. This meant I was buying my coffee and drinks from Aramark, but everything else could be brought in from outside provided we could carry it with our own two hands. In other words, we couldn't wheel in trays of goodies or have deliveries.

No worries. I gathered up a crew of volunteers and as soon as the Market opened we were there, buying fruit, sticky buns from the Amish bakery, scones, pies, crackers, cheese, all of it fresh and all of it wonderful! Later that morning there were trays of cookies from an Italian bakery to die for, chocolates, nuts, more munchies and it was finest kind, not as one Green Room devotee said "tasting like it had been baked a month ago, shrinkwrapped and put in storage for this event."



We kept the Green Room ambiance simple. A daily newspaper (and the WEEKLY WORLD NEWS), and plenty of security at the door. We made a decision early on that the only people allowed to hang out in the Green Room would be program participants and their dependents. It was not a staff lounge nor a benny for the Convention Committee, and I actually had some of the pros thank us for keeping the Green Room a place where they could get some peace and quiet.

My staff was handpicked and also finest kind. I owe special thanks to Tennessee fan Melissa Wauford for being my voice of reason and levelheadedness,

helping to make good decisions and keep the room well stocked and well staffed. The Convention Center folks too were helpful and cooperative, and I couldn't have done it without them.

We had some problems, naturally. I never did get a cork board or whiteboard for messages. We had a couple staffing glitches. And I heard a horror story about someone being treated very rudely when I was away from my post. But overall I'd have to say the Green Room ran well and I was pleased Janice and Laurie and Jim Mann tapped me for the job.

I was on a panel on "SF and Romance" with Catherine Asaro, Bud Sparhawk, and Diane Turnshek, and the "Sapphire Award" was presented at the start of the panel.

It was a lively discussion with appropriate *homage* paid to Asaro and Lois McMaster Bujold, who was in the audience. My most cogent comment was that romance novels, in the modern genre definition, are different from other genre novels in that you already know how it's going to end--the protagonists will be together, and presumably will be happy.

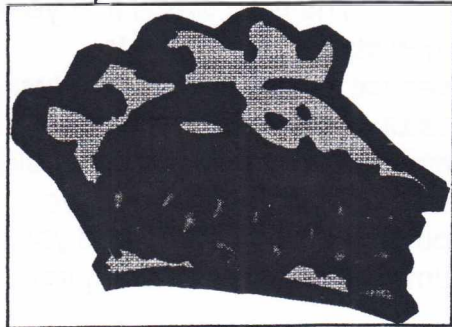
"The romance novel is not about the destination," I said, "it's about the journey. If you know how it's going to end

then what keeps you reading is how the characters get from point A to point B--what do they learn on their journey, what happens to change them?"

We had a lively audience and could easily have gone another hour.

I was also scheduled for a kaffeeklatsch on Friday morning but when I poked my head out of the Green Room no one was there, so I stayed at my station instead.

The dealer's room was interesting but didn't have the variety I'd come to expect from WorldCon. Two explanations were offered up for this. One was that some last minute charges brought to bear on dealers kept some from signing on. Another comment, and one I found especially interesting, was where before you had to come to major conventions to find a lot of these goodies, now they're all available on the 'net, from used books to leather bustiers with attached batwings. It made sense, but it saddened me to think we may lose some of that exotic bazaar atmosphere from WorldCon.



I certainly ate well at this convention, probably better and more varied food than at any con since ConFrancisco and NolaCon. The nearby Reading market as well as Maggione's Italian Restaurant/Bakery across the street from the Marriott kept us well fed and happy.

Chinatown was a short stroll away and I dined out on outstanding Malaysian food as well as Chinatown kosher veggie treats. The cheeses the local farmers sold in the market were so full of flavor they made the pre-packaged grocery stuff taste like spackle, and Termini Italian Bakery did cookie trays that were almost too pretty to eat.

I also sold some copies of *PIRATE'S PRICE* and did some editing on the first (completed!) draft of *CAPTAIN SINISTER* so it was definitely a working convention for Darlene Marshall, something that will make my accountant cheerful. One of the best places to network turned out to be the round lobby lounge at the Marriott, where you could not only get a drink but see just about everybody in the hotel pass by. There was almost always some kind of lively discussion happening there and it was a good venue to meet and greet.

The bid parties were well done and I was thrilled with Boston's win. I did

mention to Priscilla, Mark and some of the other Boston fen that the City by the Bay is a possible destination for Raphi's college years, and if that's so then they can expect to see more of me. I'd like a good excuse to go to ReaderCon, Boskone and some of the other local events.

Overall I'd pronounce MillPhil a success. Janice, Jim and Laurie did a great job with Programming, I met a lot of new friends and made some valuable business contacts.

