



SPIRITUS MUNDI 183

SFPA MAILING 221 * APRIL-MAY 2001

GUY H. LILLIAN III * P.O. BOX 53092 * NEW ORLEANS LA 70153-3092
504/821-2362 * GHLIII@YAHOO.COM * GHLIII PRESS PUBLICATION #908

It is April 12, 2001, and I remember 40 years ago today.

I was in the 6th grade at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Tonawanda (Buffalo), New York. My teacher was Mr. Alba, and I still remember the cold, terrible moment when he mentioned that he had heard that the Russians had put a man into space.

Even then I took these things personally. Mr. Alba – my first male teacher – had us draw a political cartoon to note the event, and I drew a winger horror that embarrasses me today. Uncle Sam stands helplessly while the Red space capsule flies overhead, the pilot *spits in his eye*, and an irate citizen jumps up and down shouting “*Why weren’t we first?*”

(Huntley-Brinkley’s news show on NBC compared the famous first photo of the *Vostok* pilot with the *Mona Lisa*, remarking on their similar inscrutable smiles. “Just what,” asked Huntley, “is so darned funny?”)

The next few years were a nightmare for patriotic space nuts like me. Yes, we Americans enjoyed our successes – Shepard’s suborbital three weeks later, Glenn’s orbits ten *months* later – but they always seemed so puny compared with the astounding accomplishments the USSR kept throwing at us. Two spacecraft in orbit at once. The first woman in space. As time went on, the steady advance and superior flexibility of NASA’s moon program – especially Wally Schirra’s hard-luck but indomitable Gemini 6 – began to soften our belief that we were losing “the space race” – until, with the flight of Apollo 8, we put the Russians behind us forever.

Still, they had their firsts, and from the serenity of 40 years it’s easier to appreciate those triumphs and the people who made them. Today, four decades to the day from his flight, is a good day to think back on the first immortal name to come out of “the space age”, that of a little (5 foot 2 or something close) dude who had originally worked in a tractor factory, and who said he hasn’t been frightened the morning of his flight because he had been disciplined to feel no fear, who was 27 – a lot younger than any of our guys – and who had but seven years left before he left our planet for good. If people are around in ten thousand years, the name of **Yuri Gagarin**, and the date of **April 12, 1961**, will be too.



Twice in the last two months I have driven to Angola State Penitentiary to interview clients on Death Row. Both are facing first degree murder charges in St. John Parish, even though the His case is not as daunting as it sounds, since St. John’s prosecutors aren’t seeking the death penalty. Nor is it all that important to Glynn, since he is already a condemned man, facing the needle for a killing in another parish. Nevertheless, it was my first visit to Death Row.

The experience could have been much worse. Death Row at the Louisiana pen is located in a wing of the new administrative building, just inside the gates. It’s an attractive building and the grounds are festooned with pretty flowers, tended by trustees. The pleasant guards patted me down but, unlike van Houten’s jailers, didn’t make me take off my shoes. (The California guards made fun of my Nike socks.) My clients and I were allowed our chats in a large private visiting room, a mural on the wall behind him, separated only by a short barrier down the center of the long table – no screens.

Glynn and Blank have their rights so I won’t talk about the facts of their cases. I will talk about their demeanor. Although Glynn said that his death sentence (now under appeal) has him “stressed,” he

seemed relaxed to me. It was another lesson in life behind the walls. People adapt to anything. They adapt to life without freedom, without women, without work – even life in the figurative shadow of the gallows. The guard told me that he told newcomers, you’ll be here for years, so you might as well relax.

Blank was also calm, but also adamant that he was innocent and was the victim of bad lawyering and bullying police interrogation. He is well named, Blank – gray in white, and so very still, so incongruous in front of the pretty pastoral mural ... a rustic cabin at dusk, a bald eagle coursing above the peaceful water. Down the wall, a tangle-footed cartoon of Scooby-Doo.

Although I didn’t see any cells and everyone seemed laid back, I was glad to walk out of there. The Farm gets to me.

Outside of the gates is their small but well-designed museum, which I’ve described to SFPA before. Its superb cabinetry is made by a skilled inmate, who wanders in and out with impunity and chats easily with visitors. The exhibits were fascinating – guns made from bits of pipe and pliers, uniforms, guards’ weapons through the decades – and in a huge plastic case, the electric chair. Big, wooden, solid – they showed no wires or cables, so the impact wasn’t as strong as it might have been. I might write them about that. But in a back room, near an autographed poster from **Dead Man Walking** (shot at Angola, and accurate to the very zip code), mug shots line the wall of those who’ve sat in Old Sparky or been injected since capital punishment was reinstated – and their eyes, their mean, dead, hopeless, lifeless, merciless eyes – those get the point across.

