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“You don't have to be even a casual student of history to recognize that somewhere deep in all of us is this same angry political Id, this fear and distrust of the other tribe just over the misty mountains.”

Charles P. Pierce, *Esquire on-line* 7-18-19

And so it is hatched out. “*Go back where you came from.*” Trump’s 2020 campaign will champion overt racism.

The targets of the White House attack, four young Congressmen “of color,” including AOC, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, our cover girl from two *Spartaci* back, and the Congress’ sole Muslim, XXX. All are progressives, all are non-Caucasian, all are women. They are the natural enemies of a brute like Trump, and the equally brutal, equally evil gang that supports him, and Trump will try to exploit the deep angry insecurity such women bring to them for his own benefit.

We have never faced such a clear choice, such a desperate decision.



I didn't watch any of Trump's 4th of July extravaganza, since I could look out of our bedroom window and watch neighbors' fireworks light the night from there. One wonders if ICE provided televisions to all those refugee kids we keep in cages, turned to Fox News so they could enjoy the show and could hear the President of the United States turn American history into the same laughingstock he's made of the current country.

Bad enough to mistake the writing of our national anthem to the Revolution instead of the War of 1812 – most of us might do that – but to praise George Washington's army for taking *airports* from the British ... well, they say paradegoers couldn't see the fireworks on the Mall, maybe they couldn't hear that, either.

The silliness of this year's Fourth didn't really matter, of course. What mattered was its Shame. The kids in cages needed no televisions to see that. They are *in* it.

The caged kids are only part of the awfulness affecting the young this summer. The Jeffrey Epstein case has erupted like a pustule this July, a revolting Polaroid of the worst entitlement claimed by the rich. Of all the sins there are, surely among the worst is corruption of the innocent for one's own ends, which is exactly the reason billionaire Epstein – an inspiration for *Fifty Shades of Gray?*, one wonders – faces life at a closeted country club.

Apparently he got rich so he could dally and prey, sexually, on kids – turning pubescents into prostitutes for himself and a clientele we have not yet seen. He felt protected by his money, by the *faux* elegance in which his money let him move – by those powerful friends. The feds nailed him as he left his private jet. I find that bitterly hilarious.

Epstein's story is repulsive enough, but there's a tangential scandal that's drawing as many pixels in the broadcast news. Why did Alex Acosta, then the prosecutor in his case and now Trump's Secretary of Labor, give the scumbag a sweetheart plea deal when Epstein was first arrested on similar charges, umpteen years ago?

Acosta claims that he let Epstein plead to a relatively minor charge – one which branded his teen victims as prostitutes – for the same reason prosecutors have taken lesser pleas since time immemorial – weakness in his case. I saw such deals struck a zillion times during my years as a public defender, and most of the time they're a great benefit to the system: they clear dockets, encourage pleas, save the state money and defendants irreplaceable time. But here I don't buy Acosta's assertion. Some victims weren't anxious to testify? Others were cooperative. Their words on the stand would have made a strong case. Conviction was more than likely. Epstein would have been sent someplace where the chicken wouldn't be so plentiful. I smell influence, laced with American wealth-worship. It's a rancid stench.

I can't help wondering what these sordid stories say about our society. Maybe I should say, I can't help despairing. It certainly seems like we treat the young not like the owners of their future, but the pawns of our politics, the toys of our appetites.

The real horror is that the young are going to believe that Trump and the distorted, ruthless, truthless world he exemplifies are normal. They'll see that bullying, bigotry, mendacity and corruption are acceptable in this country if they bring reward. They'll hear the plaints and ideas of progressives – or just decent people – and think them plain whining. Their America won't be any that has previously existed. It'll be a fake disconnected from its dream, its philosophy, its history, and it will be a crass and ugly thing. Personally, I'll go into the void estranged from my people. It's a bitter future.

Or ... not. Let's not forget my divine Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. In addition, the developing Democratic race has brought a welcome jolt of – if not optimism, then temporary relief from despair. I credit the young candidates – Pete Buttigieg, Kamala Harris, even poor, neglected Julian Castro and his hapless fellow Texan, Beto O'Rourke. The soulless GOP has no youngsters to match the energy and spirit of these comrades in arms. 2028, anyway, looks promising.

