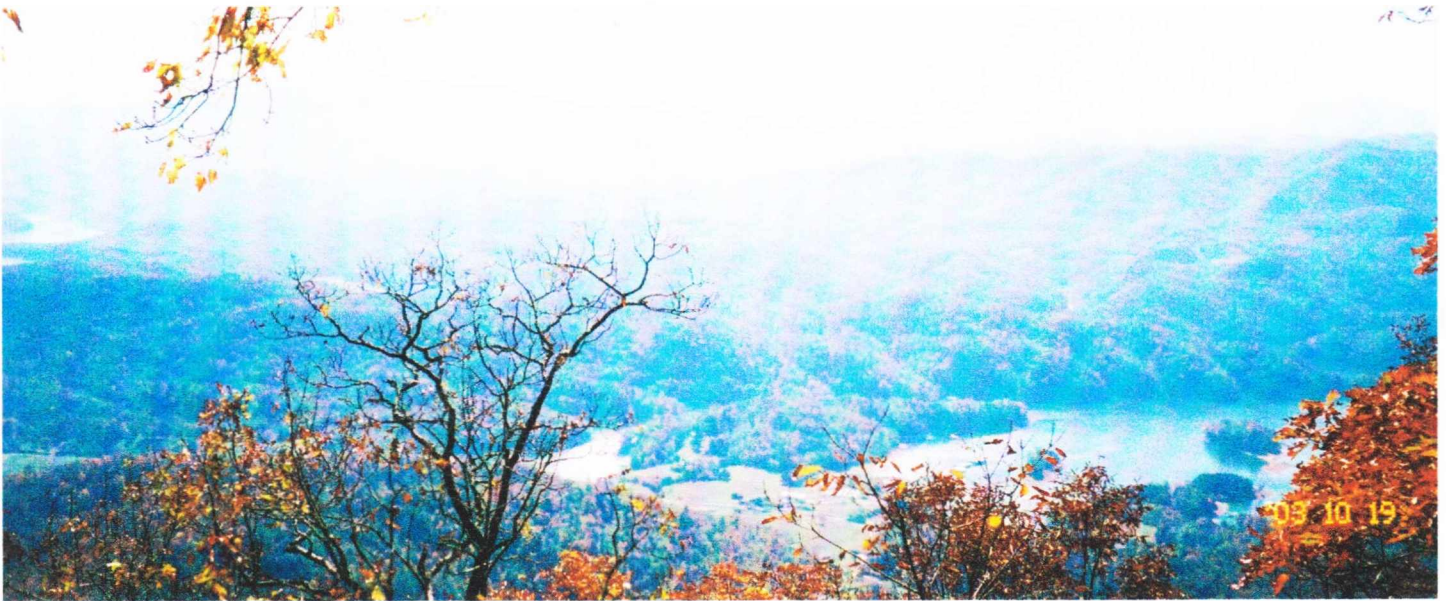


# TENNESSEE TRASH #56

Would You Walk Sixteen Miles With 35 Pounds Strapped To  
Your Back To See This?







Tennessee Trash #56 was produced between camping expeditions with The Robe Scouts by Gary R. Robe at P. O. Box 3221 Kingsport, TN 37664, phone 423-239-3106, e-mail [grrobe@chartertn.net](mailto:grrobe@chartertn.net). The last two months have been absolutely wonderful times to be outdoors and we have made the most of the opportunities.



# TENNESSEE TRASH #56

A Zine by Gary R. Robe for Mailing Number 236 of the  
Southern Fandom Press Alliance

October - November, 2003

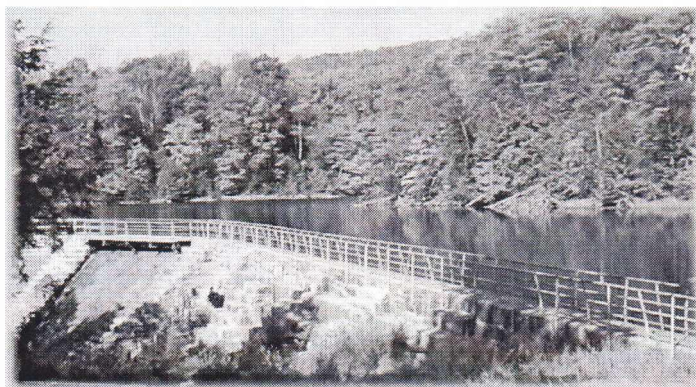
## **HIKING THE TRAILS, COMBING THE BEACH, PITCHING A TENT AND OTHERWISE ENJOYING THE GREAT OUTDOORS...**

The pleasantly warm summer we had in East Tennessee gave way to a luxuriously long and surprisingly warm autumn. One would have thought that with the average summer temperature running 5 degrees below normal and the nearly constant rain we saw through the summer that the fall would have been brief, wet and miserable. On the contrary the weather stayed so warm that we did not see a killing frost until mid-November and the rain held off for most of the period. October and early November are often our most favorable times for camping and hiking and conditions this year were superb.

Nick has completed his Second Class rank in scouts in about 18 months with the troop while Isaac has completed most of his Cub Scout Arrow of Light requirements that will allow him to graduate with honors into scouting. I am looking forward to the end of February with great anticipation since at that time Isaac will move into the Scouts and I can retire as a Cub Scout leader. Although I will continue as an adult leader with Nick and Isaac's troop the demands on my time will be much less. There are over 20 adults signed up to help with Troop 48 so I will be one among many and I will have plenty of backups. There will, however, be occasions where my help will be vital as happened in October.