I’ve heard three death sentences pronounced. Antoinette Franks. Julius Lucky. And Daniel Blank. Is it incomprehensible why I’ll think it, however just, fundamentally horrible when their faces go up on that wall?

God bless every inch of the 140 miles between Angola’s gates and my front door. I’ll be traveling them again.

I got my **wallet** back. A few weeks after its loss on Bourbon Street on Mardi Gras Day, a letter arrived for me at Dennis Dolbear’s old address. The letter was from the NOPD, and its significance was immediately clear: the only place I’ve ever used Dolbear’s address was on my (lost) driver’s license, which had been *in my wallet*.

The letter directed me to the Property and Evidence Room in the basement of the main police station. There my forlorn old wallet – adorned with a blue “Cape Canaveral: Then & Now” sticker – was returned.

The money was gone, of course – as were my credit cards. That cinched it: either my pocket had been picked on Fat Tuesday or, when dropped, my wallet had been found by a dastard. But I did retrieve items of value: my driver’s license, giving me an (illegal) spare, an extra door key (my car key was gone), a couple of phone cards, one with time still on it, my notary’s license and original Bar card, an admission pass to an excellent strip club called Temptations, and a J.C. Penney’s Gift Card with a few dollars left on it, at least. Along with a few business cards, an expired Subway customer appreciation card and a plastic card from Valvoline Service Centers, which has no outlets closer to New Orleans than Mobile, that was it ... except for *three Powerball lottery tickets*.

Perfect cap to the story, right? One of those tickets hits the \$90,000,000 jackpot and I get the last laugh on the schnook who took my wallet.

Well ... it *would* have been.

Three weeks prior to the DSC, over Easter weekend, Rose Marie and I agreed to meet at a mutually accessible spot. We chose **Apalachicola**, Florida, on the Gulf Coast, a peaceful island on a coast dominated by garish condominiums and spring break motels. It was an obscenely long haul – eight hours for me – but the short time we had there was exquisite.

We ate seafood, including Apalachicola Bay's famous oysters, while boats of every description – even a kayak! – sailed past us in the Bay. We walked on the beach, the chill waves slapping our calves, and sat in the sand and watched the Gulf of Mexico do its thing. We watched gulls and pelicans perambulate. We marveled at a peaceful little city, a village more than a city, 50 miles from the closest movie theatre, and wondered what it would be like to be people who could live there. We worked on parody versions of “Waltzing Matilda” and “Yankee Doodle” for one of her classes, and ever-so-gently bounced wedding ideas back and forth. It was very natural to be together.

We were together one full day and segments of two others. To my dismay, however nice the time, it was just too short a time for the drives. I didn't recover from Friday's until we were seated for dinner at the Gibson House on Saturday night. The week after Easter's eight hours on I-10 began with two groggy days of groaning. I'd've crawled to Apalachicola or anywhere else to spend ten minutes with Rosy, but I was and am glad that after June 30th, such marathons behind the wheel will no longer be necessary. I can just look up ... and there she will be.

But *where* will she be? *crunch* (shifting gears ...)



This is old news by now, but **Challenger** has again been nominated for the Best Fanzine Hugo. I am exultant – even to the point of paying \$100 for a full-page thank-you-read-it-vote-for-me ad in the next progress report for the Millennium Philcon.

The good news was not without its subtext of dread. My Hugo nominations – this is the 4th – are almost always a sign of imminent trouble. Last year it was uncertainty about my job. This year it's wedding blues and apartment-hunting. In planning our June 30th nuptials Rosy worried that because I'd talked about the wedding here, and issued a blanket invitation, that everyone would show up ... which is why I sent out that mass e-mail in mid-April asking for an early commitment. Need I say, those of you who said yes, and are there, will be welcomed with delight. It took an enormous load off the heads of those working on the event to know how many souls to expect.

