

REVENANT #9

Revenant #9, November, 2001 produced for SFPA mailing #224 by Sheila Strickland
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Two months and some since Sept 11, and are we back to normal? I'm not as affected as last time; but I still can't bear to write much about it. I'm still wincing at violence on-screen even more than before. The horror of the events of that day have faded somewhat; but it's still painful. Reminders of what was lost keep showing up. At work the other day, we were cleaning up the accumulation of stuff that collects at the circulation desk. One item was a postcard from New York sent by one of our patrons back in July when they visited there. It was of the Statue of Liberty---with the World Trade Towers in the background. A new book came in last week. It was a travel guide to New York City---again with the World Trade Towers on the cover. We're still hearing reports in the newspaper of local people going up to New York to cook for the workers at the site; and of the fund raising for a new fire truck for a fire company that lost trucks that day. Today, Thanksgiving day, there were stories about those fire companies that will try to be thankful despite missing co-workers. There's still a lot of grief out there. And the holidays will be very hard for too many people. But we'll survive.

I was hoping I could be a little more cheerful this time around, but there's not a whole lot of good news to be had these days. The Taliban may be on the way out in Afghanistan, but the Northern Alliance is not a major improvement. Bin Laden may be on the run, but he has enough followers around the world ready and willing to do harm that they will continue to be a threat. I am appalled at Bush's order allowing due process to be scrapped for non-citizens as long as they are suspect. Comparisons with World War II aren't apt---that was a declared war with a clearly defined enemy. What we have is a history of attacks and threats of more from individuals and organizations. We still don't know who is behind the anthrax attacks; whether domestic or international terrorists.

Enough of that---it angers and frustrates me because I can't do anything about it. I did have one good day last weekend---I went up to the Highland Games in Jackson, Louisiana. Last year was cold and raining; this year was warm, dry and very sunny. So sunny, in fact, that I spent only a few hours there. I brought along a hat, but forgot my sunscreen; and by 2 P.M. the sun was getting to me and I had to find some shade. Before I left, though, I got to hear Ed Miller, a Scots musician originally from Edinburgh, now living in Austin, Texas. He does some traditional music and some modern. During several songs he tried to get the audience to sing along, without a lot of success. To be fair to the audience, though, there was a big distraction going on behind us in the form of the cabor toss. When you're sitting on the ground with the knowledge that men are throwing telephone poles behind you, and you hear the crowd "ohhing" behind you as you hear a

thump! and feel the ground shake; it's hard not to wince and turn around! After taking all the sun I could bear, I stopped by the cemetery in town to pay respects to dead relatives. My mother's parents (whom I never knew) are buried there, as are my maternal grandmother's parents, and that great-grandmother's parents. Several of my maternal grandmother's family are buried there, only one of whom I remember. It may sound like a waste of time to visit the graves of people you've never known; but they are family. With the genealogy searching my sister has been doing; I've wondered about some of them---what they were like; why they moved from wherever to Louisiana. I can't ask them questions; but I can pay respects, and brush the dead grass off their headstones. My mother and her sister used to go there when I was a child to clean off the graves and leave flowers. While they worked, my cousins and I would play around, always being careful not to step on the graves and to stay away from the tomb with bricks falling off it---we didn't want to see inside it!

And speaking of cemeteries leads me backward to Halloween. With the anthrax scare in full bloom I wasn't sure if I'd have any trick or treaters this year, but I bought candy and turned on my front door light just in case. There are lots of kids in the neighborhood and sidewalks for them to walk on, but not a lot of street lighting. I wound up having a couple dozen; not many, but more than last year. Last year I had one big group being taken around by an adult (a party group) plus a few together. This year I had several small groups, most of whom had adults with them.

I haven't yet been to see the Harry Potter movie yet. I thought I might go this week, but the school kids are out of school all week, and I'd rather wait until the crowds thin out a little. Some of the critics have been less than enthusiastic, but people I know who've seen it say it's great. Meanwhile, I've ordered the first book from Amazon.uk.com. This is the one with the "adult" cover. From the image on their web site, the cover seems to show the Hogwarts Express in shades of gray and black. The "adult" covers are supposedly for those who don't want to be seen reading a "children's" book. I wouldn't care about that, but I did like the "adult" cover better than the regular one. I want to read the British edition to see if there are any changes I can see.

