

# REVENANT #20

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Revenant #20, September 2003 produced for SFPA mailing #235 by Sheila Strickland  
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Another mailing, another last minute effort for me. This time around, I'm blaming Louisiana Public Broadcasting for running a series on the history of Louisiana. I spent time watching it on finishing up this issue. Five hours long, it covered the history of the state from the first European explorers to the present time. I was surprised how much of the history I already knew. I certainly wasn't paying attention back in eighth grade when I took Louisiana History, but I must have picked some up through the years. The series was far too short, but the book that goes with it is said to go into more depth. I saw the book back in the spring and keep saying I'm going to buy a copy of it---if for nothing else than the beautiful pictures. A friend of mine who works at LPB was describing how they selected not just the familiar images, but some that hadn't been seen for years, and then cleaned them up when necessary so they'd look their best.

I am indeed running for OE of SFPA for the coming year. I know I won't be the OE ever; but I'm more than willing to do the work to get the job done. I've had offers of advice and help from Toni, Jeff, and Guy; and Guy offered to be Emergency Officer as well as helping out with collation anytime I need assistance. With all that experience backing me up, SFPA should have no fears.

On a grimmer note; I am not in school this semester. I think the Library Science Dean did her bit; but with no direct contact with her since spring, I don't know how hard she pushed my case. Shortly before the semester started, I called and left a message with her, then e-mailed a few days later. No response to either message; so a co-worker who used to work with her called her---and got through. According to her, the Dean said it was up to the Graduate School. I'm not happy that the Dean never contacted me; it makes me think my re-entry into the program has a low priority with them despite what I heard from them in the spring. I haven't given up entirely, though; I have a few more people I can call on to try and push my case. Maybe next semester.

## DeepSouthCon/LiberyCon July 25-27

Going to DeepSouthCon this year was a last minute decision for several reasons. I wasn't optimistic about how good the con might be; my finances weren't in great shape with going to Toronto once already this year and planning to go back for Worldcon; and most of all, Chattanooga is a long long drive from here. It's possible to make it in one day, but only by starting very early, driving almost non-stop, and getting in late. But a few weeks before the con, I decided although I shouldn't take the time and spend the money, I really did want to go to DSC. Having made plans so late; I couldn't get a room in the main hotel or the more expensive of the two overflow hotels. Instead I stayed at another discount hotel just down the road from the con.

I left home Thursday morning a little after 9 A.M. and drove as far as Tuscaloosa that night. I had booked a room for the night online in a motel which had the lowest rates listed. I got

what I paid for. It was a stripped-down version of an inexpensive motel; with parking right outside your door and an air conditioner that kept you sort of cool, but never really got into chilling temperatures. I found it odd that the room didn't have a clock radio or even a clock, but did have a mini-fridge and a low-power microwave. I should have found a grocery store and bought a frozen dinner to eat in the room; but since I didn't care to spend much time there (the ambiance was less than thrilling), I found a bad Chinese buffet restaurant and ate there.

Friday morning, I left early to make up for the hour I'd lose crossing into Eastern time zone. I hadn't been to Chattanooga since the early 80's and wondered what the driving would be like; whether I'd encounter any mountain driving conditions. Mountain driving is something I have next to no experience in so I carefully read my car owner's manual recommendation for how to drive on long grades. I was hoping for a few "scenic overlooks" on the way so I could stop and take pictures or just enjoy the view. But no, other than a few glimpses, there were no long vistas to admire and no steep grades to worry about. I assume it's because I was driving on the interstate rather than on state or county highways. And I could have made time while I was up there to go do some sightseeing, but no, I just hung around the hotel and did the con. On the other hand; after all that driving, I wasn't eager to get behind the wheel anytime soon!

This was my first LibertyCon and it's possible it will be my last. I understand that the con was at a disadvantage in that the hotel burned and was rebuilt with fewer rooms; and the current hotel management had been there for less than a month; but the hotel set-up just didn't work very well in my view. The main programming room was a partitioned off part of the bar area (or possibly of the restaurant next door) with the con suite on the other side of the folding wall panel. The programming room was quite small and the noise level from the con suite on one side and the restaurant (where they had gaming) was distracting. The con suite/bar wasn't too bad; but had only small circular tables and chairs for seating. The outside patio area, though, had additional tables and chairs and was a nice place to sit and visit after dark when it cooled off. They used three sleeping rooms (with furniture removed) for two other panel rooms and the video room. That's fine if the con is putting little emphasis on programming and the lobby was a very nice place to sit and hang out; but I like panels at a con, even when it's a small con. It can be a good chance to hear from that writer guest or see what that artist guest has been doing lately. Gripes aside, it was a pleasant enough convention and I had a very enjoyable weekend.