As for the apartment, I scanned the listings in the local fishwrapper (thank you for that phrase, Mr. Brooks) and soon collapsed from despair and what my brother described as “sticker shock.” Rosy had several prerequisites for a new home. Diamond-encrusted toilet fixtures were the easiest to answer. (I said “That's the most ridiculous thing I ver heard” – thank you for *that* phrase, Mr. Brooks – and that was that.) The others – two bedrooms, central air & heat, a complete kitchen with dishwasher, and *pet friendliness* – were worse. They were available, but at something like *three-and-a-half to four times* my present rent!

Quaking with terror I enlisted the aid of Steve Chesnut, a law school classmate who does real estate work on the side. His efforts were immediate, productive ... and instructive. The prices didn't seem quite so ridiculous once I learned a bit about the market.

When Rose-Marie came to Nawlins prior to DeepSouthCon I sent her out with Steve's mother to look over the four or five apartments I considered “finalists.” She agreed with me on the best, and the best is what she shall have.

It's the downstairs of a large and well-kept building on a street called *Allard*, which I immediately associated with the Shadow. It's two blocks from City Park, a block from Carrollton Avenue, an easy shot from the freeway. It has three big rooms, two smaller ones, two baths, and a separate entrance for the room we foresee as an office. High ceilings, and ceiling fans, and lots of exposed wood. It's beautiful. It's Christ-almighty expensive, but Rosy's optimism and confidence that she will quickly find work – as a teacher or a newspaper writer – has been infectious ... to an extent.

This issue of **Spiritus** is rushed – and the prospect of moving into 63 Allard Street, New Orleans, Louisiana is why. Next issue: new phone number.



On one evening in a year far too late in my life to mention, out of sheer embarrassment, I took Jan Grogan to a dance at Ygnacio Valley High School, and kissed her good night. Hit her nose first. That was the first time I ever did that. Kissed a girl, that is. After leaving California, I thought I'd never hear of her again, but when I found myself signing up on Classmates.com, lo, there she was. And of all places, she lives in Atlanta!

Classmates.com is a royal trip. Not only Jan is there, but Kathy Ericksen, the irrepressible girl who bullied me into asking her out in the first place. Frank Bosche, my comrade from **The Smoke Signal**, whom I met some months ago through another group, and who served as a Gore delegate to last year's Democratic convention. Junior class president and poet Steve Bishop is a *grandfather* now. And Ruby Bernstein, my first journalism teacher, is still teaching, though at a college level, and is living in – where else? – Berkeley.

The past is never the past.

From my diary, March 14, 2001:

"I swear to the living Buddha that this is true. This morning on the way to work I stopped at Walgreen's to pick up a roll of pictures from a disposable camera (and drop off another). When I opened the package I found photos of Rosy watching the Endymion parade and landscapes of swamp country between LaPlace and Kenner, with particular attention to moss-swathed trees reflecting in the still, swollen bayou. *And obscene close-ups of fat female genitalia.*

At least four photos documenting the rather ragged epidermis of a somewhat bloated woman were present. The striations on her belly revealed she was a mother. The ultimate shot depicted the process by which she had become such, rendered in anonymous closeup proximity to the wondrous act which begat us all.

At first shock I began to protest that some of the pictures Walgreen's had presented me were indeed, not mine, but I paled at displaying the amateur pornography to the clerk and paid for the lot. On my way to LaPlace I considered the photos' possible source. I wondered if [a certain friend] had purloined my camera, persuaded [one of his inamorata] to pose, and sneaked it back into my arena of control as a brilliant practical joke. I decided as I drove that this had to be the case and chuckled at the excellent jest. But when I stopped in LaPlace and again unsheathed the smut, I found that the gentleman therein portrayed could not have been [my friend], for lo, the man was black.

I also checked my sleeved negatives. None of the skin shots were there. Walgreen's had not printed several of my esoteric parodies of Ansel Adams. Instead, they had substituted this malarkey from *someone else's roll*. That the substitutions I received were of marginally greater interest than Baby Junior's birthday party I ascribe to luck.

One can but imagine the reaction of the artist behind those photographs when, upon retrieving his own order, discovers instead pictures of oak trees reflected in the sublime blue of the bayou. What dare he do next?"



MAILING *CALISTO* 220

Those of you who missed Tenacity, the 2001 DSC, missed out on a good little convention and convivial SFPA company. Word to the wise: Huntsville (flyer elsewhere) will be just as fine.

You will note that not every SFPazine in the last mailing is commented upon below, and some not completely. The plain truth is that, in the hubbub of my moving, I can't find the rest of the mailing! Apologies, of course, to those I missed, and a pledge to make up for the problem ASAP.