In the first weekend of October Nick went on a short five-mile hike on the Appalachian Trail. Although the distance was short, the AT can be quite rugged

and the plan was for the hike to accustom the younger scouts to backpacking so it was planned as an overnight event. I wanted badly to go on the expedition but I was needed elsewhere as a Cub Scout Leader.



Bay's Mountain Lake in Kingsport

Just to the west of Kingsport Bays Mountain looms on the horizon. Around 1900 it was discovered that the spring-fed creek that originates on the mountaintop passes through a narrow gap that could be easily dammed. In 1916 the dam was completed and Kingsport had a gravity-fed water supply that would serve the city for many years. In the mid 60's the site of the lake was converted into a nature preserve and city park. Although the lake no longer suffices as the city's water supply the park is still a great place for the people of Kingsport to come and commune with nature.

The park also includes a small zoo for local animals, including a pack of wolves. You can even look in on the wolves 24 hours a day with the Wolf Cam at [www.baysmountain.com](http://www.baysmountain.com). Recently the area around the

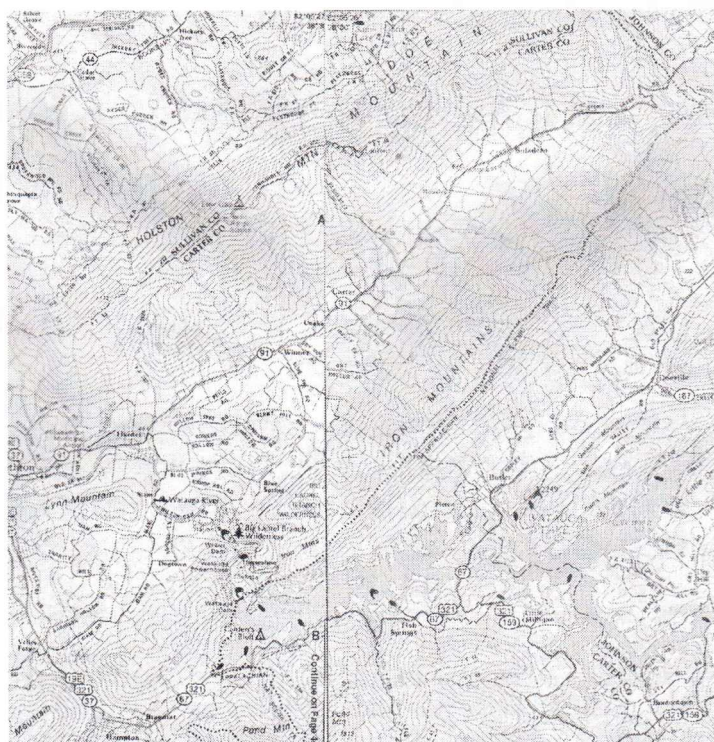
animal habitats has become choked with dead wood knocked down by the summer storms and the victims of the Southern Pine Borer. The park asked the local scout troops and cub packs to come to the park for a work day to pull out the deadwood from around the park to reduce the fire hazard. So, as Nick left for his hiking adventure Isaac and I headed for the park armed with old clothes, work gloves and cutting tools.

I was proud of the job the Cubs did in clearing out the underbrush. They worked for four solid hours and moved tons of tinder up to the access roads so the city crew could come by later to haul it away. I even managed to get the cubs to work together as a team. In some places there was a steep dropoff to the side of the road and carrying the wood uphill would have been exhausting. I suggested that the boys line up bucket-brigade style and hand the branches off rather than individually climbing up and down the hill. At first they looked at me like I was a supreme idiot for such a stupid idea. (Even at 10 they are perfecting their parental idiocy rolling eye response that will see them through their teen years.) Then a couple of them slipped and twisted their ankle and got poked in the eye with a twig and suddenly they got the idea to line up bucket-brigade style and pass the detritus up the hill!

Even though I missed the camping trip I did get a day of bonding with Isaac and the satisfaction of making our city park a safer and better looking place. Then next day when I went to retrieve Nick I found that I had not missed my chance for camping and hiking after all. The five-mile hike was a warmup for a 16 miler the next weekend and they didn't have enough adult leaders to support that trip. Well, it didn't take much coercion to get me to volunteer for that job!

Iron Mountain is a long, unbroken ridge that runs for 16 miles between Wautauga Lake Dam near Elizabethton, TN and a gap where TN Highway 91 near the Johnson-Carter County border. To the east of the mountain lies Wautauga Lake, one of the most beautiful lakes in Appalachia and to the west there is nothing much but more mountains. The high point of the trail along Iron Mountain is at a little over 4,000 ft and the low point is the trailhead at the Wautauga Dam Road at 2,380 ft. The plan was to hike the trail from north to east, taking advantage of the fact that Highway 91 intersects with the AT at about 3,500 feet. Why not let the cars do most of the uphill climbing? I was excited by the prospect of making the hike. My only worry was how my 47

year-old somewhat flabby body would cope with carrying 30+ lbs of camping gear over 16 miles of rugged terrain.



The Appalachian Trail Route on Iron Mountain - Note the density of contour lines surrounding the trail (the dotted line running diagonally below center)!

This was a big stretch compared to any hiking I had ever done before, even going back to my own Scouting days 30 years ago. I had never undertaken an overnight hike or anything over 5 miles at a stretch. The first thing I decided was that my footwear had to be upgraded. I had a pair of boots but they were more suitable for work like snow shoveling than long-distance hiking. I had worn them to the Bay's Mountain project and my legs were nearly useless by the end of the day. I could have tried to go to Mahoneys, our local outfitter for a pair of high-class boots that would have probably set me back over \$100. I had a Sunday afternoon to experiment with and Mahoney's was closed, so I bought a pair of \$18 Wal-Mart low-cut hiking shoes on spec. I loaded up my pack with about 30 lbs of stuff and then took off with Isaac on a two-mile hike around the neighborhood. I figured that if the shoes had not blistered my feet on that walk then they probably wouldn't on a longer hike. The practice run went fine and I wore the Wal-Mart Specials all week



to work. By Friday I hardly felt like I had them on at all!