The movie I'm really eager to see is Lord of the Rings. I won't be able to go on its opening day; but I have the second day as a vacation day; and I hope to see it then. I've been trying to avoid hearing too much about the movie which is silly in a way as I certainly know what happens; but I don't want to get too saturated with the images before I see them on the big screen.

This next piece should have been in last time. I had it written and ready to include in Revenant #8. Unfortunately, when I put in the disk, it refused to open. After mailing #223, I tried again, and was able to open and print it. I couldn't copy it; then couldn't open it again. So I re-typed it from the printed copy. With the amount of work I put into taking notes, writing it, and fussing over trying to recover it; I'm running it, late or not!

Toronto Tales

I've found a way to beat the summer heat in Louisiana---visit Toronto! I can't stay there all summer, but the week I spent this year was a welcome respite to the broiling at home. Daily high temperatures up there were in the low to mid 70's as opposed to the mid 90's here.

One of these days, I'll learn the correct balance between packing too early and waiting until the last minute. This trip was a case of "wait until the last minute before deciding what to bring, much less packing." It was crunch time going into this. I worked the weekend before the Tuesday I left and had to finish up my apa entry for #222 since I would get back home just before time to mail it. I finished writing it in time, but printing it up was the usual exciting experience. I wanted to include two pictures in my Twain bit and had never tried to print graphics in a document before. My printer freaked out and started printing the wrong pages together, or refusing to print two-sided sheets at all. I ended up having to print sheets separately, then collating. (Yes, I'm spoiled with having a printer that will normally collate.) With the printer problems, I ran out of my usual paper and had to substitute thinner paper than I like to use for two-sided printing. My apologies to those who got the too thin paper, but I wasn't up to a midnight run to Wal-Mart! (As an appropriate capper, I later found that I did have some of the heavy paper!)

My flight up was at the reasonable hour of 11 A.M. and out of Baton Rouge, so I was spared having to get up too early. Alas, I was at the airport and going through security before I realized I had forgotten my camera and my jacket. I bought a disposable camera there at the airport and hoped it wouldn't get too chilly on the flights. As we were waiting to board, they called for volunteers to be bumped, offering a free voucher for a future flight. The plane wasn't overbooked, but was overweight. The gate agent attempted to explain that it was something about when the weather was humid, they couldn't carry as much weight; but that she didn't really understand it. I volunteered to be one of the bumped, and was chosen; then at the very last moment, they sent me ahead and bumped the group of four who had also volunteered. (Looking back on it, I should have been nervous about getting on a plane that was almost too heavy, but I think I was too tired and too relieved to be on vacation to give much thought to it!)

I had about an hour layover between flights in Charlotte, and needed every minute of it to race all the way down one concourse, through the terminal, stopping long enough to buy a sandwich, then going all the way down another concourse. While racing through the terminal, I saw something that made me wish I had an extra hour or so to spend---a line of rocking chairs set up, with several people sitting and rocking. I don't know if that's a regular feature or was just there as a special feature; but it was something I would enjoy taking advantage of.

I finally made it to Buffalo, met my sister, and we started for Mississauga (just west of Toronto). My flight was into Buffalo because of the difference in fares---it would have cost over twice as much to fly from Baton Rouge to Toronto as it cost from Baton Rouge to Buffalo. Buffalo is only about one and one half hours drive from Toronto and my sister was willing to make the drive. Crossing the border was simple---a question or two and right on through. (And re-reading this after Sept 11, it'll be interesting to see if they're any more vigilant or ask more questions when I go up at Christmas.) My sister and her family have lived in Canada for over fifteen years, but they moved to Mississauga

only last spring, so this was the first time for me to see the new house. Bigger than their old place in Etobicoke (which is east of Mississauga and closer to Toronto), but less convenient to the city. At the old place, you could walk a few blocks down to Lake Shore Boulevard, and catch a streetcar that would take you to Queen Street West in downtown Toronto. From this house, the fastest way into town was the more than several blocks to the GO train station which would take you to Union Station in downtown Toronto. The train was faster than the streetcar, but had farther to go and was more expensive.

Unfortunately, I wouldn't see my brother-in-law Don on this trip--he was in Bangladesh on a business trip. My sister tried most mornings to contact him by internet messaging, but it was always very slow and sometimes didn't work at all. We had a nice relaxing evening catching up on news and meeting my niece Alison's latest menagerie additions. In addition to my sister's old cat and the family's young dog were two hamsters, two gerbils (one of which actually belonged to one of Alison's friends), and an anole---one of those little green lizards that you see all over around here, but they had bought at a pet store. I enjoyed being able to sit outside in the fresh air without being drenched in sweat or eaten by mosquitoes. Amazing weather---the sun went down and it cooled off!