Having said I like attending panels, I'd best mention some of the ones I did attend. Andrew Fox, a newish writer living in New Orleans, read from his new book *Fat White Vampire Blues*, about a vampire working as a cabby in New Orleans. His problem is that after all those many years of drinking the fat laden blood of the locals and tourists who've been gorging on the native rich cuisine, he has gotten too fat and decides to go on a diet. To that end, he attempts to pick up a fare from the athletically minded convention going on. Of course, it doesn't go as he has planned.

At another panel, we heard about the trouble with Harry Warner, Jr.'s collection. The motto of that one was, "Make a will."

I suppose it's telling of the con that the highlights of the weekend were the parties and the dinner out with fellow SFPAnS. The Cirque de la Lune party Friday night was highlighted by impressive decor---wallpaper with moons and stars, strings of lights up around the walls, a Jacuzzi full of balloons; and some very good drinks. Saturday afternoon Steve and Sue Francis ran an ice-cream social. The fen were lined up waiting to be fed before they opened and quickly scarfed down two gallons of the frozen delights. Shortly after, the SFPA party was held where

we perpetrated a one-shot with lots of participation and where Toni asked me the fatal question about OEship. Silly me, I thought I had a good out with not being around here long enough; but she and Guy quickly closed that easy out. It must have been con fever because I agreed to run if no one else wanted to take on the job.

A couple hours later, a mob (well, 11 of us) got together to go eat. Naomi Fisher did the organized thing and found a list of local restaurants. The Acropolis was the chosen and we made our way there. Gary and Corliss Robe were good enough to volunteer the use of their van to transport seven of the pack. The restaurant was on the perimeter of a mega-shopping mall; the mall had its own exit from the interstate! We managed to get enough tables together to be at one long table although it made conversation from one end of the table to the other difficult to impossible. The Acropolis specializes in Greek cuisine (never would have guessed that from the name, would you?); but had other types of food for the non-Greek food lovers. I love Greek food, however, so I was happy with the choice. Several of us ordered appetizers to pass around and sample. I ordered the spinach pie (insert proper Greek name here) and it was good enough, but the humus the Robes ordered was the best I've ever had--- spicier or at least a different spice from what I had before. I had veggie stuffed grape leaves for an entree and it was wonderful. I lusted over the dessert listings; but decided I wouldn't be able to move if I ate any more! Back we went to see the short Masquerade and the Rebel, Phoenix, and Rubble award presentations. I went to a few of the parties that night; but called it a night fairly early.

Sunday morning I got up and checked out of my inexpensive motel and went back for the last bit of con. During the business meeting last year; there was an attempt made to clear up some ambiguities in the wording of the business meeting protocol regarding who could vote in the site selection and when the vote could be held. At that time, a committee was formed, and this year they presented their report. The report presented three different possibilities; and as each had its own merits; it was decided not to vote on accepting any of the recommendations this year; but to allow time for it to be published in the SFC Bulletin (and elsewhere) so interested parties could read and discuss it and vote next year in Memphis. As far as site selection voting this year; Nashville was the sole bidder for DSC in '05, so it'll be there. \*Sigh.\* Another long, long drive. I left Chattanooga mid-afternoon and again stopped for the night in Tuscaloosa. On the trip up, I picked up some hotel info at the Alabama Welcome Center and had a coupon for a different hotel than the one I stayed in on the way up. It was slightly more expensive, but I liked it better than the other place and I liked the expanded continental breakfast (juice, cold cereal, yogurt, and muffins) they offered in the morning. I got home by early afternoon Monday to accept my cats complaints for being left so long.

## Torcon

In contrast to my feelings about DSC this year, I was very eager to go to Torcon. I can always find plenty of program items to attend at a WorldCon, and it's always been fun to wander around the dealers room and the art show. I became mildly apprehensive about the convention when it took them so long to get the programming schedule up on the web; then became irritated when they didn't get the last Progress Report mailed soon enough for many of us to receive it before we left for the con.

