

# Catchpenny Gazette 13





# Catchpenny Gazette

**Number 13**

***Inconveniencing electrons since 2004***

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## **Artwork**

Cover: photograph by David Burton

Masthead: Pecos Dave on his trusty steed Jimmy.

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# Notes From Byzantium

Eric Mayer

## I Remember the Suzerainne

A few evenings ago the subject got round to cheesy old 50's science fiction effects. Mary and I had been talking about George Pal's *War of the Worlds* and the new version, which we haven't seen. I recalled a television show where the same slim, four-finned, miniature (obviously) spaceship took off from the busy spaceport again and again. (Maybe it was every time the scene changed.)

What I remembered best, though, was the ruler of this busy place, an evil tyrant bearing the title "Suzerainne," who strode about in high heeled boots and a Ming the Merciless collar, issuing orders, looking cruel and imperious and just generally making men weep.



At the time, I would have called her "hot" except I was six and didn't know the word. Did anyone know the word "hot" in the 1950's?

I couldn't remember the name of the show, of course, but in a few minutes Mary located an Internet site devoted old TV sf and *Rocky Jones - Space Ranger* flew right out at me - the attached strings clearly visible.

Amazingly, I had even got some of it right. There was, indeed, a Suzerainne Juliandra, but in my memory I had apparently got her jumbled up with her evil twin who was kept locked in the dungeons to prevent her from destroying the universe, needless to say.

By weird coincidence, I was surprised to read, the actress who played the Suzerainne - Ann Robinson - starred in George Pal's *War of the Worlds*. She's still around, with a website, giving interviews, and even makes an appearance in this year's screen version of the H.G. Wells classic. She's listed as playing "grandmother."

I must avoid seeing the movie. I want to remember the Suzerainne as she was.

## Dangers of Digitalization

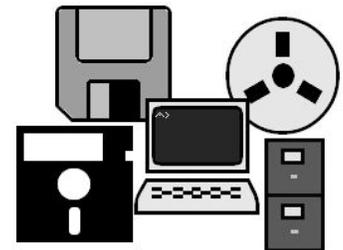
Ted Rall writes about the dangers to our heritage of digitalization. See [Cultural Suicide via Digitalization](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Without discussion or debate humanity has committed itself to the wholesale digitalization of its collective cultural and historical information base. Music, movies, manuscripts, everything from letters between presidents to merchants' financial transactions are currently created and stored in strictly digital form - a development that fulfills George Orwell's prophecy that history would become mutable, now with a few keystrokes. Even more terrifying than the likelihood that the digitalization of history will be abused in the service of tyranny is the certainty that we are setting the stage for the greatest loss of knowledge since the destruction of the Royal Library at Alexandria.

The article provides an interesting summary of the ways digital data is lost, both through degradation and technological obsolescence.

Whether the data I saved to 5 1/4 inch floppies when I got my first Apple is still readable is impossible to say because I don't have the hardware or software to try to read it. Not that I recall there being anything I'd like to retrieve. Perhaps the box score for Ryne Duren's no-hitter against the 1964 Cleveland Indians in a memorable Strat-O-Matic baseball game. Or my saved position from my feeble attempt at the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy computer text adventure. Nothing I wrote then would be of any use to me today.

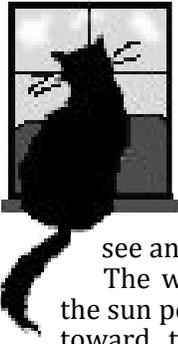
I'm not sure I agree with Rall's suggestion that paper is still the best solution. What is wanted, I think, is to keep



updating to viable media. Granted, it would be impossible to continually save to newer formats more than a tiny fraction of data, but it would be possible to save more that way than by reducing it to paper.

Years ago, for instance, my brother had a videotape made of some old family Super Eight movies. Mary had untangled a rat's nest of film we discovered in a shoe box in the attic and painstakingly rolled it back unto reels. In between endless stop motion animation and shots of the family dog were preserved a few minutes of my grandmother and other relatives.

## The Cat Looks Down



Sabrina's up in the window again. She's our cat. She sits on the windowsill and stares intently out at...who knows what. I hunker down behind her, try to put my eyes at the same level as hers, to figure out what it is that has her attention but I can never see anything.

