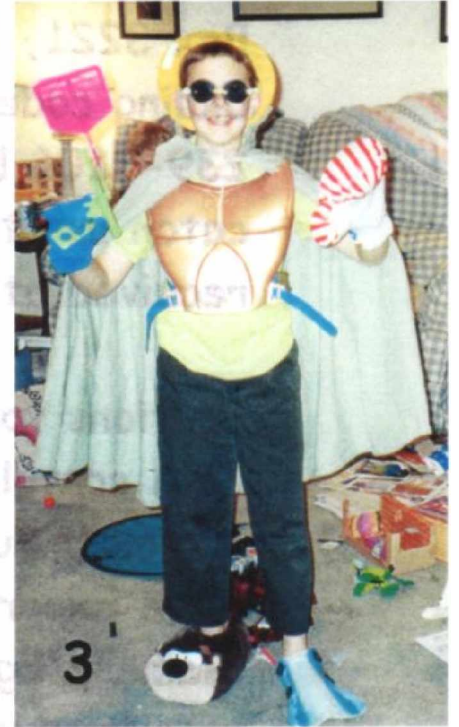


TENNESSEE TRASH #47

Here and There With The Robe Experience



Tennessee Trash # 47 was produced by Gay R. Robe somewhere between Caracas, Venezuela and P.O. Box 3221, Kingsport, TN 37663. International dialing codes are not necessary to reach us at (423) 239-3106 but it might take a small act of God to catch us at home. E-mail is also occasionally received at grobe@chartertn.net.

Captions for the photos on the cover are as follows:

1) A convalescing Isaac is comforted by Jellybean, our most cuddly cat. 2) The newest addition to The Robe Experience, Lilly: Queen of the Bed. She is a Siamese/Egyptian Mao mix that came to us by way of a graduate student couple that moved to a pet unfriendly apartment. 3) It's never too early to start practicing for Halloween at the Robe House. This jaunty ensemble is accented by the lime green cape and Tasmanian Devil house shoe. 4) Nick gets to demonstrate his Taekwando skills in front of entire student body of Miller-Perry Elementary. 5) We were watching *Spaceballs* on DVD recently when we realized that Nick wasn't seeing some of the sight gags. Welcome to the four-eyed world!

TENNESSEE TRASH #47

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 227 OF THE
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Unwanted Medical Knowledge, Homebound Caregiving, Globetrotting, and Other Intrusions on an Orderly Life...

Funny how you can know about something for years and not really know about it. I had heard about Rheumatic Fever before March, but not as something that I had to deal with. That was before late March when Isaac had a case of the flu that wouldn't go away and started complaining about pains in his joints.

The first trip to the doctor was nothing much. He had been feeling bad the night before and was running a low fever. That had been going on for three weeks, and we finally decided that he should be looked at again. By the time he was worked into the doctor's schedule that afternoon, he was feeling fine and was crawling all over the exam room and was too busy squirming to really tell much to the doctor. Luckily, Corlis started telling about the recurring symptoms and that was enough for them to do some tests.

That was on a Friday afternoon, and we didn't hear back from the doctor's office until Monday morning. At that point, they told us that he was anemic and had a high sedimentation rate that indicated he had some kind of infection going on. They didn't tell us more than that except to give us the first available appointment on Wednesday morning. That gave us two whole days to worry about what could be wrong. When I looked up the symptoms on Web MD, I was not reassured. Those symptoms could cover anything from mononucleosis to leukemia. On Wednesday morning Isaac was feeling

severe pain in his ankle joints and for the first time we paid enough attention to note that his foot was swollen and feverish. Once we got to the doctor's office it didn't take long to set things in motion. After listening to Isaac's heart for about 30 seconds, they ordered an EKG and more blood work and called the pediatric cardiologist's office for an appointment ASAP. That was when the pediatrician explained that it appeared that Isaac had Rheumatic Fever, but that it would take consultation with the specialist to confirm it.

