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SPIRITUS MUNDI 166

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In late May, to compound all the other miseries of that terrible month, my computer finally died. One morning I turned it on and instead of reading "C:\wp51" as I normally did, I found, simply, "C:". Typed "\wp51" and hit Enter. The reply was mercifully short in coming. "Bad file name," it said.

Soon it became obvious -- even to a dreary illiterate on these matters -- that my faithful little 386, which had served me well since January 1993, helping me through 32 issues of **Spiritus**, a like number of KAPAZines, seven **Challengers** and God knows how many what-elses, had given up its electronic ghost. You may have read of the preliminary problems it evinced last issue. I was mournful, but not surprised.

Clearly it was time for an immediate change. I knew what I wanted. I wanted -- and I still want -- a Pentium II, 233 MH or better, with 4 gigs of hard drive, 32 megs RAM, and a 56K modem. (At least, that's what computer whiz Larry Touhi says I want. He also says it's pretty standard.) Such a gizmo runs between \$1500 and \$1800 these days. Had May ended up as I'd hoped, this would have been no problem.

But May wasn't ending up as I'd hoped. Recall that I had been scanning my P.O. box with excess interest in the last few weeks, waiting for my share of the booty to come in on the great "Susie" SSI case -- a matter, I am ashamed to say, of some *four thousand dollars*. Susie had received her payment and, according to the award letter issued by the Social Security Administration, was due mine. Yet it had not shown. I complained, of course, at first with good humor, then with ironic humor, then with no humor at all. Finally, I got my reply. With *smug* humor.

Well, the woman was not *quite* smug. She claimed to be passing along a decision from On High, one of those anonymous federal decisions that, because anonymous and administrative, are absolute and unquestionable. "We paid the full amount to the client," she said, "so you'll have to get your money from *her*. If you can't find her, we'll check with the regional office and see if we can't set up *some kind of overpayment*. Okay?"

I think I invoked the spirit of Timothy McVeigh.

Except that I'm smarter and fundamentally *meaner* than Timothy McVeigh. All he did was fill a truck with fertilizer and strike at federal employees that way. Having less scruple, I wrote letters to *politicians*.

John Breaux, Mary Landrieu, and William Jefferson, respectively Louisiana's two senators and the local congressman. I whined to these semi-worthies (I should be kinder to Ms. Landrieu: I voted for her, know her brother, and consider her cute) that Social Security was trying to force me to rectify *its* mistake, tasking me to locate an unstable woman who had left the state (as Susie has) when their own resources were infinitely better able to do so, and *then* to weasel \$4000 from her, which would drive a significant wedge between a lawyer and a valued client. No way!, I told these great leaders of the American people. Make Social Security do its own dirty work and *send me my money!*

There the matter stood. I was perfectly confident that even though I am penniless and without influence, my elected representatives in this great democracy would stand up for me against the faceless, soulless, brainless bureaucracy that had ripped me off for four solid large. What else, after all, are people in politics for except to serve the needful. Nevertheless, I would have to subsist on my salary and what fees *hahaha* I could coax out of my private clientele. So it was that when my computer went *bluh*, I could not trot off to the computer shop and merrily tour the aisles going "Give me this, this and this." I had to suffer.

Suffer I did! I didn't realize how much my little dinkum-thinkum had come to mean to me. Even without net capability -- for that I have to visit Kinko's, where I surf a bit and get my e-mail, at ten bucks an hour -- my computer represented creative freedom. Lord knows how many sleepless nights have been relieved by typing a mailing comment or a bit of natter or some legal work or a letter. I'd grown accustomed to interface. Without it, I suffered.

So -- on the advice of Mr. Noble, the elderly attorney with whom I am doing a few Orleans Parish cases -- I did not cast away the classified section of my daily newspaper. Instead, I scanned for used computers. And found this one.

"This one" is an IBM PS/2, Model 70 386. I know -- so old it should print out in Sanskrit. I got it from a guy named **Curtis** who was operating out of an open garage on Bienville Street in the French Quarter. It was a repulsively hot afternoon, and Curtis' garage was beneath an air conditioner, which trebled the suffering of we who bartered therein. But I was fairly impressed by the little machine, not too unhappy with the price (\$100), and amused by Curtis, who was one of those talkative bullshit artists who have been everywhere and done everything and can always top any accomplishment of *yours*, at least in their imaginations. (Why are you looking at me like that?)

I bought the thing and took it home. I had a mild conniption when I couldn't get it past an icon which looked something like a stop sign having sex with a telephone book marked IBM, and a worse one when I called IBM. My call thereto elicited bafflement. They tried to get me to call a 900 number to find out what it meant, but I didn't buy their dumb act -- the swine merely wanted to soak me for a few dollars. Curtis, when contacted, nailed the symbols right away: a keyboard problem, easily fixed by an adapter. The spirit of Social Security lived at IBM. Nuts to you, Big Blue!

So I hammered on the new computer, learning its limitations and its strengths. Perhaps both were manifest in the fact that it wasn't programmed with WordPerfect 5.1.

I was used to WP5.1 and frankly concerned that I'd find Word or WP for Windows a nuisance, or worse. (White screens gave me headaches when I first started writing on computers, and I missed 5.1's comforting blue.) But being similar, Word and WP-Windows proved easy to master, and I was soon bashing away happily. The Pentium II with my name on it still sits boxed in a warehouse somewhere, awaiting release to an electronic life more fulfilling than any a computer could dream of. But till then ...

In other ways late May improved upon its early weeks. I purchased and perused **Triumph of Justice**, Daniel Petrocelli's splendid memoir of Fred Goldman's suit against the murderer of his son. The book was inspiring for a lawyer and insightful for all into the strategic conduct of a civil trial, and few cathartic moments in literature could match my pleasure as Petrocelli tore a new asshole for the twisted butcher of Ron Goldman. Eat shit and die, O.J.!

But I mainly mention the book by way of lamentation. I am old. You see, on purpose, and because I needed it, and because I wanted it, I bought the *LARGE PRINT* edition.

It was much easier to read. With words the size of **Dick & Jane at School**, the pages *flew* beneath my eyes. Still, I felt disgustingly antique. Why not? By this deadline I will be 49, beginning my *50th* year. The Monster called Senility has me by the short hairs. On one memorable occasion in late May, I lost my glasses, and had to wear my former specs -- which weighed a ton and gave me a headache -- to court. While there I called neighbor Cindy and asked her to snoop about for my current pair and *find* them, dammit, and dammit, find them she did. On the arm of the couch. In plain view.

49 ... going on *eighty-nine*.

Another bit of good news. You all will remember that incredible \$104,000,000 Powerball pot everyone was so excited about in late May. *I won*.

Three dollars! And I only had to buy \$25 worth of tickets to win it! It bought a great tuna sandwich and there's no such thing as a bad Coca-Cola.

One more item remained to May. Searching the Net, I typed in my own name, and found ... this. That **Lillian H. Guy**, 77, had died on May 21, 1998 in the Tampa Bay area.

The shame of it is, whoever she was, she never knew I existed, and I think she would have gotten a kick out of my name.

Thus fortified, I faced the beginning of June, and the onset of DSC.

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DSC : A Hot Time in the Old Town

Friday

The dining room at the Flying Pig Barbecue in Heidelberg, Mississippi, is dominated by a giant stuffed moosehead. Dennis Dolbear and I regarded the moose with sympathy as we stuffed *ourselves* midway through our drive to the 1998 DeepSouthCon. Perhaps, we figured, the poor beast had *eaten* itself to death at this establishment, for the victuals were of such quality that one could easily do so.

When, on this drive, I wasn't trading bullshit with Dennis, I listened to **Into Thin Air** by Jon Krakauer, his epic and tragic account of that terrible May of '96 on the world's tallest -- and most dangerous -- peak, when 12 climbers died there -- including two of the very best mountaineers on Earth. The tale of the mountain's supernatural cold dispelled some of Alabama's belaboring heat, and the expedition's travails up Everest's slopes made the drive seem much easier. All is relative, after all.

#

There was a time when the sight of the giant iron statue Vulcan gave me shivers -- but I was only 3 years old. Nowadays that silhouette on the distant hill tells me I'm back in Birmingham, one of my favorite cities, one of my homes, and is a joy to spot. Entering the city, it was easy to find the Ramada, site of the convention: last time, the hotel was a ruin; this time, it was worse.

Because it was *hot*. The air conditioning was erratic, the atmosphere was steamy, and there was only *one spot* in the entire place where one could feel cool -- a square foot of carpet just in front of con registration where the air conditioning vented. Everyplace else was a sweatbox. But among the first to greet us came the cap'n, Meade Frierson, wearing a *jacket*. Is losing weight *that* important, old boy?

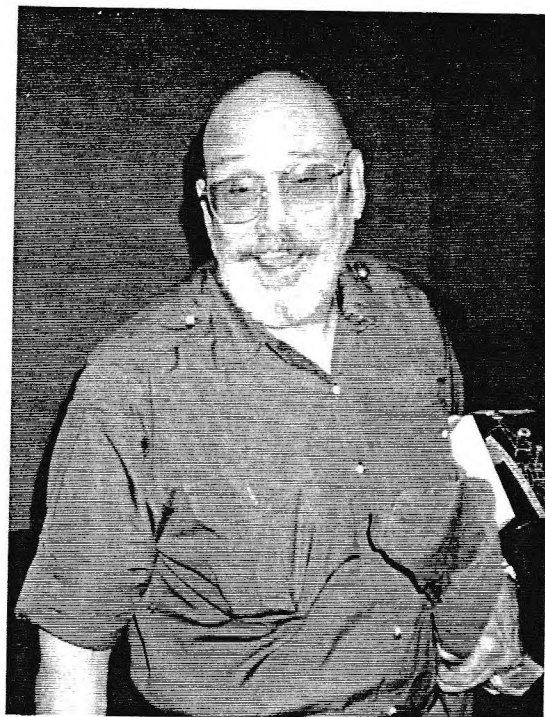
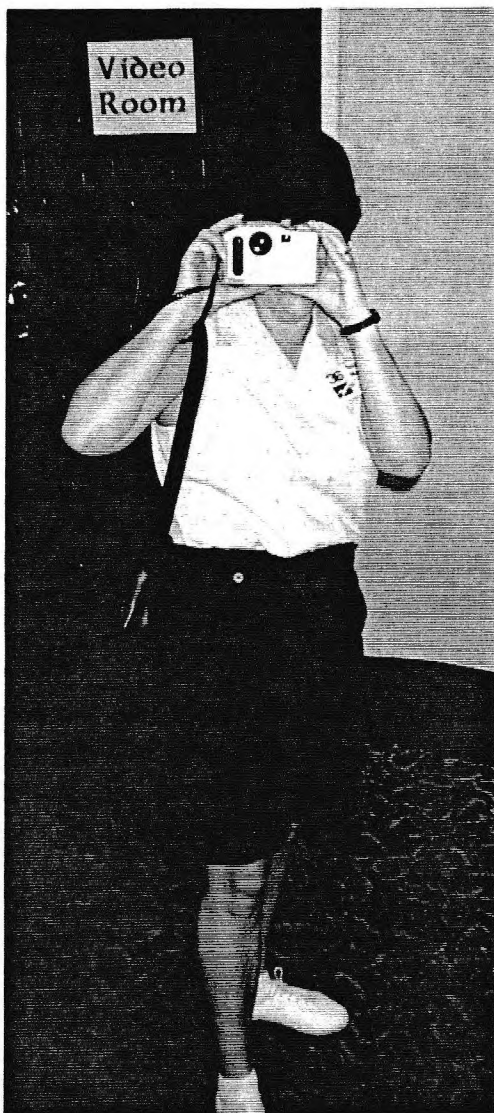
Also in the lobby, Joe McCarthy, Ned Brooks' noble nephew, 16 now, doing an excellent job of shaving his palms and energizing the whole weekend for his uncle's sodden and decrepit pals. Ah, fandom! Ah, DSC! It was the 36th such convention, and my 25th. It would be a good one.

#

I am *not* up on things:

Larry & P.L. Montgomery appeared -- Larry looked hale and hearty, but P.L. was wheelchair-bound, and is in the midst of hand therapy. What happened?

Stven Carlberg showed for his first DSC in four years. He's married now -- and though he didn't get to play in the Hearts tourney, he did get to serve me a Marguerita. Pretty good



DSC '98 *in pictures ...*

Suzanne Hughes snaps
while above right,
the wolflord preens
and below, Ned Brooks,
Jeff Copeland, Janice
Gelb, George Wells,
George Inzer and
JoAnn Montalbano
"pit"!

