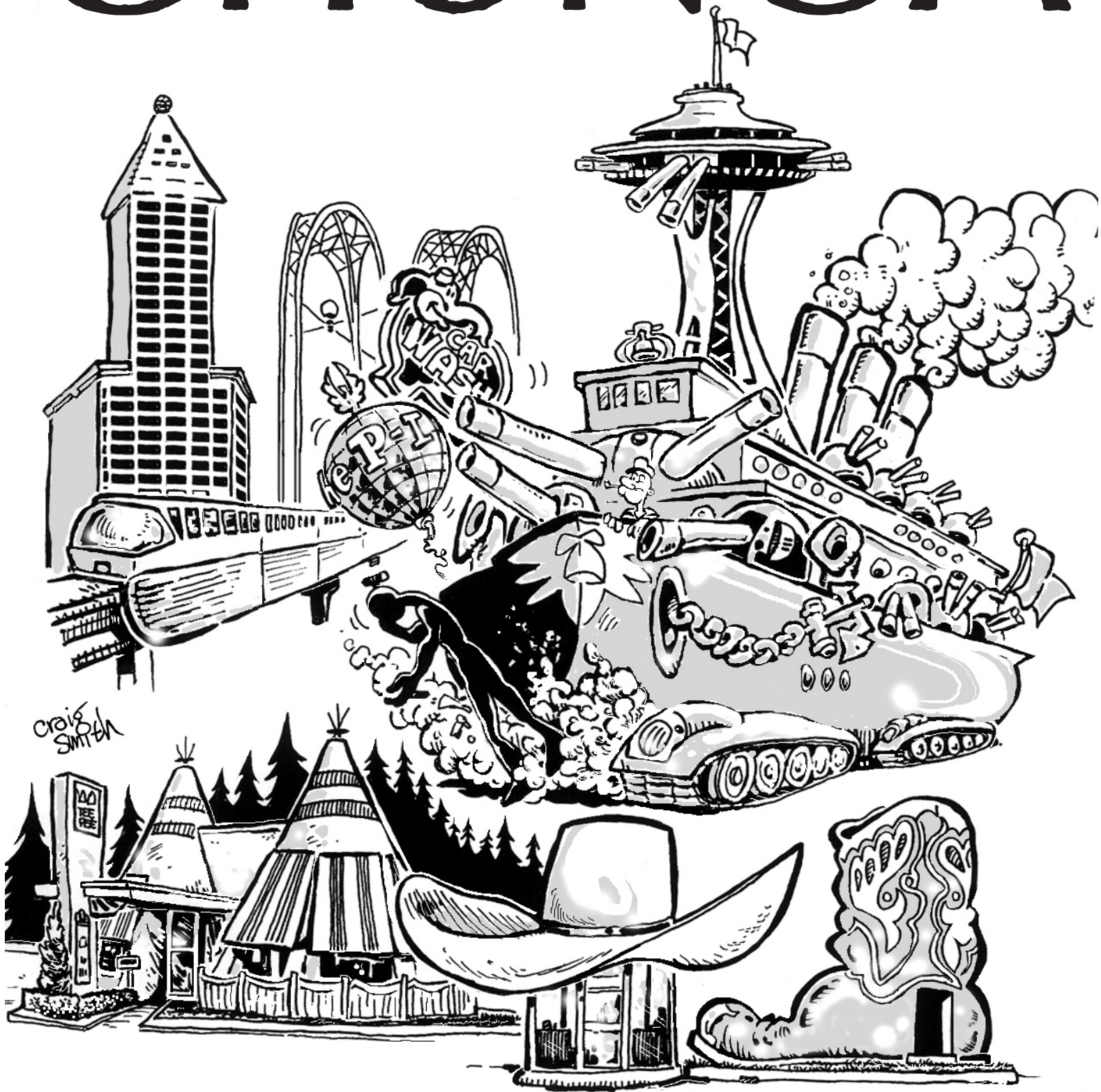


CHUNGA



#4 • April 2003

CHUNGA

No, Rogov, no! The Chungiverate is a benign Sacher-Torte of self-determination, like a crème brulée its hand-torched brittle surface concealing a rich custardlike substance that makes your tongue go wow. That's because it *is* custard, and you are eating it. *Chunga* is served by Andy Hooper (publisher), Randy Byers (editor), carl juarez (design), and our esteemed contributors, listed below. Available by editorial whim or wistfulness, or, grudgingly, for \$3.50 for a single issue, though we suggest downloading the online edition at eFanzines.com, it's easy for you and cheap for them (we hope, thanks Bill). All correspondence should be addressed to 1013 North 36th Street, Seattle WA 98103. Editors: please send three copies of any zine for trade. Email: fanmailaph@aol.com, rbyers@u.washington.edu, and cjuarez@myrealbox.com. This fanzine supported Byers for TAFF, and look what happened.