Wednesday morning, after the delay of trying to get Don on line, we drove into Toronto. The traffic was dreadful, a theme that repeated itself the entire trip. I wasn't upset over the slow drive into town though, as it gave me a good look at some familiar landmarks from my earlier visits. Our first stop was the St. Lawrence Market, one of my favorite places in the city. This is a neat place to go for food; to eat or just to window shop for. There are different vendors selling fresh meat and seafood; teas and coffees; cheeses and olives; preserves; fresh fruits and vegetables; sandwich shops; bakeries. We made the obligatory stop at the St. Urbain Bagel bakery. They make what's called "Montreal style" bagels. I'm not a bagel expert, so I don't know the exact difference between these and any other style of bagels, but they are wonderful. They were out of my favorite variety (poppy seed), so I bought flax seed and multigrain, both of which were very good. Afterwards, we made a brief stop at Bakka Books, a science fiction bookstore on Yonge Street. When I first went to Toronto several years ago, they were on Queen Street; this new location is smaller (I think) and on a grotty section of the street. Their on-hand stock didn't impress me this year. I did buy a couple of Terry Pratchett paperbacks for the British covers. The Josh Kirby illos on the British editions are to my eyes more interesting than the dull, serviceable ones on the U.S. editions. By the time we finished up at the bookstore, the afternoon was wearing on and we decided to leave the Royal Ontario Museum for another day.

Thursday morning, I walked to a near-by shopping center to get a newspaper while Virginia and Alison tried to make contact with Don via internet. Again, it was slow and difficult to connect with the result that we didn't leave the house until almost noon. Traffic going into and in Toronto was just as bad or worse than the day before and we again spent some time in gridlock. We were all planning to visit the Royal Ontario Museum; but with the delays, Virginia thought better of it and decided she and Alison would have to get back for Alison's tennis lesson. They dropped me off and I spent several happy hours at the ROM. The ROM is another one of my favorite places in Toronto. Like most big museums, you can spend a few days there and not see everything.

I concentrated on the ground level exhibits this trip, especially the Asian art and ceramics. I loved the Chinese tomb display that I remembered from earlier visits and enjoyed the pottery display that I didn't remember. I took a brief look at the third floor displays of European furniture from various periods several of which included with music of the appropriate era. I was beginning to succumb to museum fatigue, so I left the dinosaurs for another visit. I took the subway for a few stops down to Eaton Centre to buy stuff. Back when I first started going to Toronto, Marks and Spencer had a store there and I would buy their brands of tea and jelly babies, and various varieties of cookies in their Food Hall. Unfortunately, Marks and Spencer closed all their stores in Canada a few years ago; so my main focus at Eaton Centre is the drug store. I bought several Cadbury chocolate bars (varieties I don't see around here) plus several bars of Pears soap, which I used to be able to buy here, but haven't been able to find for the last past several years. I also bought a package of Claritin, to see how well it works on my allergies. By this time, it was on into the evening and past the rush hour, so I took the subway to Union Station and the GO train back to Mississauga.

Alison talked us into playing New Orleans Monopoly after supper (it's played like regular Monopoly, but the streets and places on the board have New Orleans place names). I hadn't played Monopoly since I was a child and it showed---I quickly went bankrupt to my niece the real estate tycoon!

Friday was the day for driving and walking. Our first stop was Burlington, west of Mississauga, where we visited the Ikea store. I hadn't ever been to one of their stores and enjoyed looking around at all the neat house wares and furnishings. My sister talked me into buying a badly needed set of curtains for my bedroom. Not that I needed much persuasion; I liked their styles and prices; and with the exchange rate of \$1.00 US getting about \$1.50 Canadian, the prices looked even better. Afterwards, we went to Hamilton and the Botanic Gardens there. Here, my memory and notes fail me, because I can remember little of the gardens except that we walked and walked and walked some more. I do remember walking through a wooded, hilly area and crossing over a bog via a bridge. My hips were beginning to hurt, so I didn't have the enthusiasm of my sister who likes plants a lot better than I do. I remember the Rock Gardens a little better. They were built in an old quarry, and have paths up and down the sides, with streams and ponds in the bottom. It was all very beautiful, but I hurt too much when I tried to walk to really enjoy it. Once I stopped walking, I was fine---just out of shape, I suppose.