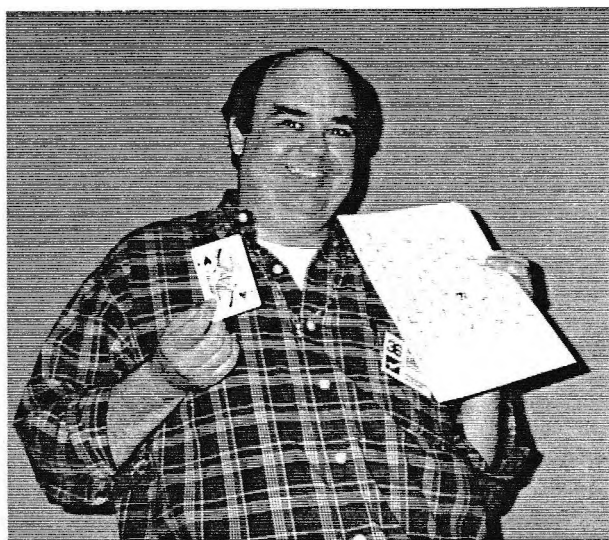




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Heidelberg, MS 39439

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Panel time ... with Buck Coulson, me, Bob Tucker and Janice. Below, Tucker gasses the slobs.



*Hearts attack ... I played my best Hearts tourney ever, even though I *didn't* win! Look at how fat that shirt makes me look; I should wear only solid colors.*

one, too, even if I couldn't use the salt.

Once cute, now decrepit Jim Cobb is 37 and has been married for *four years* to a strikingly beautiful lady. Ward Batty, too, is married. I didn't know any of this.

I did know that Steve Hughes had married lovely Suzanne, and Suzanne covered the con taking electronic photos, a 21st Century tourist. I can't wait to see how the pictures came out -- for sure, better than mine!

The Van Hartesveldts came in with Jerry Page and sweet Rebecca Brayman. MaryAnn looked gorgeous, of course, and my namesake, her daughter Lillian, seemed flatteringly happy to see me. Met her husband for the first time: fine lad.

I had my one and only panel that Friday, but the company continued to be heady. Janice Gelb moderated Bob Tucker, Buck Coulson and I on the subject of Southern fandom, which neither Bucker nor Tuck knew any- ... which neither *Tucker nor Buck* knew anything about. Still, Janice managed to keep me from dominating matters with my tales of DSC history and Ned Brooks making water by the side of the highway (as Al Fitzpatrick and I hid our faces in shame) and so forth; Gelbo simply tapped my shoulder when she wanted me to shut up. She didn't swat me in the chops -- for our relationship, *progress*.

Mentioning DSC history reminds me of the cute lady reporter from the Birmingham News whom Charlotte Proctor -- stand, men -- sent to me. Past my leers I hope I got across how ineffably *boss* it is that an event that began as five guys reading pulp magazines in a garage in 1962 -- then *six* guys in the same garage, in 1963 -- then *19* guys in a Birmingham motel in 1964, four of whom were at this year's convention -- could survive 36 years to become the gleeful mess which surrounded us. I think it's a great story. Wonder how she wrote it up.

We -- a good slew of us -- adjourned around the corner for dinner at Shoney's. I'd starve if it wasn't for Shoney's; B'ham's featured a superior seafood bar. While we packed our chops, George Wells noticed a pigeon limping about outside, seemingly crippled, and being one of the kind ones, had to check on it. Bird couldn't have been in too rotten a shape; at the approach of the Demented Methodist Giant, it flew off.

I returned to the game room to join in the Hearts tournament, and while our first contest was underway a lady came to stand by my elbow and watch, a baby in her arms. I glanced up and said, "Hello, miss, " and "I'm Janet, Guy," she replied.

Free fall!

Forgive me for not instantly recognizing you, Janet! In the course of the weekend the good doctor and I admitted that between us, it's still 1973. I am still 24. She is still 16. Of course, she is *not* 16. She is a grown-up and accomplished lady with a handsome (and incredibly patient) husband, a truly adorable infant (if Toni's Katie is my matie, then Janet's Cassie is my lassie!), and two teenagers. (The male sported a faceful of patchy beard and a

turned-around baseball cap and spent the entire con gaming. The pretty girl silently endured her mother's ridiculous buddies with stoicism suitable for a Jesuit.) Anyway, seeing Janet was -- hell yes, a stunner. Pleasant stun, I must say.

I went to bed sometime that night, but not to sleep. Dolbear's snoring is everything that you have heard and everything that anyone else has heard. I marvelled that a human larynx could make such sounds. Without the slightest hint of rhythm or sequence -- like a modern jazzman, Dennis never repeated a phrase. You never knew what horror would emit next. It was almost ... wonderful. I felt almost ... privileged. I felt very ... sleepy.

Saturday

Birmingham is not just a fannish center for me. My father was raised there and my grandparents and most of their generation are buried there. First thing Saturday morning I scurried down 6th Avenue to the Elmwood Cemetery, stopping en route to buy flowers. After a long search -- it had been five years since I visited -- I came to the right plot. I remember how freaky it was, in 1972, to see GUY LILLIAN engraved on a tombstone, but now it was just nice to clean the grass away from my grandparents' names, to say hey in the heart to cool ol' Uncle Elmer (U.S. Marine, talented artist), and leave my flowers for my grandmother and greataunt. I imagined their spirits lingering to watch me ... and *humming* together in embarrassment as, panic-ridden, I searched for lost keys. *Takes after your side, Guy*, Uncle Elmer quipped to my granddad, before I found them, in the lock.

I returned to the convention and played inspired Hearts. Yes, this was the most satisfying tournament I think I've ever had, because although I was butchered in the final, I enjoyed an excellent *15-hand* win over Ward Batty and Larry Montgomery in the first tilt, and in the second round, accomplished a satisfying and challenging last-hand run. The final wasn't important; I'd played the best I'd ever played in the DSC hearts tourney. And Hank Reinhardt -- in from Atlanta -- *roared* when he heard I'd whupped Wardo. *Hawhawhaw!*

Watched a cool belly dancer exhibition -- a practiced troupe balancing swords on their heads and clinking cymbals and writhing in rhythm -- I found out later that they were unable to complete their show because one of their number was stuck in the elevator for 90 minutes.

Speaking of elevators, I found this taped to the 'vator wall:

DESPERATELY SEEKING FRITZ

Calling One Fritz ... tall, glasses, dark blonde / light brown curly hair.

Wonderfully obnoxious! Mid to late 20's. Cute, sweet & opinionated ...

If you are this person or know a person who fits this description who was at B'hamacon in '94 and went by the name FRITZ! please contact the # below or ask Fritz to contact me.

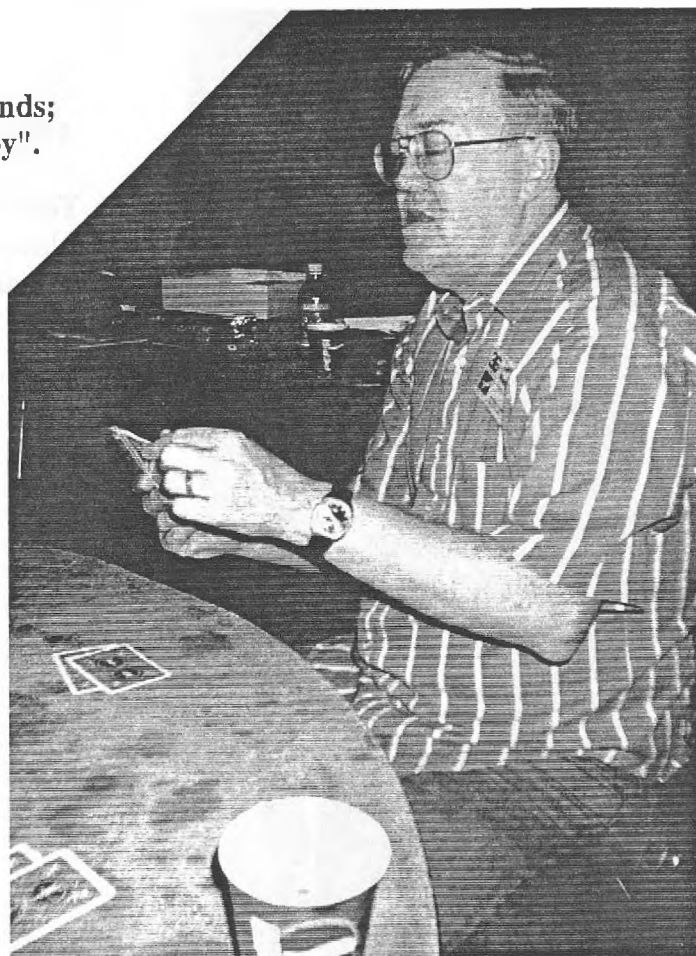
(signed) Carla 205 933-6631

Calling Fritz

Fritz, you lucky twerp ... take care of yo' bizness!

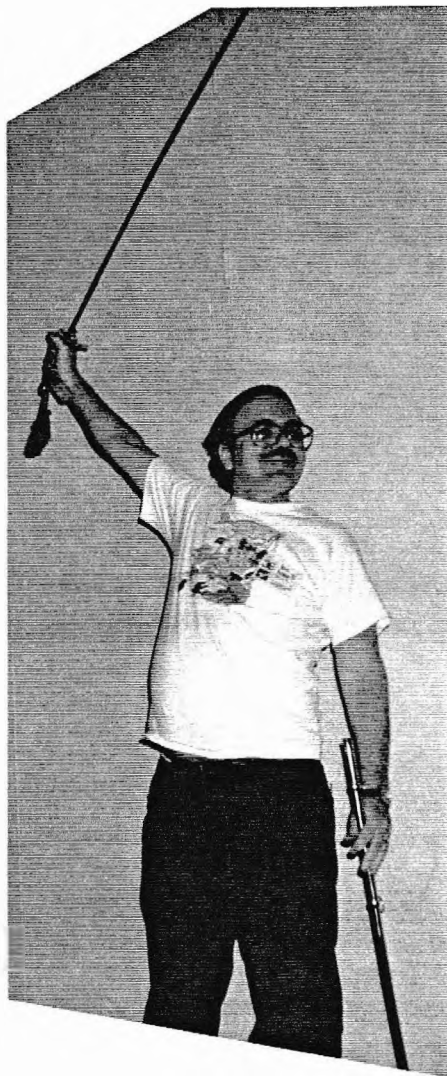
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Larry Montgomery faces the 52 fiends;
below, P.L. draws as "hand therapy".



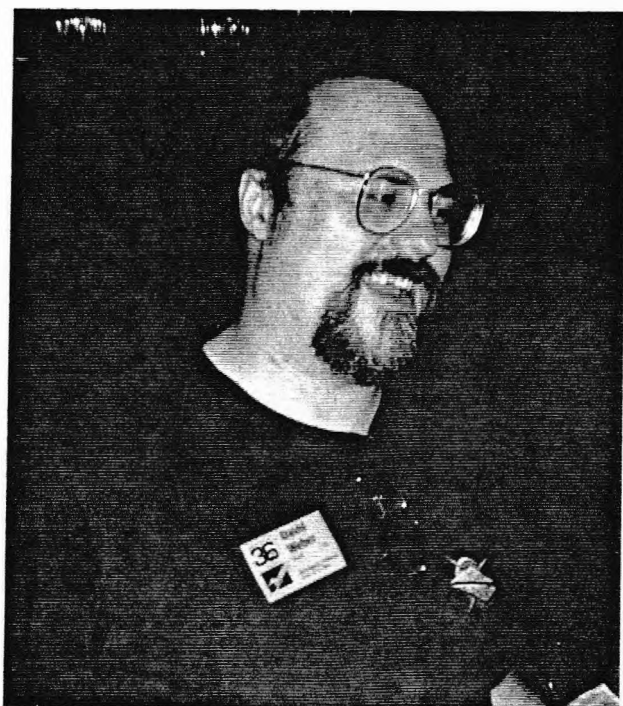
Toni Weisskopf with
Cassie Larson





AWARDS TIME

Tom Feller raises his Rebel Award, while below, Gary Robe learns that he has been hoist on his own petard.



Left, Phoenix winner (and mike's brother) David Weber. Honor for Honor ...

I had bizness too ... **Rubble Award** bizness. At the SFPA party the night before, it was noted that, Gary Robe being under the weather, it had fallen to we former winners to select the 1998 winner of Southern fandom's most odious honor. Various names were tossed hither and thither, and it was Naomi Fisher who came up with the prize proposal. We would fool Robe into thinking we had chosen some apt target, then present the award, instead, to *him*, to *Gary*, as reprisal for his having given the award to *us*.

Great idea! The other Rubble "winners" present at the con were polled and chimed in with concordance. Eviol Irvin Koch seemed particularly avid to heap revenge upon Gary. As a diversion, we enlisted the aid of Jerry Page, whom we would assure Gary had been the *real* choice of the former winners, to be conspicuously dragged into the assemblage and sat in the front row ... just as if *he* were being set up.

Naomi and I set out in the Male Menopause to find a Krystal and a metal ashtray for the trophy. Tougher task than it sounds! The only Krystal we could locate -- off in one of those charming hillside suburbs that surround Birmingham -- was 100% non-smoking. No ashtrays. I don't know what Naomi ended up doing for a trophy, but I left its procurement -- and the plot to get Gary to present his own Rubble -- to her. I had a dinner date.