The window looks out over the roof of the sun porch, across the yard and downhill toward the back of a neighbor's house. Nothing's moving. There isn't enough breeze to stir the limbs of the pine trees. No birds, that I can see. No squirrels. No dog in the pen behind the house.

A decade and more ago, in a different house, the kitchen window faced our neighbor's place. From the kitchen floor, a much younger Sabrina could look up toward a second floor window next door, in which, as often as not, sat the neighbor's dog.

Day after day the dog looked down and Sabrina looked up. Sometimes Sabrina bristled or flicked her tail in annoyance. Though she never ventured outside and had seen the dog only from a distance, she still recognized the canine, her mortal enemy.

Maybe when she appears to be looking at nothing she is watching the pen, waiting for the dog to come into view. Now it is she who looks down at the dog. Sabrina has moved up in the world.

## Typewriter Heroes

Recently Dave Davies, of Kinks fame, had up for auction on eBay one of his old guitars, a vintage 1977 Les Paul Artisan, used on various tours and songs. I imagine that for a connoisseur it would be exciting to get hold of an instrument from which a genuine rock n' roll legend had wrung some notes.

A lot of rock fans associate guitars with musicians, and even with individual tracks. I

suppose different makes of guitars have different characteristics. I can just about distinguish an acoustic from electric so why, exactly, Dave might have played a Les Paul Artisan three pickup custom walnut on "Come Dancing" instead of, say, a banjo is beyond me.

Since writing, unlike music, is something I know a little about, I was intrigued when I ran across Richard Polt's [list of typewriters used by famous authors](#).<sup>2</sup> Pounding the keys and slapping the return lever is a physical process, like working guitar strings. Every typewriter has a different feel. Making the same words on a portable, or a manual, or an electric is a different sensation. The words sound different coming out too. The clatter of the keys, the noise made by the carriage, differ from machine to machine.

Might the make of typewriter used influence the words? Looking down the list I noticed a few authors had the same machines. For example, both Philip K. Dick and Harlan Ellison used an Olympia SG 3. A good machine for SF perhaps? On the other hand, E.B. White and Jack Kerouac wrote on Underwood portables. Now there's a mismatched pair for you!



At least all the typewriters represented had proved capable of producing publishable work. The Smith-Corona manual portable I labored at for years was a machine shunned by the successful authors listed. Maybe that was my problem. You need the right tool for the job.

Would it have helped if I'd used the same writing instrument as a typewriter hero, like Mark Twain? Where would I have found a Sholes & Glidden?

James Thurber employed an Underwood. I used to bring \$4 Underwoods home from the thrift store all the time. Inevitably they proved more suitable for reducing a sheet of paper to shreds than writing, that is when the carriage didn't immediately jam, or fall off. None of those old typewriters had "The Night the Bed Fell Down" in them.

Neither have any of the word processors I've tried. But I keep looking. •

*Eric's column is extracted from his blog at <http://www.journalscape.com/ericmayer>*

1. <http://lnk.nu/news.yahoo.com/6fl>
2. <http://lnk.nu/staff.xu.edu/6fm.html>

# Scrungy

Originally published in 1969

## Dave Locke

I'd just had lunch, and as I came out of the restaurant and started down the street to my car I happened to see this guy painting his window. He was across the street in a small building that had been vacant for a few months. With little attention to aesthetic qualities, and with many colors of paint, he was painting words like:

**PAPERBAX - THOUSANDS OF THEM  
BOOKS SWAP  
MAGAZINES BUY SELL**

I went up to the corner and crossed over.

As I walked into the place the odor of books, magazines, cat food, cats, ashes and rotten leftovers inauspiciously assailed me. I'd read accounts of discovering bookstores on out-of-the-way streets in big cities, and here I was on the west coast and in east Pasadena and there wasn't a doubt in the world but that I had definitely discovered something. I explored further.

The inside was about 20' by 25'. Immediately inside the door was a large table displaying dozens of magazines. They in turn displayed covers showing couples who were immensely enjoying each other's company. All the walls were covered with shelves upon shelves of paperbacks and magazines. As I remember it, there were three aisles, and the shelves of paperbacks dividing them were approximately six or seven feet high. The interesting thing about them was that the shelving was in four foot sections, and each tier was supported by a number of books stacked flat on the ends of the shelf below.

