





Cindy had a nice funeral. Her sister Julia made a fine floral arrangement to sit atop the closed lid of the pretty pink casket, and had photos from Cindy's personal collection on display. Inside the album were many pictures I had to explain to the family: Dennis Dolbear with the ferret he found in his garage, a critter that spooked old Boo; Martina Klicperova, whom Cindy adored; fans she met at parties I'd taken her to; pictures of my mother and my brother from when they visited New Orleans. Standing on its own, one photo showed Boo proudly manning the tiller, "driving the boat," on Wayne Walker's sailboat. I contributed a 12x18 copy of her final picture, the one SFPA saw on SM209. And there was an enlargement of a Polaroid shot of Cindy's baby daughter, given up for adoption many years ago, along with letters from the adoptive mother. Julia had made copies of each of those pictures, to send with her sister.

## SPIRITUS MUNDI 210

Guy H. Lillian III  
8700 Millicent Way #1501  
Shreveport LA 71115  
318/797-1822 \* 504/909-7084  
SFPA 248 \* Oct.-Nov. 2005  
GHLIII Press Publication #987

Cindy's aunt sang a hymn *a capella*, her voice growing stronger with every line. Sister Joy tried to speak, but broke into tears and could not – no matter; everyone knew how she felt. Julia told a very moving story about how Cindy had selflessly helped her escape from an abusive relationship. I recounted my long friendship with old Boo – much the same as last issue's closing lines. Cindy's mama and sisters smiled when I'd hoped they'd smile – at stories of Boo's stubbornness, kindness, and care for people – and nodded when I grew serious. One lady shook my hand at the luncheon afterwards and said I'd been a good friend to Cindy, but that wasn't the story: the story was how good a friend she tried to be to everyone. Cindy, you see, believed in the Golden Rule; she needed friends, so she *was* a friend, who cared about other people, tried to help them, strove to protect them. The only thing this special person ever wanted was to be like other people, so she acted like people should act. Would that everyone was as kind and trusting and courageous for others as Cindy Snowden.

In the back of the chapel JoAnn Montalbano sat with Dennis. Montalbano had always been kind to my special neighbor, and now she wept for the sweet, gentle girl. Also back there, inconspicuous, as they'd promised, was the news-crew from Shreveport's Channel 3. A few days earlier – with the family's knowledge and approval – they'd interviewed me about Cindy, and before the service they'd spoken to Julia, filming her photographs, trying to put a face on the loss dealt by Katrina.

They followed us to an attractive cemetery, shielded by tall trees from the noise and ramble of the outside world. We interred Boo near her maternal grandmother. It's a pretty place. Remembering the funeral for the Jewish landlady who had so helped Cindy (and me) in years past, I took up the shovel to help fill in the grave.

And so we put my friend to rest. I will return there from time to time, to see the marker, to bring a flower, and if you should ever pass through Hammond, Louisiana, north of Lake Pontchartrain, I hope you remember reading here about Cynthia Marie Snowden, known to her siblings as Pepper, known to me as Boo, caring friend, brave friend, pain-in-the-tush friend, silly friend, *my* friend, and if you have no gods to speak to on her behalf, just send out a mental shout: *Hey Boo!* That's all you have to say.

\*

It had been quite some week. Two days before the funeral I drove from Shreveport to Dallas to pick up Rosy. She had been out west for ten days, vacationing with Joe and Patty Green. Carlsbad Caverns ... the Grand Canyon ... the Lowell Observatory ... Vegas ... the Arizona Meteor Crater ... a vacation worthy of an expression from another era, "*Eh-pic!*"

And what was *I* doing while *la belle* was gallivanting around the wonders of the West? *I* was in court in Benton, Louisiana, pleading people and trying trials. Had a successful week, too – pleaded out one of my ugliest cases (a retarded child molester – more you do *not* want to hear), won one jury trial, and was picking another panel when my D.A. discovered he'd misread the statute, and allowed my guy to cop to a meaningless misdemeanor. The judge was happy – we unloaded a boxload of cases – and my clients should have been happy, too, since they all made out like ... heh, *bandits*.

The jury trial was fun. My client was charged with Unauthorized Use of a Movable. Translation: he had been driving his live-in girlfriend's car when they'd had a drunken fight. She claimed she'd ordered him out of the car, but instead he'd called her a fat bitch and driven off. He'd been on his way home later when the gendarmes nabbed him. The complaining lady – who wasn't really *fat* – hemmed and hawed about details in her testimony. I made a big deal about that in my speech, but my main question to the jury was, *Why are they bothering you with this?*

That's what won it. Jury bought my argument, that this was a trivial lovers' quarrel and not a crime at all – a complete waste of our time. One lady juror waggled her finger in my poor D.A.'s face and said, "I oughta send you a bill!"

\*

Unfortunately, because of a screw-up in scheduling, Rosy could not fly back into the Shreveport airport, or even the cool local facility at Longview from which she'd taken off. She had to fly into Dallas-Fort Worth. The airport, too, was epic. I had to drive almost four hours to get there, trying to read Mapquest's addled directions by map light – only to discover that the address given for DFW was not the terminal area, but Administration, many miles away. After careening to the enormous terminal cluster – for there were several buildings – I somehow found the proper airline and secured a decent parking spot adjacent, by sheer luck, to Rosy's disembarkation point, near to the right time. We had a fond reunion.

Followed by a quick trip home via interstate, right? Ha.

Two interstates depart the Dallas area in an eastward direction, I-30 and I-20. I knew that I-20 was our ultimate path into S'Port, but I remembered taking I-30 for part of the journey into town. I therefore took I-30 out of town – and soon found us nosing up the long side of an isosceles triangle, with Big D at one locus, Shreveport at another, and Texarkana, Arkansas, where we were headed, at the third. In short, we were a good distance out of our way. This at 10:30 P.M.

We had gone too far to turn back and find I-20 in Dallas, so we checked maps and consulted locals and finally peeled off onto a U.S. highway heading east-southeast. We meandered through hamlets and piglets and towns without names, a tour of the back country of east Texas we could have done without. But, as I knew it must, the road eventually intercepted I-20, and eventually – two hours later than usual – we limped home. Just in time to jump up the next morning, and head for Katrina country.

\*

After the funeral, we joined Dennis and JoAnn in Covington, due north across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans. It was a delight, and a relief, simply to sit and gab – and to gain some inkling of just how much the world had changed. JoAnn articulated in beautifully: “You must stop thinking ‘pre-K’,” she said. We’d met at the Acme Oyster House, and the hurricane-churned Gulf meant there were no raw oysters, but I suspected she meant far more than that.

More intimations of what she had in mind awaited us at the local Books-a-Million. There we met John Guidry – like Dennis, a northshore refugee from Katrina. A nice surprise: when we ran into him, Jawn was with Bob and Anne Neagle – other victims of the storm. The CrescentCityCon honchos had seen *six feet* of water *inside* their home. They lost *everything*. Neagle laughed at the disaster; what else can you do? His \$1 DVDs like *The Crawling Eye* came through fine, he said. But all of the books, all the *good* DVDs, all the CCC memorabilia ... mush. “Can somebody write to Stephen King,” Bob asked, “and get him to send another autographed set of his books?” I forgot to ask about his Rebel Award.