My trip up there had me hoping that the theater adage about "bad dress rehearsal, good first night" (or however the exact phrasing goes) would translate into "bad trip, good con".

My flight was scheduled to leave at 7:20 A.M the Tuesday before the con. Being of the “get there early” mindset, I carefully planned to get up at 4, so I’d have time to feed the cats, do all those last minute things that I couldn’t do until right before I left; then get to the airport by 6:30 or so. I carefully set my clock---and then woke up that morning at 6:30 and panicked. Had I been thinking clearly, I would have called the airline at that point and re-scheduled. Instead I flew around trying to get off in time. Of course, I didn’t make it; but was able to get a flight for later on in the morning. I had calmed down by the time I got onto the flight to Houston. The plane was small, the flight was bumpy, and I got sick. And I’ll spare you further details on that! I finally made it into Buffalo with a queasy stomach expecting to meet my sister as soon as I got through security. Except she wasn’t there. I had time to get my luggage and start worrying before she got there explaining she had left three hours before for what should have been a hour and a half drive; but got caught in traffic associated with a wreck on the QEW. We drove back (stopping at a Tim Horton’s for tea/coffee and donuts in lieu of dinner) and I got some sleep at last.

Registration had been scheduled to open Tuesday, so my sister drove me downtown Wednesday to pick up my stuff. All I could get was my badge with choice of pin, clip or lanyard; neither the pocket programs nor program book were ready yet. Not a good sign. The badges were huge, but at least you could read people’s names (unlike MilPhil); and they gave out canvas tote bags with the con logo.

I didn’t want Virginia to have to drive me into the city each day. She lives in Mississauga, not that far from downtown Toronto; but with my niece starting high school just after Labor Day; I knew she’d have plenty to do keep her busy. The most convenient option was to take the commuter train (the GO train). There was a station not far from her house (I walked back a few times) and it would take me to Union Station, just a couple of blocks from the convention centre. I bought a ten ride ticket, picked up a schedule and started feeling like a local!

Thursday, I hoped to actually see some of the con. I picked up my pocket program and the update (which was published for each day) with changes. It became a daily ritual to look over the updated program and see which items were at the same time and which ones had been changed. I don’t know how effective they were in notifying program participants of the changes; I do know Connie Willis was late to her reading because she didn’t know it had been changed.

The first panel I attended Thursday had its own raft of problems. There were no live mikes, no moderator (an on-going theme), and the lights went out about half-way through and no one could get them back on! It wasn’t quite dark, as there was a projector (for another panel?) set up throwing light on a screen. As it happened, the semi-dark was a relief to the headache I was developing. By the time the panel was over, I was feeling better. I continued to feel less than well all weekend, though. Nothing too serious, but I didn’t feel up to much walking.

I located the con suite during the day only after having to ask someone where the first floor of the Royal York was. Just to keep us all confused the hotel has about four levels before you get to the first floor, with designations like “main mezzanine level” and “convention level”. The easiest way to find the first floor was to get into an elevator and push the “1” button. The con suite was actually four different rooms---one smoking, one labeled “quiet con suite” (which I never did hear an explanation of---the times I was in there people were certainly talking), and two regular. It was a fair hike to get there from the convention centre; not terribly far, but not very convenient to stop in during the day between panels.

On Thursday or Friday, I made my main pass through the dealers room. My first impression was that it was small---the smallest WorldCon dealers room I remember seeing. On reflection, I decided it was to be expected---I suppose many U.S. dealers didn't want to deal with U.S. and Canadian customs coming and going. Lots of books, though; I bought a couple of Mike Resnick books; and *Budayeen Nights* by George Alec Effinger, a collection of stories set in the world of Marid Audran.