The next worry was fitting all the gear I would need in the pack I had. Our packs, while adequate for a day hike and fine for the children are rather small for an extended use. With careful packing, however, I found that I could fit our two-man tent, a change of clothes, rain gear, food, water and survival gear into the pack. Using bungee cords I strapped my sleeping bag and ground mat to the bottom of the pack and I was ready to go.

Another concern for the hike was water. Although there are several springs along the trail we were hiking the weather had been dry for over a month and these springs were rated intermittent at best. To be on the safe side each hiker in the party was told to bring along at least six liters of water for their own use. That added about 12 lbs to my load although it was weight that would diminish as the hike progressed.

Finally we had to be concerned about the weather. While up to then the weather had been warm and calm, this was October in the mountains so anything could happen. While the Boy Scout Motto is "Be Prepared", its corollary is "There's No Such Thing As Bad Weather - Only Inadequate Preparation". I had my Yosemite souvenir poncho tucked in bottom of my pack along with a pair of waterproof rain pants. I hoped I wouldn't have to use them. Luckily two of the worries cancelled themselves out two days before the hike. A strong line of thunderstorms moved through the area assuring that there would be at least some water to be collected en route and the storm settled the weather and an excellent if chilly weekend was forecast.

The intrepid band met at 9 a.m. on Saturday morning and drove to the trailhead on Highway 91. The day was a bit chilly but the sky was completely clear as we pulled out of Kingsport. As we climbed the mountains we ran into mist clinging to the ridges, but it appeared that this would burn off as the day progressed. I started out near the front of the group feeling that if I had trouble in keeping up the pace I would be better able to slow the group down from there than if I were in the back. As it turned out this was not a problem. We set out at a pace of about two miles an hour. For the first several miles of the hike the trail wound slowly uphill. Some of the grades were steep enough to make me strain and slow down, but not any more than our leader, Charlie Hasbrouk. After about an

hour of walking we took a short break to take a drink and peel off some outer clothing. Although the temperature was not much over 50°, with the exertion of the hike our jackets were soon not needed.



#### The Intrepid Band Prepares to Depart

The Appalachian Trail is relatively well blazed and maintained on Iron Mountain. The Eastman Chemical Co. Hiking Club maintains the AT as it runs across the far eastern tip of Tennessee so there are considerable resources and manpower brought to bear on this part of the trail. That does not mean that the trail is easy to follow. There is usually nothing more than a white blaze on a tree every few hundred yards and a cleared track to mark the trail's route. This is one of its charms. When hiking the AT there's nothing between you and Nature. There are also deer tracks, fire roads, and old routes of the trail that can lead the hiker into peril. Luckily we had an excellent trail guide that gives a blow-by-blow description of what to expect as well as locations of water sources, points of interest, landmarks, locations of shelters and campsites and warnings about false trails. One of the other adults, Mark Wilson, had a handheld GPS locator with him that had trail details included although we discovered that several of the landmarks weren't where the GPS thought they should be.

Since this was rated as one of the more difficult hikes that Troop 48 normally undertakes we actually had only eight brave souls in the party. This was a good number. It was enough to have several others to share the load but not enough that it was difficult to keep the group together. As the hike progressed I found myself thinking that although a long hike is



not something you would want to do by yourself, when you are on the trail it is a strangely solitary endeavor.



**The Appalachian Trail Southbound From Tennessee Highway 91**

On the first mile or so of the hike there was quite a bit of chatter between the hikers as everyone discussed their gear, last night's dinner, the weather that morning, and the condition of the trail. After an hour of walking, however, the conversation died out, partially due to the physical toll of the pace but also because there is something about the woods that discourages small talk. When you are walking in the woods your normally two-dimensional world suddenly becomes three-dimensional. The undulation of the ground, the treetops, sight of the valley below gives you a connection with the earth as well as a feeling of hovering high above the ground. You soon develop a strange feeling of simultaneous

freedom and claustrophobia. While you may be able to see thousands of feet down into the valley and up into the infinite sky, at the same time the trees on all sides hem you in. The world squeezes down into vastness above and below but with a strange one-dimensionality of the narrow opening of the trail in front of you. The feeling is so vast and alien that one begins to feel that human noise is an intrusion.

Five miles into the trail we came upon an interesting landmark. About eighty five years ago Nick Grindstaff lived on Iron Mountain subsisting only on what he could raise in a small patch of ridge top ground and what he could forage. He died alone in his one-room cabin on the mountain, survived only his faithful dog that kept watch over him in the days between his passing and the discovery of his body. He is buried there on top of the mountain and his gravestone is a familiar sight to AT hikers. It was a lonely sight but also a compelling one. There is a certain attraction to chucking the world and going to live on top of a mountain. There was also a sentimental touch to his gravestone in that someone cared enough about this hermit to call him Uncle Nick Grindstaff.



**Nick Grindstaff's Grave**

By mid-afternoon we had covered seven miles and came to a good campsite. Although we could have pushed on a few more miles to a shelter we chose to call it a day at this place because there was water here. We had only found one other water hole along the trail despite the recent rain. We decided not to risk running into another dry spring at the next shelter, so our hike for the day was declared over. Even so the water was not plentiful. It rose in a boggy ravine and there was no water on the surface. We had to dig down into the mud and let the seepage



slowly fill the hole overnight so we could fill our canteens the next morning.

