

Snufkin Goes West...

Notes from the TAFF
Trail, 1998

Maureen
Kincaid
Speller



Sue 98.

Before explaining what this is, it seems sensible to explain what it is not. Of course, it's not many things—it isn't a previously unknown Phil Dick novel, a new album from The Verve or a small pink tapir to name but three—but, most specifically:

This is not a TAFF report.

Now there are many people who don't actually believe in the existence of TAFF reports anyway, despite the evidence to the contrary presented by Martin Tudor earlier this year. But an actual TAFF report will come later (so Maureen assures us); this is merely a collection of 'notes from the road', an initial impression of some of the stops on a three-month trip around America during August, September and October 1998. Its genesis is explained in the first issue: periodically, Maureen would e-mail bulletins back to Claire which we'd edit into a newsletter for distribution through a couple of UK APAS (*Acnestis* and *Prophecy*), a small mailing list, the newsgroup REC.ARTS.SF.FANDOM and various London pub meetings, specifically the 'First Thursday' gatherings at the Jubilee. As a result, many people in the London area will have received copies as they appeared; and of course the denizens of RASFF will have seen them on-line. But we thought there might be others who'd like to see copies now that the complete set is available, only now we're going to charge you (because, of course, *you* also get Sue Mason's wonderful cover into the bargain). Proceeds go to TAFF and 'cos we wouldn't want to discourage you from buying the full trip report *as well* we'll keep this as cheap as possible. We thought a donation of £1.50 UK (cash or cheques payable to "Maureen Speller")/ \$3 US (cash or cheques payable to "Roger Robinson")/ A\$5 Australia (cash only here) would be reasonable, although feel free to give more if you wish.

Copies available from:

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Mark Plummer: 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, UK

E-mail enquiries to BANANA@TRAGIC.DEMON.CO.UK

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund

TAFF was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time, TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. TAFF exists only through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted on by interested fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of not less than \$3 or £2. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what makes TAFF possible.

Previous trip winners are (⇒ indicates an eastbound trip and ⇐ a westbound):

1954 ⇐ A. Vincent Clarke ¹	1971 ⇐ Mario Bosnyak	1988 ⇐ Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake
1955 ⇐ Ken Bulmer	1973 ⇒ Len and June Moffat	1989 ⇒ Robert Lichtman
1956 ⇒ Lee Hoffman ²	1974 ⇐ Peter Weston	1991 ⇐ Pam Wells
1957 ⇒ Bob Madle	1976 ⇒ Roy Tackett and Bill Bowers (tie) ³	1992 ⇒ Jeanne Bowman
1958 ⇐ Ron Bennett	1977 ⇐ Pete Roberts	1993 ⇐ Abigail Frost
1959 ⇒ Don Ford	1979 ⇒ Terry Hughes	1995 ⇒ Dan Steffan
1960 ⇐ Eric Bentcliffe	1980 ⇐ Dave Langford	1996 ⇐ Martin Tudor
1961 ⇒ Ron Ellik	1981 ⇒ Stu Shiffman	1998 ⇒ Ulrika O'Brien
1962 ⇐ Ethel Lindsay	1982 ⇐ Kevin Smith	1998 ⇐ Maureen Kincaid Speller
1963 ⇒ Wally Weber	1983 ⇒ Avedon Carol	
1964 ⇐ Arthur (Atom) Thomson	1984 ⇐ Rob Hansen	
1965 ⇒ Terry Carr	1985 ⇒ Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden	
1966 ⇐ Tom Schluck	1986 ⇐ Gregory Pickersgill	
1968 ⇒ Steve Stiles	1987 ⇒ Jeanne Gomoll	
1969 ⇐ Eddie Jones		
1970 ⇒ Elliot Shorter		

FOOTNOTES

1 Unable to make trip

2 Declined funds

3 Election tied; funds insufficient to
send both; Bowers withdrew

Current TAFF Administrators:

UK: Maureen Kincaid Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ, UK

USA: Ulrika O'Brien, 123 Melody Lane, Apt C, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, USA

Snufkin Goes West...

The 1998 TAFF Travels of Maureen Kincaid Speller

Issue 1: 31 July 1998

"Three months," said Mark, "is a long time to be away. Are you going to do your TAFF report as you go?"

"No," I said firmly. "Much as I love Martin, I think he was insane. I don't want to spend every waking hour tapping away at a trip report. I want to write that when I get back."

"You could," said Mark, "send back bulletins along the way. E-mail them to Claire. I'll format them and we can copy them and hand them out at the Jubilee and send a few out to people. That way, people know what's going on and it won't seem as though you've disappeared off the face of the earth for three months."

The man is a genius. He even came up with the title and the format... so you know who to blame.

"Of course," he said then, "we'll need to get the first one done for the August Jubilee..." Given the time constraints, just imagine that as you hold this in your hot sweaty hand in the Jubilee circa 7 PM., I hope I'll be somewhere in the fully air-conditioned Baltimore Convention Centre, sorry Center, at about 2 PM, hopefully not going "ohmigod" as the full enormity of an American Worldcon hits me. Oh, and given the baroque licensing laws in Baltimore, would you have a drink for me? In fact, would you make it several? I probably need them.

Everything You Wanted to Know About Winning TAFF And Were Afraid To Ask

HANDY TIP #1: Do not let your cat campaign on your behalf by diving into Ulrika O'Brien's dinner.

Sunday April 25th dawns rather too bright, rather too early, and I settle down to wait for the results of the TAFF ballot. I could be killing time at Unconvention in London, but have eschewed the delights of a day with R. Lionel Fanthorpe, David V. Barrett *et al*, partly because of a lack of spare initials, partly because it's the first weekend Paul and I have had to ourselves in months, and mostly because I already know I am going to be a bag of nerves all day and it doesn't seem kind to inflict myself on the world. Tolerance is at a low ebb. As the day goes on, it recedes so far I conclude someone's pulled the plug out in the Atlantic. At this rate, I'd be able to walk to Baltimore. I spend hours poring over small maps with illegible lines denoting time zones. What time's midnight in Arlington?