And let's pay heed to the (spiritually) youngest, brightest, most hopeful, most intelligent, best prepared of them all: **Elizabeth Warren**. Her cascade of ideas is heartening, her enthusiasm is infectious,

her decency is inspirational, her optimism *almost* convincing. I doubt seriously that she can sufficiently penetrate the murk in which float the brains of our nation of Wal-Martians, but it is a good thing to know there are such people in the world.

And there is, this summer, the US Women's soccer team ... Of *course* they should be paid as much as the men's team, if not more for the joy, inspiration and *sass* they have brought to our stupefied country.

Why are we progressives wasting a single brain cell on baloney PC like protesting the Nike sneakers with the Betsy Ross flag? *Who* would be paranoid and petty enough to be offended by the original flag of this country? Foolishness, it makes the progressive cause look foolish, and worst of all distracts us from the task at hand. But here's an issue far more serious ...

One controversy that has reared up in recent months is the idea of reparations for slavery. The government, according to this idea, owes black people of today restitution for the decades of servitude suffered by their ancestors. It's not a bad idea – if you want Trump to win a *third* term.

Because the optics of such a concept are awful. It seems like a rank bribe to black voters and an in-your-face to poor and working-class white folks – the one ethnic group it's still politically correct to despise. Their sense of exclusion and mockery is what drove them to Trump in the first place. Underscore it and they will cling to that *orange*-utan for good.

Try low-low-interest gummint loans to start-up businesses from the poor – no matter what ethnicity. Progressives must address race-specific issues, of course, from police misconduct to the generalized ill health in African-American communities to the pestilence of drugs, an infection hitting *everyone, everywhere*.

Let's switch over to **ENTERTAINMENT** ... What I've enjoyed of late? Wimbledon was epic – the men's final with Djokovic and Federer was an occasion for awe, and the new lady champion is a charmer. There's been good fictional TV – *Chernobyl*, for outstanding instance. The scene where the Russian scientists explain to the USSR Central Committee that, if not contained, their reactor meltdown could very likely *eviscerate mankind* was only one fabulous moment. Indeed, the Reds came as close to global-level catastrophe as I care to imagine. On the other extreme, the *American Experience* documentary on the moon program showcased man at his finest. The film of JFK speaking of the dream made me wonder, in no small anguish, *what the Hell has happened to this country?*

I've been reading BOOKS...

The Hungry Moon / Ramsey Campbell: A slim but effective horror novel, hyped on the pb cover as a werewolf story but nothing of the sort. I love Campbell's work but can't decide if his changeless tone of dread is a weakness or a strength. Must be a strength: my TBR stack has more of his books than anyone else's except Fred Chappell's.

The Cabin at the End of the World / Paul Trembly: Very strong horror novel, spare and disturbing, as a "new normal" family on vacay is invaded by some very crazy cultists. The book won several major genre awards this year. I didn't find the ending as explosive as several other readers declared, but it was still a quick, relentless, insistent read.



The Killer Across the Table / John Douglas: Real-world horror here, as the founder of the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit recounts some of his major cases. The techniques developed by the fibbies over the decades are fascinating. So too, I admit, are the killers, at least until all the veils are snipped away and the dumb, pathetic, weak need common to their hearts is bared.

The Border / Don Winslow: Greg Benford recommended this writer to me, and his trilogy on the drug war with the Mexican cartels represents his masterpiece: a contemporary *Les Miserables* with the junk plague at its center but the violent destruction of the Mexican culture and the painful desiccation of America's societal dreams swirling about it – starstuff vanishing into a black hole. The previous novels – *The Power of the Dog* and *The Cartel* – set up the story of a DEA agent battling against the night, a 30-year odyssey this book brings to a close. Violent, wide in scope, despairing, hopeful – the three books are all large, together they are huge, but this is the best read I've had so far in 2019.

One Thousand Monsters / Kim Newman: I've long been a fan of Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* series, positing a world where Drac conquers England (by infecting Victoria) and creates a race of vampires that coexists, sometimes awkwardly, with the "warm." Fictional characters walk – and sometimes fly – side by side with the historical. Throughout several books, covering many decades of the 19th and 20th Centuries, a jolly time has been had by all. Until now. For some reason, this excursion to Japan and its unique vampire society seemed stodgy and confusing, so much so that I interrupted my foray to devour a masterpiece I have too long neglected ...