Dinner that night was freeze-dried trail food reconstituted with a cupful of our precious water and a candy bar for desert. Actually the dehydrated food was pretty good, considering what it was. There are apparently two companies specializing in trail food, Mountain Home and Alpine Aire. Of the two, Mountain Home apparently has gotten it right. Once opened the package becomes a cooking bag. Just pour in a cup of boiling water, re-seal the top and then squish around the water until all the powder is wetted out then wait for five minutes. After a day on the trail probably your definition of tasty expands a bit but the Vegetarian Lasagna I had was at least satisfying.



Our Campsite on the Trail

One funny thing did happen while we were settling into our campsite. At one point we heard a group of hikers coming northbound on the trail. When they reached us it was none other than Troop 87, our troop's biggest rival, hiking *our* trail on *our* weekend! They had, however, started from the base of the mountain and hiked up to where we were. We were comfortably settling in for the night when they had another two hours of hiking to do. We went to bed that night feeling very superior.

If the woods felt somewhat creepy during the day that feeling intensified at night. We were many miles away from the nearest electricity and the night was moonless. I had expected pitch blackness but when I awoke sometime in the wee hours the tent was more strongly illuminated than I expected. When I went outside following the Call of Nature all the trees and details of the campsite were clearly visible in

monochrome lit only by starlight. The night was perfectly clear and the stars were brilliant but the air was blustery and chill enough that I was glad to crawl back into my sleeping bag.

The next morning we had a real camping treat. Although the temperature in the night had dropped into the upper 30's the air was so dry that there had been no dewfall! Our tents were dry so we could pack up quickly without having to haul wet gear. Breakfast was oatmeal and granola bars. I discovered that instant oatmeal cooks fine right in the pouch when hot water is poured in. We used some of our bog water to douse the fire and were back on the trail by 9 a.m.

At noon we stopped at the 11-mile mark on the trail at a shelter with a spectacular view of the valley and lake below. That is where the panoramic photo on the inside cover was taken. After lunch my pack was considerably lighter after all of the food and most of the water was gone. At this point we had only five miles to go to the end of the trail. Energized by the food and rest we maintained a steady pace. The only long stop we made from that point on was to have an impromptu church service beside the trail. I am a bit ashamed to admit it but at that point I did turn on my cell phone to call back to Corlis to tell her when we were likely to be ready for pickup.

The last half-mile of the trail was probably the hardest part since it involved a sharp drop from 3800 ft down to 2380 ft at the end. Climbing downhill with a loaded pack is a real challenge. Avoiding a face-first pratfall is probably foremost on the mind, but the growing pain in the knees is a close second. Suddenly as we rounded a bend a simple covered display with a bulletin board and a guest log came into view. We were at the end! One of the boy's father was there waiting for us with a gallon of fresh-brewed iced tea. Within 10 minutes of our arrival at the base Corlis came down the road and our adventure was over.

That was what it was like to hike 16 miles of the AT over one weekend. The whole trail is over 2,000 miles long and there are people who hike the whole thing from Georgia to Maine nonstop in one season! That is a monumental task that I don't believe I'll ever even aspire to do, although after this experience I am ready to hike the 183 miles of the AT that lie within the boundaries of the Sequoyah Council. Troop 48 does that in a seven-year cycle so Isaac will be 17 when we complete it. That seems like an achievable goal to me.

## LETS GO TO THE BEACH

After two straight weekends of being left home alone Corlis was ready to be Taken Somewhere the next weekend. Also that week was her fall break from ETSU and the children were off on Friday for a school in-service day. If I took Friday off we could stretch it to a three-day weekend that would break up the long stretch between Labor Day and Thanksgiving nicely. My first thought was Gatlinburg but a quick check of hotels showed that was impossible. Late October is the peak of autumn so the Smokies are crawling with tourists.

I was, however, nicely surprised when I tried Myrtle Beach. They were well into off-season there and I was able to book a two-bedroom suite on the beach for \$48 a night! In order to conserve vacation time I worked a flex schedule on Monday through Thursday so I could take Friday off without calling it vacation. In order to maximize our time at the beach we left home at 6 p.m. on Thursday evening and drove to Spartanburg SC. They have finally finished I-26 through North Carolina so we can now reach Asheville, NC in a little over an hour and Spartanburg in three. By making this jump start we were on the beach by noon the next morning.

The ocean water at Myrtle Beach is still in the mid-70's in late October. That is warm enough for children to go swimming and for parents to watch while reading a book. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate with us as well as it had on the two previous weeks when the boys and I were playing mighty woodsman. I strong cold front had pushed through a day earlier and although there was some sun showing through the temperatures were a bit too cool for real enjoyment of the beach.

There were, however, compensations for visiting Myrtle Beach in the off-season. We never had to wait at a restaurant and those tourist attractions that were open were not crowded. It takes a lot for a kid to get tired of the beach, but after a few hours of chasing waves and digging in the sand Nick and Isaac were ready for something else. The hotel we were at also had a nice indoor pool so we visited that until the children were tired of that too. I swam with the boys in the pool for a while but mostly Corlis and I lounged in a recliner chair and read while the children played.

Since Myrtle Beach is a Major Tourist Attraction, of course it has a bunch of outlet malls built up around

it. That is not normally too compelling to me except one of the stores nearby was a Coleman Outlet, I was happy to shop for a while.