The Southerner #220 | Jeff 100% participation is a rare event – congrats on realizing it so early in your tenure. Thanks also for sending me two copies of the OO. My nearly complete set of **Southerners** remains nearly complete. >< Krispy Kreme doughnuts are *sinfully* good. A new outlet opened up in Metairie, and they've had to hire their own traffic cop! When I mentioned Krispy Kreme to my dermatologist, we simultaneously morphed into Homer Simpson: "Slobber slobber drool drool!"

The New Port News #196 | Ned Well, how'd you enjoy your assay into GoHmanship?

Revenant #5 | Sheila *Outstanding* to say hello at the con! I hope you're pleased by my little token of welcome – **Spiritus'** dedication. You are in very fine company in a tradition that goes all the way back to the founding of this zine, and many of your fellow honorees were at the con. Charl Proctor received the accolade in #38, I think. Rosy got #41. P.L. got #9. Penny Frierson was praised in #8. And on our roster, Eve and Janice have won **SMs** ... and so has Janet, even though she had to share #19, but I meant the salute no less for that. From now on, you can tell the world, "I am a **Spiritus Mundi** dedicatee!" and the world will ask you, "What the hell is that?"

Aristotle Meets Gernsback | Jeff That's an upsetting story about the Boulder school's reaction to that garde-schooler's experiment in subconscious racism. She got grief – she should've aced! >< I share your distaste for **Gladiator** – see my comment to Brown for further good sense about the Oscars – but am astounded that you gave the squishy pornography of **Wild Things** a thoughtful review. It's the only notice for that movie to go beyond the smut, and the smut was the only thing I liked about it. Didn't my line go, "You usually have to go dumpster-diving behind the tuberculosis ward to find trash of this quality"? >< Sounds to me like Rosie O'Donnell

employs an armed guard to foil kidnappers ... not an illogical or hypocritical expenditure for a public personality. If the guy is licensed, trained, and bonded, what's the beef? >< "I thought *I* had the corner on being the nit-picking pedant, Ned!" Teach your granny to suck eggs! Ned is the source cited by the guy who wrote the book on nit-picking! >< Peter Frampton had only one album because of the jihad launched by the legion of good taste. >< Amazingly, Connie Willis has no stories on this year's Hugo ballot. Mike Resnick does, but one, "Redchapel", is devoid of SF content. It's a what-if story about Theodore Roosevelt investigating the Jack the Ripper murders, but it ignores some of the most enticing Ripper evidence. (Chalked on the bricks above a gutted victim: "The juwes are not the men who will be blamed for nothing.") Mike has better nominees listed. >< Nixon may have been stewed on booze and pills when he invaded the Lincoln Memorial during the Cambodia/Kent State revolt, but it was possibly his most human moment as President; he allowed himself shame over the campus massacre and all the alienation and division he'd brought to America. >< I like all three of the comic strips you and Arthur find so tacky, **Blondie**, **Hagar** and **Beetle Bailey**. They're not **Rose is Rose**, but then only **Rose is Rose is Rose is Rose**. >< Oh, but Henry Morgan-the-cranky-old-fart made a *tremendous* transition from radio to television: for years he was a popular and irreverent regular on **I've Got a Secret**, even going so far one night as to decline questioning a contestant because "I've lost interest." >< Voters in Mississippi recently rejected a proposal to change the state flag by eliminating Confederate colors from its design. The Stars and Bars had been part of the insignia since about 1874, showing that it had been put there not to defy integration, but Reconstruction. The referendum turned on three issues: the locals thought the change was being advocated by outside agitators as a matter of political correctness, the new flag looked dorky, and Mississippians are more interested nowadays in