The next day I took Isaac in for an echocardiogram at the hospital. Even with no idea what I was looking at, I could see some problems. The ultrasound machine comes with a feature that works like Doppler radar. It shows which direction the blood is flowing through the system. It didn't take much for me to see that there were places where the flow was backwards in Isaac's heart. Later that afternoon we got the meet with Dr. Tiexiera to get the whole story.

He explained that his job was easy since he only had to make a decision as to whether or not Isaac had Acute Rheumatic Fever or not. That was where it began to get scary because he pointed out in the video of the echocardiogram where the problems were and there were plenty of them. Also, Isaac's EKG was abnormal, so there was no doubt that he was suffering from a serious inflammation of the heart. The maddening thing was that he did not have enough symptoms to make a clear diagnosis of Rheumatic Fever. It seems that there are certain rules that apply to making the diagnosis. He had to have the

heart inflammation, which he had in spades, but at that point he had never tested positive for strep, and the joint pains, while indicating Rheumatic Fever, were not severe enough to make a definitive diagnosis at that point. Regardless, the treatment was the same whether or not the diagnosis was positive: antibiotic treatment, high doses of aspirin, and avoiding stress. He confined Isaac to home for two weeks at which point they would re-do the echocardiogram to see how he was responding to treatment.

One thing that made visits to the cardiologist more fun is that the ultrasound technician who works for the practice is Rick Mula, one of my sparring partners at Grosso's Martial Arts. Rick was much more thorough in examining Isaac's heart than the technician at the hospital. He carefully showed us each part of the heart, what it did, and where there were problems. Unfortunately, there were plenty of those.

After two weeks of treatment with antibiotics and aspirin, three of Isaac's heart valves were not closing completely, he had pockets of fluid around his heart, and a hole between his atria. Dr. Tiexiera explained that the normal course of Rheumatic Fever is 12 weeks from the onset of symptoms to recovery. By this time the blood work had come back from the pediatrician's office that had confirmed the Rheumatic Fever. Although Isaac had never had any of the early symptoms like strep throat or Scarlet Fever, his blood was loaded with strep antibodies that confirmed that he had a massive infection.

This was quite sobering to think about. Isaac had come down with the flu in early March and that might have masked the early symptoms. For three weeks he had an infection that was building to the point of affecting his heart and the only thing he felt was some intermittent joint pain, lethargy, and a low-grade fever. It is really scary to think that you can get that sick without having any red-flashing danger signs going off! Isaac went to school and took the weeklong state achievement exams in between doctor's visits. As far as I can tell the disease may have helped him on the tests because it slowed him down and he

concentrated on the test instead of what was happening outside the classroom window.

Anyhow, we were now faced with keeping Isaac bound at home for the foreseeable future. After the first week of antibiotic treatment he felt fine as long as he didn't do much physical activity. The only treatment he needed was to keep poking aspirin down him. (Aspirin you might ask? But I thought Aspirin caused Rhyes Syndrome and you should not give it to a child. That is true, but Rhyes Syndrome is mostly a complication of influenza and is very rare. In this case, aspirin is the only anti-inflammatory drug proven to work against Rheumatic Fever. Ibuprophen may have some effect and acetaminophen is useless in these cases. See? All of you with the possible exception of Janet have now acquired some more medical knowledge!) The big problem was that in our two-career household, keeping Isaac out of school was a major problem. To solve it I did what parents across the ages have done. I called home to mommy!

Both sides of our family rose to the occasion and helped us out tremendously. My father came to Kingsport the next week to keep Isaac during the day. The second week of April was the boy's spring break, and they went to stay with Corlis' mother and stepfather in Bowling Green as had been planned in advance. The following week, the In-laws came to Kingsport and the week after that my mom and dad came for another week. After that I alternated taking half-days of vacation while Corlis taught her morning classes. The only week that was a complete disaster was the first of May when I had to travel to Seattle to give a paper at a paint industry meeting and Corlis had to get through finals week at the university. We ended up finding a sitter to stay with Isaac while Corlis finished up her classes.