Alas, I never did make it into the art show; it was closed several times I had the time to go through it; and when it was open, I was feeling the need to sit and rest or distracted by something else. The "something else" was often the fannish exhibit. Lots of good stuff here; this was one area I would have liked to have had lots more time to peruse. One part chronicled the fannish career of Mike Glycer (the Fan guest of Honour); Hugos from different years were on display; there was a rack of fanzines you could sit and read. I was looking at the zines when I suddenly recognized a cover on one of them and realized it was a copy of one of the first SF zines I had ever gotten; back in the late 70's, I think. This must have been the second issue I had received because I found a LoC from me commenting on a con report in an earlier issue. It was a strange sensation to see that old zine; I had totally forgotten about it until I saw it there. This fannish exhibit area was badly underattended, by the way; often I was the only person there. By contrast, the "fanzine lounge" was in the Royal York near the con suite and the only time I saw it open during the day was on Monday.

I feel as if I missed out on half the con because I was able to go to so few parties. I would have liked to see more of them and stayed later; but I had to take the train back each night and the last one left at 12:43 A.M. Another consideration was my sister who had to come pick me up at the train station if I was coming in late. During the day, I could walk to their place, but I didn't want to do that late at night. Add in that I couldn't go crash in my room during the day to rest up for the evening; and this con became a daytime only for me. Of course, I might not have done much partying anyway; I can't stay up all night like I could when I was in my twenties! And most of the parties I tried to attend Saturday night were jammed, and noisy. Too much hubbub for me.

This has been a rambling report and it's not going to get much better. I'm not going into details of just which panels I attended each day. As usual, there were times when there were two or three items going on at the same times that I would have enjoyed seeing. As usual, there were program items that sounded interesting which didn't grab my short attention span fast enough to keep me there. As usual, there was a "Humour in SF and Fantasy" with the usual suspects. As usual, I went to hear Connie Willis and Terry Pratchett read from new works. Willis' reading was from an unfinished story about the editor of a de-bunking magazine investigating a psychic channeling an unexpected soul. Pratchett's reading was from *A Monstrous Regiment* due out in October.

One panel I'm glad I made was "Fannish Ghetto". I finally got the chance to say, "Hi" to Janice, but I enjoyed the panel too! They discussed the ways fans put themselves and other fans into ghettos instead of trying to find common ground. Too many times, fans with an interest in one area will treat their area as the one "true way" and not want anything to do with other fans of another area. Janice passed on a quote from someone else; I don't have the exact wording down, but it was approximately, "SF is the secret handshake that gets you into fandom."

Another program item I'm glad I made was the "Life Through the Eyes of Harry Warner, Jr." It was not at all well attended, but with the schedule shuffling, it was opposite Mike Glycer

doing a presentation on 25 years of *File 770* (which I would have liked to have seen as well). I learned a little more about the man and learned a little more about what a loss we've suffered.

Of course, I went to the Hugo Ceremony. And SFPA was represented well, with Guy and Rosy doing a fine job as presenters of the fan artist award, putting in a pitch for the fan funds; and with Rich and Nicki graciously accepting another Hugo for their fine work on *Mimosa* thanking the voters and reminding the audience of all their contributors that we've lost to that undiscovered country.

The few parties I did attend were actually fun, apart from the noise and crowds. Saturday night, I went by the SLOF (Secret Librarians of Fandom) party, and enjoyed some of their good food before it got too crowded and noisy. Sunday night, I went to the Bean Books party that Toni told me about and hung around for a while. Just about the time I was leaving, I ran into an old con friend I hadn't seen since ConFrancisco. We chatted for a while and traded e-mail addresses. We made tentative plans to meet up at the Dead Beaver Party Monday, but I stayed there only a short time before deciding I was too tired and just wanted to go "home" and rest.

And it's on to Boston!

## Mailing Comments

**Last Minute Stuff:** Pictures, pictures, we want to see lots of pretty pics of New Zealand! I hope to see some in your expanded report. New Zealand has become my latest "I wanna go there" spot. It may not be Middle Earth, but it has a lot of the same scenery seemingly. You mention seeing mostly white people and few Maori; in the movie "Whale Rider" that I mentioned last time, it's just the opposite---most of the cast is Maori and only a few whites.

Sorry you couldn't make DSC: I couldn't get to Crescent City Con this year because I was scheduled to work Saturday and Sunday and didn't want to take off when I'd be taking off the weekend for Torcon so soon after.

**New Port News:** Another DSC misser! Sorry to hear of your mouth troubles. I hope it's cleared up or at least is not giving you as much trouble by now.

Is that the goddess of fanzines on your cover?

## Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette:

I'm sorry to hear of your mother-in-law's death; though it sounds like her husband might now be better able to live the life he would like. I can understand how your wife would be going through a hard time, though. We can do only so much to help other people; but when they won't let us help them, it can be doubly frustrating.

Interesting reading about the Rosicrucians. I can see the appeal in the belief that somewhere out there is a secret elite who know things that they are keeping from the rest of us. I don't believe in any sort of secret elite; but for some it's a handy excuse to wrap everything that's wrong or inexplicable up into a bundle and blame it on the secret cable of whomever. Of course, the trick is not to form a secret organization with mysterious knowledge; but an organization that can influence events and secretly rule the world. I'd say the faanish equivalent would be SMOFs, but I think they're a little too open about it; maybe fandom needs a new secret cable.

Ct me: *The Matrix seems to be a cult favorite because it claims the entire universe is one vast plot.* Maybe that's why I didn't like it; I'm not fond of conspiracies as a plot device. On the other hand, I loved "X-Files" and its running theme of "it's all a plot."

On SFPA Slash and me: Bite your tongue, Rich. Or should I say, "For shame, for shame"? Whatever; just don't go there!

On the SFPA flag of the Stars and Bars with the Black Power flag colors: I think I once saw such a design. It was years ago and before I had seen the Black Power flag many times, so I didn't understand why that confederate flag had that odd color scheme.

Ct David Schlosser: *I have yet to find the word for sex with someone who hasn't been born yet.* You mean other than "impossible"?

**Nice Distinctions:** I'm glad to see your auto accident didn't wreck you. Of course, other people have had it worse, but that's not much comfort when you have to go through something rotten. I am distinctly uncheerful when I'm having bad times; and I don't want to hear about anyone who has it worse than I do.

"*You get justice in the next world...*" said William Gladdis. I'd rather get mercy. I don't want to think about what I'd get with justice.

Sounds like some interesting papers at the IFCA this year. I'd like to read Charles Nelson's on the similarities between LOTR and *Alice in Wonderland*. I know some of the papers from the conference in past years have been published; any idea if these will be?

I found a couple of Alison Lurie's books at the library; now I want to go and read Hans Christian Andersen and the Oz books. I never read but the first Oz book when I was the right age for them; when I tried to read them in later years, I couldn't get interested in them.

**Traveler's Tales:** The 3-D pictures were very cool. I didn't have much trouble "seeing" them; but when I took the glasses away from my eyes, it took awhile for me to be able to see normally!

Nice to be able to jet off to St. Thomas when you need a break from the bad weather. My periods of wanting to get away from awful weather usually occur during the summer when we have a long stretch of hot, dry, sunny weather. I start longing for cool temps and rain and subdued light. Unfortunately, anywhere fitting that description at that time of year is out of my budget.

The Osborne Family Spectacle of Light? The only Osbornes I can think of off the top of my head are Ozzie Osborne and company and somehow the idea of Ozzie and Sharon with Christmas lights just doesn't go together.

**Variations on a Theme:** Congratulations on the Hugo! That was a very nice acceptance speech, too.

The problem with Harry Warner's zine collection was discussed at DSC. The moral of the story is, "Make a will". Don't just tell people what you want done with your effects, get in down in writing at the very lest; preferably as a legal document.

You certainly have more interesting lunches that I do---you eat at the Cato Institute and hear fascinating talks; my most interesting lunches are sitting in our tiny kitchen at work reading my SFPA mailings so I can make comments on them.

Ct Gary Brown on the future of SFPA. If the membership did drop a lot further, I suppose it would be up to the remaining members as to whether they wanted to continue it. It's possible that even with just ten members they might want to continue their print ways. Maybe

that could/should be a WorldCon panel discussion---"Can print apas continue?" Electronic zines proliferate, but can print zines and print apas survive.

**Tyndallite:** Ct me on the Schachner story and Hitler. Oops. Didn't notice the date on it. I shouldn't imagine he would have predicted the Holocaust. And there will be a Fforde in my future for sure. I saw *The Well of Lost Souls* at Torcon. I briefly considered buying it just so I could read it before it's released in this country; but decided to wait. It's the same way Terry Pratchett used to be published---the books came out in Britain a year or more before they came out here.