making money than arguing about such drivel. (Their policy towards casinos has made the state millions; Louisiana has lost that much.) Symbol schymbol. Such crusades are a waste of time. Show me someone's rights being denied; *then* I'll get angry. >< Teaching a kid to drive on roads lined with cliffs and poisoned stakes doesn't make any sense. I learned to handle a car on a dry lake bed. Find one of those around Seattle and take Allie there. >< Look at those fat, pampered little Bushies yelping and gesticulating to intimidate the Miami/Dade vote counters. Their fat, pampered parents never had any qualms about blasting us war protesters with gunfire and tear gas; wonder how these sleazy little rats would handle it. >< Best and most reliable ballot in the world: piece of paper with a box marked GORE and a box marked BUSH (and so on). Voter takes a pencil and makes nice big X in the box by his choice. Republicans riot to keep the clerks from counting the ballots and install their stooge in office. >< A sad memory sparked by that silly **Non Sequitur** depicting God as a Dog. One time when I was a kid I was mean to a harmless pooch, and have regretted it ever since. Can't do anything for that poor mutt, but I can try to be kind to his present species-mates. Unless they shit on my sidewalk. >< I miss my Austin visits too. They showed me a world of affluence and happiness alien to my life of poverty and despair. I never expected the chance to overcome either, but happiness, at least, is at last just a matter of *carpe diem*. You mention Sna Francisco and cause a mental spasm: I lived in a satellite community to The City through most of high school and college. What would life had been like had we stayed there? Without New Orleans my family wouldn't have subsequently moved to Buffalo, where my brother met his wife, an event that led to the existence of my beloved nephews, nor would I have joined NOSFA, or attended the '73 DSC and met Joe Green, who wouldn't have introduced me to his beautiful curly-haired daughter three years later ... ah, wondering what-if is worthless, since I wouldn't trade Rosy, or my dudes, or my life, even *my* life, for anything.

Dewachen/Planet of the Apas | Trinlay Well well *welcome* to SFPA! (I'll have more to say when I find my mailing.)

Tennessee Trash #40 | Gary R. Fine choices for the Rubble this year – Sue and Steve Francis, for the supreme sin of retiring from Rivercon. Bolgeo is

taking over that late-July date, which is fine for Libertycon, but I was kind of hoping Con*Cave would seize the days and shift to summer. No way I could avoid attending it then! As for the '01 Con*Cave, I love your newspaper photo with La Gelb, and at least the reporter didn't pepper the story with snide references to **Star Trek**. You obviously had a blast, and another successful convention. You really ought to suffer through a clinker just to break the monotony. >< Your Mexico trip in March made for mirthful reading, at least imagining your face as that Pentecostal preached at you during that long flight. The one time I sat next to a minister on an airplane, it was on purpose. He turned out to be a hypnotist, a divine intervention that got me to Baltimore as sane as when I left.

Home with the Armadillo #46 | Liz Your cover quilt – the seven of Cups – is rock gorgeous! I missed this: are you part of a project quilting up the entire Tarot? >< Allie ... got ... *tattooed*??!? I am feeling very very very very ... well, may I suggest **Uncle Guy is the Cutest Dude in the World** for her next one? >< Rosy recently went through the same loss you did: her beloved cat Cassiopaea had diabetes, and by the time she passed, spent most of her time at the vet's. She had 16 years, though, with one of the best women on the planet, so I'd call her lucky.

Passages #9 | Janet Love that cover photo, but who's that handsome dude hogging all the pretty girls? >< Funny natter about twins. I know several – Maxy Peruit and Jerre Rivers here in town and Janice, of course. *Wombmates*. Everet Dirksen and John Lindsay were twins, but not to each other. They were also *good* Republicans of stripes long extinct. >< A "warmblood" mare? Are you syaing other horses are *lizards*? >< Not only is Rosy's mama a Kelly Freas fan, she's a Kelly Freas friend. I think her originals, in fact, were gifts from the artist. >< "MCI"? It's one of my phone companies. It'll "whack" me if I don't pay my b- ... *Ohhhh*, you meant *MCI*, the myocardial infarction bound to "whack" me one of these whenevers. No man on either side of my family has died of anything non-heart-related in generations, except the uncle who gave way to cancer and the great-grandfather hanged for stealing pigs. (All right, all right, he wasn't blood kin, just married to my great-grandmother, and they didn't hang him – but he *did* die in jail!)

Guilty Pleasures #18 | Eve Grand that **Pirate's Pence** is out there and doing well. Even if the male lead in the tale isn't handsome or swashbuckling enough for me to portray him in the movie, there is always the title dude in **Captain Sinister**. >< I see that the river named St. John is infinitely more interesting – at least according to James Branch Cabell – than the Louisiana parish bearing that appellation. Cabell's opinion of Andrew Jackson reminds me of that revealed by R.A. Lafferty in **Okla Hannali**, where the Indians marked 1824 as the year the Devil was elected President of the United States.

