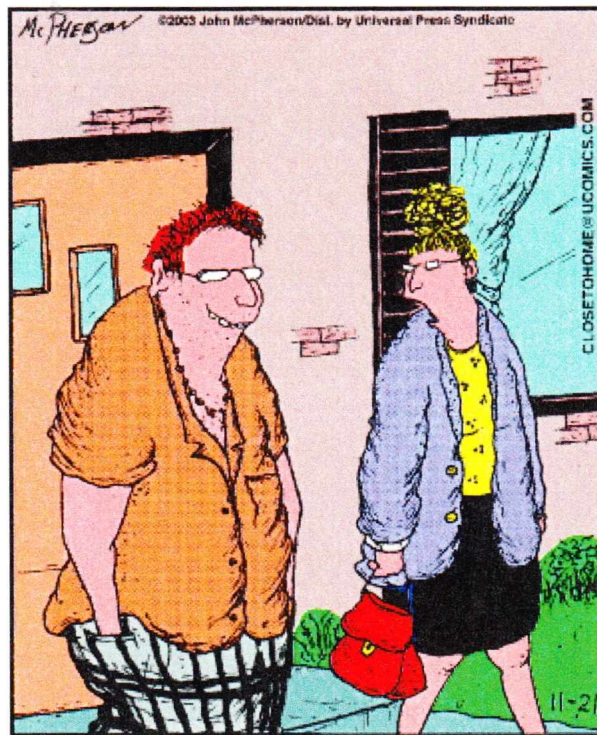


Home
With
The
Armadillo



"For heaven's sake, take that hideous thing off!
Nobody wants to see a necklace made out of
your kidney stones!"

Home with the Armadillo #61 is brought to you by Liz Copeland of 3243 165th Ave. SE, Bellevue WA 98008. Phone number is 425-641-0209. Email is received at lizc@nwlinc.com. Started in November 2003, for SFPA 236.

My medical problems are getting a bit better. I'm sleeping better, I've adjusted a couple of my meds so most of the other problems are better, and now I just have a little fatigue problem. I can only hope this improves as time goes by and won't really interfere with my birding trip to Texas.

I leave Tuesday, December 2, for Brownsville Texas. Tina and I will be there for 10 days doing the winter Texas birding thing. Whooping cranes are the big draw but there's a list of about 130 birds that we stand a good chance of seeing while we're there. We'll be going to the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge on the Rio Grande River, the Laguna Atascosa NWR on the coast, Corpus Christi, Rockport and the Aransas NWR where the Whooping Cranes winter. I've bought a couple of Texas birding books that have great pictures of the species that are only found in Texas (in the US, that is) and I'm making my lists. I'm excited about this and am really looking forward to it.

I'd talk more about the birding trip, but Lisa already says I need a 12-step program for the birding talk so I'll leave it there.

BOOKS I've been reading the J.D. Robb series that starts with ***Naked in Death***. These are an interesting mix of sci-fi, mystery and romance novels. Starting in 2058, these novels feature a homicide detective named Eve Dallas, and chronicle her cases and her romantic entanglements and those of her associates. The science fiction setting is done fairly well. The differences are portrayed easily and seem reasonable with the possible exception of the space colonies. The mysteries are generally OK, and the romance element includes several very hot sex scenes per book. Not bad for a light reading series.

In recognition of this new and improved me, I'm making an attempt to do something unusual for me lately. Namely,

Mailing Comments on SFPA 235

Wave to the Mountain, Dear/JOEff It's been a great run as OE, but I'll be glad to have all our weekends back soon. Good Job.

I'm glad you do these movie reviews. I should have mentioned **Frida**. I found it a fascinating movie because of the artist and historical perspectives. Visually stunning indeed.

Movies that you saw that I didn't: Bad Boys 2, The Rookie, and The Quiet American. I'm sure there were more, but you didn't review them here.

The moss killing stuff didn't do much damage to the heathers but the 85+ temps for weeks during the summer sure did. I'll have to replace 6-8 of the 21 I planted last spring. I'll have to go up on that part of the hill and check it all out in February or March.

Of course you read The Times. You're a New Yorker.