The Perfect Storm / Sebastian Junger: The story of the hideous nor'wester of Halloween, 1991, and the fishing boats and other craft endangered and destroyed by the confluence of hurricane and Canadian storm front. It's quite technical, educating the landlubbing reader in general seamanship, the deadly art of swordfishing, meteorology, maritime sociology and, alas, how it feels to drown. There's plenty of personal storytelling, too. By the end of the tale you understand the men who were lost in the deluge as well as how the storm came to be. *Very* effective, *very* moving. Yes, I like the movie too.

Dark Sacred Night / Michael Connelly: Harry Bosch rides again along with female copy Renee Ballard in this latest thriller from Connelly – a writer who somehow manages to combine the dry facts of police procedure with genuine readability. He'll never match James Lee Burke or T. Jefferson Parker for me, and the terrific *Bosch* TV series adds color and liveliness to the stories, but damned if I can put down these *Dragnet*-style tales.

... and seeing FILMS ... a couple, anyway. It's been a fallow summer.

Rocketman – This clever, surrealistic biopic of Elton John thrives with great music, good performances, humor, great music, style, *impeccable* music – its only flaw, in my ears, was not getting Elton to sing his songs himself.

Midsommar -- Rosy and I took in this cult/horror film, in the mold of *The Wicker Man*, praised by *Esquire* and gifted with a respectable 80% rating from Rotten Tomatoes. I found it worthy and spooky, Rosy found it cliched – and we both found it foreshortened. The digital projector went blooey in the last few minutes; we didn't get to see the very end. The management, aghast, gifted everyone with replacement tickets and us with passes to come see the last scenes at a future date. That was nice of them.

And then there's the film I most look forward to ... Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood*. It's set in 1969, on the edge of hippydom, Manson, Woodstock ... my generation.

Speaking of those times ... Forthcoming is an animated edition of that magnificent maladjusted trip from my misspent youth, *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, a satirical portrait of the '60s and '70s by Gilbert Sheldon. The boys never failed to be savagely funny – well, maybe when Fat Freddy unloaded a shotgun in a police station to try to rescue Dealer McDope from Norbert the Narc. Otherwise, larfs a'plenty, mostly at the Freaks' expense. Their day is past but who knows? Maybe this show will reignite those burnt-out doobies and get this revolutionary show back on the road ... (By the way, I tried marijuana twice in my life, both times to impress girls. I choked and coughed and hacked and wheezed and writhed on the ground, my face blue as a Druid. I impressed them, all right.)

WHERE TITANS RISE_: LOCS

“Where Titans Rise” is the motto of Eastern Florida State College, where Rosy and I adjunct.

Taral Wayne

I recall something I wanted to ask about.



There are few **famous** Canadian accents, but there are three that most of you should be familiar with. The actor who plays Kryten has claimed that he based his voice on a Canadian accent – a combination of American and Scottish, which technically has merit. But which does not sound Canadian to anyone Canadian-born. The second **famous** Canadian accent belongs to a voice actor, who plays Tintin in French. But apparently he has drawn criticism for having a pronounced *French Canadian* accent, not the ducet tones of the Parisian ideal. Finally, there is Bob and Doug McKenzie, the choice of real Canadians for making fun of our own speech. But, it is a really a joke on others, who only *think* we talk that way, eh?

I sent a graphic to go along with the Kryten article [in *Challenger* no. 42], but it wasn't included. Was there a reason why you left it out? I seem to spend a lot of time on this sort of thing that just wastes me time – the art that was supposed to have gone with Banana wings an issue or two ago, for example. But I've been gradually giving up art anyway, so what me worry?

*No .. what **me** worry, since had I seen such a cool illo, I certainly would have included it in **Challenger**.*

Didn't come through until now. Many sorries – and please keep art-ing.

*You also sent a spiffy LOC to **Challenger**, and since I won't be publishing another issue of that journal for several months, it'll run not only there and then ... but here.*

LOC to Challenger 42, 20 May 2019

Gawd, that was a long issue. I didn't have to write it all, of course, but even reading that many articles between two covers is going to be a challenge. I mean, when I need four hours a day to putter on Facebook, how am I supposed to find the time to LOC fanzines? To read an entire article may take me two or even three sessions in the bathroom, and a particularly long piece may even tie me up for a month. Clearly, I will have to ration myself.