For the first two weeks Isaac was out of school, I just went over to his teacher and got the assignments and papers he needed to complete. After that we found that Sullivan County offers a homebound schooling program in these cases. One of the teachers came to our house twice a week to give Isaac his lessons and homework. The first time Isaac saw a whole week's worth of schoolwork

in one pile at one time, he broke into tears. "She must be crazy to think that I can do all that in one week! She must get paid more to give me extra work!" He soon discovered that with a little effort he was able to clear up a whole week's schoolwork in about two days of effort. He soon looked forward to getting his assignments so he could finish them and get back to the serious business of play and watching DVDs. I don't know whether to be proud of him for learning to budget his time and concentrate on his work or to be worried that he learned that a week's worth of work is two/two and a half days effort at worst.

Right now we will take Isaac back to the cardiologist in early June and we hope at that time he will be released back to normal activity. There is still the hole in his atrial wall to be concerned, but the doctor explained that that is a simple outpatient procedure where they put a plug in place with a catheter threaded up through the femoral vein. Isaac is getting more frustrated every day at being held to minimal activity, and we have had lots of long talks.

It is hard to make him understand how relieved we are that he had nothing more serious than Rheumatic Fever. He should get through this with no permanent damage, an interesting story to tell, and no effects worse than having to have a monthly penicillin shot. One of the upshots of getting Rheumatic Fever is that he is ten times more likely to get it again and that if it recurs the probability of permanent damage is increased. The shots are to keep a constant low level of antibiotic in his system to ward off another infection.

In mid-April Isaac had another echocardiogram done that showed that his heart had responded well to the treatment. Although he still had mitral valve inflammation and swelling, the other two valves that had been inflamed were normal and there was much less fluid around his heart. The main problem now, aside from the inconvenience of having to keep him at home, is to keep him from overstressing himself. He still fatigues easily, but that does not keep him from wanting to play with the neighborhood gang. He is good about dropping out when he feels tired of light

headed, but he probably should not be getting in the position of getting so stressed in the first place. We go back to the cardiologist in the first week of June for another evaluation, and we are hoping then that he will be allowed to resume normal activity.

Meanwhile Back in the Real World...

During the time of family crisis I would have chosen to remain at home so that Corlis didn't have to bear the burden alone. Unfortunately I had made commitments long ago to make a couple of trips. The first was an unusual one for me: domestic travel. The Western District Sales Manager is a guy named Ron Reagan (no relation, but we still call him Mr. President). Two years ago Ron was a District Manager in Latin America, so when an opportunity came to invite someone from Kingsport out to the Pacific Northwest to make a presentation to a coating society meeting, I was at the top of his list. About six months ago I was asked to prepare a talk for the Pacific Northwest Society for Coating Technology annual conference that was held in Seattle over May 1-3.

This was nice because it has been 11 years since I last visited the area, and I was happy to go back. It was also a chance to make contact with domestic customers. This is important because the West Coast is the first place where new environmental initiatives are born. Working in Latin America is something of a spoiling experience because there are no environmental regulations in the region to speak of. I do, however, need to keep up with what is happening in the US because I have a lot of responsibility over the Eastman solvent and paint additive business that is directly impacted by environmental regulations. Finally, it was a chance for me to visit with the Copelands. That was especially welcome since they will not be able to attend DSC this year.

The flight out to the coast was madder longer by the line of thunderstorms that was moving through the east that morning. I got stuck in Cincinnati for four hours because the plane that was going to continue on to Seattle was stuck in Baltimore for two hours by the weather. I had had to change my travel plans

the week before the trip because the salesman I was meeting in the area had added on some customer calls the following week after the meeting. I had booked the flights earlier and had a supersaver that cost around \$500 for the whole trip. When I made the change, the only seats available bumped the cost up to \$1600! Ouch! I had not even looked closely enough to realize that the reason for the high fare was because the travel agent had booked me into first class! With the delays it was 9:00 p.m. before I got into my hotel room. I felt guilty about it, but by that time I was hungry again even after the first class meal, so I ventured out to the Outback Steakhouse next to the hotel for my fourth meal of the day. Of course by that time my day was getting close to 20 hours long!