You mention Cheney and the New American Century. I wonder how many SFPAn have checked it out? See the statement of principle at www.newamericancentury.org if you haven't.

I think it might have been mike weber who introduced us to Big Daddy when we were living in Durham. Maybe Bernadette or Arthur remembers...

In yrctDengrove, you say, "I probably don't understand economics well enough, but it seems to me that cost plus profit is greater than cost alone, not less." Only if cost doesn't decrease, say by breaking the union or sending the work overseas or hiring illegals thru a contractor.

About the war in Iraq not being as popular as the administration would like for us to believe, I note the following. We're seeing stories in the local paper about troop families being unhappy with the war, in part because they don't see progress, in part because they're having to ship basic stuff like socks to their soldiers because of continuing snafus with supplies. When the wives and parents of men in Iraq are saying they support the troops but not the war, well, there's a serious gap out there. And

I personally am not very happy about the stories about high levels of suicides in the troops either.

Spiritus Mundi 197/GHLIII I'm glad you wrote about PL. I was sorry to hear about her death.

Why do I have this feeling that wild hurricanes couldn't keep you from helping Sheila with collation?

Check out the New American century webpage I mention above and you'll see they've been gunning for Saddam for years. I imagine that played an important role. After all, we kicked butt in Afghanistan and even Jeff and I supported that police action. Too bad we didn't finish the job there before getting distracted with Iraq.

Well, almost nobody liked **The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen**. But I'm a real Sean Connery fan and I enjoyed most of it in a cartoon/comic book kind of way. But then, I'm sitting here watching **Dante's Peak** on the Sci-Fi channel with James. After watching **Waterworld**. (Hey, Lisa, there's a gull near the end of Waterworld. Ask Robin what kind it is, okay?)

I'm curious, why would you have a problem attending a same-sex wedding? Say, George Inzer's?

So, if we rename the Short Dramatic Fiction Hugo to the TV Hugo what do we do with things like Hardware Wars? I ask because I think we'll see many more short films done by fans and would-be movie directors given the advances of technology. (James has a great little short done with his Lego movie set and when Jeff buys the DVD burner, James can make copies and ship them out in a fanzine. Just for instance...)

I think the WSF constitution requires publishing the Hugo results asap. I'm sure Jeff will say for sure.

You're not the only one who compared Torcon to Nolacon. Tina, our Canadian but now local fan friend, said the same. And she had the background scoop on the committee, which apparently wasn't as local as she would have preferred.

Yngvi Is a Louse!/Toni Thanks for the sf book recommendations. I'm enjoying reading sf again but haven't

read much in a while. Maybe it's time to subscribe to Locus again.

Does this taste comparison of Tim's to KK mean you won't be interested in a fresh doughnuts taste off here in Washington? We are uniquely situated to have fresh doughnuts from both within about 3 hours. Yum. I think we're all in agreement that Tim's is better for cake doughnuts and KK has sweeter ones.

Glad you like the comics. And I'm willing to compare scars anytime but three of mine are smaller than a quarter so I'll probably lose unless I can include the truly ancient one from abdominal surgery (47 stitches long, now measuring more than a foot in length). I kinda like the 2 on my back which we contemplate passing off as knife wounds from a bar fight. I wanted them to look like bullet wounds but Jeff says that doesn't work. Oh well.

I don't think that downloads helping sales is counterintuitive. Free samples have a long history in selling things. Why would music be different? I know I don't have time to listen to the radio enough to know about new music so a free download would be the only way I'd try some out. Other than listening to Allie's cds, that is.

You hate the Bee Gees? Y'know, I'm going to have to start questioning your taste if you keep this up...

Interesting thoughts on gender labor specification. One of the striking things I noted with 2 kids, one of each gender, is that they were both interested in the same toys but at different ages and ways. For instance, James got interested in matchbox size cars at the lower age on the box (2 or 3? Don't remember for sure now.) But Allie ignored them. I bought them for her and left them and a foldout plastic sheet with a little town printed on it for her to play with. No go. I put them out again for James initially when he was a bit over 1 and Allie was interested in them then. He got interested in the next year or so. He played with her Barbie dolls more than she did. But neither of them ever groomed Barbies or cared much about dressing them in the cool outfits. I've decided that all of these traits are on a continuum and different people have them in different levels. Cultural conditioning does play a part, but so does basic temperament and nature.