Oblio No. 133 | Gary B. I was amazed when I saw the date of that Virgil Finlay illo you use on your cover: 1937. I was sure that was supposed to Vincent Price in the background, and in '37 Price was a hunky young swain, not the bearded senior shown. Perhaps indeed Finlay saw the future. >< Your perspective of the Florida recount, being that of a professional newsman, on the scene, is extremely valuable and will be quoted. If Republican operatives didn't steal the election, they lucked into it, and they deserve none of the respect that goes with winning. >< You mention that the editor of **Rocket's Blast/ComiCollector** has died, and mortality's fetid breath seems to cough into my face. That was the first fanzine I ever saw, I think, a dittoed issue – #8? Anyway, I remember being offended by its pro-Marvel stance. >< We disagree about the Oscars. This year – with the exception of Marcia Gay Harden's upset win for **Pollock** and Soderbergh's **Traffic** win for Best Director – they were devoted to pure star power. If artistry were the standard by which these awards were presented, do you think Russell Crowe could have beaten Ed Harris? **Pollock** was brilliant stuff, all the more exciting because of my devotion to that sociopathic maniac's exquisite, unique, *thrilling* work. Expressionism enlarged art's scope by taking something away from it: *light*. Pollock painted only expressions of his inner spirit, and forgot about the world outside. No wonder he went wacky. Harris' performance too was brilliant, all the more impressive because he directed himself. >< I remember that "Gary Brown" story from **Psycho**. That princess is truly a paper bag case. >< Maybe there was something about the individual fan's ditto fluid that either kept his zines from fading or made them vanish all the quicker. Never having used it – perhaps four GHLIII Press Pubs were done on ditto – I wouldn't know, but there are zines Dolbear did

during his OEship that might as well be blank sheets of paper these days. >< Oh, that is a *righteous* me to **Challenger** about the limp-wristed faneds of today never having had to clean up after a mimeography binge. It gets printed! >< Alas, looks like my ambitions to re-do and update **The Book of Years** will have to wait another decade. I'd have to gather and re-read the last sixty mailings, select the best and most representative covers, write a squib for each year, plus research membership data and pagecounts and blahblahblahblah ... and there's too much else going on this summer. Damn, I'd like to do that, though ... *and* do the same for **The Book of Polls**. >< Palm Beach's Hamburger Heaven would be lost on Rosy. She doesn't eat meat. I do, however, so lemme at it.

Ev'rybody's Got Something to Hide | weber Good to see you at the DSC, and please tell your unspeakably cute 17-year-old stepdaughter that it's *okay* to resemble Alice Krige! I got the feeling that she was mortified by the thought.

Challenger sub-micron/Spiritus Mundi 182 | me So much for my great influence in national fandom. My mini-campaign to get Julie Schwartz onto the Hugo ballot hit the wall and slid lax to the floor, leaving a smear of green brain goo behind it. (In English: his book wasn't nominated.) >< Damn! I can't even mc my own zine!



DSC 2001

The first fan to greet Rose-Marie and myself when we walked into the 2001 DeepSouthCon was a nice-looking yuppie guy in a white shirt and tie. “Hi,” he chirped, “my name is Cary Duffy. I’m an *alien abductee*.”

“Hi!” I squeaked around my suppressed grimace, and carefully backed my precious and self away.

It was Meade Frierson who clued me in. “Oh, him,” he said. “That’s the kid pulled through the doggy door in **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**.”

I ran back to the yuppie abductee (almost rhymes, doesn’t it?) and took a closer look. “Damn!” I said. “It *is* you!”

It was him. Same knobby nose and high forehead. He was no longer in the business, a financial planner now for Merrill Lynch, living in Birmingham. He’d read about the DSC and simply showed up, bringing not only stills from the movie, but the tiny little shirt he wore as aliens yanked him from Melinda Dillon’s hands – the thought staggers me – and dragged him through the doggy door.

“Did Spielberg really have a guy dressed as a clown off-camera to get you to smile?” I asked.

“Actually,” he said, “it was Snoopy.”

It was the first of many pleasant surprises about this con.