As if this didn't make traffic dangerous enough, bones, bowls of milk, bowls of food, and a dozen or more cats allowed anything but fancy footwork. To add an extra fillip, the dust and the ashes of burned books or magazines made seeing any of these other hazards quite difficult. While I was contemplating whether or not to wade into this I saw a pair of ankles off to my right and when I looked up I spotted a bearded, scraggly-looking small man with a paintbrush and a paint bucket. He asked what I wanted.

"I've got pornography," he said. "I've also got sci-fi, mystery, western, contemporary type stuff. And I've got some really wild stuff in a crate out back. Have you ever seen any 3-D pornographic comic

books?"

"Not since I was a kid," I told him. "I'd like to see your science fiction, and maybe pick up a few John D. MacDonalds that I'm looking for."

"How about some color stag movies?"

"I haven't got a projector."

"I've got some of the dirtiest photos you can buy anywhere. Dirtiest books, too."

"No, and I'm not interested in your sister, either. Can I look at your science fiction?"

Uninsulted, he led me to the west wall and pointed out a shelving unit and a half. I'd followed his footsteps carefully, but now he had left me alone and I felt rather stranded. I saw a cat trip over a bone buried in the dust and ashes.

On my way to the cash register, with two books, I saw an east wall display (of all things) of National Geographic. Eight years worth of them were burned to a crisp, four years on either side of the outlet that must have started the fire. Three years' worth on either side of these spanned from well-charred to faintly browned. All of them, even the ones burned to a crisp, were still just as neatly stacked as they had been before the fire.

I showed him the two books and asked how much. He told me the price was on the inside front cover. They totaled a dollar, and when I reached into my pocket to fish for a nickel to cover the tax he said to forget it.

"I don't believe in sales tax," he informed me. "And next time you can bring in your sci-fi and we can trade. I'll give you two for three."

"You don't believe in money, either, do you?"

"Curse of the common people," he philosophized, leaning further back on the barrel behind the cash register. "Tell all your friends to bring in their sci-fi and trade or sell."

Two weeks later I ate in the same restaurant across the street, and the building with the cats and the books was empty again. Some business, selling office machines or something, has moved in there now, but somehow that street has a little less atmosphere than before.

Probably because they cleaned the floor. •



# Found In Collection

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Christopher Garcia

When I find things, I sometimes do a little dance. Sometimes it's a mental dance, other times it's a physical dance around the collection warehouse where I find the thing. It's a tradition, it is, and one that I recently got to do with a not-so-strange discovery.

Arnie and Joyce Katz are great humans. I went down to visit them and pick up a bunch of things for the museum. Mostly photos and slides from their days in the Electronic gaming world, but a few other video game related things, but mixed in with a bunch of buttons promoting video games and various companies, I found a few of the Katz family's fannish pins. There were "St. Louis in 1968" buttons and a "Montreal en 1977" button too. There was a Noreascon (the first, I assume) button, too. These were an excellent find, but this was not the first time I had found a button in the collection that was fannish in origin.

Back in 1999, I was a new guy around the museum and I was always looking for fun stuff. Sometimes I would spend days searching for strange things that might even be important to the history of computing. On the third day in a row that I had spent in the dark warehouse at the base of the giant Dirigible Hanger, I came across a strange pile of things that were wrapped in green bar tractor paper. I figured that I'd spend an hour or so curled up on the Cray-1 Supercomputer, reading.

As I started to unwrap the things, I found a great old watch with a lovely fob. It was about 1900 in make, but it wasn't anything that I hadn't seen before. I set it in a box for curatorial review and went on. I opened another and it was a 1989 era cell phone. That was very cool, and I tried it and though it didn't work, I felt like I was an important guy who might have actually owned a DeLorean or a souped-up Le Car. This was rad, but the last thing was the reason this fits the "Found In Collection" column. It was a button saying "I Break Rule 6."

During my High School return to fandom, there had been an incident. During the 1991 BayCon, held at the legendary Con hotel The San Jose Airport Red Lion, there were a bunch of issues with a few of the fans. There was at least one couple having sex in the halls. I witnessed another of them going at it in the elevator (I believe the song "Love in an Elevator" was a hit at the time, though I could be off by a year or two). There was a keg party (that I had briefly attended), and a few people complained about the attendees, including a business guy who I've heard identified as Larry Ellison, though I have no proof of that. This led the Red Lion to put up a list of rules that took effect at the next con, TimeCon 1991.