Playing in the Sand Doesn't Require Warm Water

My new laptop computer from work has a DVD player, so I bought an AC converter for the car to allow it to work on trips indefinitely. During the round trip to Myrtle Beach and back the boys enjoyed a movie marathon and Corlis and I got to drive in peace. The only harsh words that were uttered during 16 hours of driving were the short arguments over who got to choose the next movie to play. I'm sure the novelty will wear off eventually but for now it is the only way to fly!

## HALLOWEEN

Preparing for Halloween is one of the most anticipated events of the year in our family. Although the boys are starting to outgrow Trick-or-Treating they still want to carve pumpkins and create a costume – just like their dad. The basis for my costume was found the day Wal-Mart started putting out their costuming supplies. I found a black skullcap with six orange tentacles arrayed along the top each with a battery-powered flashing eyeball at the end. I just *had* to design a costume around that! I combined the hat with a blank face cover, an orange turtleneck (the availability of bright orange clothing is one of the few advantages I've been able to discern about living near UT) orange Halloween sleep pants and a black cape. When people asked what I was I just said I was an Eyesore. (See the inside cover for a picture.)

We continued with the alien theme for Isaac and Nick. Isaac had picked out a rubber full-face alien



his costume around that. For Nick we had a rather silly Cyclops alien hat that went on his head over a blank face hood. Nick's costume was finished off with a rather silly colored sweatsuit and yellow rubber gloves. When people asked Nick what he was he said he was a Thing-ar from the Klaatu Nebula. I accompanied the boys around the neighborhood for trick-or-treating. My costume was wild enough that several of the houses we visited offered me treats too.



**Our Attempts At Pumpkin Carving - I Am Especially Proud of the Mike Wazowski Pumpkin on the Right**

## **A COMET APPEARS AT OUR HOUSE**

At Halloween we always are concerned for our black cat Jellybean's safety and try to keep him in during the days before and after October 31. Unfortunately that did not keep us from a cat disaster. One week after Halloween I let the cats out for their morning toilette as usual. As I stepped out a few minutes later to leave for work and there was a cat screaming outside the house. This is not a terribly unusual happening as several of our neighbors also have cats and none of them like each other at all. I almost disregarded the sound except there was something about it that was disturbing. Then I saw our cat Lilly lying in the street.

I ducked inside and yelled to Corlis what had happened and then got the cat carrier from the basement. When I reached her I saw that there was no hope. Her hindquarters had been crushed and

there was no movement from her shoulders down. Lilly had always been an extremely strong-willed animal and getting her into the cat carrier has always been a battle of wits and nerve. As I tried to gently ease her into the carrier she reached out with her front paws and clung to the edge of the box, fighting me with her last energy.

By the time I had the carrier in the car Corlis had called the vet and had herself and the boys dressed. She took off and the vet arrived at the office within a couple minutes of her. The only thing to do at that point was to put Lilly out of her misery. I wished that the car that had hit her had done the job cleanly instead of leaving it for us to finish, but at least it happened when we were home and could end her suffering relatively quickly.

Since this traumatized everyone beyond the point of functioning, Corlis did not make the boys go to school that day. They went shopping in Johnson City and the Humane Society had some animals for adoption there at the Petsmart store. Among the cats they had was an all-white female kitten with golden eyes and just a few black hairs on the top of her head. Corlis has coveted my mother's white cat for several years, so it was not a hard decision to give the kitten a home.

The kitten came with a nasty respiratory infection so we had to quarantine her for ten days after bringing her into the house. She obviously didn't feel very well for the first few days after she arrived with the flu, vaccinations and worm medicine all wearing on her. After a few days, however, she began to perk up when we visited her in her guest bathroom domain. After ten days of confinement her grippe had subsided and the other two cats were showing symptoms of catching it anyhow despite our efforts at hygiene. We turned her out into the house and she joyously began romping in the halls and terrorizing the other cats. I know they hate it but I really do enjoy watching old, fat, lazy cats having their world upset by the introduction of a kitten.

I am a firm believer in having animals name themselves so we gave her some time for her nature to manifest itself. Nothing came to us during her confinement but once we turned her loose it came soon enough. What do you call a rapidly moving dirty snowball with a tail? How about Comet?

Comet has moved right in to our house with catlike self assurance and while the other two are not thrilled about it they are grudgingly accepting her.



# MAILING COMMENTS

**THE SOUTHERNER #235: JEFF COPELAND**—Congratulations on a great run as SFPA OE! You have done a great job and can now turn the reins over to Sheila knowing that you have done more than your share to keep the ship afloat.

I always enjoy telling mundane friends about SFPA. Their eyes usually get big at the mention of a Press Association and writer's group. The idea of actually writing something on a regular basis and getting it published makes usually impresses them. Even in these days of endless and infinite blogs there is something about setting one's words to paper that still seems to mean something. It is a worthy endeavor and I'm glad to be a part of it and I thank you for your big part in maintaining it.

**BOB'S INFECTED THIGHS LEGS NOSE: MIKE WEBBER**—Sorry to see that your job worries are not over. Having just missed that axe at Eastman recently I really empathize with anyone looking for work (three of my colleagues got laid off, including the guy in the cubicle next to me). I'm just glad I learned Spanish because I think that's what kept my job safe up to now. None of the supervisor's pets in the department can do what I do with Latin American tech service. I hope you've found something in our Bush's wonderful jobless recovery economy!

Even though I never felt the show recovered from the departure of Diana Rigg, I did appreciate it that *The Avengers* didn't muck up the relationship between Steed and Mrs. Peel with a romance. At my age when the show first ran I was much more interested in the spy stuff than any yucky kissing stuff. Still the relationship between Steed and Peel set the stage for Mulder and Scully a generation later.