Peter, Pan & Merry #51/David Jeff has been annoying lots of people telling this hambush joke. Sick, very sick.

Hmm, if rishathra is sex between different sentient species and we discover dolphins are sentient then some people in Florida have actually engaged in it.

Otherwise, I have to say raebnc.

Nice Distinctions 3/Arthur Have I mentioned that Allie keeps asking for pet rats? Good thing she doesn't know about ratuncle.

Thanks for the book reviews. I've added the Huffington to my library book list to be read when I return from Texas.

The New Port News 211/Ned Interesting comment about the difference between the Internet and McDonalds.

Most hotels will rent you a refrigerator if you ask them. (This is in regards to your comment about not attending cons due to a medical treatment.) I know because I have to refrigerate my allergy medication and can't go more than a day or so without it.

Sorry to hear about your mouth problem. I had an allergist once tell me that we were seeing new and different health problems because of penicillin saving people from dieing from pneumonia. He claimed this was the major cause of the explosion in people with allergies.

Trivial Pursuits #109/Janice So, now that the recall is history, how's Arnold as governor? Is he doing anything different from what Gray Davis was going to do? Or was this all just a total waste of time and money?

Fifteen months? You didn't synch your Palm for 15 months? What's the matter, you haven't had systems crash on you often enough to train you to do better? Sheesh...

My stray thought on reading your quote from the Aussie party is that fans sometimes have conversations that read better than they play. Not to mean that this one was, but it made me think of it.

Tennessee Trash #55/Gary R. Your trip sounds like fun. We have purple starfish up here too, along with the traditional orangish brown ones. There are even giant octopi in the Hood Canal on the Olympic Peninsula but we haven't gone to see them yet.

Passages #18/Janet Hmm, maybe I should do a reintroduction zine. Naw, we don't have that much turnover. But I'm not sure I had heard all of this the first time, especially the horse stuff.

I'm thinking of doing the lasik surgery next year sometime. Between quilting and birding, I have various problems with the progressive bifocals and would just like to not have various glasses to put on.

I worked with Todd McCaffrey when we were in LA (at a company named Locus). Locus has an email list for ex-employees and he and I have exchanged some email lately and he is switching to writing full time.

Actually, I'm not wondering why my doctors didn't come up with a diagnosis sooner. I didn't go to a doctor regularly while we were in Boulder, which is when the kidney problems started getting noticeable (assuming the fatigue and energy problems were caused by the kidney problems). I didn't have any pain in my kidneys nor did I pass any stones that I know of. I assumed the problems were due to my allergies getting worse because the symptoms were so vague and undefined. If I hadn't gone in for the sonogram, we would probably have found the kidney problems when I collapsed from kidney failure. As for the urologist not doing the testing to find the adenoma sooner, well, he's the best surgical guy around but I didn't push him on the testing. I wanted a break over the summer so that was okay by me. I had annual physicals every year once we moved to Bellevue and the blood chemistry never caused a red flag. I don't think there were any symptoms a doctor should have caught. Do you think differently?

Well, that's my 6 pages for this mailing and it includes some mailing comments. Let's hope I feel better and can do more next time.



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The Professor Takes the Gloves Off

Terrence McNally, AlterNet
November 11, 2003

Viewed on November 12, 2003

Accustomed in economic circles to calling a stupid argument a stupid argument, and isolated (in Princeton, New Jersey) from the Washington dinner-party circuit, Paul Krugman has become the most prominent voice in the mainstream U.S. media to openly and repeatedly accuse George Bush of lying to the American people to sell budget-busting tax cuts and a pre-emptive and nearly unilateral war.

Krugman cannot be dismissed by opponents as some dyed-in-the-wool lefty. He's a moderate academic economist who's been radicalized by the Bush White House and the right wing it represents. Krugman joined The New York Times in 1999 as a columnist on the op-ed Page and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University. His new book, "The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way In The New Century" (#9 on the New York Times best-seller list and a top seller on Amazon) is a collection of his op-ed pieces from January 2000-January 2003.