The rules were actually pretty basic and they made a lot of sense. The rules included that party rooms had to be vacated by 2 am, except for registered guests of the hotel, no non-registered guests using the pool, no keg parties, no sleeping in the lobby and so on. There were a few downers on the list too. No amplified music, which made a few of the panels that had counted on having music pretty pointless. The one that everyone remembers is Rule 6: No physical contact other than holding hands, a quick hug or kiss will be tolerated. Any further actions will result in the subjects being asked to leave the property for the remaining time of the Con.

This was a big deal. While I agree that Public Displays of Affection kinda suck, and there certainly shouldn't be anyone screwing in the halls, it went way too far. So, someone brought a button maker. By the end of the first night, I had already received a button almost exactly like the one I had unwrapped. It simply said "I Break Rule 6." There was an upside of wearing one of the buttons. There were a few girls around the con who were going around and kissing anyone wearing the button, full on the lips. I got a little of that action.

Over the years, there arose a following for Rule 6. There've been Rule 6 Parties at BayCons, SiliCons, and even at the 2002 WorldCon, ConJose. The button is all over the place, especially in the Bay Area and LA. I went to Philcon and ran into two of them on the vests of long-time button collectors. I saw several at LosCon last month.

There are strange moments in fandom that just sorta happen and it ends up changing local fandom and sometimes, wider fandom. Rule 6 is one of those things.

Now, I had no idea why the button was wrapped up in green bar paper, but there was a clue; I've managed to trace it to a potential donor. In the final bundle was wrapped an early Personal Digital Assistant called the General Magic. There were a few fans who were employed there, but I've never managed to figure out if any of them might have given the watch, the button and the PDA, and why they'd wrapped up the button by itself is another question.

Sometimes, I'll let mystery stay a mystery. •

# Epistles

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## Lettercolumn

### **Peter Sullivan**

I think that Dave Locke is correct to say that Christmas events, or indeed any kind of office social event, usually work better when kept as informal and unorganized as possible. I always tended to skip the official office parties if I possibly could. I could never see the rationale behind rewarding people who'd worked very hard for the company and spent many a night away at a hotel far away from home – by taking them for a night away at a hotel far away from home. However, some of the best times out were where a large or small group of us would be hanging around the office, and someone would say, "So, are we going to go out and get something to eat, or what?"

Eric mentions writing for *Modern Secretary*. I think I've seen similar publications being handed out to young female travelers at railway stations on the rare occasions I've been on a commuter train heading out of London in the evening. Not being in the target audience, I've never been presented with a copy myself, but I have occasionally managed to scavenge one. The mix of articles is such that I can imagine almost anything Eric could write as fitting in. Most of the contents are adverts (or the print equivalent of infomercials) – lots of job listings, employment agencies, and more off-beat stuff like cosmetic surgery clinics, modeling agencies (recruiting, not offering) and strippergrams (both recruiting and offering).

Actually, I find the weekly *Secretarial* supplement to the *Times* compulsive reading, if only for its Hints and Tips on using Word, Outlook and Excel which seem to range from the blindingly

obvious (at one extreme) to useful things I never realized I didn't know I didn't know how to do (at the other).

I think Eric is right not to worry too much about character description. Not least because, as soon as a novel makes it onto either TV or the movies, then you can forget about the description of the character in the book. As far as any future readers are concerned, your character looks exactly like the actor portraying them. This can even infect the writer as well. It's noticeable in the later Rumpole of the Bailey books, for example, that Rumpole takes on more and more of the physical characteristics of Leo McKern. So Eric just needs to make sure that he gets a chance to have a say in the casting of John the Eunuch when his books finally get optioned, and not worry too much about character description in the meantime.

Enjoyed Chris Garcia's piece about fannish visitors to the Computer Museum. What we ought to do is organize a mass gathering to all turn up at the museum and demand a tour. All of us wearing a suitable fannish rubber face-mask. I bags the Forry Ackerman face-mask, and you can have the Carl Brandon one. Or, if we can't find enough fannish rubber face-masks, we can just all affect a naturally wan Sensitive Fannish Face and see how long before he catches on.