We ate dinner with Rick Coleman and took in *Dreamer*— extra Rosy’s visible in the racetrack sequence early on (keep your eyes on the northeast corner of the screen). Then we followed Guidry to his current residence, a mother-in-law’s house beside his cousin’s abode in Covington. There he rests between daily 12-hour clean-up sessions at his old home in New Orleans. There he stores the silverware and crystal he has salvaged – and books recovered from his wonderful collection, copies he has cleaned with Lysol, to kill the mold.

Mold? Pre-K? The next day we followed John on his commute, to see New Orleans for ourselves.

\*

I am reminded of the words of a man who must tell his friend that his family has been killed: *Tell you? How can I tell you?*

The silhouette of the city rising before us, as we crossed the Causeway, looked normal. But as we came closer, we saw the plywood covering the shattered windows in the lakefront Hilton – and the multitudinous signs on the neutral ground. It was like the day before election; the signs were everywhere. But instead of touting Alphonse “Pappy” Devereaux for Parish Clerk of Court, these signs advertised carpet removers and house gutters. *Demolition* expertise seemed the order of the day.

We would soon see why. Metairie’s pleasant suburban brick homes had changed from every other time I’d seen them. Now all had mounds of trash and debris before them, and standing sentinel by almost every curb, a taped-up refrigerator – fridge after fridge after fridge, a common denominator of disaster. The smell of damp and rot hung heavy. I drove down Vets Boulevard towards Fleur de Lis, the border between Jefferson Parish and Orleans – and the site of my dentist’s office. We’d been told it was bad. It was bad.

My dentist’s office was barren – the wooden façade had peeled off. The house next door sported smashed windows opening into emptiness. The walls were crusted with dried mud. A dark horizontal line marked the crest of the flood. It was astonishingly high. Fleur de Lis Drive, itself, was an obstacle course of downed tree limbs and trash. Mud-coated cars sat abandoned and askew in driveways and on the neutral ground. Although there was some traffic winding through the streets, the houses all bore an unquestionable aura of hollow emptiness, for except for a rare harassed homeowner lugging crap to the curbside, there were no people.

We turned towards West End Boulevard, a wide avenue with a huge neutral ground. Much more of the same. Gutted houses etched with watermarks. Muddy autos – submarines. Debris where once there were lawns. In the middle of the neutral ground, trucks circled two



enormous, house-high mountains, one of tree trunks and tree limbs, the other of twisted gutters, wrecked furniture and smashed sheetrock. Across the street, a huge uprooted oak leaned onto the roof of a house. We crossed via Harrison, passing the library on the corner of Canal Boulevard where Rosy had once rented audiotapes. Brick, it seemed all right on the outside, but the video store stocking rare movies, the collegiate eye-tie café, the elegant Steak Knife restaurant were all empty, featureless, stripped to the walls.

North on Marconi, by City Park. Trees down, and those that still stood, all but leafless. We crossed Robert E. Lee Boulevard into Guidry's once-elegant neighborhood: Lake Vista, and found his house at the corner of Finch Street.

John was already at work. Wearing slops and a breather, he toted material from inside his house to the lawn – which was covered in the ruins of his collection.

What a heartbreak for John. His complete set of ERB-APA, the apa he founded, were reduced to goo (his SFPAs were stored higher, and safe). Full-page *Prince Valiant* strips dried in the sun. Hardbacks lay strewn in the dirt – there was no more grass. But it was worse inside. John led me in. I was crogged. *No walls.*

I remembered when John's family moved into #1 Finch from next door, more than 30 years ago – and my thousand visits, since. It had been a very nice suburban home. Now the sheetrock was gone from the living room and kitchen, and the floor was bare to the concrete slab. The refrigerator by his computer was coated with something green that stank so bad it made me choke. I stuck my head into the sitting room at the front of the house. The walls looked like they had been blasted shoulder-high with paint balls filled with black paint, overlapping polka dots, slimy and pestilential. The back bedroom – John's mother's clothes hanging from a chest of drawers; the poor lady had died a few weeks before – was festooned in the same way. Mold.

*Touch nothing. Don't breathe it in.*

John and his cousin were peeling the house down to its basics, he said, one room at a time ... and his room was next. Despite weeks of salvage, it was still filled with books and tapes. I wondered about the marvelous set of Sabatinis, and all the other wonders with which John had filled that room. His Burroughs collection, he said, was okay – but how much was not?

Outside we found not only fresh air, but Justin and Annie Winston and Richard Janeski, who had driven up. To help John preserve his treasures, Richard took the *Prince Valiant* pages, saying he would freeze-dry them; I don't understand the process but I wish him well. Rosy and I took three of John's priceless photo albums, containing pictures of great moments in NOLA fan history – including a picture of *la belle* with Jan Lewis and Rick Norwood from the 1968 DSC and shots from Joe Green's epic Apollo 11 party. Some of the color Polaroids were totally shot – Hal Foster looked like a Hammer Frankenstein – but Rosy's promise to scan the rest to CD should preserve those gems for good, and I hope he lets me publish some in *Challenger*.

I was anxious to tour the rest of the city, so we embarked, and made our way past convoys of military relief trucks to the other side of City Park – and Allard Street. Rosy and I spent the first years of our marriage there, in a beautiful, expensive apartment, and we wanted to see how the building had done. The answer from our erstwhile next-door neighbors was, fine. The floodwaters hadn't exceeded the depth of the crawlspace beneath 63 Allard. The hardwood floors in our apartment were unmarked. Of course, the ground-level pad of our neighbor, Keith, had been soaked – the door stood open, the rooms stood empty – but I was glad that our other neighbors had come through unscathed. Sure, they were rich yuppies, as alien from me as Martians, but they'd put real effort into furnishing and fitting their beautiful home, and I was glad they'd made it through.

So, had we remained in New Orleans in 2005, and made the same eastward escape from Katrina as we had from Ivan, we would've suffered a lot of worry about the stuff we'd left behind, but would have lost nothing. We might even have talked Cindy into coming with ... *No, no – dump such thoughts.*

But I couldn't forget Cindy. Our next stop was Raphael Manor.

When I turned down Fig Street from Carrollton, I told myself, *I will never come this way again.* No reason to, now. The three story brick building is located in a poor neighborhood, a solid edifice – I always understood why my former neighbor and ersatz kid sister felt safe there. On this day Raphael Manor looked curiously battered, plywood over the doors (secured by a lock and chain), but the windows were all intact and the curtains were all drawn. On a roof surface, someone had stamped a message for helicopters: HELP. I looked up at the end of the second floor nearest the elevator. That's where ...

Go. Go.

Justin, Richard and John were already in line by the time we found the Red Cross aid station, a block or two away. The line wasn't particularly long – and nobody was checking IDs, although my eyes widened at the weaponry being toted by the GIs lounging about. Inside the gate, enthusiastic workers gave us huge buckets and commanded us, *fill 'em up* – pre-packaged lunches, boxes of snack crackers, cases of canned water, mops, a flashlight, cleaning stuff, Pop-tarts, *here, here, take it, please, we've got plenty ...*

The Winstons' house suffered little during Katrina – Annie had just had the roof replaced, and it withstood the winds. Justin had ridden out the storm inside, and so had been on hand to instantly repair the three windows that had blown out, thus saving their furniture. Of course, the flood had taken its toll on their cars and on their basement – a moment's exploration into its subterranean depths proved that Annie would get her wish, to have it cleaned out, at last. We sat on the porch – where, in another century, another age, I'd often sat and BSed with these same people, plus Walsh and Wirth and other unworthies – and tore into the Red Cross' ham sandwiches and applesauce. Not bad. And the kits even came with their own trash bags.