It’s safe to say that nobody expected much from DSC 2001. The con chairs, Arthur & Paulette Harper, were newcomers to conventioning, had beaten the experienced Mike Kennedy for rights to the con by blatantly appealing to hucksters, and made a scad of pre-con blunders – like openly touting the event to gamers and bringing in half the world as guests. *Sixty-four* of them, a full fifth of the membership ... but many of those, Paulette assured us, were the performers who opened the con. Such as *the Fire Maidens*, a local dance troupe who did a turn in filmy Grecian gowns to the recorded classical music just as things weighed anchor. It was Steve Francis who gave them that name. And then the local Heritage Fife & Drum Corps, who marched in braying “Scotland the Brave”, torturing their bagpipes enthusiastically and, according to Vince Docherty, pretty fairly. He wished he’d had advance notice so he could have donned his own kilt and tartan.

It was a rather noisy but auspicious beginning.

There were plenty of us, SFPAnS, at DSC. In fact, Ned Brooks, the convention GoH, was there, celebrating his umpty-umph DeepSouthCon in a row (he’s been to every one since #3). He and Rich Dengrove were chatting at the registration desk as we came in. As usual, SFPAnS “pitted” at a central locale and Rosy and I spent the convention in their – your – company. Tom and Anita Feller were there, George and Jill Wells – George was brilliant on the “roast Ned” panel, which substituted for a FGoH speech – Steve and Suzanne Hughes, with whom we shared many a sprightly meal. Toni came, of course, and Randy Cleary, nobly penning a cool cover for the oneshot Toni got together. Perhaps the biggest hoot of all was the appearance of **Sheila Strickland**. Meeting her, for real, meant that I’d set eyes on all but two of the current membership (Norm and Trinlay), and in honor of that, and her fine contris and general niftitude, I

DEDICATE

this issue of **Spiritus Mundi** to her. Couldn’t happen to a truer SFPAn!

So what did we do at the DSC? We did a oneshot, courtesy Toni and Steve, on their handy-dandy super HAL 9000 laptops. Every SFPAn present – except weber, who came in late – leant a paragraph. We bought books in the nice big hucksters’ room – including (me) a promising Hugo nominee, Nalo Hopkinson’s

Midnight Robber and a sexy romance novel being hawked at the con by the author, a gift for my lady. She bought **Heinlein – A Reader's Companion** gift for her stepmother Patti and a beautiful book on Freas for her mother.

At parties, we spoke with the splendid Guest of Honor, the beautiful Catherine Asaro, whose resume includes nuclear research, nine (I think) published novels, a '99 novella that led in the Hugo voting until the very last moment (she's up again this year), and an easy charm and patience with fans. At one fabulous party I bent Asaro's pretty ear with Civil War and Berkeley stories ... and found that we had been less than a block from one another on May 4, 1970, Kent State day. She was 14, the frightened daughter of an AEC scientist, and I was of course, me ... and she was watching, as I was, when the cop car spouting tear gas had been flipped over and set ablaze. A terrible thing to remember, but a great choice for Guest of Honor. She lives in Georgia – I hope we manage to adopt her into regional fandom.

We listened to shuttle astronaut Edward DeLuccas – a professor of optometry at a local university – describe his extraterrestrial experiments in crystalline growths, and I for one was awed by the vast technical universe which lies as far beyond my wits as it does my senses. Translation: it was a great presentation, but boy, did I feel dumb.

We went to a Kentucky Derby party put on by Sue Francis and watched the race run in the fastest time ever... but for Secretariat. I recorded the race and you can hear me shouting "That's a horse and a half!" about the underrated Monarchos, who is at least that.

We called my nephew Steve on the occasion of his first communion. It was wonderful to eavesdrop as his Aunt Rosy drew him out, got him to talk ... I can't wait until she meets him and John, even it most likely will not, alas, be this coming June 30th.

The only relatives of mine Rosy has met were past conversation. We left the convention on Saturday to visit Elmwood Cemetery and the graves of my grandparents. I go there whenever I'm in Birmingham, to clean their headstones and report – and this time, to tell the newest Lillian about the earliest Lillians I personally knew. It was an easy thing to find Elmwood but a furshlugginer nightmare to find the site. It took a map drawn at the office to get us there, but from now on I think I'll remember: eight stones down from the little bridge and giant mushroom I remember from my childhood. Rosy was patient as I left a flower for my grandmother and great-aunt.

Nobody did any costumes so there was no masquerade on Saturday night – suits me, costuming a waste at small cons like DSC – so we waited to see the Awards. Robert Neagle busily sat up his d.j. stand for the dance to come. I got so excited I – heh, Rosy doesn't know this – dropped my camera into the toilet, fortunately, before it was used. It floated, and the pictures came out anyway.