The next morning I was the second speaker on the program. I was giving my standard lecture on coalescing aids for latex paints. The twist was that this was the first time I'd made it in front of an English speaking audience. I was gratified to see that the house was standing room only for my talk. I was a bit surprised that almost 100 people would show up for a presentation on a product that has been around for 30 years, but there they were. I think that only Ron Reagan notices it, but there were a couple of places where I paused in my speech searching for a word. The problem was not that I was at a loss for words, I was having to mentally search for the English ones! The paper was actually a big hit with the audience, and afterwards I collected several dozen business cards of people who wanted a copy. The chairman of the meeting also made a point of telling me how much the people there enjoyed the talk and that if they gave awards I would have probably had the best paper of the meeting.

Giving my paper at the beginning of the meeting has an advantage in that I got a bigger audience and was able to get over the anxiety faster. The downside is that I had to sit politely through the rest of the presentations for two days. There were a couple of papers that were actually quite informative and helpful to me. There was even one that gave me a new idea for an approach to a project I working on currently,

to it was all time well spent. The conference went on through Saturday night, so at least I did not sit in my hotel room and play computer games the whole time.

On Sunday morning Jeff called to say he was on the way to pick me up for brunch. That took a bit longer than planned because I had not clarified which Doubletree Hotel I was staying at. After picking me up, we returned to the house to pick up Liz and JJ for lunch. After eating we did a bit of shopping. Earlier in the week Liz had noticed a "fifi" at a gift shop that was her contribution to the SFPA party at DSC. We then spent the rest of the afternoon at the Copeland's house covering everything from office politics to SMOFing.

On Monday morning I had to rise very early for a drive down to Portland to make calls on customers there. This was the first time I've gotten to see the Colombia River, and I was quite impressed by it. I would have probably enjoyed the day more if not for the typical low clouds and more or less constant rain that day. The next day was much the same except that we stayed in Seattle. The sun did break through at noon, and I had a very good lunch of fresh halibut at a restaurant wharf. The flight home the next day was uneventful.

My other trip of the period was to Venezuela, a country that seems to be cursed with being the second worst in South America. After Argentina, they have the second worst economy in the region. This year the government was forced to float the currency and it seems to have stabilized at about 80% of its previous value. Compared to Argentina, this is stability, but it's now much to brag about. Venezuela also had the region's second worst political situation. They cannot come close to the chaos in Colombia, but the regime of President Hugo Chavez is distinctive in that the people voted for it. The country has only two things going for it: oil and, well, petroleum.

The government of Hugo Chavez is a slow motion train wreck that has not gotten much attention in the US until the operatic coup that displaced him for three whole days in mid-April. Chavez was elected in 1999 promising prosperity to the 80% of Venezuelanos living below the poverty line.

He made no secret of the fact that the statesmen he most admires are Fidel Castro, Saddam Huesein, and Juan Peron in that order. One of his early acts upon his assumption of power was to dismiss the legislature and appoint a new one filled with his political friends. This more compliant legislature then wrote a new constitution for the country that essentially handed all power over to the president. Once this change was in place Chavez then sacked the judiciary and filled the positions once again with (surprise!) more of his cronies.

Chavez has declared this complete turnover of the government to be, by the way, a revolution. This is the ultimate political CYA move. If his reworking succeeds (well it *could*), then Chavez is a Revolutionary. If it fails then it is the fault of the counter-revolutionaries who are thwarting him at every turn. He can't lose. In the meantime, every business that can had pulled up the stakes, folded the tents, and left the country as quickly as possible. In April, Chavez turned his attention to the one powerful sector of the country that he did not control, the state owned oil company Petroleos de Venezuela, a.k.a Pedevesa.