Next day we traveled again, this time to Montreal. Unfortunately, we had to go through Toronto, and the traffic was just as bad as it had been on previous days. The congestion eased up as we got out of the city; so all we had to deal with was construction along the way. One good aspect of traveling the major highways in Canada is the service centre. (There may be something similar in this country, but I haven't seen them.) A service centre has a gas pumps out front and a building with an eating place or two; usually a Tim Horton's plus a KFC or McDonald's. Even better is that as you approach the centre, there'll be a sign that says "Next Service Centre X kilometres" so you can decide whether to get off now, or wait until the next one. It's a long drive to Montreal---six or seven hours---and not terribly exciting on a super highway, so Virginia brought along some tapes. One was Lucinda Williams' "Car Wheels on a Gravel Road". I had heard of Lucinda Williams before, but I didn't recall ever hearing any of her music

and this tape converted me. I'm not sure how to best describe her music---a little bit bluesy, some rock, some country influences. I'd guess anyone who likes Emmylou Harris would probably like Lucinda Williams. We also listened to Zachary Richard---he plays Zydeco and Cajun and used to live in Quebec although he's from Louisiana.

Once we got into Montreal, the traffic was heavy. Our hotel was in Laval, just to the north across the river. After checking in, we drove back downtown intending to park the car and walk around old Montreal---the area near the St. Lawrence River (the other river). There were at least two festival going on that weekend, though, and guess what? All together now---the traffic was terrible. Gridlock all over the downtown area and impossible to find a place to park for a reasonable fee. We settled for a short, very slow driving tour of the old city. It's a lovely place, very picturesque. The streets slope sharply down toward the river and the area where the first French colonists settled. The buildings are of stone, and it looks more "European" than downtown Toronto. My sister and I had visited briefly several years ago, and I was disappointed we didn't get the chance to see more this time. One of these times, we'll really get to see the place! On the way back to Laval, we drove up Mont-Royal, the "mountain" in the middle of the city. It's not much of a mountain, but it's high enough that you can get a good view of the city.

Sunday morning, we made an effort to get up early enough to do some sightseeing before we left for Toronto. We visited the Botanic Gardens (one place Virginia and I had been on that earlier visit) first. Virginia and Alison looked around the Insectorium while I walked around the Gardens. The place is immense, hard to see in one day; impossible to see much of in the short time we had. I concentrated on the Chinese gardens, part of the Japanese gardens, and a brief stroll and sniff in the rose gardens. The roses were beautiful and smelled wonderful. I also took a brief look at the water gardens before meeting up with Virginia and Alison. If I had had several more hours, I would have gone through the greenhouses the way we did last time. I'm not particularly knowledgeable about plants, but I thoroughly enjoyed this interval---comfortable temperatures, no crowds, no screaming children, or ringing cell phones. Fresh air to breath and beauty to behold. Lovely. The next stop wasn't quite as enjoyable. We took the shuttle bus to the Biodome a few blocks away. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but I felt a little disappointed. The Biodome is in one large building (a converted velodome left over from the 1976 Olympics) with several different "environments" all with appropriate animals and plants. I think I would have enjoyed it more with fewer people! It was so crowded (and there were so many people talking loudly) that it was more like seeing a diorama of the environments in a museum rather than actually walking through those environments. We left the city about 4 P.M. and headed back to Mississauga. With the construction (and other mysterious delays) it was almost 11 P.M. before we made it back to the house. Despite being tired, I didn't get to bed early. I had brought along Connie Willis' new book *Passage*, and was reading some each night. This night I was reading along and was about ready to quit for the night when the plot gave an unexpected twist, and I had to go on reading until it was somewhat resolved. I wanted to finish it, but that would have required staying up the rest of the night---it's a long book.