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Tanglewood

A Topographic Editorial



Seattle is a city of neighborhoods. Which is to say that the neighborhoods have strong identities, and this has been encouraged by the city, most recently under former mayor Norm Rice and his Urban Village initiative. I like to say that I live in the (formerly funky) Fremont neighborhood, although this area actually falls into a kind of border zone between Fremont and Wallingford and is sometimes jokingly called Freford or Wallingmont. (I prefer Fremingford, but that's just me.) There aren't really any official boundaries, so there's lots of room for disagreement about which areas belong to which neighborhoods, or indeed what the name of a neighborhood is. A Chicago company put out a tourist map of Seattle not too long ago and attempted to name neighborhood names, leading to a great deal of amazement, confusion, and outrage amongst the concerned citizenry. Turns out in some cases that they asked residents in ambiguous areas what their neighborhood was called, and people had the oddest ideas—or at least ideas that people on the next block had never heard of.

I've lived in Seattle for nearly twenty years, and I like to think that my internal map of the city is pretty thorough by this point. But I'm continually surprised and delighted to find nooks and crannies that were previously invisible to me. These discoveries not infrequently involve beer. The most recent occasion of enlarging my map was the opening of a new brewpub by the owners of my favorite, the Elysian. I was a regular at the Elysian until a year or so ago, when the drive to the far ends of Capitol Hill began to seem more of a pain than it was worth. So when I heard that they were opening a new pub just a mile or two from my house, I was delighted. They were taking over the space of the old Honey Bear Bakery, which was a somewhat fabled establishment in its own right that had moved to a different location a couple of years ago in search of lower rent. I had never been to the bakery myself, but I had seen a few stories about the move, which was unpopular with some of the customers. I knew that the Honey Bear was in the Green Lake neighborhood, and my internal map of that neighborhood told me that it must be in the commercial district up by the Albertsons grocery store.

When word finally came down, via the newspaper, that the new Elysian was finally opening, a small group of us arranged to check it out. Carl

and I took a bus to my bank in Wallingford, then walked north along Meridian Avenue, which Carl said should lead us straight to the door. He was right, and we found Hal and Ulrika waiting for us outside the place, which, it turned out, wasn't quite ready for the grand opening after all. Dick and Dave, two of the three partners, were there doing some last minute work, and Dick apologized and said that they would be open in a few days. In the meantime, I was astounded to find myself in the midst of a pocket neighborhood that I'd never seen before. It was just five blocks off a couple of thoroughfares that I've travelled hundreds, if not thousands, of times, but I'd had no clue that this little commercial center was there. Furthermore, because I had placed it in the wrong spot in my internal map, I was completely confused about where we were in relation to familiar territory, such as the commercial center by the Albertsons. We had entered a Bermuda Triangle, and I was lost.

"What's that neighborhood called?" I asked Andy, when he and Carrie caught up with us at the Plan B location we had fortunately designated earlier.

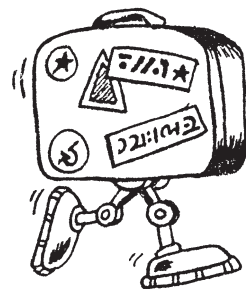
"I don't know," he said. "I wrote about it in an early issue of APAK, and I called it Keystone. That's obviously not its real name. If it has one."

Two weeks later, as we made new plans to visit the brewpub, I referred to it as the Tanglewood in my e-mail message.

"Is it Tanglewood, or Tangletown?" Andy asked.

It turned out to be the Tangletown, which is an appropriate enough name considering that it's located at the point where two street grids collide at an angle to each other. And Tanglewood is a fitting name for my internal maps and their eternal confusions and misplacements. Just stay away from old oaks, and don't eat the mushrooms.