We drove John back to his duties, and set out again to explore the city.

Every report we'd heard said that the French Quarter, being the first-built, and highest, point in the city, had survived the levee break. We drove there down ruined Canal Street, Rosy noting our old Walgreen's, which seemed okay, and Betsy's Pancake House, the delightful breakfast place, which did not. (Liuzza's, our favorite Italian restaurant, was boarded up – with the telltale highwater mark high on its outside walls.) The buildings flanking Canal, whose upper floors always seemed deserted, were deserted now from the ground up. Even the mannequins were gone. We turned into the Quarter and drove down Chartres to Jackson Square, across St. Ann to Burgundy – same old Vieux Carre, only nowhere near normally crowded. There was even jazz, or its simulacrum, in the air. New Orleans began once from the French Quarter. If it began again, here it would begin, again.

North of the Quarter was the Ninth Ward, the poorest part of the city. There, we'd heard, destruction had been complete. But the Faubourg Marigny, through which we passed, seemed okay – indeed, some kids in their late teens were moving *into* a house. Something strange moved in our emotions – hope. Maybe Nawlins wasn't so dead after all.

We kept moving – and found that such a judgment depended entirely on what part of the city was being discussed.

We entered the Ninth Ward, and saw large Xs spray-painted on every house, with coded initials. Such a sign had been left on Raphael Manor, with the terrible annotation, "1 D". Some of the worst buildings were marked "TFW", standing for God knows what – but with an obvious meaning: demolition. These were the slums, leaning, in a state of slow, inexorable collapse, street after street of them – the former homes of the very poor. (Again, there was no one on the street.) Surely this was the worst, we thought – but then I said, "Let's check out Dennis'," and we headed across the Highrise bridge, for New Orleans East.

It was odd to find the exit, make the turns – automatically, since I'd gone this way a hundred times before. But every other time I'd passed busy fast food joints and a busy mall – not the abandoned shells of buildings and businesses we passed now. Turning into Dolbear's nice suburban neighborhood, I remembered his article, "Survivor", on the storm ... and so wasn't surprised to see so many trees on the ground, so few leaves on the survivors, and the morass on Coventry Street, where Dennis and his mother used to live – and nearly died.

Was this the house? I always recognized it by the front door, but this door was hanging funny, filthy with mud and that damned, omnipresent highwater mark ... the garage door hung slightly open, a bicycle falling forth ... there was a tree across the drive and walkway, and on its side, a bent metal ladder ... just as Dennis described. He and his mother clung to that ladder for dear life at the height of the storm. I stepped over the tree and the ladder to the front door. An incongruously fresh sheet of paper stuck through the door handle advertised carpet removal. I pushed on the door with my knuckle. *Touch nothing.*

Inside, darkness – shadow – masses of shapelessness – the smell of deep, sick, damp – a print still hanging on the closest wall ... "Yes, this is it," said Rosy.

We went no further.

\*

My cover is by Charlie Williams, one of three extraordinary pieces he did for *Challenger* articles by Dolbear and myself. I'm working very hard on the next issue – it sports as gorgeous a cover as I've ever seen on a fanzine, and for once, I'm not exercising my hyperbole. Alan White is simply transcendent. Of course, I can't afford to publish many print copies, but please – look at it on-line: [www.challzine.net](http://www.challzine.net).

Dolbear – speaking of whom – reports that he's begun cleaning out his house. He's found some personal items of great value. Guidry reports that his Burroughs and Sabatini collections survived intact, his Talbot Mundys and *Weird Tales* sets are shot. He says that the Army Corps of Engineers has declared New Orleans a flood zone. Well, *duh*.

We brought back a case of canned water from that Red Cross station. It'd do in a desert, but it needs both filtering and boiling to be truly potable. You know, New Orleans water had the reputation of being the tastiest in America. How long until that's true again?

Final impressions from our day in the gouged and wounded Big Easy: the city can and will re-open – yuppies are rebuilding, and John reports Whole Foods has moved to Veterans! But it will do so without the poor. They've been washed away, and they have neither the means nor, really, any reason to return, and their neighborhoods are just gone. As several have predicted, the new New Orleans, repaired and revived, will be a yuppie haven, indistinguishable from the rest of the world, its heritage revered only for its tourist appeal.

I'll move back if they offer public defenders a decent living – and we all know how likely that is. No, we'll never live there again ... but as with my little neighbor, who in many ways came to mean New Orleans to me, I will always remember it, and miss it. It'll never be the same.





Justin Winston and John Guidry outside of John's home on Finch Street. These photos were taken by Rosy with our digital camera.



On Fleur de Lis Boulevard.

Right, across from Dolbear's house on Coventry





# MLG CAUSTICS 247

September 2005

**The Southerner #247 <Sheila>** Congrats on the new computer! No more screwy margins! >< I'm not surprised to lose Sally Syrjala – she's a good kid and a good writer, but apac just wasn't her thing. I expect she'll chime in with another zine in a few months or years, and when that happens, I'll cheer.

**Egoboo Ballot <SSOE>** Just like everyone else, all of my votes went to Bobby Poulette. Hey, maybe he'll run for OE next year!

**Uncle Lon's VERY Unofficial ... <"Brown">** Hmm, I knew Schlosser was good, but I obviously need to pay closer attention.

**The New Port News 223 <Ned>** The girl on your cover looks like she's toting a tribble on a stick. >< If Wells doesn't answer your question, *The Boy from Oz* is (or was) a Broadway musical about a gay choreographer from Australia – I think he was married to Liza Minelli. Hugh Jackman, eschewing his Wolverine role, starred. >< Nuts! I should've voted Copeland's *pdbecone* for Zine of the Year. >< The more I hear about your dad's perpetual motion machine, impossible or not, the more I want to see a picture of the damned thing. (Not to mention an article about it for *Chall* ...) >< Your comment about the Statue of Liberty likely not standing in the 2700s makes me wonder, what's the oldest hollow metal statue around, now? Seems to me such construction would be a fairly new development – in fact, didn't Bartholdi invent this technique just for the Statue? Anyway, if anyone cares, the proposed Spirit of Houston will be more than five times the height of the Lady – but judging from the proposals, nowhere near as attractive. >< The generally liberal politics voiced in SFPA probably wouldn't bother a trufan like Steve Hughes; he's a lifelong friend well used to our rants, and besides, he could always talk to Hank. >< I'm astounded that anyone

would reprint *Werewolf vs. the Vampire Woman* by Arthur M. Scarm – but I like their cover. Reminiscent in some ways of the great Hannes Bok cover to *Who Goes There?* >< Ah, I remember mimeo. The feel of wax stencils. The aroma of fresh corflu. The stickiness of spilled ink. Long live xerox! >< Any felon as bright as Toni would have to be sociopathic; an intelligent person wouldn't commit a felony in the first place if they weren't emotionally flaky. As for cleaning up their records, first-time felons can petition Louisiana courts to have their convictions expunged, and the attendant social strictures (like losing the right to vote) erased. >< Madagascar stars in the brilliant George Macd. Fraser novel *Flashman's Lady* (perhaps the best of the series), so those interested in the island need read no more than that.