Although Pedevesa is a state-owned company, it was allowed to run on its own, only handing over its profits to the government. This winter, however, oil prices fell sharply, and Pedevesa was not delivering the anticipated treasure to the country. Chavez used this excuse to fire the directors of the company and install his own set of political appointees. This move almost proved to be Chavez's undoing.

Since Pedevesa is one of the few operations in the country that actually makes money, it is the one thing that gets international attention. Plus, the company is quite used to go about its business without comment or backseat driving from the government. When Chavez installed his buddies in control of Pedevesa, the rank and file employees walked away. It is fine to appoint one's buddies to the board of a company that doesn't make anything like the central bank. When, however, you need someone to actually run the pumps, you find out real fast who controls the means of production. It was

rather ironic that communistic Hugo Chavez was essentially forced to take a couple of days of by the common workers of Pedevesa.

Once the oil workers walked off and production halted, it took only a few days for the military to step in and strongly suggest that Hugo take a hike. The crisis that precipitated the move was a protest march in support of the Pedevesa workers that drew fire from the Chavez supporters waiting on the rooftops.

I know exactly what happened. The presidential residence and the government center are situated along the main street of Ceracas, only one block from the preserved hacienda of the Bolivar family. Just to the west, however, the neighborhood becomes rough, and is full of hopeless fools who rabidly support Chavez. On April 11, thousands of Venezolanos flooded the streets in front of the residence. A crowd of that size can't all stay on the nice side of the street. As the crowd swells it overlaps into the barrio, and gunmen on the rooftops open fire.

With dozens killed and injured, the army decided enough is enough and remove Chavez from Caracas. That was a good first step, but unfortunately from that point the whole thing fell apart in a series of confusion and bad moves. The first thing the coup leaders did not do was to get a public renouncing of power from Chavez or have him meet with an Unfortunate Accident. Second, they named the president of the Chamber of Commerce to be the interim president. Oh, right. You are deposing a communist leader with a popular following among 80% of the citizens. Who do you replace him with? How about a blatant capitalist and sworn enemy of the deposed leader? Yeah, that should be a popular choice. Then, the newly appointed president declares that the legislature is dissolved and the constitution is rescinded. Granted it is a lousy constitution and a corrupt legislature, but at that point it is sort of difficult to claim that what is happening is a Democratic process. Two days later, the Chavez crowd takes to the street and the shooting starts again. Chavez returns to the presidential residence and asks for the keys. The counter-revolutionaries smile sheepishly and

point out how nicely they polished the brasswork while Mr. Presidente took his little vacation.

The interesting thing is that the day after Chavez came back, he sacked his board of directors of Pedevesa and installed a new one. It was not the original set, but it was at least a set of reasonable choices of petroleum industry experts. It may not be a perfect solution, but at least Chavez did end up in control of the company. Now the opposing sides are sitting across the table glaring at each other, but the swords are, for the moment, sheathed.

This was the situation I came into on my visit May 19-24. The first thing I noted right away was that some of the companies I've visited before in the country weren't there anymore. The multinational companies who had production facilities in other countries have mostly pulled out. The second thing I noticed was that on the surface it was difficult to see that much had changed. The traffic at the airport was about as I remembered it. The number of cars on the road had not changed much. The city lights were still on, and the outrageous billboards featuring naked women were still there.

Caracas is really a beautiful city to come into at night. The hills are covered with thousands of tiny twinkling lights that look like white Christmas lights scattered around the rim of the city. It is only by closer examination or daylight that you see that those lights are the slums lit by strung naked low-wattage light bulbs. By day, the city is surrounded by steep green mountains and is composed of hundreds of modern-looking skyscrapers. It even looks like the city is growing as there are many construction cranes resting on top of uncompleted buildings. It is only when you visit again after two years that you realize something is wrong because the same cranes are still there over the same buildings in the same state of incompleteness.

I discovered that one of my friends who used to be the technical director of one of the multinational adhesive companies now owns and operates a bus in the city. He is making a reasonable living as a bus driver,

comparable to when he was in the adhesive business, although the security net is a bit smaller as an independent bus operator.