The phone melts as I download e-mail at increasingly regular intervals, waiting for news. In between, people phone to wish me luck and to ask if I've heard anything yet. Paul fields the phonecalls to protect people from me. Nothing much is happening on rec.arts.sf.fandom. There may be quicker, more effective ways of going mad, but I can't think of one off-hand.

Around 9 PM I go to bed, but just lie there, muttering and being comforted by Snufkin. At 10 PM, Paul phones Martin, who says he hasn't heard from Dan yet, and he's not answering the phone. Paul mutters a lot, too. I've finally fallen asleep when the phone rings an hour later. Paul miraculously shoots across the room to answer it while I'm still waking up, listens intently, thanks the speaker. He leans over me and says, "Congratulations, you've won." "Oh," I say helpfully. "Can I have a cup of tea?" While he's doing this, I ring Croydon to let Claire know the result. I retrieve my shattered eardrum from several hundred yards down the road the next morning.

Finding the Trail

I need, I say to the guy on the other end of the phone, two flights to Washington, two flights from New York to Chicago, one flight from Chicago to Heathrow in August, and one flight from New York to Heathrow in October. Ah, he says, your husband is flying home later. No, I say, I am flying home later. There is a long pause. Feminism is obviously late arriving in Kensington High Street.

Later, when I ring to confirm the bookings, a different person informs me that Paul is booked on the midday flight from New York to Chicago; I am booked on the 1 PM flight from New York to Chicago. The first guy has obviously taken this separation very much to heart.

HANDY TIP #2: Do not try to buy traveller's cheques on the day the entire Barclays Bank computer network decides to take an all-day siesta.

Sparkly Frocks 'R' Us

Dave Langford discreetly emails me, one day, and hypothesises that in an alternative universe, where he can quote the e-mail he's not quoting to me right now, I might like to be his representative, should he unaccountably happen to be nominated for and win the Hugo for Best Fanzine. I unaccountably accept.

At Eastercon, everyone is seized with sparkly frock fever. John Dallman accosts me in the bar, and asks if I'd like to be *Attitude's* representative at the Hugo Ceremony, if I win TAFF; that way I can wear a sparkly frock and go to the Hugo Losers' Party. I say yes: not sure about the sparkly frock but the Hugo Losers' Party sounds fun. A couple of days later, Mike Abbott asks me precisely the same thing, in practically the same words. Cool ... synchronised inviting.

I've never been to a Hugo ceremony so I haven't a clue what's expected. Sartorial opinion suggests that it's a dressing-up sort of occasion, which is even more worrying as I am not very good at girly stuff, and I'm led to believe that Americans are really into dressing up for Hugos. Talking to Patrick Nielsen Hayden about various things, I perhaps unwisely ask him about this; he opines that it's fine to pick up a Hugo in jeans and sneakers. I wonder whether to buy some sequins to stick on my trainers. Popular opinion, however, favours a purple frock, with sparkles. As it turns out, Croydon yields something completely different that I realise is exactly what I wanted in the first place.

And for Dave Langford and for *Attitude*, I spend several toe-crushing weeks learning to wear high heels again, gritting my teeth and persevering with the blisters. After a day or two, I feel in sympathy with the Ugly Sister who cut off her toe so the glass slipper fitted. I think longingly of sneakers, sequinned or not.

HANDY TIP #3: Do not drive your car for at least three days after winning TAFF, do not use automatic supermarket doors, do not go out without telling anyone where you are going, do not pass Go, do not mislay £200... Remember to get dressed, brush your teeth and eat.

At Eastercon, Tony Cullen gives me a ten dollar bill left over from his trip to the States, telling me to have a drink from him when I get there. Later, he gives me a guidebook he used when he was in the States. He really thinks I'm going to win.

I still have that ten dollar bill tucked away safely, ready to have a drink in San Francisco.

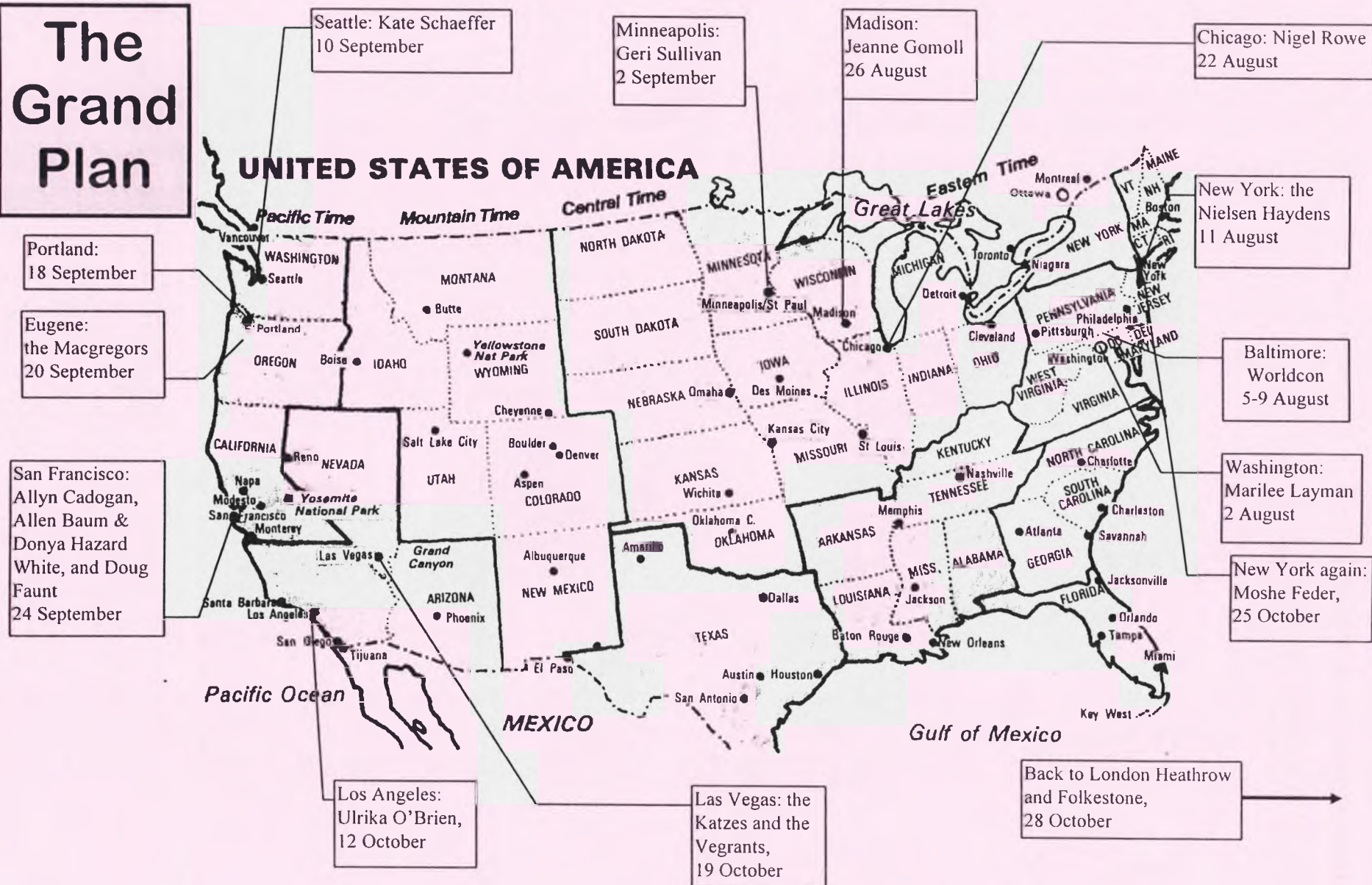
I shall be back for Novacon this year, so start saving your hard-earned pennies for the United Fan Fund auction and the exciting things I'll be bringing back. If you're seized with a sudden whim to donate money to TAFF (and I feel that people should be seized with this sort of whim every now and then), feel free to send me a cheque, made out to 'Maureen Speller' and specifying its destination clearly. Or press cash (sterling or dollars) into my hand as I pass by.