Dinner was a sandwich at local deli with hard-to-read sign, but Dolbear and I had been looking forward to it for weeks. The Van Hartesveldts and Dennis had wanted to reconnect ever since, years ago, MaryAnn and Fred had made an epic journey to New Orleans and had shared a great conversation with DD at the local eatery known as Dempsey's. Tonight's chowfest was in memory of that one, but it was also nice for itself: I got to meet my namesake Lillian van H's husband, bask in the friendship of all, and scarf a pretty good deli sandwich.

On came the masquerade, a parade of pretty girls in pretty Renaissance dresses, and then the awards. Julie Wall presented the first of two *Rebels* to Tom Feller, finishing out his third solid year as SFC President. Cool trophy: a Confederate sword, which Tom wielded swashbucklingly. Then Jerry Page took the stage to give another Rebel to the magnificent Bob Tucker -- true, a citizen of *Illinois*, but ol' Pong, he belong to us all.

Following, huge, genial Dave Weber was brought forward to receive a special painting from Baen Books -- one of his Honor Harrington spaceships, depicted as it was *supposed* to look. The delighted author was taking the piece back to his seat when he was stopped in his tracks. He was given something else to carry: the 1998 *Phoenix* Award.

Dave was a truly nice guy, and it was a truly well-deserved honor. (My Australian visitor, a week later, mentioned "David Wee-burr" as one of her favorite writers.) He echoed my only regret when I voiced it: that brother mike wasn't there.

(Also, brother Mike Bishop, who was supposed to be Guest of Honor at the convention, and for all I know, never showed his face. At least, *I* never saw it.)

Then it was time for the Rubble. Jittery but grinning, Gary took the mike, attended by

Naomi, who carried a "prize envelope" and a secretive smile. True to our plan, Gary had been tipped off that Page was the alleged winner, but was asked to read his name from the paper within the envelope ... well, you get the idea. Robe went on and on about how this year's winner -- Page, he thought -- would be Southern fandom's first "Triple Crown" winner, with Rebel and Phoenix *and* Rubble to his credit, took the envelope from Naomi and laboriously began to tear it open. The conspirators agonized as he ripped and flailed at the stubborn paper, fearful he'd say to hell with it and announce Page, but no, he got the thing open, spread the sheet wide, and with dawning comprehension read his *own* name as 1998 Rubble Award ~~victim~~ recipient.

It was this DeepSouthCon's Great Moment.

I brought Jerry to the stage in the happy pandemonium that ensued, to thank him publically for serving as decoy and to promise that someday he would indeed receive Southern fandom's affectionate spear. If it takes as long to win the Rubble as it did to win his Rebel, then he can expect it around 2023.

I don't remember the Saturday night parties, just that I sacked early. Dolbear stayed up for Robert Neagle's dance, where he was boogied into oblivion by Nawlins' own Annie Hebert, who takes daily aerobics and can shake that thang till the dawn's early light. Dennis staggered in after some hours, close to demise, collapsed immediately, and just as immediately put his deviated septum to work waking the dead. Dennis asleep sounds like he's swallowing a live squirrel.

But on this night I overcame DD's snoring -- sorta -- by wearing earphones. I played a tape of Inca pipers I'd bought in San Antonio. It erased most of the higher registers of Dolbear's sinus symphony and eventually, I entered the land of Nod, where Rebels and Rubbles and Hearts and Hugos drifted and darted and marched and meandered in and out and up and down the cols and corridors of fannish sleep ...

Sunday

Upon rising I went first to the Art Show to pay for the one piece I'd bid on. That's it on my cover, a Diana Sharples illo that caught me just right. Diana, a lovely redhead, was present, and as the world well knows, I am a sucker for redheads, particularly brilliantly talented ones who have gorgeous blonde daughters and know how to use scratchboard.

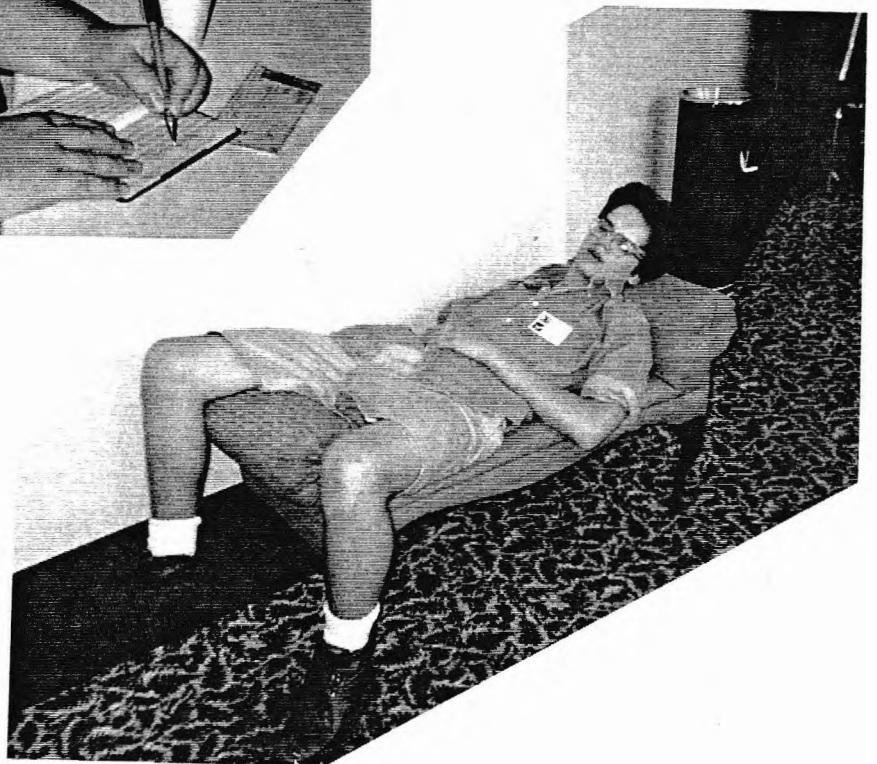
(A moment's aside about this cover. What really nailed me were the expressions on the troubadour and the dancer. Credit the models, Diana said; they were boyfriend and girlfriend and the mien was genuine. And enviable.)

Politics -- the Southern Fandom Confederation meeting. It always embarrasses me to recollect the goofy bullshit we debate and glower over at our SFC do's, but the issues seemed important at the time. The assemblage debated at one juncture whether SFC should endorse Boston's bid for an Orlando worldcon in 2001. Good Judy Bemis, SFC treasurer and Florida resident, spoke in favor, and good Lew Wolkoff, Philadelphia booster, opposed.

The exotic dancing at DSC wasn't *quite* the same as at Sammy's. Below, Liz Copeland and Janet Larson join the millenium DSC, on Jekyll Island, Georgia.



Sleep tight, Joe. You'll need your strength for New Orleans



Though Orlando will probably win easily -- I fear I had the ill grace to say so -- we voted to keep our confederation neutral. Only once has SFC taken sides in a worldcon race, and that was back when there were competing Atlanta bids for the '86 worldcon. Wanting the people involved to abandon their egos and concentrate on winning, we endorsed the *city*.

Speaking of egos and winning, you may know that Irvin Koch and I have had a friendly rivalry going for decades on who will be first to join the next DSC. I always outsmart him. This year, while Irvin opined about the endorsement controversy, I snuck up to Jekyll Island honcho Bill Francis ... and *paid my fee*. Yet again, I'm #1! I'm #1! (At B'hamacon, thanks to registration chicanery, I was #1*b*. Hmmp!)

Okay, endgame ... up the street we trooped to the spectacular pancake house we had discovered in '94: the Copelands, Gelb, DD, Sharples and her three-year-old blonde daughter, a radiance even on such a bright day. As we waited for our table in the courtyard -- and Dolbear photographed the "Satanic" fountain statues across the street (a goat reading a book to a few bears) -- a five-year-old masher paid court to Sharples' flaxen-pated daughter. Ah, romance ... the nicest thing there is. This wheel keep on turnin'...

I had banana pancakes.

#

JoAnn begged Dennis to ride home with her, so I was on my own as I left DSC. Time for one last orgy of Birmingham memories. As I headed home, I stopped on the seedy west side of town, specifically outside my father's house on 4th Avenue West. I identified it by the Scharbers' house across the street, a sagging old place which as a toddler I thought so grand. In memory's eye I can still see old Mr. and Mrs. Scharber sitting on their front porch, watching the world of 1953 go by. Now they were spirits, watching me, a balded chubguts, sink into melancholy. Around the corner, the gutter where my dad cut his foot as a child, behind Ira's drugstore where I always felt so close to my dad, Ira's smile when Dad told me how he had patched him up, the soda counter where I once saw a ventriloquist (dummies always spooked me) -- Dad's gone, Ira's gone, the drugstore's now a boarded-up Bible bookstore ... The stories that made these special places in my father's life are *my* stories now: if anyone would want to hear them.

I drove on, and by dumb instinct found the little apartment in Fairfield. My first memories -- walking a polished wooden floor, aged 2 or 3 -- are based there. Still a nice enough little pad for young folks with no money, though the "big tree" in the courtyard has been uprooted, leaving a sad hole, and the steps where a cutworm freaked me out (and sparked a lifelong phobia) now lead only into a wall. Nice neighbor Esther; the young couple who gave me drinks out of their cool metal glasses ... all gone now, and why not? I knew them there *45 years ago*.

Grim, this march of time. I suppose. There was a sign on a museum wall downtown, though, a sign visible from the freeway: **THE FUTURE CAN'T WAIT**. Guess not. I put pedal to the metal, and *climbed Everest* -- in my ears. In real life, I just drove home.

June

The night I returned from DeepSouthCon I checked my mail -- and found a blessed brown envelope containing a blessed yellow slip: the SuSle check. My complaints to Louisiana's senators and my congressman about "the wedge" Social Security was trying to drive between me and a client bore \$4000 worth of fruit. Do I hear the ancient maxim, *The squeaky wheel gets the grease*?

I paid all my outstanding bills -- including my state income tax -- and enjoyed a rare and temporary sensation: financial security. The extra bucks would probably last no longer than worldcon in early August, but hey ... live for the day!

#

I'd rather have gone to the proctologist than back to work after the convention, but a public defender can no more pick and choose when he works than a man can choose when he meets his maker. Two Louisiana judges did just that in the period of this **Spiritus**. One was a federal jurist who died of *cholera*, of all things, after cutting himself cleaning shrimp. Then there was the local judge who died due to complications of diabetes in mid-June. Somehow the lawyers I know restrained their grief to short bursts of hysterical joyous laughter.

This judge, you see, was a loon. Never mind the clouds of cigarette smoke that enveloped him as he presided, or the fact that he often eschewed the bench to sit in the jury box. That was simple eccentricity. That he made his name synonymous with abuse of attorneys and staff was more to the point. He once threatened a defendant with a pistol for giving him lip and called a secretary the "c" word in open court for scheduling a jury pool for another judge ahead of him. I heard him humiliate an innocent A.D.A. with one-liners like "You couldn't arrange a' elevator!" I was told that his funeral was packed, probably so lawyers could see for themselves that the old bastard was really dead.

As an aside, we have a new judge for the summer in Drug Court. Judge Burns looks like William Rehnquist but has a friendly and funny manner and the good sense to let the A.D.A. and me moreorless run the court, and he seems inclined to cut the pumpkins (our prisoners wear orange jumpsuits) some slack. I respect Burns greatly for a decision he made some years ago, granting a new trial to a retarded black defendant unjustly convicted of murder, but I find I like the guy as well.

I had two trials the week after DSC. The first was in Orleans Parish and brought up some interesting legal issues. My cretin, **Durrell**, was charged with five counts of armed robbery for a series of sidewalk stick-ups ... *and* with possession with the intent to distribute both heroin and cocaine. Seems the cops had found goodly quantities of the aforementioned substances when they arrested the guy. Well, I didn't mind trying the guy for the armed robberies, and I didn't mind trying the guy for the "p/wits" ... but I had much objection to trying them *together*. I believed -- and I think quite correctly -- that doing so was prejudicial to my dude and represented *the misjoinder of offenses*. Judge disagreed, I objected, so the matter will someday end up in front of an appeals court.

In the meantime I had to fight. Possession with intent to distribute cocaine is a serious enough crime -- it carries a sentence of 5-30 years, hard labor. But "p/wit" heroin is different. It carries a *life term*. Durrell was a dickhead but hey, you get life terms for killing people. Heroin is deadly, but the intent to kill is plainly not there. Anyway, the cute female A.D.A. pointed out the sentence requirement to the jury pool -- lots more black folks than in Jefferson, oddly enough -- which gave me a terrific rhetorical weapon.