**The Fake Yorker/ A Black & White World <Jeff>** I agree with Lynch and Cates: Washington's WWII memorial is ghastly, less "impersonal and cold" than vulgar and overdone. Methinks the vet they met who was overcome by being there was simply grateful that the event had been commemorated – not by the quality of the commemoration. Not every monument can be as successful as the Vietnam Wall. Remember how it was initially condemned by right wingers as a "black gash of shame"? That was before it became the most popular and emotionally affecting site on the Capitol Mall. >< How close is the tenth planet – nicknamed Xena – to the elliptic? >< We caught the 90-minute episode of *CSI* directed by Quentin Tarantino, and it was terrific. Before *Kill Bill* I'd feared he'd lost his touch, but it's obvious he's gotten it back. >< We're far from being teenagers, thank God, but both Rosy and I got a substantial hoot out of the crazed teenage comedy, *Napoleon Dynamite*. As for why, well, I recently saw *Elephant*, Gus van Sant's take on teenage misery, and after that, *ND*'s o'er-the-top satire seemed infinitely more hopeful. >< Speaking of baseball, to my shame, I saw nary a minute of this year's World Series. I'm pleased for the White Sox, but I still pray

for the Cubbies. >< Oh, yes, *Lost* is superb. Gets better and better. >< If I had to name a pinnacle for my life, I'd probably name May 15, 1969 – “This *is* my home!” – but there have been some awfully spiffy moments since then. Walking into the New Orleans bid party at Confederation and seeing the expression on Rose-Marie Donovan's face when she saw me was one. Maybe there'll be more. >< Our opinion of Shreveport restaurants shot up a few notches when Brad and Cindy Foster were here. They took us to a fine Chinese buffet – not a chain! – fairly close to our pad. So there may be hope for this hole yet. >< Excellent paragraph by Seymour (?) Hertzberg about the election. I may cop it. >< I used the term “quanta” inexpertly, of course, but here's my justification: doesn't “a quantum jump” in an atomic sense mean that an element has been transformed into another form? Ergo, a science fiction novel “quanta” better than most other SF novels is so superior as to seem to come from a whole different genre. Or so it seems to an English major who doesn't know poop about physics. >< I enjoyed creating new titles in LASFAPA and NYAPA and Shadow-SFPA. Who can ever forget *Piva the Polymath*, speaking of physicists? >< Neat report on Cascadiacon, and yes, I love Kyla's knock-knock joke. That girl hates my guts. >< I can see why you kept the picture of the girl in the black dress. Woowoo. Who? >< If you're calling for a show of hands from those who wish you'd forget catching up on mailing comments and just do the latest disty, I hope you see *my* fingers waving. >< I never met Aaron Broussard, the Jefferson Parish president, but I've seen the tape of his public breakdown, and I met his wife once or twice. She worked at my Honda dealership. Jefferson Parish was a mean place – sharp class divisions between rich/white and poor/black – but I must approve of Sheriff Harry Lee's actions protecting emergency communications lines against FEMA. After visiting New Orleans a full six weeks after Katrina, I am still amazed at the extent and quality of the federal failure to handle the disaster. And Halliburton got the first no-bid

clean-up contract? Disgraceful. If the GOP wins Louisiana in 2008, though, I'll pray for another hurricane. >< The fault for the destruction of the levees, which brought the waters into New Orleans, has been laid to many causes. John Guidry blames the Army Corps of Engineers for building such a ramshackle barrier. His neighbor blamed the people who gouged out the Industrial Canal. You cite someone who heard dynamite going off the night before the flood. What happened? We are owed an explanation. Big time. >< What 24 seemed to be about this year was advocating torture. I suspect that Fox was trying to soften public opinion in favor of such tactics. You note that no less a demon than Dick Cheney has come out in favor of torturing overseas prisoners. >< Who was the “woman ensign named Hopper” in Eileen Gunn's “Green Fire”? Hedda? Dennis Hopper's mama? >< A most instructive quiz comparing LBJ's Vietnam rhetoric with W's on Iraq. One-third the initials, one-third the brainpower, but the same hubris and capacity for disaster. >< Interesting animated film this year: *Corpse Bride*. Rick Coleman swears the *Wallace & Grommit* movie was better, though. >< “Every man gets man can be convicted of a crime the society without proof beyond a reasonable doubt.” I wrote that? Too much LDS back in the sixties ... >< Speaking of curves, did you catch a gladstone gander at Erica Durance in her bikini in the Aquaman episode of *Smallville*? HO-ly MAC-keral, Andy! >< Your comment to Dengrove reminds me of how embarrassed Major Ingus was when he got promoted. >< When my cousin Roger last visited NOLA, I snuck up behind him in the airport men's room and called his cellphone. While he was talking to me, I stepped up to the next urinal ... >< The only card I can get from American Express is a *Christmas* card. >< Dammit, that stupid cartoon has “The Hokey Pokey” repeating itself over and over again in my brain – just as this comment will, when I read it in December. Scene from an SF/horror novel: character who can control other people with his mind decides to destroy a whole city by having the population do the



Hokey Pokey until they die. Hugo here I come.

**Tyndallite Vol 3, No. 121 <NORM!>** I love your story about Ray Palmer's misadventures in magazine publishing. I once reprinted a terrific photo of him standing with Otto Binder and Himself, Julius Schwartz. >< Let's see ... lots of Phil Dick's stories have been made into movies, some more successfully than others (we await *A Scanner Darkly*), and there was a recent movie of *Nightfall* ... I suppose the most famous SF stories ever filmed were "Farewell to the Master" and "Who Goes There?" Even though Ahnuld has gone on to greener pastures, and we'd be stuck with A Vin Diesel or a Rock in the lead, I still wake up some nights sweating over four little words ... *The Stars My Destination*. >< Thanks for mentioning Alva Rogers again. A prince among fen.

**Twygdrasil #96 <Rich D.>** Cool that the pulp magazine on your cover advertises a story by E. Hoffman Price – his visit to Justin Winston's house once upon a long ago was a highlight of our shared experiences in the Tent of the Turk. Justin took and published here a photo of Price talking with Clarence Laughlin that should rank with the all-time fannish classics – which brings up a question: who collects and preserves the great fannish photos? >< I knew Paracelsus as a pharmacist, not the occult priest you describe. Great spooky name, in any wise. >< I suppose that when the inevitable occurs and my dear mother goes to join my father, I'll be glad to avoid having to dispose of her stuff – my brother did that when she went into the nursing home. He also sold the computer and monitor set-up I used when visiting her, but out of understanding for the stress of the moment, I've let that slide. >< Never lost my tonsils – although I certainly had tonsillitis often enough as a kid, my parents never had them yanked. Missed out on some great ice cream, I hear. >< As for natural behavior, it's natural to whip out your weasel and pee when your bladder's full, but socialization forbids us from doing so in