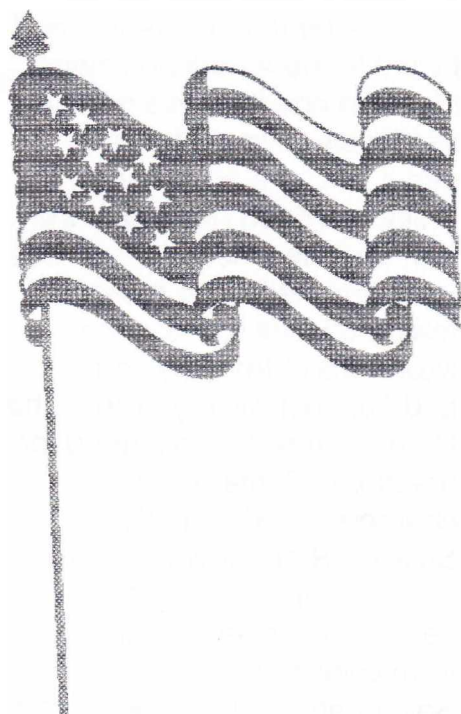
After the con Janice and I went to the American Jewish Museum and that was good at two levels--I would have felt bad if I'd come all the way to Philly and seen nothing of the city, and the museum itself was worth the visit. The exhibits featured icons (pardon the expression!) from my youth and from our history here in the US and I also found it good for research. Some of the characters in *CAPTAIN SINISTER* are Jews living in the South in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and seeing artifacts from communities like Savannah and Charleston from that period was helpful.

I hope to be at ConJose, but it will depend largely on Raphi's college plans. He's looking at a special program in Israel called *Nativ* where he would spend half a year on a kibbutz and half a year at Hebrew University. When and

if he goes on that would be a factor, as well as whether he stays in the US and goes to a school that starts before Labor Day. So I don't know yet, but hope to know by mid-winter.

## I purposely did

**not** start this 'zine with the events of September 11, 2001. There is plenty that has been said and plenty more we will say as the days pass. Miles to



go before we sleep. But what I will do is what I suspect so many of you are doing in your 'zines, and that is tell you what my impressions were of that day.

Around 9 a.m. I was taking Yofi for her morning walk before settling down in

front of my computer to work on my novel. As I rounded the block I stopped to talk with the lady who lives three doors down, and as we chatted another neighbor drove up and said "turn on your TV. An airplane flew into the World Trade Center."

I hurried Yofi home and walked into the family room. Howard was flipping channels and I said "put it on ABC", not only because I like their news coverage but because that's our local station and if there are local cut-ins I wanted to see Gainesville's news, not Jacksonville or Orlando.

I sat down to start watching moments after the second tower was hit. At that point, of course, it was still all confusion. We didn't know it was a terrorist attack. We didn't know anything, except we were watching it live, on television. A disaster movie where no one yells "cut". I saw the first tower fall and along with the ABC crew I was silent and dazed.

"What happened?" Howard said.

"It's gone. The tower's gone," I said, tears rolling down my face. "Thousands of people were in there."

And so the day went. Glued to the television screen as the reports went back and forth, information and misinformation, hope and despair.

But I knew one thing I could do.

When Raphi came home from school I said, "I'm going to the blood bank. You haven't donated yet. Would you like to make your first donation today?"

I told Micah we'd be home in about an hour and went to the blood bank at 4 p.m. When I saw the traffic cop outside I knew there would be a wait, but I was unprepared for what I found. Long lines in the hot Florida sun, snaking around the parking lot and around the block. We parked and took our places.

It was 2 a.m. before we were processed and out, but it was an incredible experience. We bonded with those immediately in front and behind us in the line--bikers, homemakers, UF students, businesspeople. Local restaurants shuttled food over. Volunteers walked the lines, passing out water and juice and reminding us to stay hydrated. I ate a box of raisins to jump my iron count so I could give. At midnight they got us in to check our vitals.

The tech was a first year med student drafted into service. I saw that he had two setups--the electric meter to measure iron count and the old fashioned solution where you put in a drop of blood and you time it as it falls. Enough iron

and it will sink properly. It is, as I said, old fashioned and less accurate than the meter.

"Use the solution, not the meter," I said to him.

He gave me a bleary eyed grin.

"Low iron?"

"I didn't wait here for eight hours to fail my crit count."

I passed and we had another two hour wait. I suggested to Raphi that we make an appointment and come back, but he said no, 'cause he had stuck it out this far, he wasn't about to pack up and go home. I couldn't argue with that and knew he'd feel better if he did something. So we passed our time playing cards, watching the news, eating, schmoozing with the other folks and reading. Raphi brought *TIMELINE* and I had a new romance novel I was reviewing, though had I known I would have brought my own book to work on and Raphi would have brought his chem homework. But finally they got us into the bloodmobile since all the tables in the center were being used.