**THE NEW PORT NEWS #211: NED BROOKS**—I recently read Kim Stanley Robinson's *the Years of Rice and Salt* and quite enjoyed his analysis of just how much Islam has been hijacked over the years by the mullahs

pushing their own political and social agenda. According to Robinson most of the misogynistic tenets of Islam were added on well after Mohammed died. The real fact is that the fundamentalist Moslems probably sense how out-of-step their views are with what passes for the world consensus and how vulnerable their whole system is when it comes into contact with Western culture. The only way they can hold their power together is to try and resist opening the society to outside influences.

I will be interested to see how Christian missionaries will be allowed to interact with Iraqis if we ever manage to get the country stabilized. Right now I imagine being a vocal missionary in Iraq is close to suicide, however, that may change within a year or so. In all the rest of the world Islamic (and Jewish in Israel) forbid any Christian evangelism. Maybe Islam is a more powerful religion than Christianity but I would like to see what would happen in some of those Islamic countries were they allowed to compete openly.

The phrase *recién casados - mañana cansados* was something I made up although it seems to me to be so obvious I can't believe it is not common.

**OLD IRON BUTT IS BACK: GUY H. LILLIAN III**—With all the other happenings I had to cover last mailing I see I barely mentioned the DSC. I *did* stay up all night on Friday-Saturday mainly to the grog that the Zielkies were serving and the fact that I was too plastered after two cups of the stuff that I didn't feel safe in walking across the Highway of Doom until I sobered a bit. I do believe that Dan Caldwell and I solved most of fandom's problems in an all night bull session in the consuite but aside from a vague memory that the conversation was long and involved I don't remember much of it.

The one person I wanted to meet at the convention was John Ringo since he is in the process of building a house and moving to Horse Cave, KY. Unfortunately the meeting didn't come



off well because the person who identified him to me (damn all concoms who think 14 pt. Type is sufficient for name badges) was mistaken. I tried to start a conversation with the man I thought was Mr. Ringo only to find out that the Real John Ringo was the one holding court and the guy I approached was only listening in. I'm afraid that I interrupted Mr. Ringo's lecture and came off looking like an oafish fanboy when I introduced myself. Apparently Mr. Ringo was aware of Concave happening in his new neighborhood but didn't seem particularly interested in it. Maybe he won't remember me if we meet again.

### **VARIATIONS ON A THEME #22: RICH LYNCH**

—It is interesting that you and (I suppose) Nicki feel the need to insulate your fannish accomplishments from your mundane lives. I have never felt the need to do that and, in fact, have touted my fannish experiences on the job. Most of my supervisors have been quite impressed by my running a convention for 20+ years. That displays organization, negotiation, management, budgeting and social skills that apply right to the workplace. Even writing for SFPA looks good on a résumé. After all, written communication skills are in high demand and to be able to demonstrate that you regularly publish your writings *for fun* is a pretty strong statement about your ability to communicate. I have, on occasion, even shared copies of *Tennessee Trash* with colleagues, especially those who figure prominently (and favorably) in the story.

### **TRAVELER'S TALES: STEVE HUGHES**

—Gee, and I thought our vacation in Yosemite was exciting and exotic! The stereographs are beautiful, although I did have some trouble in getting my eyes to cross enough to see the larger ones. I wonder just how much of a tourism boost New Zealand has gotten from LOTR?

I recently read that the castle used for most of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is close to Glasgow. We will certainly make the effort to visit there when we attend Worldcon in 2005 so I suppose it is not so unusual to let film scenery influence vacation plans. We didn't know it but Page, Arizona is apparently one of the favorite locations for many Hollywood movies. The surrounding desert has many unearthly seeming rock formations, Lake Powell allows the construction of a waterfront and the town itself can be used for urban settings. We didn't know

that when we planned our Grand Canyon tour a few years ago but I'm certainly glad we did go there.

### **TWIGDRASIL AND TREEHOUSE GAZETTE #84: RICHARD**

**DENGROVE**—After saying that I hadn't had much trouble with porn showing up in the kid's Internet work I just had a doozy a few weeks ago. They were studying agriculture in Isaac's class and specifically pigs. One of the assignments was to find out all the things that come from some of the less palatable parts of a pig. Corlis typed in Pig Byproducts into Google and got a Pork Industry Council website than has some of the information needed. She then had me to help Isaac with the rest. I typed in pig hair into the search engine and found out that apparently pig hair is a euphemism for pubic hair. Luckily I was doing the scrolling and selecting from the search results and since it was school work Isaac wasn't paying much attention anyhow. Still, it is amazing just what web sites are out there if you go looking for them!

At least for my kids the realism of the Harry Potter Universe only makes fantasyland seem closer. When things like cars, trains, school administrators, and politicians are mixed into the magical world it serves to flesh out the fantasy and make it easier to project yourself into. Of course, I may just be projecting myself and assuming the boys feel the same way. Most days their main concern is if they have found all the secret levels in the Harry Potter computer games.

Right now we are taking a vacation from Harry Potter by visiting the Discworld. We are about halfway through reading *Guards! Guards!* And the boys are loving it. This is a really fun book to read because Captain Vimes, Sergeant Colon, Corporal Nobby, Captain Carrot and The Partician are among my favorite Pratchett characters. I am having lots of fun making up voices for them, especially Colon and Nobby. As I read I notice that Terry Pratchett generally does not inject dialect into his character's lines. I find it is much more in character to give Nobby a bit of an Eric Idle cockney accent while Vimes is all John Cleese.