court or in restaurants or by the roadside, unless Al Fitzpatrick is in the car. Being "natural" cannot justify dangerous or obnoxious behavior – although it should *explain* it. So I guess we have to come up with a better rationalization for ogling bosoms and making those breathy anonymous phone calls at 3 in the morning. >< There's a story in one of the great Bradbury anthologies – *The Illustrated Man* or *Golden Apples of the Sun* or *A Medicine for Melancholy* – about a spacefaring Christian who darts from planet to planet *chasing Jesus* – and always arrives after the local equivalent of the crucifixion. I didn't get the ending. Then there is *Jesus Christs*, a superior novel I read in college about the characters of Jesus and Judas as they are manifested on alternate worlds. >< Actually, *Fosfax's* Tim Lane is fairly amiable in person. We share a good friend in Joe Major. >< Getting *Challenger* into a printable .pdf version is a project Patty Green promises to tackle RSN. I *want* this next issue read, and not just by the few folks who will see it in print form. >< I liked the presidential trivia game you – or someone – started, asking who was the last sitting senator elected prexy before JFK (there have been none since). The answer was Harding, of course – but who was it before him? I thought it was Garfield, who died in office, just like Kennedy and Harding. Clearly it's unlucky to move into the White House from the Senate side of the Capitol, something John McCain and Hillary should keep in mind. But! Garfield was elected from the House of Reps. The correct answer? You'd be surprised. >< Actually, I'll bet that if we Democrats nominate Hillary, the GOP will nominate a Giuliani-Rice ticket, hoping to undercut Clinton's appeal to New Yorkers, blacks, and women. God help us. A more capable and acceptable candidate would be John McCain, but it's widely believed that McCain hates Bush's guts – and the Repubs might not want to turn so abruptly away from a two-term president, however catastrophic his performance in office. >< I haven't been able to "sell" more than one or two printed *Challengers*, and because I have to ask

people to read the zine on the net, the wide interplay I've previously enjoyed in fanzine fandom has dwindled precipitously. With enormous regret, I'm thinking of hanging it up in two or three more issues. <> Where Joe Haldeman truly shone in *The Forever War* was in depicting the relationship between the hero, Mandella ("I came close to having a much shorter name"), and his lady, MaryGay. It's probably the best realized love story in science fiction.

#### Variations on a Theme #45 <Rich L.>

I've been straining my limited musical memory to remember Fucik's "Thunder and Blazes March", so popular in the circus, and *think* I have it ... Wait, I'll whistle it. <> Thank you, thank you, thank you for the photo of the James Joyce statue in Dublin – and may I say how much I envy your trip to the Emerald Isle. I love Nicki's trip report. "Dublin is a very pedestrian-friendly city" ... As Leopold Bloom could tell us! I wonder how Joyce worked the Book of Kells into *Ulysses* – no way he would've left it out of his left-handed tribute to the city on the Liffey. Cool that the London subway map reminded you of its illustrations – I wonder if anyone has made that imaginative connection before. <> Remembering how thrilling it was to hear bagpipers play "Scotland the Brave" (known to most of us as "My Bonnie Lassie") at Confrancisco, I ache to experience the Military Tattoo at the Edinburgh Festival. As I said at the time, when, in the far future, Earth sends a delegation to the Galactic Olympics, though our racial anthem *must* be "La Marseilles", our athletes would *have* to march in to "Bonnie Lassie". Anything else would be an offense to our human heritage. <> W's clumsy attempts to spin his disastrous response to Katrina were bound to fail, considering his personal stupidity and insensitivity. He should bear the blame for the incompetent federal response. John Guidry, as I've said, blames the initial Katrina disaster on the Army Corps of Engineers, and their decisions on constructing the wall about the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal. It was wrongly conceived and

wrongly built, and it was bound to give way – and give way, it did. <> I have three or four copies of *Ion Trails*, Cheryl Morgan's inspired "faux in-flight magazine" for Interaction, not enough for SFPA but enough for my files and in-laws. It came out well. <> I absolutely agree that the Jose Padilla ruling – allowing his indefinite imprisonment at the pleasure of that drunk in the White House – was disgraceful, and I only wish it could reach the Supreme Court while Sandy O'Connor was still on the bench. W might not be able to place personal cronies among the Supremes, but the wingers he does install will soon make such obscenities the law of the land. America is in definite danger of losing itself. It is no longer worthy of its ideals. I envy Janice her Australian option.

#### Peter, Pan & Merry #63 / Cal, Edonia ...

<Dave> Indeed, you've been around for more than a quarter of SFPA's mailings – better than that, counting your first incarnation on the roster. We *do* stick around, we apaholics. <> Haw! Just got that "bear in a teddy" gag. <> Gas prices around here are down – \$2.34/gallon today. A year ago that figure would have made me choke. <> When we were in Australia, Rosy almost stepped into oncoming traffic in Sydney, despite the signs painted on every curb, LOOK RIGHT (dating from the Olympics). Still, she wanted to rent a car, but I thought about driving on the left and nervously forbade it. My rationale was, driving is to a great extent engrained, instinctive behavior. Driving on the left in a car with the wheel on the right goes against the training that instilled that behavior in us. In an emergency, we'd react contrary to the actual situation, and ... *splat*. <> Speaking of the Supremes, I'm surprised that, after the excellent choice of John Roberts, Bush's handlers let him name try to name Harriet Miers to O'Connor's spot. My guess is that he thought such a harmless lady, having no judicial record to attack, would garner no opposition. Wrong. Well, at least the brouhaha exposed the stridency and closed-mindedness of the GOP right, as if anyone doubted those qualities. <> Hell, at this



point I'd rather have *Nixon* back in the White House. Wait ... down, hyperbole, down ...

>< One of the things that strikes me as weird about the reaction to Waco is that those who protest the government's actions *never* defend the Branch Davidians, a nut group under the thrall of a sociopathic child molester. If their point is that the government should not use overwhelming force against an armed, aberrant group, no matter who, then when *should* the gov't act? And how? My opinion remains: the mistake at Waco came when the FBI let David Koresh get back into his compound; they should have thrown the cuffs on the asshole during one of his jaunts to town. >< I really enjoyed your worldcon report – everyone's is different, and what makes your unique is Random's presence. Poor kid – in a foreign clime, in fannish company, and stuck with your parents. Ah, here's a blessed name: Karen Schaeffer. Along with Kay, there are few warmer or more beautiful ladies in fandom.

**The Sphere vol. 218 no. 1 <Don>** Many thanks for letting me reprint your editorial on Katrina's aftermath in *Challenger*. As for what happens now in the Crescent City, I recently spoke with a reporter from the *Times-Picayune* who threw some light on the subject. An immigrant from Phoenix (!), she said that her fellow yuppies were coming back – determined to repair, rebuild, and make a go of it. They have jobs – homes they've built – and are New Orleans residents by choice. The old-line New Orleans poor, on the other hand, were born in the Easy and have never known anyplace else. Having evacuated to cities that may provide better opportunity (or benefits) than the Easy, and are certainly in better repair than New Orleans, they might well *stay there*. Why not? Their homes, their neighborhoods, their families, all the connections that tied them to New Orleans, are *mush* – drowned in the toxic gumbo that engulfed the city. What can they return to? Why should they? So the new New Orleans will be more yuppified and more homogenized, to the detriment of its

character – but (this hurts to say) the possible benefit of its people.

**“Yngvi is a Louse” <Toni>** Cute cover; I love Sheryl Birkhead and I love her work.

>< You're visiting Bob Tucker! How old is that boy, anyway? >< I like your analysis of space opera as a sub-genre, but why must such tales have “life-or-death-of-the-universe practical ad ethical issues”? I suppose *Star Wars*, to name the most familiar space opera, or the works o Doc Smith, to stick with the written word, deal with such matters, but what about *Serenity*, this year's hit? >< Cool analysis of *Starman Jones*, a book I see I must read, sometime. (I am woefully sub-literate when it comes to Heinlein juveniles.) >< Interesting to read Pat Gibbs' analyses of this year's Supreme Court term. Not surprisingly, I disagree about *Roper v. Simmons*, the underage death penalty case (the more restricted the d.p. is, the better I like it), but surprisingly, I agree about the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment condemnation case – it's obviously misguided to allow the government to condemn private property for the benefit of another private party, no matter what future economic benefits may accrue. But I certainly disagree with Pat about the value of the Court. Occasionally the Supremes weigh in with some idiotic and harmful decisions— e.g., *Bush v. Gore*, the worst example since *Dred Scott* – but a neutral magistrate providing fair hearing to both sides of a dispute and issuing a decision gifted with finality is the essence of civilization, as far as I can tell. >< Hank's rants are splendidly entertaining this time. I'm with him on Intelligent Design – an obvious subterfuge for Creationism – and share his revulsion for every elected official in a position of responsibility during Katrina. As I said in my TV interview about my neighbor, no one, from the lowliest utility worker in New Orleans to the President of the United States, knew what they were doing, and dammit, *they owe*.