McNally: How did your role in the op-ed pages of The New York Times happen and how has it evolved?

Krugman: I was brought on to write about "my real home," economics and business, specifically international economics. There were a lot of international crises in the '90s and The Times thought I'd be writing about policies and disasters overseas, as well as about stuff at home, typically the follies of the new economy. But it was election season, and it pretty quickly became clear to me -- and more and more so as we went along -- that the really scary follies, the potential disasters that

were the greatest risks of concern were at home.

I came on thinking it would be a largely non-political column. I think The Times thought that, too. And then during the campaign, because I knew my stuff -- basically, because I could do my own arithmetic -- I found myself saying: "You know, these guys are lying...This is a fundamentally irresponsible and dishonest economic program." Then after the election it increasingly became clear to me that it wasn't just economics.

So it's a very strange thing. I'm no wild-eyed radical. Actually, The American Prospect, a very liberal magazine, ran a story in the mid-90s attacking me for my support of Free Trade.

McNally: I remember that.

Krugman: So I was kind of a bad guy from the point of view of more consistently reliable commentators on the left. But of course now all of that seems insignificant compared with the awesomeness of the fraud that they [the Bush Administration] are trying to perpetrate on all of us.

McNally: Exactly. Could talk a little bit about the introduction to your book and the context it sets? I assume you would never have written that at the time you wrote the first op-eds that appear in the book.

Krugman: You're right. I put a date on the introduction: April 10, just to make it clear that this is what I thought at that date. If we'd found a nuclear program in Iraq or the budget picture had improved, then I would've looked like I didn't know what I was talking about. But of course everything has turned out even worse than I expected. What I realized looking back over my own writings is that it's pretty easy to identify some very radical intents on the part of the coalition that now runs the country. It's not just a single group. It's the religious right, it's the hard-line conservatives, it's the anti-environmental industry groups and so on.

Put it all together and what you see is the outlines of an extremely radical program. Maybe reactionary would be the word because a lot of it would be rolling us back to where we were before the 1930s, before Franklin Roosevelt. In any case, a very radical program that would un-do the America that we've all grown up in.

I end up quoting Henry Kissinger because his writings gave me the key to why it's so hard for people -- even liberals -- to accept what's going on. He wrote about how when faced with a revolutionary power -- who really doesn't accept the rules of the

game, the legitimacy of the system -- people who have been accustomed to the stability make excuses. They say: "Oh, well, they may talk that way but they don't really mean it. If we give them some partial concessions we can appease them, they'll be satisfied and all of this stuff would stop." That's exactly what's been happening now.

The true radicalism of the Bush Administration -- cutting taxes to a level that will not support social programs and dangerous adventurism in foreign policy -- has been right in front of our eyes, but most pundits and much of the public are saying: "Oh, let's not get too extreme here. I'm sure we can work this out. We can find a middle ground." And there isn't one.

McNally: Do you think that appeasement approach, that inability to believe that these people are as far out as they say they are, has been exacerbated by September 11? It's my take that had the economy continued as it was, had the lies continued as they were without Bush in the Commander-in-Chief role, people would've picked up on this sooner...

Krugman: Probably, although it's hard to say. We can't re-run the tape.

If you say what is actually obvious: that these people took September 11 as a great political opportunity and used it to push both a domestic economic and social agenda and a foreign policy agenda that had nothing to do with September 11 -- that's an extraordinary charge. And the very fact that it's such a harsh thing to say makes people unwilling to see it. It was obvious in the fall of last year that they were hyping the case for a war with Iraq. But it just seemed too harsh, too extreme to say that the President of the United States would do that. So there was a tremendous soft pedaling in the reporting.

McNally: I've talked about this with [UC Berkeley journalism professor] Mark Danner and others... Is it because the press is afraid of Bush's popularity and basically the media don't want to be caught ahead of the people? Is it corporate profits? Is it just a loss of true journalism? What do you attribute it to? You must talk with your colleagues about this.

Krugman: Well, actually, less than you might think, in terms of talking with colleagues. I'm based in Central New Jersey...

I'm not even sure I believe that the corporate influence thing is important yet. It may be at some future date, but I think that -- outside of Fox News, which is of course simply part of a machine -- it's not that crucial. By the way, I insult Fox News

whenever I can, hoping that they'll sue me.