You are right that colleague has little to stand on with only Mexican law behind her. Company policy, on the other hand, is another thing.



While my male colleague may not need fear legal action, his future with the company may be what suffers. You can be sure that his behavior has been noted by superiors who have a much more American view of personnel management and it may haunt him when promotions are being considered. While the PC Police in the US may go overboard in protecting us from any slight, real or imagined, I can see how damaging the racism that was common a generation ago was.

### **ADVENTURES IN GRAPHIC DESIGN:**

**STEVE HUGHES**—Ha! Did you really think you could get out of volunteering to do the program for the Stereoscopic Society? Especially after you had demonstrated competence in producing the flier? The finished product is beautiful so you can pat yourself on the back and tell yourself that at least you have learned about color spaces. I especially like the photo of the sailboat in front of the Yorktown.

### **THE SPHERE #206: DON MARKSTEIN**

—I do not share your confidence that President Bush will not win a second term. As I have said before, the man is just lucky. Until November I might have said that his luck had turned with Iraq getting messier by the day and the unemployment rate climbing steadily. With both a foreign policy train wreck and a faltering economy it looked like President Bush's popularity was tanking like one would expect. Now in November the GNP surged by 7% in the third quarter and the labor market stopped bleeding jobs. Now The Administration can point to the rebounding economy as that they were right all along and all that was needed was the jump start of the Bush tax cuts. As long as the economy doesn't sag again, we can look forward not only to a second term for George W. but also a run by little brother Jeb in 2008.

This picture would be brighter if the Democrats weren't busy self-destructing. The best they can do is attack Howard Dean because he said he wanted to reach out to rednecks with confederate flag bumper stickers on their pickup trucks. The rest of the Democratic field ran over themselves condemning that, but perhaps here in the South we know exactly what Dean meant by that. It seemed as if all the other Democratic candidates are so blinded by Political Correctness that they don't want to admit that such a creature as the Southern Redneck exists. Anyone who drives

around south of the Ohio River knows that not only does such a species exist, down here they are common. Whoever they are, they sure aren't voting Democratic these days. It used to be that the Democratic Party could count on a wave or two at the South and depend on racking up all those electoral votes. Now the Republicans have tapped in to the basic religious and social conservatism of your basic Southern Baptist. The Democrats are stuck with the shrinking Northern Liberal states and California as their power base and it's not enough to carry an election any more.

### **SPIRITUS MUNDI #197: GUY H.**

**LILLIAN III**—Thank you for the appreciation of PLCM. Since P.L. was our guest oh honor at Concave 1 in 1980, she was one of my longest-standing fannish friends. It is a terrible loss for all of us who knew her and even more to those who never got the chance.

Now all the K-Mets need to do is sign the kid who caught the fly ball the Moises Alou missed in the Cubs-Marlins game and we would have the set! We don't know if Mookie will be back again next year. He seemed to run a pretty good ball team, they just couldn't win. It must be tough knowing that if you develop a player enough to help the team that the next week he will be sent up to the next level.

I went through most of the summer without another migraine attack and then had a string of them in early November as the weather changed. I was just glad I didn't have one while I was eight miles out on the AT. Developing a blind spot and losing my depth perception would not have been a Good Thing while picking my way across the Iron Mountain ridge!

### **REVANANT #20: SHEILA**

**STRICKLAND**—Thanks for taking on the OEship of SFPA. I hope you enjoy the job!

LibertyCon suffers from its own success in much the same way that my own concave does. Having a small convention in a funky old hotel that really doesn't care what you do does have its charms. Unfortunately what has happened here was that the management decided to book another group into the hotel that weekend, plus the inclusion of the DSC increased attendance to the breaking point. I would have enjoyed the



convention a lot more if it had been cooler weather and if I had a room in the main hotel.

The convention did do one thing that really put me off though. I don't think the run-of-the-mill attendee noticed but behind the bar there was a selection of Good Stuff that was available only to con committee and guests. My philosophy is that everyone who attends the convention is a guest and to display a fully-stocked bar in plain view but then to deny access to most of the membership is just plain Bad Form. If they wanted to treat staff and guests to something extra they should have set up a separate Green Room with the Good Stuff out of sight of the masses. I have often felt that the LibertyCon staff enjoys displaying a bit of arrogance to the rest of fandom and this just served to highlight that feeling. I would probably not have noticed this if I had not volunteered to serve for a few hours behind the bar. I was blithely serving anyone who asked until a staff member pointed out the Error Of My Ways.

I'm glad that Chattanooga is a three-hour drive from Kingsport or The Acropolis would get a lot of my income. We just had a Greek/Italian restaurant open in Kingsport, and the family that runs it is just as friendly and attentive as the one that runs the Acropolis. We have become regulars there although it is across town for us. Luckily the food there is not as fancy or pricey!

Actually the Moose is a family organization, so there are women around to help recover civilization. I think that the bomb shelter style comes from the fact that it is a members-only organization and that most of the success of the Moose comes from the distinction as the only wet spot in many dry towns. Since dry areas are becoming rarer and rarer the Moose has suffered quite a decline in membership. For a traveler on a limited budget, however, it can be a good club to belong to. As Rickey pointed out every lodge has a low-cost buffet every Friday night and a brunch on Sunday. It would be a way to reduce costs and meet new people in strange cities. I know that Rickey and Betsy made use of the Moose Lodge in Huntsville during the 2002 DSC.