The victims of the robberies came to the stand one by one, and I was nice to them, of course; unless a victim is obviously embellishing his story, it doesn't pay to alienate the jury just to make the guy look bad. I simply drew out how frightened one guy was for his daughter, playing nearby when he was robbed, which could have clouded his perception, and how far one lady was from a light source, and so on. I gave the cops who found the drugs a bit harder time. One claimed that the foreign money he'd found in Durrell's house was evidence against him, since such had been stolen from a victim. I produced a Canadian \$2 bill from my own wallet: was this evidence *I* had committed that robbery? No more than the Italian *lira* and Mexican *peso* he'd recovered from Durrell, since the victim had been robbed of Spanish *pesetas*.

In my closing, I harped on all this, and threw in a bit of horror about life terms -- that inmates at Angola are buried under crosses without names. "I've been there, and I've seen it," I intoned. Utterly irrelevant, of course, but a nice touch. After three hours -- I went home and slept -- the jury found Durrell guilty of two of the robberies, not guilty of three, and guilty of *attempted* possession-with-intent of heroin and cocaine. Clearly, jury nullification of the life term. The A.D.A. said she was seeing a lot of that.

Durrell's final sentence was left up to the judge, who put it off until July.

One thing more. The cops had found Durrell's heroin in teensy little foil packets, and they were scattered all over the lawyers' table by the end of the trial. I could have pocketed one easily -- if I wanted to risk four years in the slammer. Those minimum sentences, they hell.

Then there was **Kenny**. I've seen Kenny around Dope Court for years. He's a pleasant young black guy, seemingly as dumb and harmless as an old shoe. Not a trace of repellant street-punk attitude or incipient violence. I had to admit it. I liked him. That *didn't* mean, of course, that I was stupid enough to believe he wasn't guilty as hell.

Kenny was charged with several counts of selling crack cocaine to an undercover narc. As is often the case, the cops had tapes of the transactions, but here too Kenny was different. The usual crack sale captured on video takes less than 30 seconds. The narc pulls up to the corner, rolls down his window, the mark asks what he wants, the narc says "A 'twenty'," the dealer reaches into his pocket or into his mouth, hands a rock to the narc, who hands him a twenty dollar bill, usually in full view of an ingenious little camera the size of a pack of cigarettes (or smaller; they've never let me see one) pointed right at his face. Slam dunk. Nothing but net. Two points -- *five years*.

Kenny's tapes were different. They showed the narc, in a pickup truck, pulling up to a seedy local lounge. Kenny is seen running out to the truck, but he always jumped into the passenger

seat. Ordinarily this would cause the narc to freak, but Kenny was simply being friendly. He didn't have any coke on him, but directed the narc to a local apartment complex (driving right past a school), took his money, ran inside, came out with the product -- all off camera. Kenny's real problem was that he was so friendly. He'd talk and talk. "Do you want a shooter?" he'd ask, meaning a crack pipe. "That stuff across the highway *soft*," he'd say, indicating inferior, poorly cooked crack. Once he got suspicious of the agent, and demanded first that he play his radio to prove it wasn't a walkie-talkie -- which he did -- and smoke his coke right then and there. The cop had to talk fast to get out of that one.

I saw Kenny's tapes at the Jeff Parish detective bureau. The cops were older guys and undoubtedly had nothing but contempt for me, but were nice enough and gave me some of the communal lollipops. (I loved the logo on the bag: DAFFY TAFFY.) They agreed that Kenny wasn't a bad, i.e., violent guy ... just really stupid. Too bad for him that he was so friendly and so gullible.

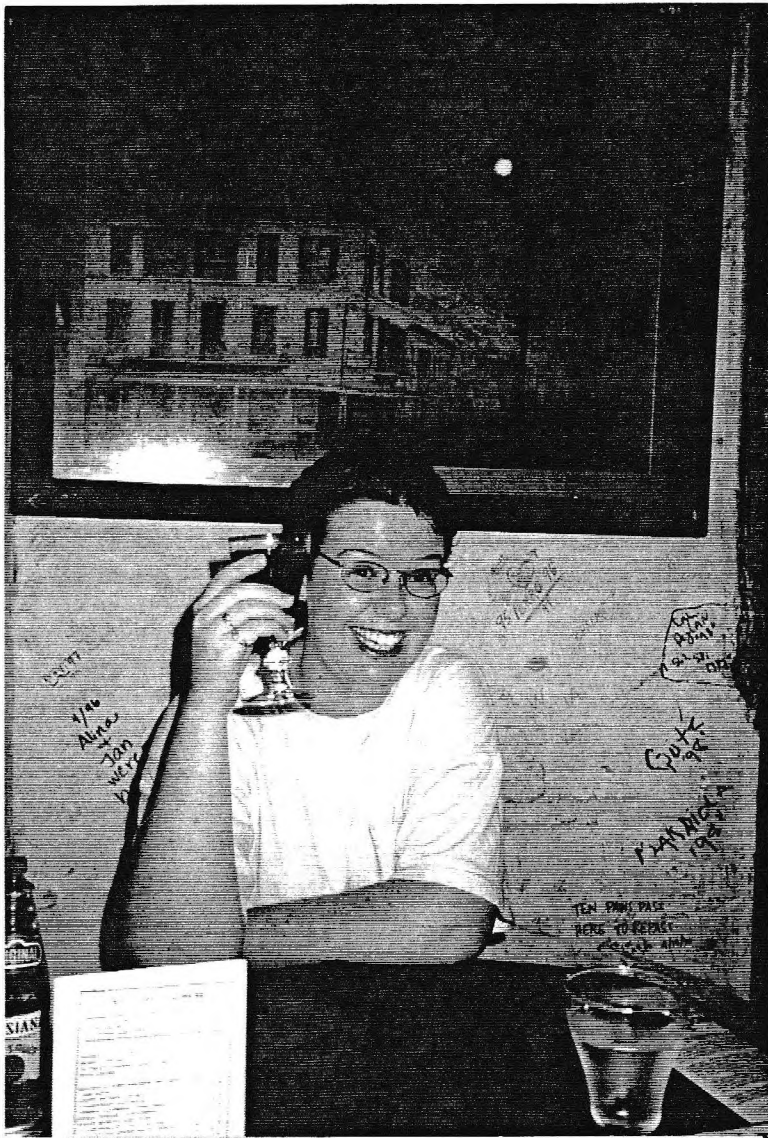
Friendly indeed. The next day we started picking the jury. When he was introduced to the pool of frightened, severe white faces, Kenny *waved* to them.

Kenny's real problem was in the law. The A.D.A. -- not the usual one -- wanted to charge him under a special, and especially nasty, statute which *forced* the judge to give him *twice* the *max* on each count -- a total of some *60 years*. When I told Kenny that he laughed. "Tell them to kiss my ass!" he said. Instead I begged for a compromise. I wanted something that would give Kenny some small chance of a life once he was through with Angola. So I pitched it and I got it, and if it sounds horrible to say *25 years* realize, please, that this was *35 years* less than they wanted to give him.

It was up to Kenny whether or not he took it. His brother -- like Kenny, an Angola veteran -- had every bit of the ugly attitude Kenny was blessedly without, but he urged him to accept the plea bargain. "You can't beat these people," he said to him. "And I'll be with you every day." Kenny shrugged ... and took his time. His demeanor never changed. He thanked me, the judge, the jury ... and off he went. In a normal case he'd be eligible for parole after about 11 years. God, I hope they give it to him.

#

One other thing about work in June. A new A.D.A. began working alongside the regular people, and she is something special. Kia, or so goes the rumor, was once a "Saint-sation", one of the sideline dancers for New Orleans' pathetic NFL team. She has the chops for the job, all right, ~~if not the bustline~~ and is an intelligent and friendly lady, as well. Sensing that I felt a little uncomfortable around a younger (31) woman with good looks, she took the time to talk to me and draw me out. Knowing my shy and introspective nature, you can appreciate her skill and charm, because I enjoyed the experience a great deal. Nor was she the giggling flatterer you're imagining -- her response to some of my non-humorous misogynistic comments was pointed, and critical ... and made me think. Despite her attempts to push serotonin on me, I hope they keep Kia around for a while.



#

I know that sounds like a **DEDICATION** up there, but it is not. My nod for this issue goes to one who comes from down under.

A few weeks before June, 1998, I received a letter from the U.K. The sender was a young lady named **Paula McGrath**, a citizen of Australia and visitor to the entire world. A new science fiction fan who had picked up my name from somebody somewhere, she told me that she was approaching the end of the European phase of a world tour and would be in the United States during the month of June. In fact, she said, she would be in New Orleans on two occasions, and if I could possibly suggest *activities* with which she could fill her time, then ...

The first dates she mentioned coincided neatly, and tragically, with DeepSouthCon. But she was due in the City that Care Forgot once more, overnight, the weekend after. I e-mailed her immediately and advised her to tour the Garden District and ride the streetcar during her first excursion here and hold herself available for a *really* good time on the next.

Paula was traveling in a minibus filled with youthful travelers; they left San Antonio late and didn't arrive in New Orleans until after dinnertime. No problem. I picked Paula up at the hostel where she was staying and we were off for the Quarter. We ensconced ourselves in an alcove of the Napoleon House, ate salads, and exchanged tales.

I was lost in envy and admiration. You know how Travis McGee always said that he took his retirement a bit at a time? Paula's done that. She worked for a good long slug of time in Australia (Hamilton, Victoria, *ectually*) saving for the jaunt, then headed off. When she ran out of money in England, she got a job and saved more. Sooner or later she'll end up back home ... and *then*, there is always China.

Aussiecon in '99? She'll be there. Makes me hope that *I* can be.

#

In June I continued the scut work on **Challenger's** 8th issue, transcribing letters of comment, "reviewing" fanzines received in trade, puttering around with an editorial. I also began to worry that because of a murder trial beginning August 10th, I might not, in good conscience, be able to attend Bucconneer. I already have my room paid for, two panels to man, and a beautiful German date lined up for the Crab Feast (Inge Glass) but first things *must* come first. ~~So relax, Mr. Client; execution doesn't really hurt anymore...~~

In the meantime, there was a family trip to Buffalo to get through, and mailing caustics to get me through it ...

#

NAILING CAUSTICS

To my fellow rosterites who showed in Birmingham ... *Great to see you all at DeepSouthCon!*

Refinement *Jeff* So this is how the real world might see SFPA: an engineering problem begging to be solved. Well, you did a good job., but I can't help but think that the egoboo poll was simpler and took less time when the OE just counted up the points by hand. Of course, once *I* got past "21" I was in trouble.

genzine I know ... (Dick Lynch, you didn't read this!) >>> First Joe Moudry quits SFPA and then doesn't make an appearance at DSC. Indeed, what's up? >>> Phooey on scientific fact. I *liked* the face on Mars! >>> Yes, **Dark City** was like **Gattaca**, a true s.f. original. I'm Hugo-nominating it ... but I'm also naming **The Truman Show**, which was a masterpiece beyond genre. >>> New Orleans Hearts isn't a real game, oh foolish one ... it's a paranoid suspicion that the rest of the table is ganging up on you! Need I add that El Hank is the author of the term? My computer Hearts game definitely plays that way. >>> I too dream about s.f. conventions and their hotels, often on Hugo night. One of the award designs I imagined in a vision was actually quite neat: instead of a silver phallic rocket, I saw an anodized golden *round* one, chubby and bosom-ish.

Seasons #32 Binker I can see that we've got to contact the CIA Raccoon Squad to rescue your house from the burglar-masked beasts. Maybe a special nerve gas could be introduced to the attic that will enhance their intelligence 100-fold, enabling them to take over yardwork duties. Nothing is beyond Langley! >>> I don't envy your dad's bladder problem; the tests they do for these matters sound like something out of Torquemada or SMERSH. If I ever develop such difficulties the medics will either tie me down or anesthetize me to the point of total dreamtime. Good luck to Mr. Glock. >>> Enjoyed the DSC '76 program book, which may not be worth much in a pecuniary sense but inspires hilarious memories: hitting Hank with his own "Put your trust in Sue" line and noting that **The Clones** was the worst s.f. novel ever written (both times, he busted his gut, which is

better than busting my head), applauding Ned when he won the Rebel, the Proctors (their first con), the deCamps. And I *still* love that drawing of the winking moon, which y'all put onto buttons we wore instead of nametags. 22 years? As if it were yesterday. >>> Interesting natter about the Quaker Oath. Maybe the makers of the Oats knew about it before they named their product and did so to make a pun. >>> Brock art? Very cool. You know, Binker, to *share* one's bounties with one's genzine-producing friends is the sign of the truly *exalted* soul ... (How about writing another caving article to go with some of Glen's pieces?)

(Title Goes Here) #5/No Minaczine This #86/Mimosa #22 Dick I really enjoy your clever postcard/trip reports, contrasting an immediate response to a place with later reflections. This one, as well done as any, breaks my heart, because it goes through Prague, and makes me think of Martina. Ah, there is a wound that will never completely heal ... >>> I will comment on this excellent issue of **Mimosa** in a loc and, of course, in **Chall**. Of course it was merely a coincidence that #22 should hit fannish mailboxes while the Hugo ballots were circulating, you old slyboots ...

