

rear-ender '02 >>>

kissing goodbye to 2002 with
Guy Lillian in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance
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Perhaps it's a bit much to ask of oneself to make sense out of a whole year while bombing down Interstate-10 – but at least I'm not driving. Hmm ... that sounds like the same joke I told last year. I'd better pick up my material.

In fact, *Rosy* is driving, and we're just finishing a very satisfying Christmas vacation trip to Florida, whence we conveyed ourselves, woob-dawg Jessie, a miniature puma named Boo, and a junior woob-dawg named Tinker, and where we encountered Rosy's parents and step-parents, Frodo Baggins and Treebeard, **Gangs of New York** and an old, old girlfriend named Suzy Snowflake. But that's a tale for **Spiritus Mundi**, to be begun as always on January 1st. Here, as I usually do, I'll sum up the year that is all but passed, as a way of putting it behind me and looking forward, bravely to the future. *Phooey*.

If one word sums up 2002 for us, it's *frustration*, thanks to another word, *poverty*. I always list the best and worst days and movies and books and what-not in this zine, and the worst day of 2002 was, in fact, many. On all of those, money shortage was involved. Dealing with the IRS made clear the impossibility of our major hope for the year, a driving trip to ConJose – and if the year had a rock bottom, it was the Friday on which we planned to start our westward trek, and instead, had to stay home. It was the demolition of a trip two years in the dreaming, a missed chance at the royal treatment afforded Hugo nominees (hearing of **Challenger**'s Hugo placement was a rich moment) and it sucked. At least we were able to eke out a weekend at DeepSouthCon – at which Rosy won her *Rubble* Award, one of the year's high points – and, late in the autumn, a jaunt to Georgia. Neither were a worldcon, but they were a relief. Money made publication of my one major fanzine, **Challenger** #16, a challenge in itself, but it was done, and except for one *really* sorry sentence in the closing natter, it was pretty well done, if I do say so. (**Challenger** was one of 21 zines added to the GHLIII Press this year, including six **Spiriti** for SFPA, a few **Chinatowns** for LASFAPA, and various other drivel.)

Actually, 2002 ends better than it began. With the help of a brother barrister and a troupe of unbearably helpful Arab philanthropists, we moved my neighbor Cindy out of our apartment and into a succession of other places. Boo was the major impediment to our happiness in the earliest months of our marriage, and getting her gone was a major relief. Of course, the first place she went was a disappointment – a greedy landlady who extorted additional rent from us on threat of having Cindy return. In addition, the second place – written about in the last **SM** – was also a disappointment -- a geriatric brother and sister who expected Boo to do the work of a nurse and shut up when they raised signs telling her to shut up. Creeps. Now Cindy is established in a decently-sized room in a rather cool old house being set up as a group home for mental patients – which, for all her faults, Boo is *not*. It's in a rough part of town and the floors sag, and my lawyer buddy is still trying to get Cindy an apartment of her own in Jeff Parish. But for the moment, she's safe, and for good, she's *not* in our place. To that extent, we are better off than before.

Rosy is working, and that's something we were only hoping for when I wrote **rear-ender '01**. That she found and snared the only open journalism job in our entire region of the state is a

testament to her tenacity. That the job requires two-and-a-half hours of driving daily, pays little, and bores her, are the enormous downsides. But a job was a necessity, and I think we can be glad that it's met. Of course, the problems are intolerable – but they aren't insurmountable, nor eternal. (Thank you, Pollyanna.) I might add that Rosy broke at least one significant story for **The Daily Comet** this year, an exciting expose of a scandal in the parish's drug-testing program which continues to rock and ripple throughout Lafourche. She might not dig the job, but she excels at it, and I'm deeply proud of her.

I too am working, and if 2002 brought little else, at least I did all right in my position as public defender in St. John Parish. I had several trials, never showed up without pants, won a Not Guilty in one very difficult case and a hung jury in another, maned a lesser-included verdict in a drug trial – and a couple of Guiltys, once in a dope selling case, the other a murder. I'd characterize my year as balanced, since although I was never brilliant, I was at least competent, and the prosecution never won a case it didn't deserve to win. Of course, I didn't make enough money at my work, and so I have at long last applied to Tennessee for admission to their Bar. Tennessee pays half again as much as my parish to public defenders with my experience, is one of my favorite places, and – best of all – has fireflies. The application is proving to be a time-consuming, seemingly endless procedure, but as 2002 coughs its way to oblivion, it provides some hope for the future. Watch this space.

So, in fannish matters, does DUFF. Our candidacy for the Down Under Fan Fund is probably the most reckless and silly thing I've ever done in fandom, since, if we win, I'll have to *fly in an airplane for 20 hours straight, twice* ... but to be blunt, the reason I'm doing it is because I'm *not* doing it for myself. I'm doing it for the lady. Our first full calendar year together hasn't been much fun for *la belle* Rose; I feel like I've let her down. I want to do something for her no one else has done, take her someplace no one else has taken her. If we lose (to my visitors and buddies Mike and Linda McInenery), so be it. But if we win ... well, I get to climb Hanging Rock by my lady's side. I'll keep a good eye on her, I promise.

Okay! It's 12-31-02 now ... six hours and 20 minutes left to this dumb year. Let's sum it up and get rid of it. I've talked about the worst days; what were the bests? Probably Christmas break. Every second we spent with Tinker, the puppy we brought Rosy's stepfather, was a reminder of how much fun life can be, if you don't mind having your nose licked in the middle of the night and your book chewed as you're trying to read it and your own dawg driven psychotic with distraction. I'll talk more about Tinker in SM193 elsewhere in this SFPA. Best movies? I enjoyed the hell out of **Spider-man** and was just plain delighted by **My Big Fat Greek Wedding**, which better win a bunch of Oscars. (Current call: Adapted Screenplay, with a possible Best Actress and Supporting Actor. Puff some Windex on it.) I was recently stunned anew by **Metropolis**, in re-re-re-re-re-release, and my feelings for **LotR: The Two Towers** go so far behind merely loving the movie that I daren't even speak them. Worst flick? Oh, it's *got* to be George Clooney's **Solaris**, a remake of the pretentious and boring Russian clunker, still pretentious, still boring, still ... *still*. **2001** may have moved slowly, but at least **2001 moved**. The only thing **Solaris** moved was legions of disappointed housewives, out of their seats and out the door.

The best book I read was **Theodore Rex**. The best SF/fantasy I read was probably Tim Powers' **Declare**, although I very much enjoyed Neil Gaiman's Hugo- and Bram Stoker-winning (and World Fantasy Award-nominated) **American Gods**, something different, anyway. The best TV discovery was **Smallville**, and it only complicates matters that it comes on opposite the show I consider the best on TV, **24**. Well, that's why God created the VCR.

Person of the year? *She* remains. And that's it for '02, and about time.