**Bruce Beefcake at Cascadiancon <several>** Jeff, Liz ... we cannot have this. *Your son* misspelled “strippers” as “stripers”. The boy

has not been taught the difference between women who paint yellow lines down the center of the highway and women who delight onlookers with a combination of disrobing and Terpsichore. Clearly the boy's education needs to be placed in the hands of one suited to the task; James' Uncle Guy is delighted to assume the responsibility. Since New Orleans' French Quarter survived Katrina intact, I'm sure his parents will forward me several thousand dollars so that we may research the question there. Remember, nothing is too good for your son! >< Ray Patrick may have gotten his "old" copy of *Ringworm* – uhh, *Ringworld* signed, but I wonder if it is the *really* old edition, where Louis Wu teleports around the world in the wrong direction. Hard science my ass.

**Home with the Armadillo #68 <Liz>**  
 Though I hate and despise this news about knees, surgery, wheelchairs and whatnot, I love your NASFic report and the photos. La Judkowitz must have a magic portrait hidden in a back room; she doesn't know the meaning of the word "aging." The redheaded dancer Hank's carousing with on the last page is Linda Donahue; a real pro, she performs at all of Mike Resnick's Worldcon parties. Oh, be still my heart – *Kyla* showed up. Neat that you watched a tape of that Clarke-Heinlein conversation on the eve of the Apollo 11 moon launch – RAH mentions Joe Green's legendary party. You didn't have to wait all this time to see Hank's dancing pecs, you know. Had you done as I asked, and come to the Reinhardt Roast in December '75, you could have seen them then!

**already gone <mike>** I love this piece about installing Windows XP. I'm glad I let Rosy handle such duties around here. >< The requirements for Book Rate – and its successor, Media Mail – seem to vary from postal clerk to postal clerk. I remember when I mailed *Spiritus Mundi* 3 – remember, the one with Sturgeon on the cover? -- to Markstein back in 1971; the clerk furrowed his brow and flexed my package, as if feeling for hard covers. >< I still haven't seen the

Oscar/Hugo winner, *The Incredibles*. Hey, family – I'd like that DVD for Christmas! >< Whenever someone mentions Richard Corben, I flash on "How Howie Made it in the Real World", his superb entry in the environmental underground, *Slow Death Comics*, and "Rowlf". Great punch to his work, and his babes were awesome. >< *Get Carter* is a good, brutal Brit crime flick – uncompromising, horrifying. When the hoods push Carter's auto into the canal, unwittingly dooming the bird trapped in the boot – serious shudder time. >< Awesome, indeed, is the idiocy of the conspiracy nut who claims the Word Trade Centers weren't struck by airplanes. Not only is there film of the attacks, we all saw the second plane whack the South Tower! Was what we witnessed special effects? The guy's a loon; Buzz Aldrin, do your stuff. >< The death ray in *WotW* didn't leave people's clothes intact, remember – those were drifting rags. But though I liked the movie, I'll bow to the majority: Spielberg's take on the Wells classic is obviously a bomb. >< I hadn't heard the true story you recount behind W's Crawford ranch, but the phoniness of the place is not surprising. Other presidential contenders have built such places with an eye on public relations: Gary Hart, for instance, bought property in a place called Troublesome Gulch, no doubt thinking it would sound cool on the newscasts. Donna Rice had other ideas. >< As for the Valerie Plame scandal, I predict that "Scooter" Libby's indictment will lead to further damage – for after all, we *still* don't know who leaked Plame's CIA connection, and whether that was done to undercut her husband's conclusions that W was full of shit. >< mike, I am in awe of this exposition on the history of the filibuster, the word and the congressional rule –really, superb research. *You* should be the lawyer.

**Oblivion No. 160 / Fred's Fund <Gary B.>**  
 That is a *gorgeous* color cover. During the lead-up to Nolacon II, John Guidry got a letter from no less a personage than Arthur C. Clarke, encouraging the con to give a special Hugo to the illo's creator, Alex Schomburg.



He got one the next year. >< Indeed, your sister should sue over that botched surgery, especially if – as you fear – the insurance company refuses to part with the additional expenses. (I imagine they'd justify not paying by calling her gastric bypass *elective*.) >< Hey, there's Alan! I should tell Sheila – who joined too late to experience him – that Messr. Hutchinson was once OE of this madcap krewé, and many times its President. He is much missed. And *you*, Gary, let him get away without making him rejoin SFPA? Shame! >< Katrina has probably been forgotten in your neck o't'woods, supplanted in the public affection by her younger sister Wilma. But believe me, they haven't forgotten her in New Orleans. I really like those *Post* front pages: dramatic, striking, irresistible. Our local paper must have the most boring headlines on Earth, winners like **New Orleans Residents Seek to Evade Serious Climatic Aberration**. \*Yawn\* Wake me when it's over. >< Betcha those ditto zines from your early apa career survived because they weren't exposed to light. Perhaps we should Xerox our old issues of *The New Port News*; that works. I was able to reprint Bob Jennings' first Southern-apa-come-on letter that way for SFPA 100. >< Of course, Janice – our senior female member, ever – *must* remain in SFPA. Ruth Judkowitz once stayed a SFPAn despite an intervening ocean between her and the OE. So can Gelb! >< The action figures I owned in my bachelor days were dear friends – and more. Oh Lulu! Why did you have to deflate! >< If you haven't been following *Smallville*'s fifth (and, I understand, final) season, you have missed out on stuff middle-aged comics fans have been waiting on for a lifetime. Not only is Clark flying (at last), and not only is Lex Luthor truly nasty (at last), they brought in Aquaman for a guest appearance – and got his name (Arthur Curry), origin (product of a lighthouse keeper and a girl from Atlantis), and mission (protecting the seas) absolutely right. Churce! Now ... where's Wonder Woman? And Luthor's classmate from prep school – neurotic kid named *Bruce Wayne* ...

**Avatar Press Vol. 2, No. 40 <Randy>** Being a disastrous loser at honest work, I have no advice to give you on your job reorganization woes – perhaps because I don't really understand just what it is that you do. I thought you made your living as SFC President and editor of the *Bulletin*. >< Seriously, you've done an excellent job at both of those tasks. Who will be your successor? One outstanding candidate springs to mind, a Rebel winner, clubzine editor and con honcho, but I don't know if he'd accept. I'll drop Mike Kennedy a line and ask ... >< It's always nice to see Fred Pohl – his run of superior SF novels in the late '70s and early '80s rejuvenated the field – but boy, is he looking old. >< Glad Daytona Beach, where you vacationed during Katrina, suffered no ill effects, but I wouldn't have gone there during Wilma. >< Hmm ... we won't be going to the Worldcon in 2007 (Japan? Get real), and I'll only be a youthful 58, so maybe we'll hit Dragon\*Con that year. >< My lad, it's great that you liked *The 40 Year Old Virgin*, but we can't have you identifying with the title character. I have a list of former 14:89 clients who ... well, never mind. You say you have your doubts about Hollywood endings.