At one point Cristian and I were standing on the steps outside our distributor's office waiting for one of the local sales reps to pull her car around. We were standing in full daylight on a busy street, perhaps stupidly holding computer cases. A seedy-looking fellow came down the sidewalk and paused, just for a moment, in front of the two of us as if to decide which case he was going to grab. Without even consciously thinking about it, I dropped into fighting position and was ready to deliver a roundhouse kick to the guy's head if he took another step toward us. Cristian tensed up and was ready to take off if the guy had made a grab. Apparently the guy must have seen us come to attention because he turned and continued walking down the sidewalk. I don't think the guy was actively looking for trouble, but he certainly seemed to be open to possibilities.

At another location a chemist explained that while she had a stable job with the second-largest paint company in the country, her whole family had sold all their possessions in Venezuela and had moved to Miami where they were now living illegally. They felt that was preferable to living in Venezuela. I'm glad I don't have to make those kinds of decisions.

On the fourth day of my visit we were scheduled to make calls with one of the distributors all day. There was, however, a general strike called that day and most businesses closed while people marched on the Federal Court building in protest of Chavez's placement of one of his cronies as Attorney General. The distributor representative never showed up and none of the customers that Cristian called answered the phone. I got to watch the clouds drift over the mountaintops and the thunderstorms move down the valley for the day.

The next day I had to rise early to return to the airport well before the departure time. After needing all of 3 hours to check in to the flight out of Guayaquil earlier this year, and missing one in Lima, I do not second guess

the airlines and make sure I'm there at least two full hours before departure. The biggest problem I faced here was paying the departure tax. It was Bs 44,400 (about \$40) payable only on Bolivars. I had information that the airport tax was included in the ticket price, so I had made sure I spent most of my Bolivars before getting to the airport. Luckily I had enough dollars in pocket that I didn't have to cash a \$50 traveler's check and get stuck with a pocket full of Amazing Devaluing Bolivars.

Martial Arts News

I was a bit surprised when Master Grosso decided that Nick was ready to test for his black stripes last month. It had only been six months since his red belt test but I certainly wasn't going to argue. The hardest thing about the black stripe test is the board break. You have to do it with a flying, spinning back kick. They lay several punching bags on the floor and the student has to jump over them while turning in mid-air, then land and execute a kick. Falling in a heap after breaking the board is optional. The back kick is one of my personally worst techniques, and I am NOT looking forward to having to execute this kick on my black stripe test.

Nick did just fine on the test, and now he starts the run-up to the black belt test. For black belt you have to learn all eight of the lower belt forms plus the 1st degree black belt form, three advanced self-defense one-steps, a board/block breaking demonstration, a one-on-one sparring match with another black belt for three three-minute rounds, and three-on-one sparring. You also have to write an essay, learn a basic Korean vocabulary, and work up the guts to go through the test. It is a formidable challenge.

Now that I am a red belt, I find that my responsibilities in the school are increasing. Since I am one of the senior students, and one of four in my age class (including the instructor) I am often called upon to be the board holder, mock attacker, and sparring partner for many of the people testing at other levels. One recent Saturday I did an hour of Hapkido workout that was mostly judo throws and wrestling technique, 90

minutes of Taekwondo class, and then serving as sparring partner for a red stripe test. I then had to go home and mow the lawn. I did, however, sneak in a viewing of Spiderman at the theater in order to recover before the lawn mowing.

It will be at least July before I have to face my own black stripe test. Master Grosso is about to depart for three weeks National Guard training in California. I can see, however, that I am getting close in performing the forms, and I'm getting lots of sparring practice recently. I just really don't want to have to do that flying, spinning back kick in front of an audience.

The Taekwondo school also was invited to do a demonstration in front of the boy's elementary school. While Isaac was obviously not allowed to participate, Nick got to demonstrate his form and board breaking in front of the whole school. He was the only high ranking student to participate, so he really got to show off for the school.

Watch The Skys!