Offline Reader Issue 4 Irv Nice to meet Kay at the DSC. Hope she wasn't *too* disgusted by your friends. (Her experience reporting on Venezuelan palace politics should have prepared her well.) Pinckney, huh? Wonder if she's related to the Revolutionary War figure of that nomicker. >>> Speaking of Sherlock Holmes, the Jeremy Brett series is now broadcasting **The Case Book**, unfamiliar stories I haven't read in decades. I wonder how far they got before poor Brett -- superb in his role -- joined Doyle, Rathbone, Bruce and other Holmesians in the dark. >>> The ad

you print asking "What does every woman want?" reminds me of the headline on a tabloid which read, WHAT DOES EVERY WOMAN WANT IN BED? My friend said, "Sleep." >>> Hey, if possible, could you check your store for the paperbacks I need? Most are Edgar-winning mysteries, but I could also use Lucy Taylor's recent Stoker winner with **The City ...** in the title. (I think it's only available in hardback.) Kaboom Books here in NOLA, source for most of my rarities (like J.J. Marric's **Gideon's Fire**) is moving, and God knows where. >>> God, Irvin, where'd you get all this *money*? Send *me* a few thou!

Twygdrasil #51 Rich Thanks for putting me on the **Jomp Jr.** mailing list! I'm glad you're back into genzining, even if it costs **Chall** your occasional article. >>> A few months ago I too was wondering if I was looking at the first black President, but decided, no. I was looking at Al Gore. Anyway, let's keep our mutual eye on this Harold Ford, Jr. Anyone who can win a congressional seat at 27, even the son of a political family, has to have some serious moxie. Watch that space. >>> It's not because our planet has fallen under an Evil Star that so many people we know are dying. It's because we're getting Older, and those older than us are going to start dying out. It's disturbing -- see my natter about my Buffalo trip, to follow -- but it's inevitable. Bless them. >>> Your brother's gay Korean muscleman story -- where a transsexual's lover rejects him after he has the operation -- reminds me of s.f.'s most famous sex change, who became a lesbian after he became a woman. Whatever floats the boat ... >>> Mary Ann van Hartesveldt sent me a **Dilbert**-worthy line the other day. Idiot boss to underling: "I know there's a problem with communication in this company, but we're not going to talk about that now!" >>> I've said it before so I

will repeat: if the wingers somehow get rid of Bill Clinton, that will only make Al Gore President all the sooner, and all the tougher to beat. Are the Republicans using kidneys for brains? >>> Indians are trying to claim ownership of Grand Island, NY, where my family lives, because of some ridiculous technical problem with a 150-year-old treaty, so they can build a casino there. Many moon come white-eye to be fleeced like lamb. >>> I wonder if anyone has ever suffered from pneumonoultramicroscopic-silicovolcanoconiosis, and if so, what'd the doctors call it for short, and if so, what did they write on the death certificate (probably "heart failure"), and whatever, where did the volcano come in? >>> There's a photo of Warren Beatty. Did I mention here how disappointing and dippy I thought **Bulworth** to be? >>> Yeah, there's a solution to Binker's raccoon problem: make money off of them. Or make them think she will. Whistling the theme to "Davy Crockett" could do it. >>> Believe me, John Guidry's **Ignite** flamed everyone (except John) ever associated with it. >>> Good point I hadn't recognized before: that the Beats were pessimistic and we hippies were (pathetically) optimistic. "All you need is love." Well, I still believe that love is a good start, that you should enjoy the work you do, that you should take an active interest in the real, sociopolitical world, that freedom is the natural state of Man, and other hippie axioms, so maybe their optimism wasn't so pathetic, or maybe I still am pathetic. >>> George Bush Jr. made the right decision when he chose not to execute Henry Lee Lucas for a crime he probably didn't commit, but I couldn't help but think that he could help an unrepentant sack of shit like Lucas when he wouldn't aid a sincerely rehabilitated woman like Karla Faye Tucker. >>> Speaking of Bush, assuming his brother wins the governorship of Florida, it would be entirely possible for

the boys to share the GOP ticket in 2000 or 2004. >>> I recently read a bitter column by a Clinton-hating woman disgusted because liberal women still dug on Big Bill. Feminism, she said, is dead. If so, it's because it fell into the hands of those it was supposed to benefit, and they used it for their own purposes, not the grand design of some elitist cabal. Of course, they screwed it up, used it for repulsive power games (like the Antioch College dating code) and illegitimate agendas (like the anti-porn movement in Minneapolis), but that's why we have a Constitution -- to call back the overreaches. I don't mind a lot of what feminism has accomplished, but I will still say "girl" whenever I feel like it, and Lorena Bobbitt should be straitjacketed in a mental institution, not free. >>> Deborah -- whom, again, I will re-name when I write up the case in detail for **Chall** -- did not use her drugs as a form of "dutch courage." She used drugs to escape her personal misery and fear. They didn't work. They stripped from her what control and intelligence and personality she had left and unleashed a raving, paranoid thing. I regard the fact that this state holds someone in such a psychotic state responsible for their actions to be proof that we meet the 21st Century with minds and hearts barely out of the 13th. You know, I saw her mug shots when I went to the detective bureau on the Kenny case (see earlier). She didn't look remotely like the person I knew before, or knew after. *Drugs destroy the self.* That's what they're for. >>> Speaking of the IRS, I like the poop they're spreading about the new rules, that Internal Revenue now bears the burden of proof that you're cheating them, instead of your having to demonstrate that you're not. That should change things. >>> Don't go by what you hear when it comes to a movie. See the thing if you're going to talk about it. Which is why I haven't talked about **In & Out** or **City of Angels**, even

though the word-of-mouth on each has excited me into furies. >>> Write me an article about winning the Killer Frog Award. Write me an article about *something*! (Get the feeling it's time for **Challenger 8** and I have no contents?) >>> The best nonsensical happy ending I remember to a movie also winked at the audience, acknowledging that it was giving it the happy ending just because it knew the people wanted it. **Rear Window**. All those stories resolved in one long pan. Sure, it was absurd, but who cared? *It was only a movie*. >>> Good mc's thish, best in the mailing.

Confessions of a Consistent Liar 66 Arthur

Got your pc about rejoining LASFAPA! As our mutual hero Mr. Spock -- or his double, double -- said. "I shall consider it!" >>>

As a three-time Hogu winner and constant Hogu voter, I've mostly enjoyed their humor, because I mostly enjoy Elst Weinstein, the Hogu honcho. The jokes are such in-jokes, however, that sometimes even I don't get them, and I thought I *knew* this crazy game called fandom. >>> Indeed, the Robinson Mars books -- the fourth, a collection called **The Martians**, should appear soon -- do appeal to people who like s.f., but they also caught on with some outside of the genre. **The NYT Book Review**, for instance, gave **Blue Mars** a glowing review. >>> I agree with most of your analysis/ranking of Heinlein, except that I like **Starship Troopers** a lot more than you do, and couldn't get more than a few pages into the later books (after **Stranger -- Moon is a Harsh Mistress** most definitely excepted) before being driven back by the insipid sexism. >>> Your natter about the NFL draft must've excited me; after I read it I had to take a cold shower! (Actually, I bathed because I discovered that despite my ceiling fan and a.c., this dump is *stifling*.) I admire your grasp of the football

scene, and feel qualified to disagree only that the Saints' Billy Joe Hobert is a perfectly competent QB -- nothing spectacular, but acceptably professional. Note that after Mike Ditka turned away from teenybopper hotshots who couldn't throw *tantrums*, let alone *touchdowns*, the Saints began to win games. Ditka's first season was 6-10 ... the same record as the Dallas Cowboys. This year? Show me the schedule. Hey, next time you visit NOLA, we'll try for seats in the Superdome. ~~With any luck they'll be playing a game that day...~~ >>> Here's proof that I'm not quite the homophobic dipshit I may have seemed at times: your reprinted "Boy Scout Crackdown" was hilarious!

The Sphere vol. 174 #1 Don Yo ho ho! Great pirate illos and font. I look forward to seeing all the variants on pirate lore you've collected, including the flags. Makes sense that variant pirate ships wouldn't use a standard flag. I'm surprised they'd use any flags at all, except possibly decoys. Hmmm ... Faruk von Turk did a radio version of **Treasure Island** for WWOZ back in 1983 or '84 which is probably still on tape somewhere. We all did pirate dialect ("Arrgh, arrgh, avast ye maties!") -- murder on our voices. If buccaneers didn't cut your throat from the outside, imitating them tore them up from within. >>> Who were the two SFPAns who "returned for years" after being on sabbatical? My complete set of OOs will settle any argument. >>> Hope Gigi's Corsaircon went dandy. Hope Laura Modine was there. *Arrgh!*

Peter, Pan & Merry #17 Dave So where do you stand on the great movement to entice former LASFAPAns back into the fold? Can we get Celia back? Leigh? Jeni? H*E*R? Then watch my dust! >>> Speaking of stamps, the last phone card I bought from the p.o. had a neat s.f. scene on it, and of

course they still have a nifty s.f.nal 3-D imprint, and Stephen Hickman's designs won a Hugo. Maybe the p.o. is trying to compensate fandom for their years of effing up our mail. >>> I wonder if El Nino is to blame for this hellish summer heat. 118° by the local TV station's "heat index" yesterday! Who do we sue? >>> Street names ... My ex lives on *Fore Street* in Greensboro, which is often abbreviated as *Fore St.*, which of course looks like *Forest*.

And Lon Atkins once lost a SFPackage because the local postals thought LA meant L.A., and they went nuts trying to find a New Orleans Street there. >>> The American people don't really buy the Republican perspective on MonicaGate, that the issue is obstruction of justice. They see the "justice" that's being obstructed as a political smear and the whole investigation as a political fraud. Starr is not the model of the modern major prosecutor. He didn't start with a crime and try to figure out who committed it. He started with a perp and tried to find something with which to nail him. Didn't work, shouldn't have worked, and Starr should be *out* of work. >>> "[I]t's possible to have a lot of moisture in the air and not rain." *No kidding!* I'm *drowning* in this bath of humidity and I live on the *second floor*. >>> Here's another question about how Hitler would have fared in a world bless'd with modern technology: how would the *Net* have changed his ability to seize the German mind and body politic? >>> **Tin Cup** was indeed pretty good. Costner needs to stick to light comedy; his heavy, long, portentous movies go *bluh* real fast. >>> What happened here? Did you do your comments to Arthur & me twice or something? >>> What happened here? Did you do your comments to Arthur & me twice or something? >>> . Geri Sullivan's opinions have come to matter little to me. She not only refuses to send me her genzine, she took

such umbrage at my being unwilling to change my personality (as stated in **Chall 7**) she demanded that I remove her from my mailing list. Feminist flake or twiggum or whatever, her wish is my command. To Hell with her. >>> Let's have your prediction (and Gary Brown's): **Who wins the Home Run Derby?** and **Does Maris' record fall?** Check your answers in October. >>> They urine-tested me for stupidity but hey, if I can't hit the *toilet*, I certainly can't be expected to hit a little *cup* ... >>> Reno! I went there often with my folks as a teenager; our route always ran (safely) through the Donner Pass and by Lake Tahoe. Man, that's a gorgeous place. I wonder if I'll ever see it again.

Trivial Pursuits #77 Janice Send some of those California rainstorms south. New Orleans is basting and northern Florida is burning up, and we could use the wet. I've been touting my week in 70° / 30% Niagara Falls ever since returning, but I've had to realize that now I understand how bad 100/100 really is. *You can't sweat*. The humidity holds the heat inside your body and you roast from within. What idiot was it last mlg who called for a quick end to spring? >>> I finally saw **The Postman**, and it wasn't *that* bad ... merely overlong, cliched and tedious. Like you say of written s.f., most filmed science fiction assumes that the future will either be lived in soulless sterility or "dirty urban ghettos ... with street urchins ... everywhere." I loved Mad Max, but enough with the imitations already. >>> Believe it or not, there is no such crime as embezzlement -- at least in Louisiana. There *is* Theft, which is the intentional taking of something of value belonging to another with the intent to permanently deprive that person of the something, but Abi Frost's pathetic pilferage of the TAFF account doesn't really qualify there. Did she intend to *permanently* deprive

TAFF of its fund? That's what a court would have to determine if she was arrested on criminal charges. Civilly, of course she's liable to the next TAFF administrator for the amount she used for private purposes. But if she made a good faith attempt to repay the cash she took, I don't think she could have been thrown in jail. >>> Enjoyed our panel at DSC -- but who came up with the dubbadubba idea of asking Bob Tucker and Buck Coulson, both yankees, about Southern fandom? >>> I'm hacking my way into **The Angel of Darkness** even as I type, and having a surprising amount of trouble getting interested. Maybe it's the other book I'm reading: Shirley Jackson's **The Sundial**. It's less florid and far scarier. >>> **yih** You *would* mention TWA 800 where I'd read it on the same day that I'm trying to steel my nerves to buy an airplane ticket to Baltimore! I keep seeing that terrifying CIA animation in my mind's eye ... but dammit, I haven't the time to drive! >>> Hey, when Elisheva is over, do y'all shout, "Elisheva has left the building!" Whoa! Calm down, all right, all right, forget I said anything! >>> "737 from Boston Hit By Lightning": it could either mean that seven hundred and thirty-seven people from Boston were fried by lightning, or that the plane known as a 737 got nicked (**yih** more air terror talk -- just what I need).