**PETER, PAN & MERRY #51: DAVE SCHLOSSER**—REYRCMT: Lynch—As e-commerce just got started collecting taxes online would have probably cost more to collect than

was raised. Now, as you correctly note adding on the tax is a simple matter of having a zip code keyed lookup table. If I have to pay sales tax on the Internet I would actually come out a bit ahead since I live in Sullivan County and the City of Kingsport has an extra add-on tax to pay for the convention center and baseball stadium. I might feel a bit guilty for not paying the stadium tax but since we are among the few that actually attends games and buys concessions I feel I'm paying for the stadium bond anyhow.

**OBLIO #148: GARY BROWN**—It was morbidly fascinating to watch Hurricane Isabel build and then luckily fade away off the US coast. Thank God there were no strong westerly winds to move the storm onshore. Since it stalled out over cooler water it pretty much fell apart before smacking into North Carolina and Virginia. Two people I knew were vacationing in on the coast as the Isabel came ashore. Luckily they were beyond the edge of the storm.

The death of Johnny Cash was especially felt here since the Carter family lives just over the state line in Hiltons, Virginia. Just after June died Johnny came up here to the Carter Family fold to perform a memorial concert in her honor. Back in the 70's my family had a houseboat in the Cumberland River not very far from the Cash family's lakeside house in Hendersonville. Several times we went past the house by boat and exchanged waves with the Cashes. I doubt we would have been welcome if we tied up to their dock, but they weren't hiding either.

Although Nick and Isaac can sing *A Boy Named Sue* on their own, I am proud to say that when they playing in the campfire with the Scout troop they sang "And it burns, burns, burns - This ring of Fire". The local public radio station has an Americana Music program on Tuesday through Friday afternoons so I had heard many selections from Johnny's recently recorded *American Recordings* albums. I was happy to see that near the end of his life Johnny Cash began to have a resurgence of popularity just like happened to Roy Orbison in the 80's just before he died.

We have not hosted any players that made it to The Bigs although plenty of players that have come through Kingsport have. The closest we came to having a star in the house was when Tom Pachorek Jr. stayed with us four years ago.



His father is a retired big leaguer who now calls games for WGN in Chicago. While Tom Jr. was staying with us Tom Sr. would call almost nightly to see how his sin had played that day. It got to where he would rather talk to Corlis or me because we conveyed more information than Jr.

### **YNGVI IS A LOUSE AND OTHER GRAFFITOS #85: T.K.F WEISSKOPF—**

Your donut comparison description has my mouth watering. Since September I Corlis and I have been on a reduced carbohydrate diet. We have not fallen for a total Atkins approach, but have combined elements from both Atkins and Weight Watchers. The result is that I have lost about 17 pounds over the period and am now back to the waist size I was in 1990. I can do without most of the junk I have forsaken but *please* don't talk to me about jelly donuts!

### **TRIVIAL PURSUITS #109: JANICE GELB—**

Your frustrations with Microsoft Word doing unwanted formatting reminds me of how much I miss the old Reveal Codes function in WordPerfect. Whenever Word is doing something arcane, inexplicable and invisible I wish over and over that I could actually see what the blasted program was assuming I wanted to do. Alas, having Microsoft reveal formatting codes would be too much like Telling, so I'm not holding my breath.

It's a shame that you didn't get on the California Recall ballot. It would have been encouraging to know that there was *someone* on the ballot that I could have voted for if I was a Californian!

Despite the disorganization it appears that Torcon was officially a Worldcon. Years ago the Wigwam Village was mentioned as a possible venue for almost every fannish event from a SCA tournament to Worldcon, Rickey Sheppard once outlined his plan for the Worldcon Powwow. His plan was for the business meeting to be held on the playground and for the Hugos to be mailed to the winners. After all, the only essential functions of the Worldcon are to run a site selection for the next one and to administer the awarding of the Hugos. The rest is just details.

### **WAVE TO THE NICE MOUNTAIN, DEAR #42: JEFF COPELAND—REYRCMT**

on Google's business model. With the recent

layoffs at Eastman I've become Mr. Answer Man for all adhesives questions coming in by whatever media. Because of this I have really had to learn where product information is stored. This has made me aware of just how badly constructed the corporate website is. Last week I was bitching about this to one of the business managers and I did a little demo. I typed in one of Eastman's trade names into the Corporate search engine. It returned about 50 hits. None of those that showed up on the first page had the product name in the title. I then switched to Google and the first three hits connected directly to pages specific to that product!

I think your Gore presidency scenario looks pretty plausible. It is a bit like the current plot of *the West Wing* where Bartlett gets hammered by the right wing for doing pretty much what they would have done in his place. The sick thing is that as many mistakes as President Bush has made if the election were held today he would be rewarded with a second term no matter who the Democrats run.

It seems to me that President Bush's constant lip service to his Christian values has emboldened our own Christian Taliban wannabees to come out of the woodwork. First there is Judge Moore in Alabama and his Sacred Ten Commandments Monument. I hear discussions about what a great man he is and what a great example he set. What are these people talking about? Here is a man who became the supreme jurist in his state who steadfastly refuses to obey a court order. How would he have reacted if someone ignored one of his orders? Here is a man who took the oath with the words "so help me God" to uphold the legal system chucking it out over a hunk of rock. What kind of Christian example is it to break your most solemn oath because you don't like a superior's decision?

Recently in Kingsport a middle school student persisted in evangelizing to a teacher who was teaching evolution. The same girl was spreading rumors that the teacher was an atheist. When the principal stepped in and suspended the girl the local paper picked up the story and you can just imagine the reaction in the letters to the editor. They all but nominated the girl for sainthood for her brave defense of The Bible. It was sad how few were bothered by the slander the teacher had to endure. These are dark times.