My Trip Report will be written up during the Christmas holiday. Fanzine editors may like to book their chunk now; Steve Green and *Banana Wings* are commended for their forward planning. The complete report will be available at next year's Eastercon.

Snufkin Goes West... was written by Maureen Kincaid Speller in the build-up to her 1998 TAFF trip. Editing, layout, printing and non-US distribution by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer/Fishlifter Press. Further copies are available at various London pub meetings or from 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE (SAE appreciated). Maureen left Croydon for Heathrow on 2 August, having ensured we'd remember her departure vividly by bringing Folkestone-style flooding with her the day before. So much for the farewell barbeque. She's currently somewhere in the map on the back.

Next issue: early September...

The Grand Plan



Snufkin Goes West...

The 1998 TAFF Travels of Maureen Kincaid Speller

Issue 2: 2-23 August 1998

Heathrow: The plane thunders down the runway, and I'm fascinated by the fact that the wings have developed a distinctly lattice-like effect as the flaps organise themselves for take-off. As the ground drops away I lean right forward in my seat to savour the moment. I glance round to reassure Paul that I'm not at all nervous, and find him ashen-faced, clinging to the arms of his seat. Come to think of it, so's everyone else. Why didn't anyone tell me you're not supposed to *enjoy* take-off?

As we fly over Greenland, the clouds part and I stare down at an incredible landscape of mountains and ice. I eventually realise that the large white blobs in the sea are icebergs. Given that we're flying at 36,000 feet, they must be very large icebergs.

Washington, DC: Marilee Layman has no idea what I look like. I have only the haziest recollection of what she looks like from a hasty inspection of her Web site. Miraculously, we instantly recognise one another at Dulles Airport because, of course, we are fans and have that look about us. This also holds good the next morning when we meet Richard Lynch at Union Station (but possibly that's because people don't normally hang around at the Amtrak Information Point).

Rich's notorious but highly recommended 'full press court gonzo walking tour' takes in Ford's Theater where Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth—distant ancestor of Cherie Booth, which kind of suggests Tony Blair shouldn't get too baroque in rearranging the UK. In the basement is the world's most bizarre collection of memorabilia, everything from locks of hair (if all these really did come from Lincoln's head, his hair must have hung down in ringlets to his knees) to the tools used to seal down Lincoln's coffin, and more bits of funeral drapery than the world really needs. Paul, needless to say, is in ecstasy. Meanwhile, I am riveted by the extraordinary collection of portraits of Lincoln, some of which bear absolutely no resemblance to him at all.

Arlington: Dan Steffan wins Paul's heart by handing him two Civil War bullets to play with. He also presents us both with TAFF T-shirts, and we spend a raucous and congenial evening with the Steffans and Ted White in an Italian restaurant.

Baltimore: The hotel room—booked in the names of Maureen and Paul Speller; how I laughed—is on the seventh floor, with full-length windows. Only after I fling open the curtains on Thursday morning and realise that I am staring into an adjacent office block does it occur to me that US hotels aren't too up on the idea of net curtains. I take to dressing before I open the curtains.

Bucconeer rapidly becomes known as SoreFootCon because everything is Very Far Away From Anywhere Else, even within the convention centre. Arcane licensing laws also mean there is no alcohol available on the premises to assuage the mighty thirst built up by constant trekking from one end of the building to another. I learn later that the bulk of the British contingent decamp to a pub across the road.

Pat McMurray informs me that her luggage is in Reykjavik. At least, that's where the airline told her it was, and that's where they're looking for it, so she hopes that's where it is. Mike Ford's luggage spends a good deal of time touring rural Maryland, looking for Nic Farey's house. We appear to be the only British fans whose luggage has not circumnavigated the globe three times unaccompanied. We are loudly smug.