Marsh Creek Gazette #3/Comments/Our Wedding Steve But I mainly address ... Suzanne! Your husband's technology and your beauty make these zines shine. Congrats piled upon congrats! >>> Your account of your honeymoon seems to center on the restaurants on Anguilla and the wonderful eats they fed you. **slobber** lobster risotto (what's risotto?). That's a scary story about almost losing it all in the surf. >>> Congrats also to you, Steve, on your retirement at a very young age. Personally, I'll be very disappointed in you

if you don't fulfill *every one* of your listed childhood dreams. If I were rich I'd go to the Louvre and sit in front of the Mona Lisa, waiting for her to notice me. When you see her, say hello. >>> Local theatres have brought **Deep Impact** back in response to **Armageddon**; since neither one is very good in my view, I don't rejoice. Maybe next they'll revive **Meteor**, or **When Worlds Collide**. >>> Gee, I have no idea how much more it would cost to run the *complete Challenger* through SFPA. Since they garner no comments in mc's, and don't deal with SFPA bizness, I feel it something of a waste to expose the apa to locs and zine reviews, which is what I usually leave out of my special editions. Since you wrote such a tremendous comment to C7, you get a complete edition of the next issue. That's the carrot! >>> No lack of moral fibre in Steve Hughes' makeup; if the Deborah case taught me anything, it's the wisdom of keeping one's personal and professional lives nice and separate. >>> Clinton Shminton. Conservatives should regard him as a lost battle, old news, and look to the future. Who do Americans vote for in 2000? I say Gore. (So does Reinhardt, but he doesn't mean the same thing.) >>> Nope -- PageMaker error and all, not too many typos. It is definitely a New Age.

Souf'paw 7 Richard With the Male Menopause topping 90,000 miles on the odometer this last month, I need to start thinking about a new ride, and with the Internet screeching my name in my ears every waking and sleeping moment, I need to think about the Pentium I describe on my first page, too. Problems aren't just financial: I like the machines I have, and trust myself far less to buy a good used car than to buy a serviceable used computer. Gimme that warranty!: it's a security blanket. >>> In the few months since I got my e-mail address, I've received maybe

three "spam" messages (as I understand the term). Easy enough to delete them, but I wonder how I'll feel when they clog my entire Inbox. >>> Website natter appreciated but completely non-understood. *BAWL* I wanna put **Chall** on the Net so I can get a Hugo nomination. *WAHH* And I don't know how to do it! >>> As one who worked with TV "reporters", who are seldom more than glorified teleprompter readers these days, I imagine this summer's CNN/Arnett scandal over the never-existent gassing of Vietnam defectors offended you especially. 1998 is the worst year for professional journalism that I can remember: the desperation for a scoop has become supreme and skeptical judgment and balance and rationality and taste are gone, *finis*, out the window, shitcanned. The Monica frenzy demolished what reputation the American press enjoyed; this nonsense certainly didn't help. >>> Our own Hlavaty sent me a postcard recently *commanding* me to rejoin LASFAPA. Tempting ... after all, my next **Chinatown** would be #150, and I do love those milestone numbers ... >>> Frank Robinson ... now there is a sweet fella. Gave a righteously funny talk about the birth of **Rogue** to the Little Men one time and of course, suffered our teasing for decades. Good dude! >>> I can see that the only way we fanzine fans are going to get anyone other than Dave Langford Hugoed is to conspire ahead of time to honor a specific candidate, and actively campaign for him. Shouldn't be any problem to get fanzine fandom to unite behind a single someone, don't you think? >>> In 1988 Jack Chalker razed me about being nominated for Hocus because of my Nolacon work -- people blamed me for printing an incorrect version of the program even though it was the latest available -- so I'm delighted he's changed his view and now looks upon the Ranquet as a moment of Pride. I'll see him there. >>> Say hey to Michelle!

Stomp Your Hat like Uncle Ned #1 George
Your title is far too hard on that fine lad Joe McCarthy, who wears no hat and has to get by on stomping his *head* like his Uncle Ned. >>> Since Sperhawk is no longer on the roster, I'm sure you were as depressed by the failure of **Godzilla** as anyone here. I found little original, interesting, or even *fun* in the movie, and no *pathos* to speak of. Since **King Kong** we have craved a tear to accompany our relief when the gargantuan monster dies and leaves us safe. If **Godzilla** achieved this aim at all at the death of its lizard, it was thanks to Matthew Broderick, whose exhibition of pity was skillful enough to evoke a *trace* of the same emotion ... but only a trace. The movie, in the words of my friend Wayne's lady Suzanne, is a *lay-mon*. >>> But **The Truman Show** is no fruit at all! It's a revelation. Peter Weir made **Picnic at Hanging Rock**, one of the most challenging films I've ever seen. He made **The Last Wave**, one of my ex's favorite movies. He made **The Mosquito Coast** and **Dead Poets' Society** and **Fearless**, lesser achievements but still very special movie fare. And he made **Witness**, which broke my heart with the building of a barn. Now he's made **The Truman Show**, among the more original and thought-provoking motion pictures of this century full of motion pictures, which featured a Jim Carrey full of humanity instead of insanity and a zillion other wonders, to boot. The Hugo and Oscar should be vying for space on Weir's mantle ... unless **The Thin Red Line** is as epic as promised. Anyway, here's a point about **Truman** that might bear discussing: what does it say about life? Weir never makes a movie without subtext; what's the underscore here? >>> "Of course, just because a kangaroo does something does not mean it is necessarily wrong." You are absolutely right. The first poetry I ever learned by heart came from a Golden Book about kangaroos, and embarked me on a

lifelong love of verse. "Hullabaloo was a kangaroo / who lived on a hill by the city zoo / with a girl named Pink and a boy named Blue." And I am one of the few people still outside of mental institutions who rather *liked* **Matilda**. >>> I missed Casper Van Dien's Tarzan movie, but thank God, we live in the world of video tapes, and his flick is bound to appear as such sooner or. Mentioning it makes me remember how much I liked the African scenes in **George of the Jungle**. *Boom, boom, boomboom ba boom* >>> Speaking of "goof karma", how is ol' Tesser these days. We miss him at DeepSouthCon. >>> Pernell Roberts as Nero Wolfe? What?! Why not Pee Wee damn Herman? Ridiculous. But you're right on when you credit Pernell's *voice* as being Wolfe-like; he could carry the role on radio, just as ~~Dennis Delbear~~ William Conrad did such a great job as Matt Dillon, and Bud Collyer as Superman.

Tennessee Trash #33 Gary R. Bravo -- Not only do you win your own Rubble Award this summer -- and what a spectacular moment *that* was -- you also win the infinitely more coveted **Best Bit in the Mailing Award**, for your proud and spirited account of your sons' first day of T-ball practice. Reminds me of the play at the end of **Parenthood**: a complete disaster and everybody loved it. >>> I only visited Miami once, and that for Suncon in 1977. My eyes were focused entirely on Rose-Marie Green and I scarcely saw any of the city, although I *did* get a hoot out of ~~stealing a shirt from Brown~~ staying at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach. No boy of the '60s who saw **Goldfinger** 180 times could feel otherwise. Interesting that you could gauge the wealth of the inhabitants by the presence of a Hummer on the street. ~~What's the big deal about a guy who can't sing?~~ I've *never* seen one of those flattened

Jeeps on the streets of New Orleans. >>> Corlis talked about her arthritis at DSC. What a wretched nuisance; glad it doesn't seem like it'll ever be worse than that. >>> Haw! at your story of scamming the phone scammer. >>> Janice "hyper-sensitive"? It is to laugh. >>> Thanks for the fine mc to **Chall**; it'll appear in #8 as a loc. >>> What got me about Peyton Manning losing the Heisman Trophy is that the year I graduated college, Peyton's *father* lost the Heisman, to Jim Plunkett. I still can't figure out if Archie Manning's diehard loyalty to the New Orleans Saints was the product of superhuman character or some sort of enzyme deficiency. >>> As I've said on several occasions, most of the times I've patronized strip bars I've gotten bored after an hour or so. But occasionally a lady gets up there with unnameable *pizzazz* ... and gets that old lizard brain cawing. (Don't lizards caw?) Then it's goodbye wallet, clothes, savings, car ... >>> Your words about the perversity of technology (*re* plane crashes, to Schlosser) are chilling. Which "engineering assumptions" (to use your informed phrase) are waiting out there now with God knows how many folks' names upon them? *yih* Not something to think about before bedtime. >>> Another interesting physics-type note: that two objects moving away from a common point at over half the *speed* of light can exceed the *velocity* of light with doing post-mortem violence to Einstein. Well, if everyone could do it, you science guys wouldn't earn the big bucks. >>> Passed very near your turf on the way home from Buffalo this July; while I couldn't linger, I shot y'all a kind thought. Gorgeous country, Kentucky. What's that *castle* I saw for sale in western Lexington?

The Lawyer at Tenth Court South #2 Meade Nice to see you at the con, old man, although how you survived the heat in that

jacket, I couldn't guess. I didn't notice any problem with your teeth. >>> I've become addicted to books-on-tape; the Everest volume I read/heard to/from DSC was only one of many experienced this bimonth. Going to Buffalo in July I listened to Elmore Leonard's **Out of Sight** and Dick Francis' **10 Lb. Penalty**, both mediocre for the writers, and coming home I endured **Apaches** (a bad "rogue cops" novel, really hackneyed) and began **Caliban's Hour**, which was a revelation -- Tad Williams can effin' write this language. Kinsey Millhone shines on tape, to mangle a metaphor; I have "N" on order. >>> "Liflix" is grim but gutsy autobiography. Keep it going. Can't wait till Murde goes to Hahvahd.

Oblio no. 116 Gary B. Remember that one of my most entertaining jobs in my year ('74) at National Periodicals was re-doing dialog balloons. Your nifty Cain-&-Abel cover reminds me that DC never did publish the rewrite job I was most proud of -- a **House of Mystery** yarn called "Death ~~Wish~~ Song". Len Wein originally wrote it, I penned fresh banter (my favorite line: "*whew* Gadfrey!"), but Joe Orlando let it rot in the cabinet, far from print. Alas! Full measure of flour is born to flush obscene! (Or somesuch) >>> I must be culturally deprived: I've never heard of teenie babies. >>> Hey, your boy Scott looks handsome indeed. ~~Where did that come from?~~ Hooray for his graduation! >>> Sorry the Comic Art Museum is a loser. Maybe it'll improve over time. >>> There's a question: what character or person has appeared on the covers of the most SFPazines? (Easy to answer for me: *me.*) I'd almost bet it was ... well, who? Bugs Bunny? Donald Duck? Hannibal Lector? I solicit other guesses. >>> Amazing that the owner of the *World Champion* Florida Marlins is such a business feeb that his team is now ignored by the

local fans. His must be one of the great tragedies in the history of baseball. >>> You're right that Carol Connors was a "big porn star in the 1970s." *Boy*, was she big! A man could get lost and wander for days ... well, never mind. >>> Credit cards ... I'm considering an offer for a secured Visa, just to have plastic again. Am I stupid or what? >>> George Inzer was at DSC, and you can gauge his appearance by the photo I run in this issue. He seemed cheerful and happy -- even though the New Year's Eve assault apparently cost him one of his toes. George is one of those rare personalities whom the world can destroy but not defeat. Nobody tell him, but I think he's the goddam bee's knees. >>> I feel ashamed about **The Chase**. I was a pissy adolescent when I first saw it and know I spoiled my parents' enjoyment of the movie bitching about it. Later, when I knew Lillian Hellman, I felt even worse. Is it available on tape? I'd like to see it again and see if the old gal could still write. >>> One of Dolbear's pals and I had a long talk about **South Park** a while back and decided that the show is neither satiric nor parodic. It's simply *Evil*. So, of course, whenever I miss an episode, I *mourn*. >>> Well, I answered all but one of the Comic Art Museum's trivia questions. Superman was born on the planet **Munimula** -- right? (Challenge: source?)

Northern Prune-picker No. 5 Robert Sorry about that title ... my mother's family, which lives near Lancaster, always called Californians "prune pickers." I still don't know why. >>> Your car buying worked out wonderfully. I especially like it that you were able to keep your old vehicle in the family, where you can visit it whenever you feel the sentimental need. I'd like to revisit some of *my* old cars. With a sledgehammer. >>> Yes, SFPA -- read Robert's **Trap Door**, an excellent, excellent

genzine.