So who won what? Brother Gary Robe gave the '01 Rubble to *Steve and Sue Francis*, for the crime of retiring Rivercon. Sassy ex-Brooklynite *Sharon Green* won the Phoenix, B'ham's *Sam Smith* won a Rebel, a handsome curved crystal, for his advice and help to the inexperienced concom. He wasn't the only one to offer wisdom and assistance. *Robert Neagle's* face was priceless as he stood in the corner and listened as he won his own Rebel Award.

Robert and his lady Ann are also due to walk down the figurative aisle at the end of June, just like Ms. Donovan and myself. I hope no one misunderstood when I said "Neagle and I are getting married June 30th."

On Saturday late the convention was startled by the sudden appearance of a super-cute young lady in a Georgia Tech sweatshirt. I was stunned – the kid looked like that spooky Afrikaaner beauty Alice Krige, of **Ghost Story** and **Chariots of Fire** and the Borg Queen from **Generations**. Alas, Mike Weber's stepdaughter Helen seemed mortified by the idea. As more and more helpless swains cast themselves into the flames in her honor, Krige may be bragging that *she* looks like Helen.

Saturday night's parties climaxed on a 14th story balcony overlooking Birmingham. Joey Grillot and I had a neat conversation about the city, and I once again remembered my childhood there, the overhead wires sparking as the streetcars made their turns. Rosy came out to get photos, leaning over the balcony as I cowered by the wall; another memory came to mind, our long walks high over the atrium of the Marriott

Marquis, during the convention which restored us to friendship, the 1986 worldcon in Atlanta. It was a wonderful thing to remember, but I still wouldn't go near that edge.

Sunday came, oh bittersweet convention day. We walked up the street to the famous Pancake House for breakfast with Steve and Suzanne. We listened to Steve's tales of caving and I lamented another of my phobias: tight places (although I had no problems with Mammoth or certainly Carlsbad, which is less constricting than the Superdome, the places *he* talked about gave me shivers). Then back to the con for the endgame.

In DSC's last remaining official business, everyone was reelected at the SFC meeting and Timmy Bolgeo bid for and won the 2003 DSC (to be held the last weekend in July); he sold no memberships and announced that the hotel would take no reservations until July of 2002, which caused some small consternation. We'll cross that bridge of birds when we come to it. And so we took our leave, the last sights of DSC '01 Dean Sweatman leafing through my extra fanzines, and Jessica and Penny Frierson listening raptly to Brothers Wells and Brooks as they carried on the grandest DeepSouthCon tradition of them all.

Alas, for all its fun, DSC '01 ended on a distressing note – no fault of the convention. On the way out of Birmingham I forced Rosy to endure another bit of Lillian family business, a run through Fairfield, a suburb to the steel city. Timeworn little houses around a ramshackle block or two of business district, it's an unattractive place but it has personal significance. My family lived there in the early, early '50s, and my first memories date from there.

The last time I went through I found the neat little apartments by simple dead reckoning. On such instinct I relied now ... and couldn't find them.

I wanted to show Rosy the front door where I once did a weather report in crayon. The cement stoop where a lifelong phobia against invertebrates was born. The ditch where my mother forbade me to play. The yard where I showed off my Roy Rogers cowboy suit. The doorway where I sat one day and conversed with God. Our friendly neighbor Esther lived just past the newlyweds next door, who let me have drinks of water out of their cool metal glasses. I had a friend named Keith, a big boy of 6, and his daddy once set off firecrackers. Downtown was Vulcan, the great statue which frightened me so much. Vulcan was down now, being recast and refurbished, and the places that meant so much to me – well, where were they? There was a brand new school standing in the general vicinity ... had the first home I'd ever known given way to it? My father is gone, his parents, aunt and uncle are gone, and my mother and great-aunt Cora, who knew that place, are in nursing homes. I'm the only one left to whom that apartment has *my* meaning. I wanted to share that with my intended. Well, perhaps I merely couldn't find the place, and there are other things to share.

Rosy and I drove home – home for me, now, and home for her, soon. Two days later I watched her walk down another airport ramp into another airplane for another return flight to Florida, and felt like the better part of my being had been ripped away. Only the thought Steve Hughes mentioned in passing saved matters. When they'd left DSC '01, he'd said, "See you next month."

Next month! Oh my God! So it was! By now it's *this* month! By now it's only weeks. Only ... *days*. New memories comin' in, at a mile a minute!