All that meant I had to sleep in a bit Monday morning. This was my last full day in Toronto, and I wanted to go back downtown. Virginia dropped me at the GO train station and I thought I'd start my Toronto shopping with a visit to Lichtman's, a book

store I had discovered from previous visits. I was disappointed to find they had closed all of their locations. In former years there were several in the city and I had fond memories of buying Bill Richardson's books there; even a Terry Pratchett title or two that I couldn't find in the U.S. I ended up spending most of my time in and around Eaton Centre including a look at the Tower Records store nearby. It was a huge place with plenty of CD's I could have blown my money on. I restrained myself and settled for Lucinda Williams' latest release "Essence" and a new one by The Rankins (Canadian family group, sorta folky, from Newfoundland, I believe). It was a melancholy ride for me on the GO train back to Mississauga. I wasn't looking forward to going back to work and the heat; and I would miss being with family. My sister and I would likely wind up arguing too much if we were around each other all the time; but I wish I could see them more often than I do. I said goodbye to all those familiar Toronto sights, hoping to be back before too long. I made it back to the house before rush hour and we decided to go out to eat. Alison had been asking for sushi every time we ate at a restaurant, so for this meal we wanted to go some place where we knew that it would be good. The restaurant was located in a strip shopping center not far from their house; I found it a little odd that most of the other businesses were eating places! Alison had her sushi, Virginia had a spicy chicken dish, and I had a shrimp and vegetable tempura with a buckwheat noodle soup. We shared around portions of our dinners; so I got a sample of it all--all good. The only problem I had was trying to eat the slippery noodles with chopsticks. I tried cutting them with the serving spoon, but they were so slippery, they wouldn't even stay in the spoon! I had plenty to eat, though, so I didn't worry about a few noodles.

Tuesday came and it was time to go home. My flight didn't leave Buffalo until almost 6 P.M., but my sister would have to get back to Mississauga by mid-afternoon to get Alison to her tennis lesson (they were having a special instructor that day). We drove first to Lewiston, New York, located on Lake Ontario across the river and a little north of Niagara Falls. We were planning to take a look at the town that was advertised as "historic Lewiston". Historic it may have been, but set up for tourists, it was not. It was a pretty enough place, but it was very unlike Niagara-on-the-Lake, which has maps, and information, and all sorts of tourist traps, er, make that "attractions". We stopped at a little eating place on the lake for lunch and asked a man working there where the tourist information center was. (It was advertised on the highway, but we hadn't been able to find it.) He didn't know, and didn't seem particularly interested in helping us find it. We walked for a few blocks on the main street admiring the old buildings. Victorian and early 20th century, probably. Back on the road and off to Buffalo. I said my good-byes to Virginia and Alison and prepared to wait. I passed the time reading and working on this trip report.

The trip back was almost like the trip up in reverse. I passed through Charlotte again. In the perverse way of airports, my flight from Buffalo came in at the far end of one concourse and my flight to Baton Rouge left from the far end of another one. Again, I had to hurry from arriving to departing gate without being able to do more than gaze longingly at the row of rocking chairs. When I got to my departure gate, I was glad I didn't have much time to spend there, or I would have come down with a severe case of claustrophobia. The Charlotte airport was under construction, and I hope that accounted for the fact that the waiting area for at least seven gates and probably a dozen flights was

crammed into a space that would normally hold two gates. Happily my flight wasn't crowded and I made it back to Baton Rouge only about thirty minutes late, and had to wait only a moderately scandalous amount of time for my luggage.

Since I didn't finish doing comments last time here are:

Mailing Comments from #223, cont.

Guilty Pleasures: Yet another person I missed getting to meet at MilPhil. Sorry we didn't manage to connect. Congratulations on the book. I did finally get it downloaded and read; and thoroughly enjoyed it---I'm looking forward to the next one! Sounds like a fun trip to NYC and Quebec City. I liked what little I've seen of Montreal and would like to see more of the province.

Your county library funding system sounds just like my parish library system. Property tax is so low around here that many people pay none at all; which may help us in getting added millage. We must be doing something right, though; in the last election (a few years ago) not only was the funding continued, but increased. The library consistently scores very high in approval ratings with the public; but it's nice to see the approval translate into willingness to vote for a tax increase.

Notorious Jumping Zine: On the matter of peel-off vs. old style stamps: The stamp machines in the post office sell the old style if you select the option of individual stamps. With the ones around here, you put in however much money, select the number of stamps, and the stamps come out off a roll. They're probably one of the few vending machines around that take pennies.

A print-on-demand bookstore could operate by having one printed up as a model. You look at it and if you like it, they'll print you up a nice new clean copy. The printing would be easy enough, the binding aspect might be harder---doing one at a time like that could be where the prohibitive expense comes in.

Yngvi is a Louse: Nice cover. Nice kitty. A cat who knows what he wants. (Er, the four-legged one; though I'm sure that could apply to the two-legged one as well!) Nice to have seen you, briefly, at MilPhil. I don't think I've ever met Sheryl Birkhead, but after Julie Wall and you both mistaking me for her; I'll have to try to meet her.