Tyndallite Vol. 2 No. 77 **NORM!** A thousand thanks for the clippings from the Boulder paper on the Ramsey case. It's valuable to see how things are viewed from close-up ... valuable and, in this case, agonizing, because the cops just can't nail this one down. It's awful. JonBenet may never rest in peace. >>> The small-format zines Bink may have been remembering might have Mike Weber productions -- I recall a few that were less than 8 1/2 x 11 -- or Ned Brooks' *atrocious* Beroaldus Cosmopolita publication, which measured no more than 1" x 1", and which, in order to keep in the mlg, I glued to **New Port News**. Please God, don't let this talk of teensy-tiny zines harbinge another flurry of the ghastly things. >>> Not all of the James Bond movies surpass the novels. **Goldfinger** the movie is majestically superior, **From Russia with Love** at least holds its own (although the book is superb), and **For Your Eyes Only** is an excellent movie and little more than an adequate short story. The film of **Doctor No** is paced better than the novel and makes more sense, and Joseph Wiseman is a much grander villain than the book's silly (and eventually coprophagic) Fu Manchu ripoff. The same can be said of **The Man with the Golden Gun**, although Chris Lee makes all the difference in that movie; I wish he'd won the climactic gunfight. 007 doesn't do much of anything in the novel version of **Octopussy**, and **The Spy Who Loved Me**, while forgettable on the screen, is memorably crummy as a book. The book of **Moonraker** is better than the formulaic film, except for the wowser skydiving opening, simply one of the best action sequences I've ever seen. >>> Interesting how journalists tried to sabotage German propaganda in conquered territories; dangerous game, that, but not one past the brave. I wonder how many editors

faced firing squads for screwing around with Herr Goebbels' bullshit? >>> Good response to my observation that the 1950's were the golden age of s.f. -- the multiplicity of good editors in great publishing houses. I'd also suspect -- without giving it much thought -- that the coming-of-age of science fiction writers of the WWII generation had something to do with the high quality of the fiction being produced, but like I say, I haven't given the idea much thought. >>> I have to disagree with the great F.M. Busby about Heinlein's **Friday**. That character was pure adolescent sex object and nothing more.

"Yngvi" #53 Toni Missed my Katie at DSC! Phooey on her mama for not bringing her! >>> I didn't hear about a Linda Lift party at DSC. I hope JoAnn hasn't given up on the idea of toting Krawecka to the '99 DSC in New Orleans, since it'd be splendid to see La Krawecka back on her home turf. >>> I'm interested in your college reunion. The tale of how it went might make a compelling article for, oh, some genzine or another ... (Dick Lynch, you didn't read this.)

Guilty Pleasures Eve Pretty font for your logo. >>> Celko's romance novel with the garbageman hero is a natural. Oh! to be Alan Hutchinson with the talent for the parodic pen! for I'd love to envision that curlicue cover. But what could the title be? >>> There's been a controversy in Nawlins regarding magnet schools, about what you could expect: local "black activists" complaining that black kids were being excluded. The response was that the schools were admitting children based on test scores and grades. The resolution? Stay tuned. The *proper* resolution? Admit kids based on brainpower and leave p.c. out of it, but make sure the testing is fair. So how do you do *that*? >>> Finally discovered **The**

Usual Suspects, eh? Brilliant movie -- starts out good and gets better, and better, and better, and you *never* know the truth. >>> Interior decoration and renovation natter fascinating, much as reading about a well-realized alien culture is fascinating. Hey, I recently had a guy install a used ceiling fan above my bed; does that count? (No ... it *spins*.) >>> The thought of having "a stunning redhead bodyguard" would have driven me into paroxysms in the days of my virility. I would have hired footpads to leap from the shadows to force her to clasp me to her protective bosom. Of course, the description *could* read that way because she carried a baseball bat, but ... >>> You make a good point about drug addicts -- that they lie as a matter of course. (I also like how you call that a "home truth". Good phrase, consider it stolen.) But I can't think of any lie "Deborah" -- whom I'll re-name for the **Challenger** article -- ever lied to me. She was honest about what she did and seemed sincere about why. Maybe my mistake was in seeing the remnants of the charming persona she'd affected *before* drugs became front¢er in her life, and hoping that it could again become dominant, that like the weight she regained in jail she could regain her humor and heart. In the jail, away from the streets and the dope, she seemed to do just that. Maybe I should just write her off and turn to the next one. >>> All this talk about wanting your favorite Regency and romance novelists to "write faster" has me clawing at the walls and screaming to book editors on the telephone: "*More Flashman! More Flashman!!!!*" >>> Oh, most certainly the 1999 Dubious Achievements issue of **Esquire**, grandest of magazines, will prominently feature the Lewinsky brouhaha. We all know whom the authors will pillory, because they can spot missteps and pratfalls as well or better than anyone. Clinton fell into a sludgepot and emerged with the

redolence of a rose. Ken Starr and Linda Tripp and Kathleen Willey and the hysterical press which embraced them are another aroma altogether. **Esquire** will *dance* on those people.

You're Not Pressing Hard Enough on the Pillow *mike* Damn that Tammy! Never could keep her mouth shut! >>> It's weird beyond description that Anne Rice should try to write songs for Cowboy Mouth. I ought to drive by her house again and see if any of the old ladies standing around outside throw their teeth at me. >>> I can't say that I totally disapprove of corporal punishment, but I don't like the idea of having a *machine* do it. A whack only means something if it has a purpose behind it, and purpose is personal, and personal comes from people. Reminding me of the terrible silhouettes on the translucent walls of the vice principal's office at Riverside's University Heights Junior High School, as he and a male teacher beat the hell out of a sassy black kid with a wooden paddle. I picked up what racism I have at University Heights, but I like to think I also picked up outrage. >>> Oh, yes ... *thanks* for reminding me of "The House that Jack Built", my favorite **Avengers**. Hank Davis sent me a tape of it once; I should search it out tonight ... >>> I hope the sick old whore who told his son he wished he'd died like "the other Commies" at Kent State remembers those words on his death bed. I shame myself with the thought that, at Oklahoma City, more precious blood was shed -- and it was, because at least some of those victims were *our* children, and they are more important than we are. But I do not understand, nor will I ever, how such a splendid generation as our parents' could so spinelessly and brutally slaughter *their* children for Richard Nixon's pleasure. >>> Did you notice that Buster Douglas' whuppin' on Mike Tyson made **TV Guide's**

list of the 100 best moments in televised sports? Jimmy Connors' psychotic/ecstatic victory over Aaron Krickstein at one of his last U.S. Opens was there too. The #1 best? The game-winning homer in the sixth game of the Red Sox/Indians World Series. *Yes.* >>> Love the typeface! >>> Right -- you correctly identify the unutterable horrible moment in **The Girl in the Plain Brown Wrapper**. Should reread McGee. Except for Grafton there's nothing nowadays comparable. >>> A magnificent comment to Markstein about respecting others' feelings. I too should take it to heart.

Home with the Armadillo Liz Allie now a teenager: I can't handle this. Ask her if she'd mind staying 12 for another couple of years. You *must* bring her to New Orleans for next year's DSC; I don't think she's seen this burg since she was a babe in arms.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe Jeff I've always loved that painting by Magritte. "This is not a pipe." No. Of course not. The point is, it's a *painting*. Thus proving some arcane aesthetic point as far beyond my comprehension as the Oort Cloud is beyond my ... whatever. >>> I have an easier method of finding out how many Fridays the 13th there are in a year: look at the calendar! What could be simpler? Jeeze! >>> As you knew it would, your techno-nerd natter has me weeping in frustration, unable to understand the slightest syllable thereof. It does seem like you have fun with it, though, so who am I to criticize? >>> You mention Gore Vidal. I recently rented and watched **Suddenly, Last Summer** for the umpteenth time, and for the first time noticed that Vidal worked on the screenplay with Tennessee Williams. I wonder if he added the insipid suggestions of romance between the lobotomist and his patient (!), for padding and advertising, or if they were in the

original play. Sebastian Venable's is a terrifying, important and unforgettable tale, and the smooching is a silly distraction. >>> The ridiculous p.c. compulsion to apologize to minorities for past injustices isn't restricted to the U.S. Paula McGrath told me that some guilt-happy freaks want Australia to apologize to the aborigines. When I first heard the idea I cooperated and did my bit: turned to the black guy behind me in the cashier's line and said, "Sorry about slavery, man." "That's okay," he replied. >>> Speaking of helpful programs, the machines at Kinko's sometimes annoy me with their solicitousness. I'll be typing away when a little box pops into view: **You seem to be trying to write a letter. Want some help?** My usual reply is unsuitable for a public business, especially since computers don't *have* mothers, I think. >>> That's an interesting story about "the New York Fanzine Cabal". I venture but one guess on who sat at the center of that conspiracy, spewing bitterness and suspicion from his mouth and spiderwebs from his rectum. >>> "When dealing with headhunters ... I look like a middle-aged man who's accomplished nothing." No, you weigh too little, have too much hair, can get by without glasses ... >>> I *really* like that **Babylon 5** quotation about fighting despair. I think that sentiment is at the heart of every just conflict. >>> "Let it Be" and "Hey Jude" may remind you (and me, and most of the world) of John Lennon, but Paul wrote them. >>> Great to hang with y'all at the con! And we all remember what Benj. Franklin said ...

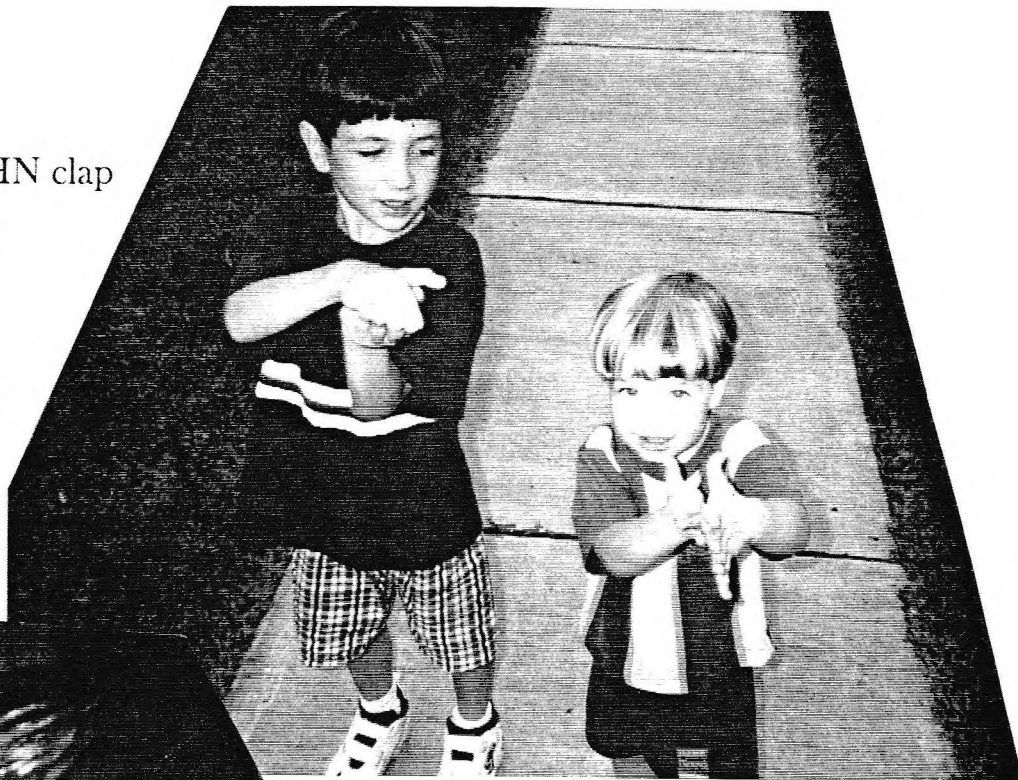
Spiritus Mundi 165 Moi Feeling much better, thanks! And so -30- is put to my mailing caustics for this issue, 7-11-98.

PATISSE

DA DUDES

Nephews STEVE and JOHN clap their hands for Uncle Guy.

Below, Armstrong in bronze. Below right, Steve reacts to freeze-dried ice cream. **blech**



July

June ended and July began with a trip to Grand Island, New York, to see my family. Naturally I drove. It was raining when I left, something of a relief from the 100 (degree)/100 (% humidity) New Orleans had been enjoying for several weeks.

As I left town I noted the froth on Lake Pontchartrain, the texture of the water on the Tchefuncte, the rainbows shimmering in spray kicked up by a passing semi. I watched cropdusters swoop low over hayfields, and made a quick stop in the northern Mississippi town of Vaughn, and the museum devoted to the railroader who died in a 1900 accident there: **Casey Jones**. The paperbound book I bought dealt as much with the town and the author as with Jones, but the repository of railroad artifacts was cool. Literally and figuratively: I was grateful for respite from this summer's sickening heat.