Raphi was lying on the table next to me, both of us with needles in our arms and I said to him, "Every generation has a defining moment that brings it together. For your grandfather, it was Pearl Harbor. For me, it was the assassination of John F.

Kennedy. 30 years from now people will ask you where you were and what you did when you heard the news of the attacks. You will be able to say 'I went to the blood bank on September 11 and I helped save lives.'"

Even though we know now, sadly enough, that not as much blood was initially needed as anticipated because there weren't that many survivors there was still a very real need. Many of those burn victims will have on-going needs. Additionally, our country was in the midst of a blood shortage so no donation was an empty gesture. And when the fighting begins, more blood will be needed.

If you are able to give and you have not yet done so, now is the time to belly up to the bar. It does save lives and it takes so little effort--and don't forget to eat your raisins!



So now here it is, two weeks later. I'm concerned over loss of civil liberties as I see the somewhat knee jerk

reactions in Washington. But I still fly the flag every day, and will do so until October 11, one month after the attack. After that I'll return to my normal pattern of flying the flag on national holidays.

I'm also concerned because I have an 18 year old son and a 14 year old son. I'm more worried about the 14 year old. I don't think the idea of reviving the draft would float right now, but in four years who knows where we'll be? If we get dragged into a long involved conflict, the government may decide there aren't enough warm bodies showing up voluntarily at the recruiting office. Having grown up in the 60's I find it almost surreal that we're looking again at an overseas war with the possibility of conscription, but it does make me appreciate how Howard has been quietly serving on the Selective Service board over the past decade. I gave him grief when he signed on, but he said "if there's a draft you will want people on the Selective Service board who will be sympathetic to CO's (conscientious objectors)" and he's right.

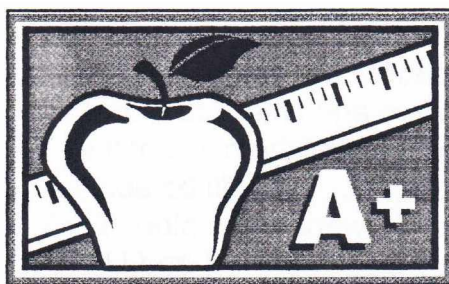
Everything has changed in an eyeblink. We know that. But already there's a sense of cohesiveness and national unity that shows the rest of the world what Americans are made of. As more than one

commentator has said, we're like a squabbling family, always arguing amongst ourselves until there's an outside force threatening us. And then we pull together.

## Life and stuff:

I've finished my first draft of *CAPTAIN SINISTER* and I'm now in revisions and looking for an agent. Toni was nice enough to recommend me to an agent she knows who's branching out into romance, so we'll see where it goes. But the writing continues and I'm already thinking towards the next book, trying to decide if I want to do another North Florida setting romance incorporating a couple characters from *PIRATE'S PRICE* or move on to a book I was noodling around a couple years ago, a post-Civil War western setting romance. As usual, I'll start writing and see where it takes me. Nothing's ever wasted, just set aside in files for a later date.

Micah and Raphi are both in high school now, but at different schools. Raphi's a Senior in the International Baccalaureate program at Eastside, a magnet school, and Micah's a freshman at Buchholz, the zoned high school. It's somewhat disorienting visiting their schools because both were built at the same time using the same design. EHS was the



school that would replace Lincoln, the segregated "colored" school. BHS was the school that would serve the predominantly white population growing on the west side of Gainesville. So if I go to BHS a day after EHS I have to turn myself around slightly since one's built on an E-W axis and the other is N-S, plus BHS has more buildings and about twice the population.

Micah's doing well though in his pre-AP and general classes and seems to have made a good adjustment. We did have to listen to about two weeks worth of whining about how the high school teachers were so tough and they gave homework all the time and there was no "downtime" like in middle school. He wisely took a study hall though and is finding it very useful to have this mid-morning period to work on assignments and study.

Raphi's looking at colleges up north, but is also looking at delayed entry. As I mentioned, Boston is the primary focus right now, Brandeis and Harvard, with a

side trip planned to check out New Haven. We may also take a trip up to Chicago later this year to look at UC and Northwestern.

The delayed entry would be for a year in Israel in the *Nativ* program. This would give him half a year living on a kibbutz, and half a year at Hebrew University. Many of the students who do *Nativ* are pre-rabbinical studies students, but Raphi insists that's not where his interests lie. On the other hand, he does like theater, so who knows? Being able to sing, dance and give a rousing sermon has made other men's fortunes. My son, the TV Preacher.

Howard has been his usual busy self getting through the High Holidays. For Rosh Hashanna I told Raphi to bring to the house any college friends stranded in Gainesville who couldn't get home for the holidays and wanted a home cooked meal. We ended up with five extra 19 year old young men. A lot more cooking was involved but I enjoyed all of it. The holidays were more introspective than usual this year, but that's a good thing--a time for reflection may have been just what we need right now.

**Until next disty,  
Eve**