Nice article/speech on writing SF.

Ct Randy on Guy and fanzines; I remember a New Yorker(?) cartoon from years ago---a gentleman saying to his young lady. "You wait here and I'll bring the etchings downstairs."

Tennessee Trash: Interesting report on the mission trip. You wondered, "What is it all worth", but I think you answered your own question pretty well. As you said, even helping one person makes it worthwhile. "Is it enough?" Is what you did on that trip enough? Of course not, but in some ways, no one can do enough. You do what you can do, and leave the rest up to God.

Liz & Jeff's Alaska Trip Report: Neat report---sounds like you had fun. I suppose I'll have to add Alaska to my list of places I'd like to visit. You mentioned the Anchorage K-Mart and Wal-Mart open until midnight? Pikers! The Wal-Mart nearest to me (less than one mile) is open twenty-four hours. The Albertson's across the road from the Wal-Mart just recently went from twenty-four hours to closing for a few hours in the wee hours. I've never taken advantage of the long hours, myself; but I can sleep well with the knowledge that I can make that 3 A.M. run for blank video tape (or whatever).

The False Knight on the Road: I liked the ballad---and the fact of it being similar to a British Isles ballad collected in North Carolina in the 1920's. Which leads me to ask if you've read Sharyn McCrumb's *Songcatcher*? If you've read many of her books, you've probably noticed the music undercurrents in many of them. She's had a few things to say about the folk process and ballad collecting; especially in *Songcatcher*.

Ct me: I don't remember if "Bedazzled" had a scene that ends, "That's just what *I* said!"; I wasn't paying close enough attention to the movie.

If you were at one of the early CoastCons, we must have met there---I think I went to most of the early ones. Or if we didn't actually meet we must have been in the same vicinity. Those early ones were very small; but a lot of fun.

I should have known better than ask about sartorial customs of members of the Anti-Conflagration Squadron! Aargh. Walked right into it!

My sympathies to you on losing your grandmother. I never had to deal with a parent or grandparent with Alzheimer's; but it must be hard to lose a loved one while they're still alive.

And now on to:

Mailing Comments #223

New Port News: Ct Armadillo re leprosy and armadillos. Armadillos are one of the few (or maybe other) animals who can get leprosy. They used to use them to test leprosy drugs at the Hansen's Disease Center in Carville, Louisiana. The Center is pretty much shut down now; so I don't know if they're using them for that. I never heard that you could get leprosy from handling them or eating the undercooked meat. I thought leprosy was not contagious; despite the traditional fear of it. People certainly used to eat armadillos especially during the Depression---they called them "Hoover hogs". Did you know armadillos bear four young in a litter---all identical? Did you really want to know?

Tyndallite: So you typoed "197" for "1957". Now if we could find something skiffy-ish that happened in 1761 we could claim that as year one of the SF calendar. Then 1957 C.E. would be 197 S. F. Which is the earliest fanzine would depend on how you define "fanzine". I suppose you could say "the first fanzine about science fiction", or "the first fanzine produced by SF fans".

Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette: Glad to hear that your father, although ill, is not quite as badly off as your brother seemed to think. One of the drawbacks of growing up is that our parents grow older---and finally die.

Ct Ned on street numbers: Street numbers are often assigned counting from a central point as if all streets start at that point. Assuming two parallel streets, one beginning at line A. The first street begins with the 100 block. The second street begins at a line that would intersect the first street's 500 block. Instead of beginning with 100's, the numbering will begin with 500, which allows for the possibility that the second street would be extended to line A without confusing the numbering scheme. That's probably not very clear, but without diagrams, that's the best I can do!

Ct me on Worldcon expectations. I didn't enjoy myself as much this year as I did in Chicago---no real idea why; maybe I was fretting over the money. From a financial standpoint I shouldn't have done it; but I had a good enough time that I don't regret it. Still, I think DeepSouthCons are more fun. They're more relaxed; it's easier to run into people I know; and hanging out in the con suite is practically on the program!

Ct David on cottage cheese in macaroni and cheese. I Am Not A Cook, but I've never seen a recipe for mac and cheese that called for cottage cheese. I've seen one for lasagna that called for it; but it's not one I would make---I don't like cottage cheese.

A Pontiac Grand Dam? Is that the one for driving through flooded streets?