**Ducks' Odyssey/Employment Strikes:** Congratulations on the job! I haven't heard any more on the rubber duckies showing up in New England yet---maybe they're waiting for Noreascon.

**Spiritus Mundi:** And a very nice job you and Rosy did at the Hugo Ceremonies and at the DUFF auction. I should have stayed longer at the auction (and spent more), but I really did want to see the panel I skipped out for. Next year in Boston maybe I'll have more money.

Ct me re Jazz Fest: Now that I have that infernal cell phone device; I have fewer excuses not to call you when I'm down there. Assuming I make it to the Fest next year; I'll give you a ring and we can find a place for dinner that accepts sweaty, sun screen covered people. /Glad to hear Malibu's been given a second chance. /Thanks for the SFPA coat of arms---but I still think it needs a computer. We may be dinosaurs with our print ways, but we still like our tech toys.

**Avatar Press:** Nice to have seen you at DSC.

Thanks for the heads up on staying to the very end of "Pirates of the Caribbean"; although I usually always stay until the very last credit has rolled and the copyright notices gone by and they bring up the lights. It's usually just me and the cleaning crew as I leave. "Pirates" isn't the only movie to include one last little fillip like that, of course; the most recent one I remember seeing was "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" which gave us one last look at one of the more memorable characters in that film.

Ct me on Nightcrawler: Thanks for the background on his religious convictions. I don't remember any of that from when I was reading X-Men, but that was long ago, and I stopped reading it about the time he joined Excaliber.

And yes, that back cover is *really* bad artwork. My artistic ability is nil minus some value; but even I can see that the head of the man (?) lowest down is about twice as big as it should be.

**Tennessee Trash:**

And a belated thank you for providing the van and driving for our dinner quest at DSC. I could have found the place on my own, but it was nice to join the company.

So the Moose Lodge ( in Bowling Green) looks like a bomb shelter, hmm? Does that mean that after the blow-up, the Moose will be left to re-populate the Earth? But they're a stag organization, right? So where's the appropriate female organization with their bomb shelter? Inquiring minds don't really need to know. Speaking of going out for ice cream as part of the bachelor party; I think that after one reaches a certain age; going out for ice cream *is* debauchery. Or at least the next best thing to it.



On a more serious note, I'm wondering if Ernesto's bad taste remarks about Alice were due to the cocktail party venue and a little too much to drink on his part. There may be more or less color prejudice in Mexico than there is here; but I don't imagine it's any more acceptable to make tasteless jokes than it would be here.

Sounds like a cool trip the Robes are planning to California. I look forward to reading about it.

**Frequent Flyer:**

Nice to have seen you and Anita at DSC; though I'm sorry the two of you weren't able to make it to Torcon.

Ironic that you go to a hotel near the park for the 4th of July concert and wind up having to watch it on TV. I suppose you could say that this way you didn't have to worry about heat, or sun, or mosquitoes after dark!

You know, if you need something to read on the plane when you can't turn on your computer; I know of this great device you can use without messing up anyone's signals. I think it's called "a book". Seriously, though, could you print out some pages to read when you're in such conditions? It would get bulky to bring along too many; but at least you could toss them when you're done.

Ct Randy on "Space 1999" premise. I watched it some long ago; and I had forgotten that it was a nuclear waste dump that blew up. Oh, dear, that is *very* bad science. I haven't seen it since it was originally on; but I seem to remember it as being reasonably entertaining as long as you didn't think too hard or expect too much.

**Peter, Pan & Merry:**

Ct Ned on amendments with unrelated material: I can see where putting in unrelated material could help get unpopular legislation passed. This way a legislator can vote for a bill his/her constituents support and sneak in that little extra matter. If the legislator is called on it later, they can say, "No, I didn't favor the amendment giving tax breaks for SF fans traveling to Worldcon; but I thought it was so important to pass the bill supporting full rights for left-handed redheads, that I was willing to vote for the bill, flawed as it was."

**Cats on Ritalin:**

That front cover looks awfully familiar---like what goes on at my house. My cat helper prefers to attack the top of the pen rather than the writing end. It does make writing checks a challenge.

Sounds like your Dad had a good time visiting the bombers. It also sounds like the pilots had even more fun talking to him. Nothing like living history sitting right there for you to talk to.