McNally: Best if they can do it while the book is fresh in the stores, right?

Krugman: That's right. But meanwhile, I think a better story is two things. One is that the media are desperately afraid of being accused of bias. And that's partly because there's a whole machine out there, an organized attempt to accuse them of bias whenever they say anything that the right doesn't like.

So rather than really try to report things objectively, they settle for being even-handed, which is not the same thing. One of my lines in a column -- in which a number of people thought I was insulting them personally -- was that if Bush said the earth was flat, the mainstream media would have stories with the headline: "Shape of the Earth -- Views Differ." Then they'd quote some Democrats saying that it was round.

Journalistic organizations are afraid of being accused of bias. There's also a fair bit of low rate intimidation of journalists themselves. I have received a couple of elliptical death threats but they weren't serious. The real stuff is the hate mail that comes in enormous quantities. Organizations try their best to find some scandal in your personal life and disseminate it. I don't think a lot of journalists are sitting around saying: "I better not cross these guys, they'll ruin me." But they do know that every time they say anything the right doesn't like to hear, they get the equivalent of a nasty electric shock. They sort of get conditioned not to go there.

McNally: Your initial op-eds dealt with Bush's campaign economics, but now you've grown to believe that the lying and the other things are basic approaches across the board, haven't you?

Krugman: Sure. Whatever you think about the Iraq war, the way it was sold was exactly the template they use for selling the tax cuts. The hyped evidence, the misleading statements, the bait-and-switch, the constantly shifting rationale. And the same things can be seen in less politically hot issues...the "Healthy Forests" plan, for instance.

In terms of naming things, Orwell had nothing on these guys. So the "Healthy Forest" plan turns out to be a plan to allow more logging of the forests. The "Clear Skies Initiative" turns out to first, get rid of new source review, which is an integral part of the Clean Air Act, and so on down the line.

So it's definitely a pattern. And if you step back a moment and look at it, you start

to realize that, although looking at selling of the 2003 tax cut and what it does to our physical future is a bad thing, looking at the whole picture makes you feel a whole lot worse.

McNally: You point back to Reagan who had ideas you didn't agree with but at least sold them on what he believed to be their merits. Whether it was true or not, it was the actual case.

Krugman: That's right. Reagan, I think sincerely believed in trickle-down economics. Look, it's funny. Not only do I miss Reagan who I thought had bad policies but didn't approach the skullduggery of these people, I actually miss Nixon. Although God knows he did skullduggery, as John Dean says, even Nixon didn't go after the wives.

McNally: The CIA leak of Ambassador Joe Wilson's wife...

Krugman: Yeah. Also Nixon seemed to be at least sincerely interested in governing. He was actually trying to run the country. He didn't think anybody else should have a chance to run it, but he actually tried to solve problems. The old hands of the Environmental Protection Administration will tell you that the Nixon years were a golden age. These people now... they're ruthless, they're dishonest, and they haven't actually tried to deal with any of our real problems.

McNally: I read one quote where you said: "Tell me one real problem that they took on and offered an actual solution." Can we narrow our focus to economics? What is most alarming about the deficit? We know in Keynesian economics deficits are okay... What's the real problem here? Why is it as bad as you think it is?

Krugman: I'm sorry, there's one-and-a-half problems. It's still a jobless recovery. That's a very nasty prospect and we have seen no real sign of turn-around there. But beyond that... Look, deficits are okay, but Keynes never said it was okay to run deficits forever. He said that deficits are good for stimulating the economy temporarily during downturns.

What we have is the prospect of deficits that are not temporary. The last estimate is, of the \$500 billion-plus deficit, only about \$60 or \$70 billion would go away even if the economy does recover. And it's much worse once the baby boomers retire, which happens in about 10 years. We have the finances of a banana republic right now. If current tax rates and current programs continue, at some point the U.S. government will simply be unable to pay its debts -- and long before that point happens, industries will pull the plug.

And we have the same thing internationally as well. We have a huge trade deficit. It roughly matches the domestic deficit, and foreigners are lending the country money to cover that. At some point they will pull the plug. Some people say we now have a faith-based currency. I think we have a faith-based government. People believe that we're going to get our act together, but there's no sign that we will.