Ct Eve on libraries. Don't be apologize for not "supporting" your public library. Using it a lot is supporting it. Be assured the library staff is looking at those circulation figures.

Variations on a Theme: Nice to have re-met you. You're welcome for the rescue (I don't mind typing nonsense), but you'll probably have to get someone else to do it next year. Unless I can find at least one roommate for certain and a really, really good deal on airfare; I won't be there.

Ct Irv on first fanzine: Interesting history there. *The Time Traveler* sounds more like my idea of a modern-day fanzine than *The Comet*. Defining "fanzine" could be as hard as defining "science fiction".

Spiritus Mundi: I liked all the statues and building art in Philly. My friends Ruth and Rickey Shields did some touring before the con, and said that they were told that any building in Philadelphia built using public money has to have a certain percentage of the budget for artwork on or in the building. It certainly makes for a more interesting design.

Peter, Pan & Merry: Ct me on the Ad Vielle Que Pourra quote sounding "suspiciously like something that the Kingston Trio would have said." I never listened to them much, so I can't judge. Maybe it's a traditional remark...(And coming back to this later; I heard a Scots singer last weekend say much the same thing about his music!)

Random Thoughts: I was beginning to think I was the only one who couldn't concentrate enough to do a half-way decent zine last time. I ran into a few problems trying to get a copy of a cartoon I wanted to run and just didn't have the drive to figure another way to get it done. I admire all the others in the apa who were able to write thoughtfully and intelligently about September 11th, but I just wasn't one of them.

Good luck working on the new house. You should have an “interesting” winter.

Trivial Pursuits: Since you were done out of your chance to see “Curse of the Jade Scorpion” in Santa Fe, I hope you got to see it later. I went to see it not long after September 11 when I wanted to get away from the nightmare of current events. It was a good antidote---fluffy fantasy with no car chases or gun fights.

Ct me on plaid patterns associated with certain clans: I was thinking more along the lines of “recent” being not as far back as the Middle Ages, but I hadn’t realized they went back as far as the 17th century.

Ct Toni ct Wells on large-print books. The audience for large-print books may have been largely female in the past, but I think that’s changing. Most of the best-sellers we get into the library these days also has a large-print edition that is published at or at almost the same time as the regular print. Possibly due to the large number of aging baby boomers who are willing to buy those large-print books. Non best sellers are not as apt to get the big print treatment; but lots of titles also come out in audio. Of course, the audience for those is not only the sight-impaired, but those with long commutes; those going on long drives; people who work using eyes, but not minds.

Philly Follies: I knew I should have taken notes at the con. I see from your report that it was a Gardner Dozois roast, not a George Scithers one.

You mentioned going to eat at Maggiano’s; I ate there with a big group after the closing ceremonies. We didn’t make reservations, but had to wait only a few minutes. I enjoyed the food, though the company added to the pleasure. I loved the Caesar salad; others at my table raved about the spinach salad.

Regarding the Dozois roast, was the song to the tune of “Barnacle Bill, the Sailor”? It’s sounds like it was a fun time. It’s the old problem at WorldCons---too much to see and do all at the same time.

Offline Reader: Sorry to hear of your troubles. I can understand if you have to drop out of SFPA, but you’d be missed. You’ve been a good recruiter over the last couple of years being instrumental in getting Trinlay and me to join.

The Sphere: One drawback of calling it “America’s” New War if that it ignores any allies who want to help. I’ve not been following events too closely; but I remember hearing various other countries were a bit disgruntled that the U.S. seemed to want to do it all alone without letting them in on it. Seems to me the military should want to take advantage of any help they could get---how often are that many countries eager to help the U.S. in a military operation?

Frequent Flyer: I was sorry to hear the sad news about Anita’s mother. My sympathies and condolences to you both. I was spared having to watch either of my parents deteriorate though Alzheimer’s or senility; but I know it’s hard on the family to watch someone slip away.

I didn’t realize the convention Center in Philly was once a railroad station. Toward the end of the convention, Ruth and Rickey Shields and I were rambling around

exploring connections and found we could get to the shopping center and its food court without having to go outside onto the street. We wondered why the con hadn't mentioned that the Reading Terminal would be closed on Sunday and Labor Day; and didn't mention the food court at all. (They may have, but none of us remembered seeing or reading anything about it.)

Ct Toni on mint juleps: Well, I'm a native Southerner and I've never had a mint julep. Of course, I drink very seldom; but it's never been a drink I wanted to sample.