TAFF meets DUFF: Terry Frost (DUFF delegate) and I spend a lot of time together, not least because we're programmed together at every available opportunity. This is a fact which will later lead to some deeply entertaining confusion in New York among those who can't tell the difference between an Australian accent and a Mancunian one. We're also co-presenting the Hugos for Best Fan Artist and Best Fan Writer. I cunningly contrive to have *Snufkin's Bun* mentioned by Charles Sheffield when he introduces us, which pleases me so much that I spend the rest of the evening telling people about it. Joe Mayhew, winner of Best Fan Artist, says a good number of very nice things about Ian Gunn. When I

announce the Best Fan Writer Hugo, the name staring out at me is that of Dave Langford. I've come several thousand miles to present a Hugo to Martin Hoare. Later, at the Hugo Losers' Party, someone is overheard opining that Martin Hoare is really Dave Langford in disguise.

Fashion note: At the Hugo ceremony, Maureen Speller was wearing a very stylish (and much praised) Chinese-style suit in dark green silk. She also wore high heeled shoes, as promised; and, as feared, they hurt. She would like to assure everyone that *this* is why Terry Frost was carrying her through the streets of Baltimore, honest.

Outside is America: We pile ourselves and a good deal of luggage into the Nielsen Hayden hired car and set out to storm Gettysburg. Only now do I begin to fully appreciate the appalling enormity of Strip Mall America, where nothing is more than a storey high and everything goes on forever. Cultural shock is vocal and prolonged and vastly entertains Patrick and Teresa. "If you think this is bad," says Patrick, "wait 'til you get to the West Coast. They've more space there."

Gettysburg: Visitor's Centre, something over a hundred dollars; Paul, a number of heavy books about the Civil War, some maps and a set of Civil War screen-savers, not to mention a promise of another book from Teresa to complete a set. Maureen sighs resignedly.

New York: We like New York. In fact we ♥ New York and are rather reluctant to leave. Paul commits the ultimate gastronomic solecism in the 2nd Avenue Deli and orders his pastrami on *white* bread, and Gary Farber later assures me I am the first Brit he's ever encountered who actually likes lox. We take the book shops by storm, do culture, go to the top of the Empire State Building with Mike Ford, wander boggle-eyed around the local neighbourhood stores (I have to be forcibly restrained from mailing home the entire dried chilli section of one of Patrick and Teresa's corner shops), drink beer, eat ice cream, walk across Brooklyn Bridge, visit Ellis Island's museum and generally have a great time. I shall return. "Lucky sod," said Paul.

Goshen, Indiana: So small, no one has ever heard of it except me, Paul, and Karen Babich. We spend two days with a non-fannish friend who tours us round the local shops (books, cross-stitch and quilting), and also takes us to Shipshewana, an Amish and Mennonite community which is something of a tourist trap. Nevertheless, in the thick of it, the Amish and the Mennonites pursue their traditional ways and drive their horses and buggies to town (bicycles are also permitted). Paul buys obscene amounts of sf and Civil War stuff from a bookseller who turns out to be a fantastically good cross-stitcher. In a local museum, Paul finds another relic of the Civil War—a piece of the towel used as a flag when Lee surrendered to Grant—and sits on the floor staring at it for a long time.

Paul is now safely home, as doubtless most of you will be noticing in due course. His last message said he'd been downloading my e-mail for two hours and still hadn't finished.

Thanks go to Marilee J Layman, Richard Lynch, Ted White, Dan & Lynne Steffan, Terry Frost, Ulrika O'Brien, Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Debi, Karl & Jason Kreider, Nigel Rowe and Karen Babich for the fantastic hospitality and support provided so far, not to mention everyone at Bucconeer and in New York who put in so much time and effort to entertain us. Special mention must also go to Vicki Rosenzweig, Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenstein and Gary Farber in NY for maps, guidebooks and much good advice.

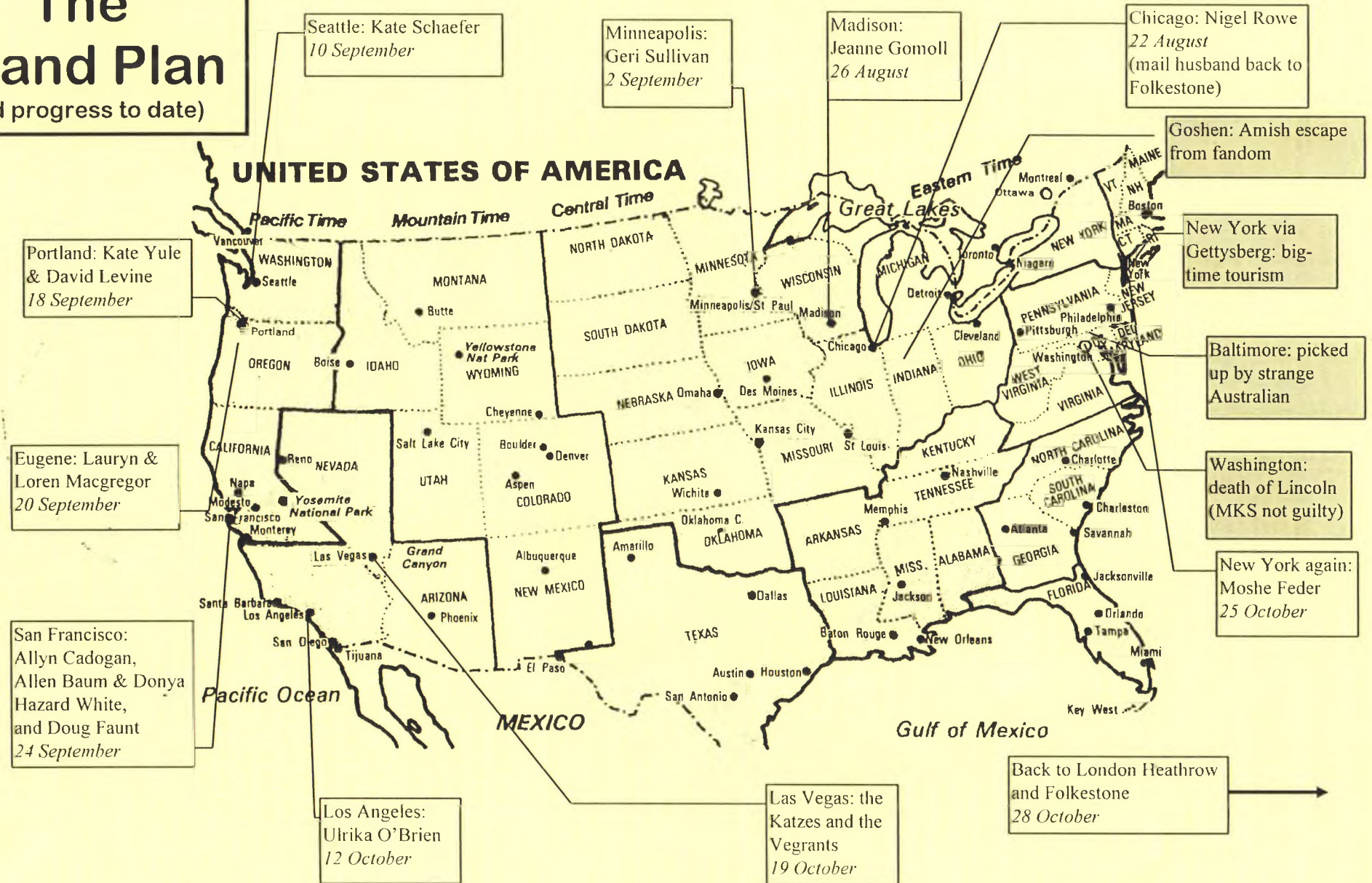
The US-UK TAFF race is now under way, the winner to attend Reconvene next Easter. The candidates are Vijay Bowen and Sarah Prince. Extra-special TAFFish gratitude to Dave Langford for heroically distributing ballots in the UK while I'm away. Please support TAFF by voting, donating money and suitable items for auction, and simply taking an interest. TAFF relies wholly on the support and goodwill of fandom and has done so for more than 40 years, a remarkable achievement.