I suspect that the problem for people like Chris and myself is that, no matter how long we hang around fandom, we'll never be able to match the health horror stories of the real old-timers. Even in 20 years time when we have our own "excellent stories of surgeries and procedures," they'll still be able to trump us with whatever new ailments they

have developed by then. Of course, apart from the bragging rights, I suspect we'll have the better end of the deal from almost every other perspective.

The fracturing of fanzine fandom you talk about is a strange phenomena. With more and more fan-nish activity being electronic-based (and I'd include not just fanzines, but also some of the mailing lists and weblogs that have strong cultural links with fanzine fandom), it should in theory be easier for people to keep in touch and active with a wide variety of fannish sub-groups. In practice, this doesn't seem to be happening. Or is it that fanzine fandom has always been fractured, but that the electronic age just makes this more apparent? In that, before the Internet, you wouldn't necessarily have even known of a paper fanzine's existence unless you were on the mailing list.

*One of the problems may be that while "[electronically] it should in theory be easier for people to keep in touch and active with a wide variety of fannish sub-groups" in practice that might actually make it more difficult. With so much information available for every conceivable interest (fannish or not), information overload can become a real problem.*

*It certainly seemed to me that when all zines were paper, there were more review columns in zines (and even in prozines at one time) so that you did have more of a chance to learn about other zines. Since Ted White stopped doing his reviews at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com), other than Andy Hooper doing his infrequent (but excellent) reviews at [Trufen.net](http://Trufen.net) what you tend to see are either just lists of "fanzines received" or capsule reviews. I've thought about doing something similar in CPG, but I only receive a couple of paper zines, so for the most part it would just be a redundant listing of what's available at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com).*

*I'm still looking for someone to do relatively in-depth reviews here, so if anyone is interested, please contact me!*

Interesting to see Ruth Davidson talking about needing to sleep in multiples of 2 hours. I've heard this said before, only for 90 minutes as the ideal length. The idea being that this is the length of a natural "sleep cycle," and that waking up halfway through a cycle puts your sleep pattern out of kilter. Unfortunately, A. (who, as a nurse and a



midwife, is *the* definitive medical authority in this household) reckons that there's absolutely no physiological rationale for this. Although that's not to say that there couldn't be some sort of psychological effect going on.

Hmm, is DaveCon II only intended to be for people named Dave, or are you a bit more flexible than that on convention memberships? I suppose, as per the Monty Python Australian Philosophy Department sketch, we could just all agree to have "Dave" as our badge name to "make things easier..."

## **Eric Mayer**

Another fine issue of Catchpenny Gazette but it is going to elicit a very brief LoC. I started a LoC last night, mentioning that striking cover photo, but it got directed to my blog instead. Then, of course, I have already read my own material (from my blog) and your material (from your e-APA zine) and I commented on the latter in my mailing comments. So I suppose you could cobble together a LoC from my blog and e-APA zine! Now, if only I had read Dave Locke's 1974 article and still had the zine with my LoC about it...

Actually it's just as well that article was new to me because I enjoyed it. I suppose the moral would be "ignorance is bliss"? On the other hand, long ago, I thought I would try some "real" wines. That is, wines that came in bottles with corks, that could age gracefully. But, judging from what I tried, I would have preferred grape juice. At least grape juice doesn't taste like mold. Admittedly, I didn't have a big budget. My best vintages aged on the ship from Peru.

I'm reminded of my grandmother who was nearly a teetotaler. At family gatherings, if she could be convinced to have a thimbleful (which is what she asked for, specifically...a thimbleful) of champagne, she would instantly consider herself drunk and begin to giggle like a school girl.

The orienteering club I belonged to asked people to bring an inexpensive gift to the Christmas party. These were distributed blindly, the only sorting being between the gifts for the grownups and the kids. One year I spotted a new product that was only just appearing in the area. Candy snot. (I'm not sure what the name was, but it was a big, clear plastic nose filled with goeey candy that could be pulled out of the nostrils) There were a lot of kids in the right age group to appreciate such a confection, I thought. Indeed, the response was more gratifying than I could ever have imagined. It was a sensation.

So, when your best story about a Christmas party involves candy snot...is that sad or what?