Avatar Press: Please pass on thanks to your friend for the Dragon-Con report. Sounds like she had a good time; but it doesn't sound like my type of con. Still I enjoyed reading about it and could see myself, were I more interested in gaming and comics and less allergic to big crowds, wanting to go. Nice to hear Robert Asprin's still around. I used to see him at cons; he was a good filker and entertaining guy besides being a good writer. I was intrigued to read of the costume made of tape blackened out in strategic places. That could hurt. Especially taking it off!

Ct me: Well, we were in the same room at the Baen Books party briefly. You were talking to someone else, I think; and I was typing on the one shot. I know I caught a glimpse of you at least.

Ct Jeff on "Homeland Security": I don't like the concept, either ; and the name creeps me out. I hear jackboots.

Yngvi is a Louse: You mentioned Green Linnet as a good source for Celtic music compilations. I used to get their catalog; and would buy things on occasion. I haven't lately; but I'm still listening to *Thistle and Shamrock* (runs on public radio) to get my Celtic music fix.

Passages: Hey, we almost share birthdays---mine is July 23. Interesting to read your impressions of Germany. When I go play tourist I like to sight-see; but just as diverting is looking at and experiencing all those things commonplace to a local, but different for me. I find grocery stores almost as entertaining as any tourist attraction! One reason for the lack of pick-ups and SUV's on the German roads might be the high price of gasoline over there. It could also be that pick-ups and SUV's are available; but haven't been around long enough that everyone wants one whether they need one or not.

And what a trip you had to the British West Indies! Sounds incredibly luxurious. I'd probably start twitching after a week of lots of servants and gourmet meals, too; but I wouldn't mind trying it for a few days!

Tennessee Trash: Nice commentary on September 11.

Your vacation in the West sounds like fun. I've never seen that area of the country and I'd like to see it someday.

And congratulations to your parents on their 50th. It seems to have been a successful party and I think they're fortunate to have good children to do all that.

Another Rude Supergirl Cartoon:: Ct Steve re parodies and their length. *The Wind Done Gone* is very short indeed. I haven't read it; but I've seen it pass through the library

a few times, and as I remember, it's barely long enough to be a novel, much less anywhere near as long as *Gone With the Wind*.

Shocked and Sleepless: Ct Janice on coffee makers making tea. I tried making tea in Philly using the in-room coffee maker. I wasn't surprised at the outcome---worst tea I've ever tasted! I even looked around and tried to find some place that sold baking soda so I could attempt to clean out the coffee maker, but to no avail. The coffee I made in it wasn't much better---far too weak. I gave up and had tea either at Reading Market or at the Convention Center when I wanted some.

Words Fail Me: That's a very effective image of what five thousand looks like. The number alone sounds bad, but to see it laid out like that...The "official" number of dead has been changing from day to day but it seems likely we'll never know exactly how many died. There are so many stories of families who will never have a body to identify or bury. So many people who survived and can't yet live a normal life.

Ct Steve Hughes on Clinton haters: I noticed the Clinton bashing back even before he was inaugurated. And the depth of the hatred toward him and Hillary astonished me as well. I remember a claim that Clinton had had several people murdered who were apparently in his way politically. And this showed up in the mainstream press; not in some whacko tabloid!

Guilty Pleasures: You mention a lack of variety in the Dealer's Room; but I didn't notice it. I saw books new and used, jewelry, CD's, clothing, comics, media fanzines, posters, buttons and bumper stickers, and various other "stuff". What was missing?

Good for you and Ralphi for donating blood. I wish I had be able to; but I'll be rejected for another six years or so. It was sad to hear that some of that donated blood had to be destroyed; let's hope some who gave will continue to give.

So, Ralphi likes the theater and may be following a pre-rabbinical studies program? "My son, the TV preacher." You did realize, didn't you, that Jimmy Swaggart and Jerry Lee Lewis are cousins? How is Ralphi's piano playing?

And to all: Once again, I've skipped a few people. Nothing personal if I did, but I would rather try for a meaningful comment than just replying to reply. Of course, I like getting replied to, meaningful or not, so maybe next time I'll try for full reply. Meanwhile, Happy Holidays to all for whatever you'll be celebrating. I'll be up in Toronto for Christmas hoping to avoid too much cold or inclement weather. A little snow would be pretty and a novelty; with the emphasis on "little". I prefer our usually mild winters.