**Trivial Pursuits #121 / Tales from the Bunker <Janice>** An apt political cartoon rides TP's cover. Katrina may have been a dumb act of nature, but I can't help but see it as evil. I don't know if it's rational to hate an act of nature; surely a sane person would never ascribe malice to a meteorite or a hailstorm or a lightning bolt, could they? Doubtless this is the correct and logical point of view. Nevertheless, I hate hurricane Katrina. Even though I know she was no "she" at all, just a freak weather system now passed beyond existence, I hate her and will hate her, forever. >< Right now all these Australian immigration hassles – viz: that ridiculous questionnaire – are nothing but an ongoing migraine, but eventually, you'll be standing in queue at the Sydney Opera House with Stephen, waiting for a performance, and remember them with wry laughter. And ~~write a funny article for Challenger.~~ ><

Your car wreck sounds like my (last) one: rear-ending a car that stopped too suddenly. It took months for me to work up the nerve to tell my mother-in-law I'd destroyed the car she gave us; when I did, she shrugged it off. Hope you do too. >< Molly Ivins brings up yet another reason New Orleans was doomed, perhaps the most important one – the destruction of the wetlands. George Will admitted an important point about the aftermath of Katrina: it proved the necessity of government. All the individual preparation, initiative and effort on Earth, nor all of the private corporate aid, assuming such a thing existed, could not have saved the city. That was government's duty – and from the dirt up, government failed. >< The sparkling moment in your Bubonicon report is your "Bride-to-Be" silly hat. Being a sentimental slob, this strikes me as marvelous – an irresistible moment out of a corny chick flick you dig despite itself. Speaking of which, Rosy dragged me to In Her Shoes, a surprisingly righteous c.f. Good script – refreshingly off-formula (I won't say what the vital difference from the usual was) – and MacLaine is always glorious. (Not that I'll get within miles of her new movie with Aniston and Costner.) Anyway, perhaps the best thing about Shoes was the presence of Norman Lloyd, the distinguished actor/director/producer; a few weeks later, I got to point him out in the 1942 Hitchcock thriller, Saboteur, falling off the Statue of Liberty. >< Never heard of Laurie King's series about the wife of Sherlock Holmes. Clever idea for a pastiche. >< No, Gore isn't interested in politics these days, which is a tremendous waste. He's a splendid man and would have a thoughtful, compassionate President. As I've said, a cosmic balance was thrown out of whack when his presidency was stolen from him. Only his inauguration could correct it. Well, I doubt if he would have been re-elected, anyway. 9/11 would probably have happened, and the GOP would have hung it on him and Clinton, claiming they were weak on defense. America's rightward lurch was, methinks, inevitable; this way, at least, we're that much closer to conservatism's failure and sanity's

return. >< I appreciate this research into the true – i.e., original – meaning of "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Clearly, it's a commandment addressed to individuals, not governments, so argument against capital punishment needs another starting point. Speaking of which, I was recently handed a nasty case, details of which I shall withhold. The D.A. was threatening death penalty, until somebody pointed out that the miscreant was 16. Unconstitutional ... thank God. >< True, the Las Vegrans have no interest in hosting a worldcon – Arnie Katz told me so himself. I understand a Chicago group was trying to bid for Sin City, but the idea fell apart. Still, what a place for a fan fic ... >< Actually, Dennis Dolbear's old house on Betz Avenue, next to Oschner Hospital, suffered no damage from the Katrina floods. So, I asked him, would he be moving back? Not a chance, he said; the place was in tatters long ago. >< Our local Bar had no comment at all about John Roberts – he was a cipher, but he also looked the part and had decent credentials, qualities to which W's next appointment could not pretend. We'll have to wait and see what sort of Chief he'll turn out to be. >< Hmm – my 40<sup>th</sup> high school reunion would fall in 2007. Why couldn't it fall in 2006, within a week of L.A.Con? >< Sorry the worldcon – which has gleaned some extremely nice press – was so stressful for you. Your inside account brings clear again the enormous logistical challenge a worldcon represents. At Noreascon, Rosy and I heard noise about mounting a 2012 bid for New Orleans. Rosy was enthused, I was horrified – a moot problem now. >< Two questions about the move downunder. First, when you move, what will you do with your SFPA collection? Of course, your first and strongest impulse would be to take it with you across the Pacific, for what SFPAN worthy of the roster could bear to surrender a page of their mailings? Should, shockingly, another alternative appeal to you, I suggest donating the mailings to the collection of UC Riverside. That's where my collection will go, assuming I can get it out there, and who cares if we duplicate the last umpty-um mailings? (Jeff mentioned a concern we've



often heard about library fanzine collections – privacy. I'll have to ask UCR how they handle such worries.) Second question is even more important. Of course, you *must* stay in SFPA. Will it be a problem? How can we help solve it?

**Tennessee Trash #67 <Gary R.>** That's a motley bunch on your cover – SFPAn at the Scottish worldcon. *OH*, to have been among you ... and where's our most happy Feller? >< Great panoramic photos of London and especially Stonehenge! I really want to see those rocks – they remind me of Hanging Rock, or rather, since Stonehenge is infinitely more famous than Australia's fabulous mameton, Hanging Rock reminds me of Stonehenge. Anyway, gotta see it – and the Tower of London, and the Eye, and Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum, and all the other Epically Cool stuff you guys saw. I'd heard that there is no real 221B Baker Street, but how spiffy that Kings Cross Station has installed a Platform 9 ¾. London has a sense of humor! I wish I'd known you were going through Shrewsbury – Sue Jones, the editor/author of the fine British perzine *Tortoise*, lives there, and could have provided a local perspective (although she might well have already left for Interaction when you arrived). Great photos, too. Damn, Robe, this trip report is so enviable I admit I was almost glad when your train to Edinburgh fell apart en route, and your water heater exploded back home. You had just *too good* a time! >< After the Brit trip, your jaunts to Mexico and OutsideCon seem anticlimactic, but we hope to be at the latter's DSC in 2007, so it's good to get a first-hand report on its site. Wish someone would hold a DSC at Stonehenge ... and make me Fan Guest of Honor.

**Revenant #33 <Sheila>** You were the SFPAn closest to the path of hurricane Katrina. Thank heaven that monstrosity did no more than snap off a tree limb in your vicinity. Speaking of losing power, my mother-in-law was without electricity for two weeks or more after the Florida hurricanes of 2004 rampaged through West Palm Beach.

When she lost power after Wilma, this year, she immediately gave away all of her frozen food – only to have power return after a mere few hours. >< I think Baton Rouge handled its influx of hurricane refugees very well indeed, but its traffic – always horrible – seems to have suffered. >< Hurricane Rita hit us when we were most vulnerable—right after an historic tragedy. When it appeared that its path would take it as far north as Shreveport, and then stall, the city braced for flooding. People waited in line for four hours for sandbags. Unwilling to do so, I argued to Rosy that we should stack bags of cat litter in front of our vulnerable windows. Fortunately, Rita for us was no more than a blust'ry day, although it wreaked its share of Hell on western Louisiana. >< Sorry to hear about your Aunt Rita. >< Well you should have heard good things about *Serenity*; it was crackerjack, a good, fast-paced, well-written SF action flick. Made me want to start watching *Firefly*.