*I've been assured there are other uses for **Challenger** in readers' bathrooms. You might want to leave it there.*

One of the most important, if often overlooked, questions about robots is why people want so badly to make them. After all, slaves have been historically cheap enough. Even though we tend now to frown on keeping slaves, it has only been a recent thing that there were artificial alternatives to living

servants ... the Golem or Vulcan's golden handmaidens notwithstanding. So what possessed mankind to begin tinkering with mechanical men, even though there was no clear need for them? In particular, why are the Japanese so fascinated by the subject?

If I were asked these questions more than twenty years ago, I might have answered that there was no genuine interest in robotics and artificial intelligences, they were the province of the deeply nerdy. No one would ever bother to make actual robots with man-like attributes. Computer Assisted Machines that could turn out cookie-cutter K-Cars, certainly, but those were not truly robots, just a continuation of a long tradition of mechanizing labour. But over the last few years, developments in robotic science have proven me wrong. Increasing interest, effort and investment into AIs and automatons has driven the science, along with investment into unmistakable momentum. I am somewhat at a loss to explain it.

Could it be, as some have suggested, that the Japanese are experiencing a rapidly aging society, and will soon be in bad need of round-the-clock nursemaids? Or is it more likely that rapacious corporations are eager to finally rid themselves of costly, sleep-demanding employees, and look to the day when their businesses consist of no labour at all, merely a totally automated process from beginning to end that generates 100% profits? It's hard to see this working out, if no one takes home a paycheck. But then there is the military, which has realized the political cost of putting soldiers in harm's way. An Armed Forces that can leap into action at the flip of a switch and lay waste to an enemy – and not inconvenience voters of even a night's sleep – can make war positively *popular!*

Then again, I have sometimes suggested that perhaps artificial companions are fated to one day to show that actual human friends may be less than perfect, or even harmful to our well-being. Imagine, if you will, that we have survived forty years of the Baby Boomers' best efforts to destroy our environment, and we fortunately still have a future to look forward to. It's tempting to wonder what this future would look like. Now, imagine that artificial intelligences have become sophisticated beyond our understanding, but have not yet evolved into a replacement species. It may be a question of what "will" is. If we don't develop AIs that have independent will-power, then we would probably have no reason to fear them. Unless programmed by the Pentagon, that is.

Can you imagine your best friend in a hundred years? He may look human, so human that he doesn't violate the "uncanny valley" that would creep us out. He (or she) would be the perfect friend. He (or she) would never seriously contradict us or make us look foolish by comparison with their own perfection. Of course, to be surrounded by yes-men would stunt one's growth, and produce a race of immature, egotistical people with no grip on reality ... rather like the 45th President. So the perfect friend of the 22nd Century would have to be more than a mere echo of our opinions; it would have to be attuned to provide us exactly enough challenge to keep us on our toes. It would have to encourage our independence, curiosity and desire to exceed our limitations – in fact, to help us be better people. It would probably be impossible for ordinary, real humans to do this. In fact, most real people constantly belittle us, exploit us, waste our time and never encourage us become the best people we can be.

So here's to our robotic companions of the future! If you think about it, having a "fleshie" as part of your social circle may be considered be downright perverted. Better go in and have the robo-doc recalibrate your Theron waves before you set off any alarms.

I remember *Star Hawkins* rather fondly, and used to have copies back in the late 1950s. The robot secretary was named Ilda, and not only was she an efficient and loyal employee of Star's broken-down detective agency, she could be pawned between paying gigs. I still remember one panel when Star has just left Ilda deactivated temporarily in the window of the pawn shop ... hopefully not for long. In years of looking, I have only found one panel on-line, and it was a delightful surprise to find another panel in the pages of *Challenger*. So that's two ... anyone know of more? My interest is not entirely arbitrary. In fact, I used Ilda in an illo of mine, way back around 1975, and when I had no reference to work with at all. And now I have TWO!

You still have that illo? hinthinthint

Then there were *Metal Men*, also a favourite of mine at one time. They were destroyed in *The Brave and the Bold*, a comic book anthology, but reader reaction was so good that they gave the Metal Men their own book. I kept up buying it for thirty or forty issues, by which time it had grown stale ... and

even unacceptably silly. The stories were always a bit strained, but I liked them. Right in the first issue, the tone was set when Tina, the platinum robot, accidentally stepped on Doc's foot, and instead of crushing it into a pulp, Doc found time to say something like, "Tina! Get your atomic weight of 195.084 off my foot! You're crushing it!" Even when I was eleven, I knew this was not good literary style.