McNally: So perhaps a lulling effect -- similar to the one we were talking about earlier -- may be working right now to cover our butt for a while, but it could turn quickly.

Krugman: That's right. At the moment, the actual fiscal state of the federal government is substantially worse than that of the state of California. The laws are different: the state of California is obliged by law to balance its books each year. It'll fudge a bit but eventually it has to clear the books. The federal government does not.

Also, you might say that Bush has some un-earned credits from the responsibility of his predecessors. In the past, U.S. presidents have always in the end done enough of the right thing so that the solvency of the government was never at stake. And it comes back to this denial that I talk about. People can't believe that we're dealing with something completely different now, but we are.

McNally: Let me get this straight. You're not saying that we will actually go bankrupt, but that we are too dependent on foreign investors and at some point, they'll say: "You know what, I'm putting my money elsewhere."

Krugman: Well, in fact, that does produce something that looks like bankruptcy. When you have a huge debt, not only do you have to pay interest on it, but you have to keep rolling it over. The point comes when investors say: "I don't trust these Americans. They don't seem to be responsible." Then all of a sudden you cannot raise the money to service the debt when it comes due.

McNally: We've watched this happen in other countries and the thought is -- that's Thailand, that's not the U.S.

Krugman: That's Argentina. This is my specialty. I watched it happen in other countries and you look at the numbers and you say: "Geez, we have a budget deficit that's bigger compared with the size of our economy than Argentina before their 2001 crack-up. We have a trade deficit that's bigger compared with the size of our economy, than Indonesia before its 1997 crack-up." You say: "Well, yeah, but this

is America and it can't happen here." But there's a lot of things we didn't think could happen here. Something very seriously wrong is going on now.

McNally: What I haven't heard quite yet is the point which you make very strongly in the book, that the purpose behind the tax cuts is to bankrupt the government, to undermine social programs, so that no one who comes into office after them will have an easy time restoring them.

Krugman: I'm not making that up. That's exactly what the lobbyists and the others behind these people say. The program that the Administration is following looks as if it was designed to implement their ideas. I think it is.

McNally: What would you do? And let me ask it two ways. What would Paul Krugman's solution be? And then, if Paul Krugman were Howard Dean or Wesley Clark or John Kerry -- if he were running for office, what would his solution be?

Krugman: Okay. First off, you have to have a plan to get the budget back into balance. It's not possible to have a plan that doesn't include phasing out the bulk, if not all, of the Bush tax cuts. Not all in the first year, we're still in a recession. But a gradual plan to eliminate those tax cuts, bring the tax system back to about where it was in 2000. This would get us most, though not all, of the way to a balanced budget. You could talk about other things on the side, but that would have to be the core of it.

Meanwhile, we need to get the economy moving. To do that, you have to do the things that governments always do during recessions, but this government hasn't. Aid to state and local governments so they aren't laying off schoolteachers and firemen just when the economy is slumping. Public works programs. As it happens, we have a whole backlog of homeland security spending: ports and so on that we should be doing that the government is nickel-and-diming away.

McNally: And a huge amount of federal infrastructure that we just ignore completely.

Krugman: That's right. Just go and do these things which we need done anyway and particularly now. They would also help create jobs. Maybe on top of that we need another round of rebates, but rebates that are fully refundable and go to the people most likely to spend the money.

Is that guaranteed to work? I don't know. But it's certainly has a good chance of working and we haven't tried any of these obvious things.

McNally: How much of that do you think a candidate could say and get away with?

Krugman: I think a candidate has to be fairly forthright. We can argue about whether the whole Bush tax cut or just the upper brackets need to go. But at least they have to say that the upper brackets must go.

And look, I don't know that we'll win. I don't know what tricks the Administration will come up with to divert people's attention, but I think that unless a candidate is really prepared to come out swinging, to say these people are doing the wrong thing by the country, there's no chance. Saying "I'm like Bush only less so" is not going to win this election.

Interviewer Terrence McNally hosts Free Forum on KPFK 90.7fm, Los Angeles (streaming at kpfk.org), where he interviews people he believes can help create "a world that just might work."

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