Snufkin Goes West... was written by Maureen Kincaid Speller in Chicago on Nigel Rowe's computer. Editing, layout, printing and distribution by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer/Fishlifter Press. Further copies are available at various London pub meetings or from 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE (SAE appreciated). Maureen is currently somewhere in the map on the back, which we're updating as news and rumours reach us.

Next issue: early October

The Grand Plan

(and progress to date)



Snufkin Goes West...

The 1998 TAFF Travels of Maureen Kincaid Speller

Issue 3: 24 August 1998 –
24 September 1998

A note arrives with my copy of *SGW* #2. Mark tells me he had to drop stuff, and "margins are getting smaller all the time." Hmm, and I thought there was so much more space out west (according to Patrick Nielsen Hayden).

Chicago: Our heroine bid a tearful farewell to Paul, who flew home to wreak havoc on REC.ARTS.SF.FANDOM and the TIMEBINDERS list by using her e-mail account without signing on as a member of the Here family. People were telling me about this all the way to Seattle; it's amazing how much impact one man and one e-mail account can have on the world.

Meanwhile, at the Field Museum in Chicago, I am buying postcards and a book. Me: do you take traveller's cheques? Young person at till: yes. So I write my first traveller's cheque (Paul had written them all previously, to use his up), hand over my passport as per Paul's explanation, and the young person looks at me blankly. "Er, do you have a driver's licence?" "Yes, but I don't think it's going to be much help; it's a UK driver's licence." He stares at it blankly for a few moments and then starts phoning people. I'm reminded of a story I once heard about Dan Steffan lambasting someone for not accepting a British passport as proof of identity, and rather wish he was here now. I practise fine speeches about this passport being good enough to get me into the country etc etc. The Young Person is listening intently to the receiver, with the kind of expression that suggests he doesn't overly understand what he's hearing. Finally he says, "No, she's not from the US," pauses and then puts down the phone. Obviously, no one had ever told him that overseas visitors use traveller's cheques too, and that they don't tend to have a US driving licence for ID.

Jae Leslie Adams has nobly volunteered to drive me to Madison. In Chicago we posit a new theory of Western civilisation which requires domestication of animals because everyone had become too short-sighted to track them. Delighted with this, we provide a practical demonstration by failing to notice we've lost ourselves in a set of roadworks in a north Chicago suburb and are now heading for Milwaukee. We arrive in Madison only a couple of hours late.

Madison: My host Jeanne Gomoll is revealed as a closet cat-wrapper. Apparently, she wraps them up and they fall over. I devote much of my visit to persuading her that it really is time she came to the UK again, to meet Snufkin. Between times, Hope Kiefer initiates me into the mysteries of Beanie Baby collecting, Scott Custis introduces Madison fandom to beer survived the British way, and we visit House on the Rock, a terrible warning to fandom about accumulating too much Stuff. This is probably the weirdest place I've ever visited. Words really can't do it justice (and probably just as well for Mark's sake).

The mid-West's answer to Thelma and Louise hit the road again, this time to Minneapolis (reflecting that it is as well there are no canyons for us to drive over, nor any need to gun down Harvey Keitel). However, Jae adds to my collection of roadside attractions by taking me to Prairie Moon, an assembly of model buildings constructed by a retired man with a taste for flights of fancy.

Minneapolis: Geri Sullivan and I do battle with Sun Country. My aim is clear: I want to fly to Seattle. Given that the Northwest Airlines strike has made airline seats rarer than hen's teeth, I'm grateful to have found one only two days later than I originally wanted. I'd like to pay for it. Sun Country would like me to pay for it. Unfortunately, while Visa cards may be welcome in Moroccan bazaars, they aren't welcome at Sun Country, at least not foreign ones. Geri's travel agent harangues the airline but finally Geri heroically sacrifices her credit card to them, and I

later learn the joys of taking money out of ATM machines in garages at midnight. Truly, the USA is civilised.