The Weather Channel reported horrid storms attacking central Ohio, which was on a linear interstate line between this home and that. I could skirt them to the west. So my course went through Memphis, where I dallied for a couple of disgusting hours. It's good that I don't live there. If I lived in Memphis my paycheck would be direct-deposited into Platinum Plus.

This western route paid off the following day. First, I tarried in Central City, Kentucky, to groove on that little town's monument to its most famous citizens: the **Everly Brothers**. A bearded hanger-on at the service station told me he'd been to Thibodeaux (which he *almost* pronounced correctly: you drop the "h" as well as the "x") during a coal miner's strike. Then, after failing miserably to find MidWestCon in Cincinnati, I headed northwest up I-75 instead of northeast up I-71, again to avoid the floods -- and, at exit 112, by complete chance, found **Wapakoneta**. You get one guess.

Wapak, as they seem to call it, was the most *caucasian* city I have ever seen. *I* was the most ethnic person there. It was also supremely clean -- you could eat off most streets. True, I did see a few motorcyclists, but I was most surprised by what I did *not* see: much exploitation of the name of **Neil Armstrong**. Of course you realized as soon as I wrote the name that Wapakoneta was the home town of the first man on the moon.

There wasn't a lot of civic nonsense about it. I saw an amateur mural on a downtown wall and a sign for Apollo Storage ("Space Available") and Galaxy Furniture -- but a sign for Moon Florist proudly boasted that it had been open since 1968, *before* Armstrong became a name for all time. No, there was Brown's Restaurant and Fred's Market, older establishments no doubt entered or passed occasionally by the quiet youngster with his eye on the sky, there was Water Street and Seltzer Street and a street called Anglaize (the name of the county). Names, places, and doubtless people whom Armstrong knew from Day One. Somehow all contributed, in some ineffable way, to fashioning the kind of person who could take mankind's first steps on another world. I wondered if it was because Armstrong so jealously guards his privacy that there was so little of a civic nature marking his achievement -- if you didn't count the museum, that is. You didn't think Wapakoneta wouldn't have a **Neil Armstrong Space Museum**, did you? It's right off I-75.

They have Neil's Gemini capsule -- gave us a scare, did GT-9 -- the suit he wore on the moon, a jagged rock he picked up there, and memorabilia from his life: the plane he learned to fly in, his boyhood bicycle, his high school yearbook with the rather arrogant pose. They showed an imaginative film about the future of spaceflight -- it's imaginative to think that it even *has* a future -- and featured a silly but pretty "Infinity Room" designed to impart awe and mystery and nausea to the passer-through. I guess it's because I'm a July 20th baby and an eternal adolescent, but I dug on the whole experience. Bought out the souvenir stand -- postcards and science books and a soft-toy version of the space shuttle, and even some freeze-dried ice cream. Gifts, you see. Because the point of this journey wasn't astronauts, it was *nephews*, and I was on my way to see two dudes named **Steve and John** who might enjoy such stuff.

There were several great things about being on Grand Island, just north of Buffalo, this summer -- the 70/30 temperature/humidity, for one, which after the shrewish raking of New Orleans' climate felt like the heavenly touch of a beautiful woman. But as always the **dudes** were #1. Steve, I'd been told, had taken an interest in astronomy, and at age 5 3/4 already knew the nine planets. He listened with wonder as I told him about the first man on the moon, and together we scanned the question-&-answer books I'd bought for him in Wapak. The freeze-dried ice cream, however, was greeted with hearty **blechs**. I tried some. Steve was right: **blech**

*"*blech*,"* said John, mimicking his big brother at every turn. John, now about 2 1/2, is one of the most pleasant kids I've ever known. He wears a broad toothy smile and a deep friendliness (once past an initial wariness), and he obviously thinks Steve hung the aforementioned moon. *Big dude*; his mama Marie told me he was in the 95th %ile in both height and weight. He's my defensive lineman; I'm counting on him to win a big NFL contract and make his Uncle Guy rich.

Crafty soul, too. Steve's folks took him to soccer practice, where the gaggly galoot kicked and flailed at the ball with an assiduousness that has no gene in common with me. More like his uncle, John got me to take him on a walk around the field. Turned out that he was leading me to a playground he particularly likes. Clever lad!

It was only a week, but it was a full week. I took my mother to see the new print of **Gone with the Wind**, which is her favorite movie. The poor lady's memory has holes in it through which you could parade the Ohio State University Marching Band, but that only made the experience fresh again for her, and she loved it. (Me, I like the first half; up till the intermission, **GWTW** is terrific; afterwards, it's tedious chickflick.) Bro Lance and I took in **Armageddon**; as you well know, it sucked. The theatre featured a wall-full of autographed publicity stills of various performers; wild to find porn pud Sean Michaels among them.

My greataunt Cora -- whom John calls "Ann Coha" and who is sharp as ever at 90 -- hosted a pizza and chicken-wings feast for Clan Lillian; nice to have all six of us around one table. Later, on my sister-in-law's advice, we drove to a small beach on Grand Island and dawdled down by the riverside. What a high to watch the dudes cavort and splash with neighbor kids, and how nice the trust when Steve ran up to me in panic, begging me to pull icky seaweed off his foot. One definition of the word "adult": you keep demons away from young'uns. Even if the demon is just squeamishness and the way you exorcise it is to simply peel away the goop



BROTHERS

Above: the Everly Brothers monument in Century City, Kentucky. Left: Steve cavorts with his old man, while below: John points at a çat, sort of.



and say, "Don't worry, Steve; it's just wet grass."

I should have left July 4th, but I tarried. Marie's family holds a big reunion on the Fourth, and I wanted to attend and hit on her sister, who has a smile like the sun over Sicily. Of course, it rained like hell all day, the reunion was washed out, and I was told that the sister was nigh onto hysterical now that her divorce was getting nasty. For other reasons I should have left. My mother committed an atrocious no-no, and *read a page out of my diary*. That in itself would have been enough to wreck the day, because I had to get stern -- not harsh -- with her, but what she read made her very upset.

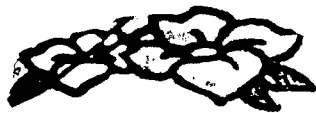
Seems that a couple of days into my visit, an anonymous woman had called, addressed me as "Miss Nancy's Son," and had asked me if I'd noticed any changes in my mother. Of course I had. Not so much age -- Mama is only 72 -- as illness and despair. Her short-term memory is completely gone. (The lady mentioned her locking herself out of her apartment.) Her appearance is deteriorating badly, a heartbreaking experience for those who knew the knockout she's always been. (For example, she won't dye her hair, and it's a mess.) Her driving is, I was told, frightening to behold. All this was something I had to hear, but not something for my mother to read.

She was angry that some "busybody" had bugged her son. She was certain it was someone who craved her apartment, or who was jealous of her magnificent Cadillac. I could tell how much the incident affected her; although she kept forgetting details, like who had called and what they'd said, she knew that she was mad at some neighbor for something throughout the whole day. I wish I could have protected her from that.

But there's no protecting her from what has to be done. Lance is setting up a driving test for her, though for all I know, she'll pass. I couldn't judge, since I wouldn't let her behind the wheel while I was in town. But it's only a matter of time.. Since my father left her loaded, there will be no problem placing her in one of the less awful of those awful somewheres, when the time comes. God help us, it won't be long.

So however dumb, I tarried until the 5th, which was a beautiful morning. Mama and I ate a great breakfast at a local restaurant (I discovered Eggs Benedict this trip) with my brother, and I hit the bricks. Problems and all, I hated to leave. Those nephews make all the difference. I may have wasted my chance at my share of the good stuff, but in Buffalo I got a share of somebody else's share, and I was grateful for it.

All the way down the road I could see my brother's headlights. I wonder if he could see me?



For reasons that will be explained below, I'm reluctant to call this page

THE END ...

but I must acknowledge in some way that this is the final section of this **Spiritus Mundi**. Ah!

THE FINAL SECTION OF THIS SPIRITUS MUNDI.

That should do it.

In mid-July I took a look at my schedule for the coming weeks and found something disturbing. Amongst the drug cases was one trial of surpassing importance. Pending, in the second week of August, is the trial of a man I shall call **Harvey**, after the location of his alleged crime. Allegedly, Harvey drove a car from which others fired into a second vehicle, killing two of the occupants. The crime Harvey is charged with, therefore, is first degree murder. My task -- if Harvey is convicted -- is to argue against the death penalty. Obviously, no big deal.

Well, it *isn't* that big a deal, at least as a legal challenge. The case against Harvey and his co-defendants is weak: the uncorroborated testimony of a passenger in the death car, a felon now imprisoned in Oregon, who *thinks* he can identify Harvey. Harvey has no criminal past, no psychiatric record, enjoyed a fairly stable domestic life and so on and so forth. I have a psychiatrist poised to interview him and a team of social workers working up a report on his home. I'm in touch with his mother and his paramour. It's really a pretty easy sell, easier than my first death penalty defense, which you might recall me writing about in **Challenger #2**.

But there's nothing easy about a death penalty defense. If he's convicted, the only thing standing between Harvey and that damned black table in that damned white room at Angola State Penitentiary will be *my* golden voice. Daunting. It's a responsibility to make me wonder if I should change my plans for the *first* week in August. For what falls in that first week of August? *The world science fiction convention, in Baltimore.*

But I will have little to do that first week of August. The reports will already be finished and digested and my arguments engrained. After jury selection, the first few days of trial would have nothing to do with me. There would be enough time to note any changes in strategy and make essential adjustments before facing my 12 fellow citizens with the question of life or death. Besides, it's best to be rested before battle.

But (third paragraph in a row I've begun with "But") the way I had my worldcon trip scheduled, I would be gone for more than a week prior to the trial. Two days driving to Baltimore. Four days at Bucconeer. Two days coming home. At least half the time completely out of touch, and on Wednesday and Thursday, I'd have to impose on my partner in Drug Court to cover for me. No ... the way I had it planned, worldcon would simply swallow too much time.

But (that makes four!) what if I *changed* my plans? What if I *weren't* gone all that time? What if there were some way to carve at least three and maybe four days off the trip? What if I --

I shuddered at the thought. The room spun and for a minute, I thought I was going to foul my underclothes. Yet I dared complete the thought.

What if I *flew* ?

One of the clerks in Section "S" was making reservations on Southwest for Orlando. I asked her to inquire about rates to Baltimore. \$182, round trip. With the SuSle check safely in the bank and not yet depleted, with a nice fee just in from the client I shall call **Dandy**, with the Baltimore motel room safely paid for, \$182 was do-able. I called Southwest and reserved space.

I took a step to battle my fear. I purposefully asked for early morning flights, since ground heat is less and turbulence less likely than later on these hot summer days. But the fear was stubborn. I had every intention of retrieving the ticket at the airport the following night by the 10 p.m. deadline; I made it perhaps halfway before I made for the video arcade instead. Because my nerves had begun to dance. I hadn't flown in ten years and thought the old reactions were evaporated. Not so. The thought of flying had me not only panicky, it had me *crazy*. I saw the world through black-colored glasses. I imagined a flight full of violent turbulence and having a blubbering nervous breakdown surrounded by mocking yuppies. I turned on the TV and found myself watching documentaries about TWA 800. When I went to the video store, only one tape leapt out at my attention: **Knute Rockne -- All American**. (Recall how the coach met his maker.) Typical stuff.

Phooey! I refused to submit to my madness. I called and reactivated my reservations. First thing the next morning I drove to New Orleans International and plunked down my \$182. Things are easier in the morning, I found. They're also easier when you've given yourself a way out.

Because in addition to making plane reservations, I'd also reserved a seat on the *train*. If the flight north was too terrifying or if the weather predictions for the trip home were too threatening, I had a seat on Amtrak to fall back on. Sure, I'd have to leave worldcon a day earlier ... but I'd actually get home an hour earlier than if I stayed and flew home as I planned.

So there things stand as July reaches its midpoint and I finish this **Spiritus Mundi**. At the very least next month promises to be ... interesting.

#

I'll talk about **Dandy's** case next issue. Tonight I'm going to talk about how it felt to open my e-mail Inbox and find that my friend **Ann Layman Chancellor** had died. I was going to finish this issue talking about Roy Rogers, but Rogers was a gentleman and wouldn't kind my devoting this space to my friend, instead. Besides which, in that Valhalla where he has gone, he knows what Guy Lillian III thinks of him. Happy trails, old boy.

Chance knows too. She saw my face and heard my cry when Jodie Offutt's e-mail came up on the Kinko's screen. She heard me call Annie Hebert and Dennis Dolbear, share my memories of the last time I saw her, in the hotel bar in San Antonio at last year's worldcon, when she comforted me because, for some reason, I was sad. Her hair had gone snow white, and she must have known that she was very sick, but she only had words of care for me. Selflessness and kindness. Maybe that's what the word *Chance* should mean to me from now on.



Ann Layman Chancellor's bookplate for the Nolacon II program book