*At the outset of my letterhacking career, as a newbie teenager, I sent MM author/editor Robert Kanigher a LOC reminding him of the origin of the Metal Men – which I asked him to remember when writing new stories. He sent me back a note: "Dear Mr. Lillian, I agree with your every word." While I worked at DC Comics in 1974, I grew fond of Kanigher – though many told me he was a pain in the tush to work with – and asked to do an interview for **Amazing World of DC Comics**. He said yes, then no, then yes, then offered to pay me what the interview would bring. He always cranked out good stuff – **Wonder Woman, Metal Men, etc.** – and his **Enemy Ace** and later **Sgt. Rock** stories were utterly brilliant. Now, comments on **Spartacus** no. 31.*

Rich Lynch

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You mention that "I truly, truly hate to say this, but I think Donald Trump is going to be re-elected in 2020." Kind of early for that kind of pessimism, if it's even warranted at all. Your belief is that: "This horror will likely come about despite the wrongness of the right and the rightness of the progressive cause." Or the far-leftness of the progressive cause. Some of the declared Democrat candidates (such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren) are way, way over to the left, and if one of their bunch becomes the Democrat Party nominee it will play right into Trump's hands.

I'll repeat what I said in my unpublished comment to *Spartacus* 29. (You didn't have a lettercol in issue 30.) When you'd voiced your opinion that: "I'd prefer to see [Beto O'Rourke] on the ticket as Vice President, beneath Elizabeth Warren", I responded that I thought that would be a big mistake. One of the most important results of the mid-term elections was that three rust belt states (Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania), which had all gone for Trump in 2016, had turned back to the blue again. Keeping them blue in the 2020 election is crucial for unseating Trump. Right now that seems do-able, but it could come apart if a more centrist Democrat than Elizabeth Warren isn't the nominee.

*First of all, O'Rourke has been a major disappointment in the race so far. My preference for a veep candidate is now Kamala Harris, or Julian Castro if an all-female ticket seems unviable. Secondly, it's my belief that Americans often pick their Presidents out of **excitement**, that sudden dash of charisma and imagination that lofts candidates like JFK, Carter, Reagan, Bill Clinton and Obama to the top. Harris and Warren engender such enthusiasm. Trump can appease his base by making racist aspersions or calling them socialists all he wants, but their energy and pizzazz might well be our best hope.*

Bill Plott

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Rick Norwood's chilling story might be even more so were it titled 2024 or 2028, given the crap going on under King Donald. 2020 is a bit of a stretch for such a drastic turn of events.

A problem for much science fiction. Those impossibly far-off future dates come along much quicker than people think.

I know I've said this before, but I do wish you'd caption your pictures. I'm sure it will be an AhHa! moment when explained, but right now I have no idea who the lady on the front page is.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, AOC, my candidate for President in 2028 or 2032. Trump just suggested that she – and several other progressive congresswomen of color – go back where she came from. In her case, it's the Bronx.

I read a couple of James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux novels and was turned off by violence in the last one. It was not so much graphic descriptions but the inane aftermath. He was involved in shootouts or such in which several people died. No arrest, no holding for investigation, just a casual "Come on, Dave, stop this stuff and keep in touch." The reaction of the cops was so far removed from real life that I just couldn't continue it.

*Burke does write (a lot, and very well) about violence – Robicheaux is a violent alky who keeps himself under rigid moral control. And he's a cop himself, given a cop's leeway in Louisiana. I buy it. His female characters – all tougher and more macho than Green Berets – annoyed me for a time, but since **Wayfaring Stranger** he's given them a rest.*

Rich Dengrove

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A big question Conservatives are asking is how are we going to pay for the Green New Deal? The answer is simple. The same way the Repubs paid for the last tax cut, i.e., print up the money. In effect, that is what an increased deficit plus low interest rates amounts to.

The Dems are going to have to figure out what the winning combo of issues is going to be. Medical care? Wages? Housing? I have two ideas. First, I think Trump's idea to maintain current infrastructure and increase it is a good one. It is popular and, with more places with urban amenities, it would free up more land for housing. Trump can't pass it before the Dems do either, even though he originated the idea. His fellow Republicans would reject it. Second, I wonder, with a Democratic majority, whether increasing the taxes to pay for welfare spending will remain sudden death. Especially if it's the rich paying the extra taxes.