Minn-stf, of which I am now a member, for life (and death will not release me), takes me to the Minnesota State Fair, for TAFF-on-a-stick, so named because going to the Minnesota State Fair is all about food on a stick. The deep-fried pickles weren't on a stick, but they had ranch dressing, and came with Geri's fervent expressions of disgust. The watermelon cotton candy was on a stick, as was the alligator (it was a sausage), and the corndog. The lefkas, Pennsylvania Dutch funnel cake, the milk shake, doughnut and good Methodist cooking weren't. Nor were the embarrassing quantities of soft toys I won on the midway.

Seattle: Kate Schaefer and I decide that we don't look much like one another, really, whatever Tommy Ferguson-says. Instead, we work on the small details of life, like putting up the walls of the room where I'm sleeping, and getting me fit to go hiking on the trails around Mount Rainier. This outing is truly one of the highlights of my trip, and not to just to watch chipmunks and ground squirrels hitting on Andy Hooper, in case he has a spare grape or tortilla chip hidden around his person. 6,500 feet is higher than I've ever been in my life.

Portland: Kate Yule takes me to Powell's Bookshop, and helps me pick my jaw up off the ground. Then she takes me to her gay square-dancing class, where I spend a riotous evening forgetting my left from my right, and learning that yes, this is possibly the most fun I can have with my clothes on.

Eugene: Loren McGregor takes in his stride the fact that my train is a bus, and the next day takes me to the farmers' market where we witness an extraordinary androgynous creature in a skimpy costume, alternately playing the violin and singing in a strange operatic falsetto. After some uncertainty, Doug Faunt reaches Eugene, and we drive into Eastern Oregon to look at volcanoes. He assures me that nothing has happened recently, which is OK. I suppose, if you don't consider 1917 to be recent; in volcanic terms, that strikes me as pretty much like two seconds ago. I suggest that killing off the TAFF delegate in a volcanic eruption might be a bad idea but instead we drive to Lassen Volcanic National Park to look at boiling mud pots, steam holes and sulphur which is kind of cool. Well, actually, no, but you know what I mean.

I'm now (24 September 1998) in the Bay area, about to head out to the wilds again. After American Civil War history, pioneer history, and geology, it's time to think about the Gold Rush.

Thanks go to Jae Leslie Adams, chauffeuse extraordinaire; to Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, and Madison fandom; to Geri Sullivan and Jeff Schalles, and Minn-stf, not forgetting Willow the dog; to Kate Schaefer and Glenn Hackney for finding space for me in Seattle, and to Sheila Lightsey for being my New England guide; to Kate Yule (and a very fleeting David Levine), the Rosetown Ramblers and Portland fandom; to Loren and Lauryn McGregor and the Eugene fans, and Phoebe the world's noisiest cat; and to Doug Faunt for driving me through Eastern Oregon.

Ahead of me lies a fortnight in the Bay area, plus time in Los Angeles and Las Vegas before a return to New York. I'm back in the UK on October 29th, arriving at Heathrow that morning. I expect to be at the next Jubilee meeting in November, if I'm awake.

Snufkin Goes West... was written by Maureen Kincaid Speller in the Bay area, shortly before disappearing into the wilds of California for a week or so. Editing, layout, printing and distribution by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer/Fishlifter Press. Further copies are available at various London pub meetings or from 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE (SAE appreciated). Maureen is currently somewhere in the map on the back, which we're updating as news and rumours reach us.

Next issue: early November

The Grand Plan

(and progress to date)

Seattle: home-building, hiking and Hooper

Minneapolis:
Visa card (on a
stick)

Madison: beer and cat- wrapping

Chicago: checking the traveller's cheques

Goshen: Amish escape from fandom

New York via
Gettysburg: big-
time tourism

Baltimore: picked up by strange Australian

Washington:
death of Lincoln
(MKS not guilty)

New York again:
Moshe Feder,
25 October

Back to London Heathrow
and Folkestone,
28 October

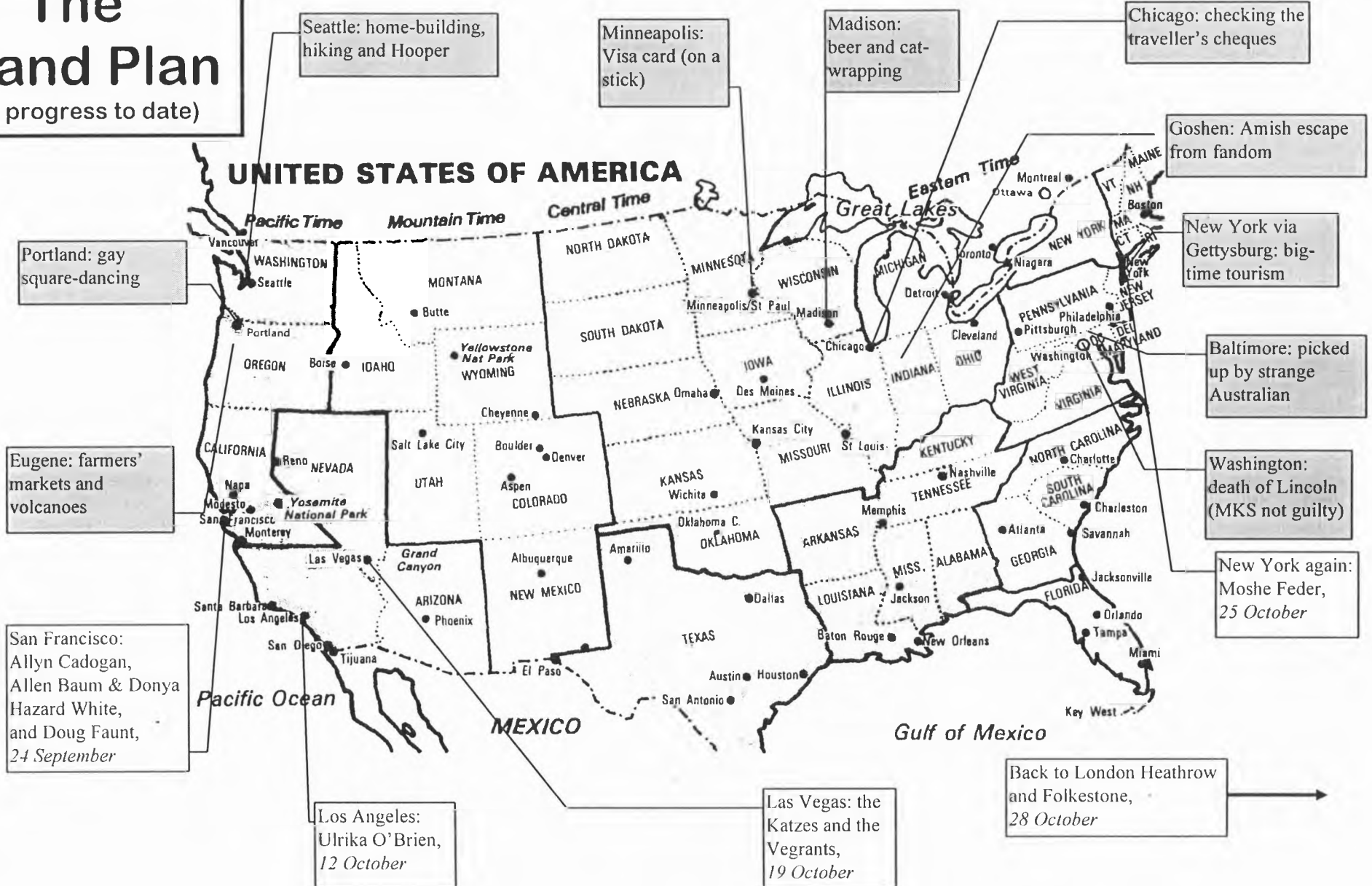
Las Vegas: the
Katzes and the
Vegrants,
19 October