I can relate to Liz's reaction of "oh, no, not again," as regards her surgery. Just about a year after my big surgery years ago, I had to go in for gall bladder surgery. Like hers, I was happy it wasn't going to be a major operation; but I still had the feeling of, "Why me? Again?"

Ct Guy on the "I'm sorry my president is an idiot" t-shirt. I loved the idea of that one and wanted one for the Torcon trip; but didn't act quickly enough to find out where to get one. The Janice showed up wearing one! I'd get one if I were going out of the country anytime soon---after all, I don't expect it to be as relevant after the election next year. I also saw a button for sale in the dealer's room "Don't blame me/I voted for Barlett".

As regards the cartoon on page 21; I thought a two-step was a waltz, not a square dance step. As a non-dancer, I'm not an expert, but I know that there are various Cajun tunes with "two step" in the title, and they are in waltz tempo. I suppose we should just assume that the two-step program takes all problem dancers.

**Trivial Pursuits:** Nice to have finally met you at Torcon. I'm sorry we didn't get a chance to do much more than literally just say hi; but as usual, I was trying to get to another panel.

I've been enjoying "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" as well; though I sometimes grump to myself, "Humph, designer clothes, designer furniture, designer haircut, no wonder the guy looks so good! Let's see them do the same transformation using Wal-Mart!" Have you seen the website [www.thelastlaugh.net](http://www.thelastlaugh.net)? Recently they did "Queer Eye Middle Earth Make-Overs". Of Boromir, they have Kyan Douglas say, "Another follicle challenged warrior..."

I must have been paying attention to reviews when it was released, because I saw "Priscilla" when it first came out and loved it. Much better than the American version "To Wong Fu" or whatever the title was. It was funny after LOTR came out to read people in newsgroups grouching that they just couldn't accept Hugo Weaving as Elrond since he would always be Agent Smith to them. To which I could think to myself, "Obviously you didn't see 'Priscilla', or you'd get that image wiped."

Have you read any more of the Amelia Peabody books? I've been reading them for quite a while now and always look forward to a new one. In the last few, we're seeing the next generation of Radcliffs coming along to take their part in the adventures. I've found the books vary in quality; a few books back I thought they were going distinctly downhill, then the next one highlighted more of the next generation and held my attention better. The original generation is still around, though; and I imagine Peters will never abandon them entirely. If you like the Egypt bits she puts in her books, try her two nonfiction written as Barbara Mertz where she talks about Egyptian history: *Red Land, Black Land: daily life in ancient Egypt* and *Temples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs: the story of Egyptology*. I just checked my library catalog and see they were both revised in 1990. I'll have to read them again; I read them both years ago and remember them as being good. I even like her supernatural/romance books written as Barbara Michaels.

You mention approvingly of "X-Men 2" jumping right into the action without recapping what went before. Which is what "The Two Towers" did as well. Maybe it's a trend? Maybe with the growing trend of everything being released on DVD and video within a year of a movie's appearance in the theaters the movie makers are figuring that the audience for the second or third in the series will have seen the first or second either in the theater or at home.

Nice to read a local perspective on the California recall election. I was amazed at the way the ballot is going to be set up with the candidates out of alphabetical order. With that many names on the ballot, how long will it take the poor voter to find the correct name? In Louisiana, the voter has a limited time they can stay in the booth; if you have to scan every name on a long ballot, you'd take up all your time and more!

**The Sphere:** That's scary quote from Bush regarding his divine calling. Do you know where and when he said it?

You mention your web site having an unexpected spike on one day in June. That reminds me of the report on NPR on "flash crowds"---a group who contact each other by cell phone to show up at a random place; do nothing much and dissipate. Maybe the next trend is web site flash

crowds? "Hey, folks, the site to hit next is [www.toonopedia.com](http://www.toonopedia.com) on June (whatever day it was). Pass the word."

The San Diego comics con sounds like quite an experience. 70-75,000 people? That's not a con, that's a decent size city! And I think Worldcons are too big.

**Guilty Pleasures:** You certainly do start out with a good news/bad news bit this time. Happy to hear that your neighbor Lance Cpl. Brown is home safe; sorry to hear of Spc. Jeffrey Wershow. His story puts a human face on those statistics. I like the way ABC News runs photos of the dead after the evening news. If you haven't seen it; as names become available; they run the picture with name, age, and hometown of the dead service people. No music or commentary, just silence. I'm sorry to hear, although it doesn't surprise me, that the troops morale is hurt by the antiwar protests. I don't know how one can express disapproval of why they are over there while expressing support for their well being. Well, there is a t-shirt that says, "Support our troops. Bring them home."