The Tangletown is a nice little pub, with high ceilings and lots of windows. Ulrika and Marci Malinowycz have been talking about setting up a regular fannish pub meeting for Seattle, and the Tangletown is a possible location. The beer is, of course, excellent—Dick is one of the top brewers in town, and they also have great guest beers on tap and in bottles. The kitchen is still a work in progress, and since this is a slightly tonier neighborhood than Capitol Hill, the initial approach seems to be smaller portions at higher prices than what is offered at the Elysian. On the other hand,



there are other interesting eateries in the neighborhood, including a sushi place, the Luau (with a whole pig roasted fresh daily), and the Hot Diggety Dog, which serves wurst. The space of the pub is a little noisy right now, due to a lot of hard surfaces, but they dealt with that at the original location by hanging banners from Belgian breweries to baffle the sound somewhat. The Tangletown is also quite popular, at least in this honeymoon stage, so it might be difficult to find a good time when there would be enough tables available. Even more rare than an empty seat, probably, is an open parking space in the neighboring streets.

All considerations assuming, of course, that there's interest in the idea of a regular pub meet in Seattle. I had my doubts about the idea initially, since the monthly Vanguard meeting has seemed a sufficient fannish social outlet for the past umpty ump years, but I'm warming to the thought of a regular excuse to drink great beer on tap and in good company, especially since a new fannish energy seems to be sweeping the Seattle scene and manifesting itself in an unusual number of impromptu and newly configured social gatherings. In any event, I'll be at the first pub meet, if someone organizes it—and if I'm not away on my TAFF trip when it happens.

Yes, deep in the fetid, heaving jungle of Tanglewood, I am following the TAFF path as best I can. I have said my thanks in other venues, but I'll take this opportunity to once again thank everyone who voted for me and to thank Colin, Curt, and Orange Mike for a fine race. By the time this sees print, if all goes according to plan, I'll be in the midst of my trip, and I should see my first copy of this ish at Corflu Badger, where I will be stopping to carouse on the way home from the UK. TAFF has been another challenge to my internal mapping abilities, as I not only try to figure out the geography of Great Britain but also the relations and history of British fandom. To the latter end, I have been picking up old fanzines, such as issues of Rob Hansen's *Epsilon*, and getting an interesting perspective on the events of the past twenty years. It's humbling to realize that by the end of my trip I will still have seen only the tip of the iceberg. Who knows what unexpected pockets of fandom I will have discovered as my internal map is prodded and pulled into a new shape? Maybe I'll finally write my first filk: "Tangled Up In TAFF."

—Randy

Before the advent of supermarkets and warehouse stores, neighborhoods in most American cities generated little commer-

cial centers like Keystone Place/Tangletown. If you walk around in Wallingford and Latona and the Stone Way valley, you can actually find sort of fossilized versions of them in storefronts converted to apartments, small art studios and galleries, and old brick walls that have the decayed remnants of painted advertising, still visible in the proper light. Tangletown is unique in having preserved a handsome little commercial drag with no connection to any major arterial street—and that's probably why it hasn't be remodeled and gentrified out of existence. Developers don't even know it's there.

If we reset the view by a mere ninety years, it would seem like Keystone had as much going for it as bustling Wallingford, if not more. Perched on the north side of a broad ridge, Keystone looked down on Green Lake through a screen of remnant timber, with the mass of the Good Shepherd center, then a convent and home for wayward girls, slightly higher and to the south. The convent was a major contribution to the development of the neighborhood, as the residents required deliveries and services that they couldn't provide themselves, and made it commercially viable for some shops and tradesmen to set up operations way up here in the extreme north end of town. Green Lake itself was some 12 feet higher than its current level, and the broad lawns and pleasure drive that circle it today were reedy shallows and bogs. The first homes set up north of 50th Street must have seemed like wild hunting lodges or overgrown loggers' bunkhouses.

The streets follow the contours of the hillside, frequently curving through switchbacks and ending in cul-de-sacs. It seems confusing until you think of the area without the broad ribbon of Green Lake Way to tie it all together—with nothing but blackberry thickets and swamp below, running streets down to the lake shore made relatively little sense until its level was lowered in the second decade of the 20th Century. Then John Phinney brought his streetcar line north of Lake Union, and shifted the focus of development away from the ferry landing villages like Latona and Wallingford. Keystone was left out of the development encouraged by the transportation lines, because it wasn't on the way to anywhere—it was tucked into the "back end" of an out-of-the-way hillside. Houses and small apartment buildings went up all around it until the larger Green Lake neighborhood seemed to swallow it up. But because the streets were devised to follow the crenellations of the hillside, they still seem different from the surrounding plan, as if partially out-of-phase with the surrounding reality.