Los Angeles:
Ulrika O'Brien,
12 October

Eugene: farmers' markets and volcanoes

San Francisco:
Allyn Cadogan,
Allen Baum & Donya
Hazard White,
and Doug Faunt,
24 September

Portland: gay square-dancing



Snufkin Goes West...

The 1998 TAFF Travels of Maureen Kincaid Speller

Issue 4: 25 September 1998 – Home

Redwood City: I met Allyn Cadogan when she visited the UK in 1986; in twelve years, she hasn't changed a bit. Disconcertingly, she claims I haven't either. In a now familiar motif, we head out of town, get lost in Sonoma but eventually find our way to the small but perfectly-formed Grinding Rock State Park, pitch our tent and head out to eat, discovering possibly the finest restaurant in which I've ever eaten in my life. I begin to understand why Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra were going to Jackson. What with this and the Rosebud Cafe, it's going to be very difficult to leave.

Columbia: When gold-mining, take the biggest high-pressure hose you can find, wash away every piece of ground without a building on it, strain liquid through a sieve and remove gold. Repeat operation when rest of town accidentally burns down (which these places did with monotonous regularity). Wash spoil into river and send it down to silt up San Francisco Bay. Having said that, Columbia is a genuine, if over-pretitified, survival from gold-mining days, and the Victorian hotel we visit is a particular joy to behold.

Volcano: The Indian gathering is almost certainly not what you're imagining. Not a tourist event as such, the people are nevertheless very welcoming to a stray passing Brit. I watch the dancing in the round house on Saturday night, spend time talking with other stall-holders and the docents at the museum, eat Indian tacos and generally have a great time. At night, the sky is so clear that I can see the Milky Way.

Yosemite: On Sunday Allen Baum and Donya White collect me from Volcano and we hit the road to Yosemite Valley. There aren't words enough to describe the scenery as we drive up an incredibly steep road over the mountains, and the sight of the old road clinging to the other hillside is not comforting. The view from the Rim of the World is breathtaking, marred only by the fizzing of the huge power lines overhead. We stop off to admire humongous redwoods and then drive into Yosemite Valley itself in time to watch the sun set over Half Dome, which is shrouded in mist.

I've never been anywhere before where I needed to lock my deodorant away in case the bears come for it. And they will. Never mind Yogi Bear, Yosemite bears know what a cooler looks like, can smell food a mile off, and will rip a car open without a thought. Trust me: I've seen the video. The clerk at the campsite tells me that if I go down to the carpark at 10:30 PM I can see bears, but I wimp out. However, I do see a coyote in the parking lot and that's enough wildlife for me, thank you. And I see huge mountains, beautiful lakes, and do not die in my ascent of the Mist Trail to Vernal Falls, even though it felt like it at the time. I make many fervent promises to get fitter when I get home. And the squirrels mug me for food.

Palo Alto: Mary Kay Kare drives me round in a cool little red sports car. She takes me to the Winchester Mystery House—built by Sarah Winchester, who was convinced she was haunted by all the ghosts of those killed by Winchester rifles. She was mad, no two ways about it, but the house is a remarkable testimony to one woman's fears, and fascinatingly bizarre, though possibly not what poor Sarah intended. Karen Shaffer nobly indulges my 'thing' about sea otters by taking me to Monterey Aquarium. *En route*, I suddenly realise it's located on the model for John Steinbeck's Cannery Row, so another literary pilgrimage is carried out. Sea otters are furry... and cute... and "think of them as big fuzzy two-year-olds," says the aquarist. The rest of Monterey Aquarium is also well worth visiting. Karen confesses to an urge to eat seafood. I know what she means.

Crisis on the home front. Donya drags me out of bed to read an urgent e-mail from Paul. He can't get the petrol cap open on the car. I e-mail instructions, make phone calls, and finally all is well, but not before half of Bay Area fandom has heard the story.

Oakland: Doug Faunt and I become cross-border raccoon smugglers. Raccoons aren't as cute and furry as you think... well, they are, but not when they've broken into your kitchen, trashed it and eaten all the cat food. So Doug has been systematically trapping a family, in between apologising that I won't see any of them. As luck would have it, he traps the last the night I arrive, and we head for the hills, or at least to Marin County, to release the ungrateful little beggar the next morning.