The planetary alignment happening over the last few months got me to bring my telescope out of the basement, dust it off, and line it back up. When I lived in Kentucky I had a nice, flat, open and dark back yard to set up the scope. Here there is no level place to set it and no great place to get a full view of the sky. Still, I made a compromise of a place that I could aim on Polaris in order to set the drive up, and had a good view of the western horizon.

Since the scope had been in storage for 11 years, the mirror was in bad shape and way out of alignment. With that under consideration, the mirror did clean up well enough to use. On the first clear day I spent a couple of hours getting the spotter scope aimed with the main mirror and getting the mirrors in alignment. I did this while many of the neighbors were out for their evening walks. Before long I had a line of curious first-time astronomers.

In case you missed it, we just had a planetary alignment in which Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter were all visible in the

same quadrant of the sky at the same time. My six inch scope is plenty powerful to turn all but Mercury into something visibly Planetary. Mars was not at a particularly good position to see much more than a red disk, but the others were spectacular. One of my favorite sounds is the squeal of delight people make when they see Saturn in a telescope for the first time. Jupiter is not far behind with its colored atmospheric bands, the red spot, and four hurtling moons. It is also great fun to convince the neighbors that you are a genius because you know those things are up there.

The spot where I set up the scope did turn out to be pretty good. Right now the part of the sky that is directly overhead is an area that seems empty, but when you look through the telescope there is a galaxy in almost every field of view. The Constellation Coma Berenices lies at 90 degrees out of the galactic plane, you we are looking at the minimum of galactic dust to obscure other galaxies from showing through. It is really an amazing part of the sky to explore.

Another similar planetary alignment will not occur for over 40 years, so this was something special. The view has degraded in the last couple of weeks because Mercury has passed from view and Mars and Saturn are almost lost in the sunset glare. Venus and Jupiter are still there and very bright in the hour after sunset.

You Might Want To Know

There had been one event here in the Tri-Cities that may be of interest to others in SFFPA, although it is bad news. In the last week of April ex-SFFPAn Rick Norwood's son James disappeared from the East Tennessee State University campus. Rick is a colleague of Corlis' at the University, and she sees him daily. James apparently disappeared sometime after Friday, April 26 although nobody knows exactly when. What is known is that James' car was used in a bank robbery on that day and was found abandoned the next day. There has been no trace of him since. The police have no clues, and nothing new about the case had been uncovered in the last month. Rick is, of course, devastated by this and would

probably benefit from support from friends. I wish there was more to tell, or at least a resolution to the case, but it there is not.

I also wish that I had time to write mailing comments, but I don't. I did take the mailing with me on the trip to Venezuela with very good intentions of writing MC's while stuck in the hotel room at night. What with customer visits and dinners though, I just didn't have the energy to do much. I did at least start writing the mailing on the day I was stuck in the hotel, but face it, I'm a mailing comment wimp.

The whole Robe Experience is anxiously anticipating DSC in Huntsville next month. I just talked to Naomi Fisher a couple nights ago and in addition to the guests previously announced, David Hartwell and Greg Benford will also be attending. Naomi also said that the hotel is full, so it looks like they are getting a big attendance. I plan to bring along another type of exotic South American liquor to make Pisco Sours if anyone is brave enough to try it.

We will also be attending Midwestcon in late June. I got word to make my hotel reservation early because there is a Billy Graham Crusade in the area that weekend and the hotel is begging to release the room block early. This should be Chinese Curse style interesting having to share the hotel with Billy Graham fans.

Also on tap in the next two months is a planned vacation in Washington DC and a trip to Mexico for the Panamerican Paint Show. I am dreading the paint show because of the entourage of people coming to represent all of the companies that Eastman has acquired over the last two years. There will be almost 10 extra people at the booth compared to years past, and I know that none of them speak Spanish. I'm going to have to interpret for these jokers. I would not mind so much if any of these divisions was making money. As it is, the part of the business that I support is profitable, but I'm going to have to spend a good part of my time and energy that could be put to profitable use in supporting all this deadweight.

See Y'all at DSC!