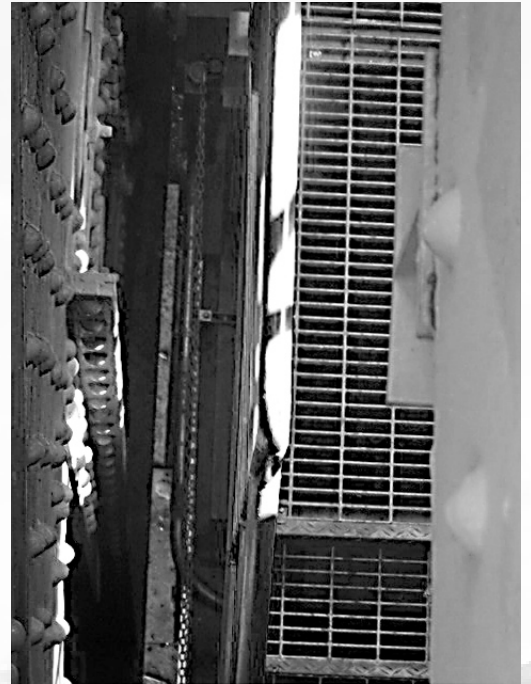
—Andy

All this may seem a bit much to accept on our word, but if you come visit, we'll take you up there and let you try to walk across it. We'll buy you a beer, if you can find it.

Two Meditations on the Ballard Bridge

This moment that seemed like ours

Looking up from dinner, I see a paramedic van, lights all flashing, the instant it hits the north foot of the Ballard Bridge. And in that same instant, the music takes a breath and begins a melancholic, downtempo saxophone solo. Everything clicks together like sliding in the last jigsaw piece, and I watch the van cross the bridge, listen to the music. This far away, from this angle, the van moves slowly, almost dreamily, as a drop of oil on a thread. Other vehicles slow down to let it pass and from here it looks like the turn and hand off of an old social dance. The lights flash so frantically they become apposite to the rhythms of the music. The solo ends, the music takes a breath for a few beats, the van disappears into Interbay, the singer wanders back into the song, I say a hail mary, and the world resumes.



Binoculars

I sit in my darkened kitchen and watch the traffic on the Ballard Bridge, and I think, they're going somewhere. Where are they going? Do they know where?

All the lights in the house are off. Anyone looking in would think I was absent or asleep. But I'm at my kitchen table, glasses off, binoculars to my face, watching the anonymous cars.

From this distance, they move slowly, with grace. Below the bridge, a car approaches an intersection as if coasting. It signals, then makes the turn. A breeze caught it, lifted it on its way. The car itself has no motive force, no driver, no engine.

I try to read the billboards, but even with these good binoculars they're too far away.

I look at the water in the canal. The rain streams onto the surface, peppering it, diffusing and spreading the reflections of the lights. The entire surface of the canal is golden. It's no longer water but a table top. No boat could disturb it.

I sit in my darkened kitchen, binoculars to my face, and think, I'm looking at nothing.

—Luke McGuff

Gonad Roads

by Andy Hooper

In retrospect, I should have known that “Thank You, Gonad Factor,” in *Chunga* #3 would inspire an avid reception. I’ve wasted an ocean of words on topics of fleeting interest at best, including baseball, science fiction, naval disasters, lake monsters, TAFF, and Byzantine military head dress. But I’m not actually stupid — on some level, I always knew that sex was what my readers were waiting for — because really, it’s what all readers are waiting for.

It is an oft-stated maxim that there are but two stories in all literature — either a protagonist goes on a journey, or some manner of stranger comes to town. Each owes its appeal to the vicarious possibility of some form of liaison — it can be intellectual, aesthetic, or spiritual, but most enduring, immediate and commanding is the hope of romantic emotional connection, the personal, and the physical. Attending an sf convention is a recapitulation of one of these basic themes, depending on whether you see the convention from the inside — as a local, or a committee participant — or the outside, as a traveling fan. Either way, strangers can be involved, and strangers contain all the possibilities of the universe, at least until we meet them.

I think what makes conventions so cool is that they offer a measure of friendly familiarity as well as the shock of the strange. And they are *about* something. They give us something to do, and something to talk and think about, and a context in which to be ourselves while we wait for that lightning to strike. You step up and say this is what I am — a shallow, gin-soaked would-be glamour-puss, a frustrated academic obsessed with genre characters, a methane-breathing creature from the planet Spackulon — and know that if you hook up with someone — in any sense — at least your *secret* will be out from the beginning.