I have not forgotten Chris Garcia and Peter Sullivan but I am not sure what Peter's article is based upon and am not quite sure, therefore, how to take it exactly. Nor can I comment on Chris' unexpectedly meeting a fan he had never heard of since I have rarely met fans I've known for years, let alone run into fans by accident. •

## **John Purcell**

I do think that you and Eric Mayer have hit on something here regarding fanzine fanac nowadays creating a specific community that is combining nostalgia with the new. This makes sense to me, especially when you consider that some of the best fan-writing of the past was nostalgic in intent as well (con reports, remembrances of significant/insignificant fans and events). My own current zine, *In A Prior Lifetime*, has this bent to it. Besides, the act of producing a fanzine - or writing of any kind, be it poetry, fiction, news, reviews, or whatever - is archiving a history. Whenever words are committed to paper a document is formed that becomes a permanent record of the writer's past, present, and is preserved for the future, complete with faulty memory and/or grammatical error. I think that what you two are getting at here is that fan writers are possibly more historically minded in what they are writing than most other fans, thereby become archivists of fannish record. Bill Burns has been creating the ultimate fanzine archive on his website ([efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com)), and it is both entertaining and illuminating to peruse the various zines hosted there. This is the history of our community being created before us, and those of us who are contributing to its creation happen to be aging, which is inevitable. But, I believe this is A Good Thing since we are committing ourselves to archiving our observations and memories either intentionally or not.

There are a couple other quickie comments I'd like to make here. Dave Locke's little piece "Nick" is a nice piece of writing that makes you think about the little treasures in life that many people tend to ignore. The old adage "one man's garbage is another man's treasure" leaps to mind here. A touching bit of writing, this.

I haven't read much of Eric Mayer's production in many years, but I will say this, his writing has really matured. Very enjoyable musings, indeed. As for Chris Garcia, I am so envious that he works in a museum; I would really love to do that. In fact, museums fascinate me - [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) is a verbal museum, you know, and a visual one, too, when you think about it - because they appeal to the eclectic part of me that loves history, art, music, science, and all sorts of odd-ball junk. Like lots of fans, I love to peruse used bookstores and look at old books and magazines. My favorite kind of museum, as it were. Speaking of museums, the George H.W. Bush library on the Texas A&M campus here has a display of model railroad trains running until the end of the year, I think. I haven't been down to see it, but it sounds like a bit of fun. The price is right: free on certain days of the week, or a modest donation of \$5 or so most of the time. •

## **Lloyd Penney**

Yvonne and I have worked for companies where the special gifts and awards and other accolades around Christmas time go to management only, and there's the feeling that the employees are there only to be an appreciative audience when the awards are handed out. You're getting a paycheck, what more do you want? is the message from management. You're an employee; all you really want is an annual piss-up at the party. Not true, of course, but managers seem unable to comprehend this, as if they were never employees themselves. We now avoid office parties and get-togethers for the most part; we don't like hypocrisy.

Mr. Potato Head's resurgence from nostalgia and trivia came about from the Toy Story movies, but I think it was the desire to keep brand recognition that made the potato turn plastic. Any kid with an ounce of smarts would put those eyes, ears, hats and feet on any fruit or vegetable to make Mr. Apple Head, Mr. Cabbage Head, Mr. Pear Head, etc. Keep the brand name, so a plastic potato with holes would force kids to remember the name. Has any kid lately taken the plastic bits and put them into a real potato? I'd doubt it.

Chris is right, I talk too much about my health. My knees hurt from time to time, my joints crackle like breakfast cereal, and if it wasn't for insomnia, I'd never have the time to get everything done. Sometimes, you have to stretch to have things to talk about, and with all the zines I correspond with, I have to wonder how often I'm repeating myself.

Fanzine fandom has aged, but not necessarily like cheese and wine. We can't have the same expectations now as we did then, but we still take part in order to take part. I agree with Eric, there is a community forming of those who are most active, but I've seen these groups form before, and they rush forward with fanac, and then rest to catch their breath, or go on to other things. I've been observing this kind of thing since starting in the local back in the early '80s. I would like to think I've had a taste of, or been a part of, many communities, and I've been pleased with that.

Hey, Ruthie-Chan is here! I wish I could remember my dreams more than I do. Rarely can I wake up and remember it; perhaps I'm more unconscious than asleep. I am lucky to get five hours in a stretch, and I sure could use more. There may be fan sites that approximate fanzines, but for most people, even in this tech age, they get more out of reading in a linear fashion, from beginning to end. That's why books and newspapers are still sold. On a website full of links, it's very easy to miss a page or two or several. At least a central site like [eFanzines.com](http://eFanzines.com) can be used to store the e-zines, or at least provide links to those websites/webzines.