LOCS: *Lloyd Penney*: Maybe it is advantageous to us liberals that Trump's emphasis on the border problems has taken the "Orange Fool" away from the budget. *John Purcell*: Trump hiding something? He's hiding everything.

"America 2020." Ah, if Trump goes on, Rick Norwood envisions an America where everyone is armed. Heinlein was wrong: an armed society is not a polite society. Rick is right: an armed society would resemble the Old West.

An armed society is not a society at all. It's barbarism.

In this little space I'd like to note, with great regret, the passing of my cousin Jeff King of Rosamond, California. I remember the day he was born, maybe 10-12 years after me, and his shy boyishness, and I wish like crazy that his political arguments with my other cousins hadn't kept us from seeing him on our visit there last August. He was a good, solid guy, survived by his own family and his sibs, Roger, Judy, Janice. Many fond memories.

I would also like to salute the dignity and love shown by my friend and Southern fan-mate Cliff Biggers in the last month, as he and his wife Susan have faced a terrible challenge. Their people are with them all the way.

JULY 20, 2019

Step outside this significant morning and there 's still birdsong in the air, a *coo-loo* that reminds me of the melody outside of Kathy Cupitt's house in Perth. Further above us an ultralight dives out of a feathery cloud. As I follow Ginger on her sniffing explorations the birds grow silent and the heavier clouds to the east begin to burp with thunder: looks like it might rain a bit on my 70th birthday.

Go back inside and thaw out a couple of frittatas for my breakfast. Our lunch date isn't for a few hours. While Rosy surveils her iPad at the dining table, I take my foodies and a Pepsi – don't grimace; it's how I get my caffeine – to my computer and flip it on.

And there is my birthday present. I yowl in delight. *A Brad Foster “inner robot”!*

Turnabout is fair play. For *her* birthday a year or two ago I took advantage of Brad’s offer to draw a person’s robot self to obtain a classic portrait of *la belle*, complete with curls (hard to do, Brad told me), and yorkie and chin and one of the covers she was creating for Greenhouse Scribes – and an ascending rocketship, denoting both Rosy’s fannishness and her home base, within hailing distance of Cape Canaveral. (We have a launch in two days!) Last April, she tells me, she contacted Foster and worked out the details to go into *my* portrait – our female yorkie, Ginger, in a coat bearing my 14 Hugo nominee pins, a patch on my chest with a Superman emblem and a Nawlins *fleur de lis*, a subtle reference on my head to my favorite SF film, *Forbidden Planet* ... and around my metal neck, of course, my *figa*. Brad enjoyed crafting a plastic dome where my bald pate should be, she says.



Our lunch is at a cool rail-side restaurant which once served as a railway station. They say it’s haunted. Ghostly or not, it wins my gratitude for the excellent French Onion Soup and for *not* singing “Happy Birthday!” From there *la belle* and I hie ourselves to Office Depot and Michael’s to make prints of our robots and buy frames. They are destined for our bedroom wall, and mine for a fanzine cover, *Real Soon Now*.

And so I am 70, brought to the moment by sheer happiness, brought to sheer happiness by the thoughtfulness, love and wit of the best person I have ever known.

I’ve never imagined this birthday. Age for me, as for many of us boomers, was a distant cloud, a mist over a far mountain. Doubtless this is why my three score years and ten passed without much thought or preparation – and why Rosy and I are still working, if not at our chosen professions.

That regret doesn’t bother me much – not as long as I can work, anyway, and at a rewarding job like college teaching – but of course I have accrued my share of remorse. The hurt our immaturity caused my first wife and me when our gesture to young hope crashed. People I’ve frightened or upset or disappointed, for whatever reasons – especially during my adolescent grabby days. My own hopes, as yet unfulfilled, sparked by some of the best people in the world, teachers and mentors and family and friends, and never really tackled.

One good thing about this birthday: I don’t *feel* old. I *feel* that there is time to do stuff, to write and to speak – maybe even fight for the right, if I can overcome that foul-mouthed dragon, despair. I can enjoy marriage, and live to please the one person who matters most, and maybe repay life for its gifts.

I owe so many debts, to Rosy and to others – and to the Guys on my last page. It has been a helluva haul. My bod has aged – there’s *plenty* I can’t do anymore – but if you never stop caring you never stop living, and that I promise.



The kid, 1949 to 2019 ... and counting.

