

REAR-ENDER '01

*a zine to cap the very strange odyssey that has been 2001 by
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An odyssey it has been, and it's appropriate that this little publication seeking to encompass the year 2001, composed on its last day, should also fall on the last day of a small odyssey of our own. Never before have I begun a GHLIII Press Pub in a moving auto, as this one is, moving south on I-75 from Buffalo, New York, Monticello, Greensboro and Knoxville towards Chattanooga, Birmingham, and New Orleans. Long trip, long day ... and it seems like a long year.

I moved this year. I married this year. I maintained my minuscule but enjoyable legal career. I tried a murder case, and flew, twice. Both times I got falling-up drunk, the only occasions in which substances got the better of me. I took several long drives with my beloved Rose-Marie, including this present haul and two jaunts to Florida, with three jaunts back (figure it out). I drove a 32-foot truck without major mishap. I stayed pretty healthy, although I'm having more skin problems at 52 than I ever did as a teenager. I went to two conventions, and did 20 fanzines, one of which celebrated the 25th anniversary of LASFAPA. I continued my string, now 31 years strong, of never missing a SFPA mailing nor owing pages, although now that I think of it, everyone was required to contribute a page to SFPA 50, in 1971, but that page-owed wasn't my fault.

In these **Rear-Enders** I like to play the game of Bests and Worst, and this year of extremes makes that task easy. Let's start with the minutiae of life – movies, books, fanzines. There were several good movies in aught-one, but until this last month, they've been rare. **Lord of the Rings**, of course, rates high. I missed the books' sense of history and poetry and Tolkein's intoxicating usage of language, but the heroism and the drama and the terror of the trilogy came roaring through. Keeping in mind that **In the Bedroom** and, certainly, **Black Hawk Down** remain to be viewed, I'd put **LotR** at the head of my Oscar list for now. Alas, the year's best performance will probably go ignored – that was Guy Pearce's incredible job as a sufferer of short-term memory loss in **Memento**. But last year's regrettable devotion to Star Turns will probably continue, with Pearce's overrated **L.A. Confidential** co-star, Russell Crowe, joining Will Smith on the lists. At least my beloved Sissy Spacek will not suffer the same rebuke: her performance in **In the Bedroom** is winning preliminary awards.

Books ... I'm reading a splendid fantasy even now, Sean Stewart's **Galveston** – it won the World Fantasy Award in a tie with a Tim Powers novel and is just terrific: original, funny, convincing, captivating, with a humane point and a unique voice. I'll have to find more Stewart; he's great. I'm also rereading the Tolkein trilogy, and there is nothing better than that outside of Shakespeare. (All right, so I exaggerate.) Certainly I

cheered when Eve Ackerman sold her first novel; Rose-Marie has it on disc and promises a review.

Fannish experiences: I'd actually put the small but spirited Birmingham DeepSouthCon ahead of the mighty World Science Fiction Convention in 2001; expectations were low for the one and celestial for the other, and I was delighted with DSC and a tad disappointed with the Millennium Philcon. Best high of the year, though, came directly because of MilPhil: **Challenger** was nominated for the Hugo for the second year running. Though the zine came in fourth again, it won, going away, the on-line **Sci-Fi Weekly** poll, which with a dollar will buy a stale doughnut from Krispy Kreme, if I'm lucky.

Speaking of which, the best zine I did in '01, if I do say so, was **Challenger** no. 15. Alan White's beautiful color cover, meaningful events, marriage to massacre – it was probably too grim for many tastes, but I am actually proud of it.

Days ... well, this should be obvious. The worst day of 2001 for me was, most probably, the same for you. When I write up this year-end vacation in the zine I now think of as **The Patriotic Route**, I will describe visiting Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan. Even being on – or near – the spot cannot match the anguish of September 11th, 2001. And writing about it one more time here cannot make more sense of it, or make its effects easier to bear. I will say this much: New York City is still there, still the most wondrous collection of human beings ever to grace the Earth. Despite the worst day 2001 saw, the low moment of its odyssey, 9-1-1.

The year's Best Day was the day I married Rose-Marie (who is, in case you're wondering, driving the car; I'm good at this fanzine stuff but not that good). June 30th fell at the year's midpoint, a moment which I hope I'll always think of as a fulcrum of my life, when the balance of things tipped forever to the positive and happy. On the morning of that hot day in Cocoa, Florida, my brother and I had watched a Delta rocket rise to the heavens, bearing a solar satellite designed to probe the origin of the universe. That afternoon, when I watched Rosy, the woman I'd adored for 25 years and loved for at least 15, come through the doors of the Porcher House on her father's arm, I knew I could have saved NASA the trouble. The origin of all things lies in love.

Later ... we are home. 2001 has 30 minutes to go. I hope you will pardon me now if I leave this computer to spend those 30 minutes with my lady. A new sense of priorities: that's what 2001 has brought to me.