**Spiritus Mundi 209 <me>** The ditty I quoted in my first lines comes from Disney's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow". Bing Crosby sang it. No, no indeed ... we won't forget Katrina ... >< The three feral cats for whom Rosy was leaving food disappeared while she was on vacation. She hopes they were adopted by another resident, but methinks it was because I started feeding them a cheaper brand. >< What's Mrs. Sheehan up to these days? Still haunting Bush's every step? >< I love that photo of Cindy. She's happy, friendly ... that's Raphael Manor in the background, where she felt safe. Rosy thought my last line, which also closed my eulogy, went over the top: an agnostic invoking Christ. But they were words that got me up and out of bed at 3 A.M. to write this section, words of power, an idea with comfort. I might have problems with belief, but Cindy didn't. >< That finishes my mailing caustics, 5:09 P.M., October 30, 2005. A whole month till the deadline. What will I write about?

Well, how about *this* ...

Mid-November finds *la belle* and me prepping for the holidays. We plan on Thanksgiving week in Florida, with her family, and Christmas in Buffalo, with mine. Rosy's madly eBaying old photo gear even as I write, getting the extra geld together that we'll need for these projects; I hope they come off, because it's been umpteen months since I've seen my nephews and I'm frothing to do so. Steve's a *teenager* now. That's amazing. So vivid the memory of anticipating his birth, right after MagiCon. Surely that was mere weeks ago.

Here at the Bossier Parish Public Defender's Office, I continue to interview clients and work cases, though things in any courthouse usually slow a great deal during the holiday months. Adhering to my head are folks who came in to assist inmates – one a sweet church girl helping a pregnant druggie, who had promised to let her adopt her newborns, another an inmate's harried but attractive sister, concerned not only for her brother's current charges but also determined to find the truth about a second brother, found shot to death some years ago. This job pays little, and with Louisiana's economy hanging tattered and torn from the ruins of Katrina, will probably never pay much more – but the drama is beyond price.

I continue to work on various SFnal projects. The tenth issue of *The Zine Dump* burst upon a madly indifferent fandom in recent days; I am distressed at the paucity of written, printed, paper fanzines being distributed, in this dawning era of the Net. My own zine, *Challenger* #23, will – like the last few issues – show mainly on the website ([www.challzine.net](http://www.challzine.net)); though it features funny pieces by Mike Resnick and Elst Weinstien, and interesting squibs from Greg Benford, our own Rich Dengrove, and several others, the zine is mainly a passionate paean to New Orleans. Sure, I hope it scores a Hugo bid, so we can go to L.A.Con as rocket nominees ... but mostly, I just hope we get to go to L.A.Con, and that *Challenger* gets read.

Speaking of reading ... Rosy and I were talking about *Shane* one night, for some reason, and she dropped the book in my lap. As familiar as I am with the terrific Alan Ladd movie, I'd never read Jack Schaefer's novel. I did. *Terrific*. I love a taut read with nary a wasted word, and the western is the perfect genre for such qualities. The relationships amongst the narrator's family, and each member's feelings towards Shane, are fascinating to encounter and ruminate upon ... just a beautiful work. Greg Benford's article in *Chall* deals mainly with *Timescape*, his masterpiece, so I'm rereading it, and I continue to scan the manuscript of my father-in-law's *Nyscandia*, offering such criticisms as a feeble wit such as mine can form.

But however enjoyable these diversions, they pale before the anticipation of the book I shall schlep along with us to Florida. Prepare yourselves, SFPA, for the most glorious words in our language ...

*New Flashman.*

It's called *Flashman on the March*, and I couldn't tell you for the world what it's about. Who cares? I know it's been years since the last Flashman novel, that it will likely be years until the *next* Flashman novel, and that the author kicks Tony Blair's butt over the Iraq War. True, this isn't the Civil War novel that I dream of, night after night, but it's Flashman, and that's good enough for me. Let you know more next time.

Movies, movies .... The year is growing short, so the better films are coming out. *North Country*, a story of sexism in the iron mines, features a good performance by Charlize Theron, but is so heavy-handed that its verisimilitude suffers. *Jarhead* is a realistic treatment



of USMC life in the first Gulf War, well acted but ultimately – like that War – pointless; I was left wondering what the movie wanted to say – what it was all *about*. *Flightplan* was eyewash. Possibly the most satisfying flick we've seen recently was *Derailed*, because it promised no more than what it delivered: a good, suspenseful, emotionally involving and surprising story. (Rosy thinks Clive Owen is "killer cute," too. Personally, I don't get it.) I left Rosy home to see *Saw II*, a righteously disturbing sequel to last year's – I'll say the word – classic.

We're anticipating the next *Harry Potter* opus, which we'll see with Joe & Patty Green, *Rent*, my current (and very premature) Oscar pick. With some worry, I await our chance at *Good Night and Good Luck*, the story of Edward R. Murrow's fight to take on Joe McCarthy, and *Capote*, *In Cold Blood* from the author's point of view. I expect both to be Oscar contenders, at least in the Best Actor category, but since both are films of intellectual content, neither is currently scheduled to open in Shrivelpport. And the latest trailer for Peter Jackson's version of *King Kong* had me leaving claw-marks on the screen. December, you say? My ass! NOW. Not next month, not next week, not tomorrow, not later this afternoon. NOW.

With New Orleans in tatters, much of Louisiana's movie-making industry is making its way here, to Shreveport. Earlier this month Rosy and I both signed up for extra work on Kevin Costner's latest project, *Robin Hood Returns*, no, *Waterworld II*, no, *Son of JFK*, no, *The Postman Always Flops Twice*, no, *Wyatt Earp Redux*, no ... *The Guardian*.

To judge by the insignia atop the application, and the questions asked thereon, the subject of this epic will be the Coast Guard, which could give Rosy an advantage. She used to volunteer for the *semper paratus* auxiliary in Florida. They asked for people who knew basic seamanship and "marlinspike" skills ... and she has those. But there was a complication: she'd been in a hurry when she'd dropped off her application, and hadn't mentioned these qualifications. Back she went to add them in.

Rosy had brought her own photo to the cattle call, which we'd printed out ourselves, in a hurry, at home. It came out *green* in our print. So when Rosy went back to her to amend her application, the aforementioned lady made a note: *woman with green hair knows marlinspike*.

I told them to call her The Joker.

The local TV story about my neighbor Cindy and her funeral aired on November 8<sup>th</sup>. It came off very well, I thought. (I looked flabby, but appropriately outraged.) Her sister hated the spot, hated their use of Cynthia's nickname and hated all the attention given me – but I recognized her as a control freak early on, and frankly, don't care. The only important thing: old Boo came across as I hoped she would – a good friend, a good neighbor, and a good citizen, who stuck by me when I needed her and stuck by her Raphael Manor friends during the flood, a generosity that may have cost her her life. Our anger at Raphael and the National Guard for not rescuing our girl are fierce, but our pride in her willingness to help others, even at such a cost, should be everlasting. Bottom line, and last word: Old Boo was a really fine human being. I'm honored to have known her.

Okay! Time to sign off. I hope everyone within the sound of my typing had a grant Thanksgiving and that a spiffy Christmas is in your cards. 2006 upcoming – which means that the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is *half over*. I am truly not ready for this.

See you then ...