Your brother gives very cool birthday presents. I'm almost jealous--I've certainly never gotten a sword!

And speaking of swords---I hope *Captain's Sinister's Lady* sells real soon because I want to read it--it sounds like fun! I love that your pirate is an orphan; I started channeling "Pirates of Penzance" and seeing him sparing other orphans in his pillaging telling them that "he knows what it is like". Or maybe not---I'm sure you'd like to be original!

I'm glad to hear Micah escaped more serious injury from his bike accident. Impressive that you were able to use the symptoms and use them.

Ct Janice Gelb on the Blair affair: I'm not surprised that he's gotten a book deal out of it. The publishers can always justify themselves by piously claiming that, after all, they're in the business of publishing and if the public want to read about Mr. Blair, well, what can they do but meet that need? In a way, I can see their point; they are in business to make money; and his book will bring in a lot of money. I don't agree with them, of course, but I'm sure there were plenty of publishers lining up to offer him a contract.

**Obilo:** Scott's a lucky young man, getting such a neat car. Or maybe he's just fortunate in his choice of fathers! Yep, cars are a necessity around here, as well.

Interesting report on the San Diego Comic Con. Actually I can see how several fans would be on the same flight out of Dallas. With 70-75,000 attending; possibly half of them flying in from the east-mid part of the country; most of whom would get funneled through Dallas; and all of them coming in within a few days; it's not surprising you'd meet up with a few with the same destination.

So you were a phantom the first night in your room. If you had checked out, would they have charged you? Silly question, I know. I suppose someone hit the wrong key when you checked in and the info wasn't stored; then someone else noticed the error and changed the lock so your key wouldn't work.

**Cow Drifters:** Thanks for the conformation that the desserts at the Acropolis were as good as I thought they would be. That was a good place to eat; good enough that I'd consider going back to Liberty Con just to eat there again!

On child labor in Asia (and elsewhere): if the child is going to school and receiving education, health care, and good shelter, that's one thing; but most of the "sweat shops" are not like that. Children are working in dangerous conditions; often treated as virtual slaves. It's the same game the sharecroppers got caught up in. They have to pay the factory owners inflated prices for food, shelter, tools; and gosh, wow; their wages just don't quite cover the prices; but they can borrow the money! At inflated interest to insure they'll never get out of debt.

**Yngvi:** I'm not sure I should say thanks for the push to run for OE---I'll let you know! Lovely party at DSC this year; I was much impressed by the decorations. And in case no one nit picks, it's "je n'est sais quoi". I also enjoyed the party at Torcon, for which invitation I can thank you. Nice party, nice suite, gorgeous food.

Charlotte Proctor is the second person in just a few months that I've heard enthusing about "Law & Order". Sounds like one I'll have to catch.

As re: the clipping on page six; actually, I had heard of the resolution. Bernie Sanders spoke at the ALA conference in June; at one of the opening sessions. Have you heard Ashcroft's latest gimmick? He's been traveling all over claiming that the "Patriot Act" is just after those nasty people and librarians are being used by special interests when they complain about the idea of due process being trashed.

**Home With the Armadillo:** Surgery again? Yuck. Let's hope this is the last one for a very long time. I hope you're doing well by now.

So, was it a lot of effort getting Allie to college in a furrin country? I assume she had to get a student visa; I wonder if Canada is making it harder for anyone to get in, even temporarily. I know it's not easy for just anyone to immigrate. I was half-seriously saying something about immigration to my sister while I was up there. I'd have a difficult time being accepted, though; I'm older than Canada wants its new immigrants to be, and don't possess the skills they're looking for. Having family already there would help, but the way libraries have had their funding cut up there, I would find it very difficult to find work.

**And to all:** I hope all of you have a lovely fall. We had a few days of cool nights and mornings with clear skies. The temperatures have gone right back up again, but there is the promise of cooler weather in the days to come. It's getting dark earlier these days, and it's not quite light in the mornings when I get up. The year is turning.