The criminal motif continues when he also takes me to Alcatraz, and shanghai's me onto the scow schooner *Alma* for a day's sailing where, in another rather familiar motif, we are buzzed by the Blue Angels display aerobatic team. I assure you you've not lived until your boat has been buzzed by a small aircraft which flips on to its back as it passes over. Or possibly, you're grateful you have lived. In between times, I potter around San Francisco, visiting the Castro, Haight-Ashbury, Chinatown and City Lights Bookshop, riding a cable car (it's like a slow-motion roller-coaster) and patronise the local Oakland coffee shop with a vengeance.

Buying the air ticket to LA—substitute Southwest for Sun Country—at Oakland airport, I actually see my luggage loaded onto my plane, which is a comfort. Hope it's there when I get off. I really do see the San Andreas Fault from the air, just as everyone said I would.

Los Angeles: I meet Ulrika O'Brien at Orange County Airport at the luggage carousel. For various reasons, I spend portions of the next few days at Orange County Airport, watching with mounting horror the amazing amount of uncollected baggage just left on the carousels. At the end of the day, someone comes along and collects it on a trolley... and probably sends it to Reykjavik.

Los Angeles is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly hugely mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist, but that's just peanuts to Los Angeles. There is a good reason why most people have several cars. However, it looks very pretty from 4,000 feet up a mountain at one in the morning.

"Are you the DUFF delegate?" asks someone at the LASFS meeting. Now, I can understand Paul being mistaken for Terry Frost... Terry makes suitably salacious comments when told about this unique double mistake.

A confusion in dates means that I don't actually get to Las Vegas, more's the pity, but fly back to NY a few days early.

Thanks go to Allyn Cadogan, Karl and Kelly Mosgofian for the pow-wow, to Allen Baum and Donya White for Yosemite and a great party, to Doug Faunt and Lyn Paleo for coffee, craft magazines, cats and raccoons, to Al and the crew of *Alma*, to Ulrika and Hal O'Brien for cacti, Regency dancing and the complete LA experience, to Bruce and Elayne Pelz for another fine party. Also, to Greg Ketter back in Minneapolis for shipping my soft toys home for me along with the books: truly a prince among book dealers (and I forgot to thank him last time; shame on me). Thanks to Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer for publishing *SGW* while I've been on the road, and doing an excellent job of keeping up with me and keeping everyone else informed of my whereabouts. Thank you as well to everyone who has supported TAFF and enabled me to make this trip.

And lastly, thank you to Paul Kincaid, for love and support, and putting up with everything for the last two months.

Snufkin Goes West... was written by Maureen Kincaid Speller in Los Angeles, just before heading back to New York and, ultimately, Folkestone. Editing, layout, printing and distribution by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer/Fishlifter Press. Further copies are available from 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE (SAE appreciated). By the time you see this, the Maureen should have landed so you can ask her all about it.

Next issue: ah, that'd be a TAFF report, that would...



Epilogue 1: Snufkin Goes East... Everyone falls around laughing when I say I'm flying to New York with Tower Air; too late. I find out why, though Moshe Feder and Alyson Abramowitz finally rescue me, late at night, from Tower's secret terminal at JFK. The saving grace of the flight through hell is the glorious view of Manhattan after dark as the plane skims low across the bottom of the island. NYC is the only place I have revisited and it's great to be 'home'. They've even laid on a ticker-tape parade for me, although I have to share it with the Yankees baseball team.

It's amazing how much a party girl can fit into a day in New York: shopping, a meal, a Broadway show, second-hand CD shops, hanging around in a gay piano bar in Greenwich Village at 3 AM and a ride home on the subway. More sedately, Moshe and I visit museums, Central Park, Winnie-the-Pooh, the New York Public Library and a genuine Texas

barbecue place, and I plunder J&Rs for CDs and Barnes & Noble for books.

I ♥ New York and the feeling is mutual; so much so that when I try to leave, the plane breaks down and leaves me sitting on the tarmac for two hours before we are 'deplaned' and left to hang around in the terminal, waiting for the world's smallest airport shuttle bus to take us to a hotel. After an hour's wait, I finally jump in a taxi and go back to Moshe's house; he is only mildly surprised to see me. Thursday morning: the driver who is taking me to the airport for the second time swears that if he has to pick me up a third time, he's not going to do it. I feel a touch jinxed myself, but this time I get on the plane, it takes off, and I settle back to enjoy the flight (this time the classical radio channel is playing something worthwhile).*

Epilogue 2: Snufkin Comes Home... London after dark is beautiful. I can see the M25 ringing the conurbation and, as the plane banks in a holding pattern, I can see the South Coast and know that Folkestone is out there somewhere. Finally, we land: I grab my stuff and get off the plane as fast as I can go. Down endless corridors, and more endless corridors, I pass through Immigration, arrive at baggage reclaim just in time to see the Big Bag whizz by and swiftly retrieve it before staggering through the Green Channel, hoping to god they don't stop to ask about the complete CD works of John Eliot Gardiner in my luggage, round another corner, and there at last is Paul, looking much as ever. I'm too damn exhausted to think about bursting into tears so we kiss over the barrier and then I drag myself into Arrivals where Mark and Claire are hovering discreetly in the background.

Claire nobly drives us to Folkestone (Paul

doesn't drive after dark); when we arrive, there is a four-cat deputation on the doorstep. Alas, they all remember exactly who I am, and want to tell me all about how awful it has been. Claire and Mark beat a swift retreat. Paul makes tea, and I verify that yes, a cat did piss on my computer monitor, and no, it doesn't work any more. Welcome home. I retire to bed to experience the joys of jetlag.

A final set of thanks to New York fans for hospitality: in particular, Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenberg and Vikki Rosenzweig, as well as Alyson Abramowitz (temporarily in town from the Bay Area) and Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden. Not forgetting Claire Brialey, chauffeuse extraordinaire, for ensuring I made the last part of the journey safely; and, of course, Paul, for being so patient for an extra twelve hours.*