Love the picture of the fox in the pack of dogs. Let's see him do that in a hen house... •

# Oblique

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David Burton

Once again there's some discussion in a couple of fanzines (one strictly digital, one paper only) about digital vs. paper fanzines, and in particular that most digital zines are emulating traditional paper zines in format. I said in a LoC to *Vegas Fandom Weekly* that I maintained the conceit that people would print out *CPG* instead of reading it onscreen, even though I really knew otherwise. I am reconsidering the format again, though, and may "revert" to a version laid-out and meant to be read onscreen in the future.

One of the wonderful things about publishing digitally is that *CPG* can be read by a potentially much larger number of people than if I were publishing it as a paper zine. It surprises me the number of people in countries other than the United States who read it. A quick look at the statistics show that people from France, Chile, Spain, Slovenia and Freedonia have visited *CPG*'s little spot at efanzines.com, as well as a sizable number from England. Even if I could afford to publish *CPG* on paper for "domestic consumption" it would probably still be beyond my means to mail copies to those foreign locales. So while there are *some* drawbacks to digital-only zines, this is a big plus.

## Childhood

As I was preparing the artwork for the masthead (a little narcissistic I'll admit), I couldn't help reflecting on my childhood. I don't remember the photo being taken, although I know *where* it was taken. Who could imagine anyone wandering through neighborhoods these days with a horse and camera, offering to take pictures of children? Anyone care to wager how long it'd be before the horse and camera were stolen, or the photographer locked up as some sort of pervert? My memories of my earliest childhood are dim except for one or two events. Like the time a neighbor boy threw a handful of sand in my eyes and I had to go to the hospital to have each grain removed by a machine like a vacuum cleaner. Or having my tonsils out; I can still remember what I saw and heard as the ether worked its magic and I drifted to unconsciousness. I suppose the more traumatic things can make the biggest impression and the longest-lasting memories.

But I remember many more pleasant things as well. Like my Grandfather and Grandmother taking us shopping with them on Friday evenings when

we'd often get a small toy. The occasional trip to Meyer's Lake amusement park, a small, two-bit affair by today's standards - a picnic area, a dozen rides for kids of all ages, a wonderful old-fashioned carousel, and a tiny midway where you could win a prize by plunking a ping-pong ball in a goldfish bowl or by knocking over milk bottles with a softball. Staying overnight at my Grandmother's old, old house in her spare bedroom on a roll-away bed. I rarely fell asleep when I stayed there because there was a door to her attic in the room, and her attic was absolutely the spookiest place I could imagine. Scared as I was, I loved staying there. Or our annual treks to Florida to visit my other Grandparents over the Christmas holidays, two adults and three young kids packed, more often than not, into a subcompact car for two days on the road. (Must've been a *real* joy for my parents...) The best trip was the one just after my Dad bought a new Ford station wagon. My brother and I spent weeks beforehand building cardboard "control panels" so we could sit in the back with the seat down and pretend we were in a spaceship.

Some of the most vivid memories of my childhood come from a little later, when I was nine or ten years old. I remember lying in bed on lazy summer mornings when school was out and I didn't have to get up, listening, half asleep, to my father in the bathroom down the hall getting ready for work. I'd hear the shower run. When he was done there I'd hear him at the sink, brushing his teeth and shaving. What comes back to me most clearly, more than 40 years later, is not a sight or a sound, but a smell. The smell of his aftershave. All these years later, I use the same aftershave myself: Old Spice. Terribly old-fashioned, but I think of him nearly every time I splash it on my face.

I lay in bed listening and smelling, still half asleep. Someday, I thought, I'll be a man too. I'll get up and go to work and have a house and a wife and kids. I'll put on a suit and tie and go to my job and come home in the evening to my family, just like my Dad. On Saturday I'll play golf in the morning, and spend the afternoon doing chores around the house. Saturday nights we'll all get in the car and go to some friend's house, where the adults will play cards and the kids will play raucously until it's time to go home, when they'll fall asleep in the car. Some of that's come true, but most of it hasn't.

And the last time I wore a suit and tie was to my father's funeral eight years ago. •