It doesn’t matter if you are young, old, straight, gay, a simmering hottie or a hopeless troll — there is still every possibility that you could potentially meet someone who might like you *that way* at a science fiction convention. Reader, I know — because it happened to me. (Of course, you can also end up muttering the lyrics to “How Soon is Now” and watching bowdlerized closed circuit porn, but

that’s another article.) The most noteworthy relationship of my adult life, my marriage to Carrie Root, began because we were both on the same convention committee. We spent months dragging other fans out to dance in various clubs in Madison, ostensibly searching for a dj to play music for the Wiscon mixer. When we had run through all the funk nights and co-op dances Madison had to offer, there was nothing left to do but begin sleeping together. And I ended up playing the music for the dance, because it was cheaper that way.

Of course, that was the work of at least 20 sweaty Friday nights, and not a single convention weekend. Building a relationship that lasts the rest of one’s life is all well and good, but I know what you really want to hear about — ill-advised and preferably inebriated copulation in seedy dormitories and motels, between poorly matched and mortified partners who celebrate their new intimacy with rounds of vomiting punctuated by uncomfortable silences. Ah, school days.

Even as conventions act to bring people together, they also tend to create conditions where comfortable intimacy can be difficult to come by. We’re always sharing rooms, running huge parties in them, and getting up at the crack of noon to run business meetings. As much as it might be fun to spend a few hours in more private and intimate surroundings, who knows what we’ll miss if we leave the bar for that long? Better, as is apparently becoming fashionable in Britain, to simply have it off in a relatively private booth and let someone draw a cartoon of it for the next issue of *Floss*.

You may take that as a comic exaggeration if you like, but I’ve lost hours of convention sleep when roommates felt like the opportunity for intimacy was so precious that they couldn’t wait for me to go elsewhere. It can be more difficult to sleep through these things when you’re on an improvised bedroll in the corner, and the couple you’re staying with is making their bedsprings squeal like a banshee. My mind flashes on classic encounters: The Chief Illini Motel, Urbana, Illinois, 1981, where the flashing neon light of an adjacent adult bookstore cast a lurid, Lovecraftian glare on the writhing bodies across the room. The 1992 Worldcon in



the Sofitel Chicago—even the softest hotel pillows I’ve ever slept on could not muffle the delighted noises coming from the rollaway in front of the window. The Hotel Leamington, Minneapolis, at the very last Minicon held in the crumbling downtown structure—who knew the shower basins were so shallow that they would overflow if you stopped to have a quickie on the sofa for just five minutes? But without the shower running, the third member of our party might have heard us, and *he* was the one *she* was *supposed* to be sleeping with....

I suspect my own experience was slightly atypical of my fannish generation, in that I can recall no point in my fannish life when there weren’t at least as many women around as there were men. Later, it coggled me to read stories of testosterone-poisoned jamborees of fandom’s early days, at which the ratio of men to women was at least ten to one. Annual attendance at the only self-proclaimed feminist science fiction convention in the world led me to believe that fandom was largely composed of brilliant bisexual graphic artists and tweedy but succulent lesbian academics. In my teen years, it seemed this situation made it no more likely that I’d ever actually have sex myself, but I think it did serve to make me a good listener.

From that earliest exposure, it was clear that there were some people who came together with great passion and intensity, but only in the dizzying lens of a convention weekend. I can remember several occasions where potential partners gently rebuffed my interest by saying “I usually spend Wiscon together with my friend X.” Sometimes that meant “I have a long list of people that I’ll be sleeping with before I get to you,” and sometimes it meant “I need to be sure that no one else in fandom will know I was willing to be intimate with you.” Being able to tell the difference may well be the most basic building block of human civilization.

To me, the biggest issue, beyond any questions of propriety or compatibility, is always time. You’re at a convention—you’re liable to about 100 people for a 15 minutes or more of personal attention. Even if you spend an hour in absolute heaven—and let’s face it, three minutes is more realistic—how can you avoid feeling like a dog or a slut when you run back to the desperate fun of the con? And it takes hours, and frequently a small ocean of alcohol to eventually make up your mind, so the heart ends up writing checks the not too solid flesh cannot cash. So maintaining a conventions-only relationship with someone whose company you enjoy can make a great deal of sense. SF cons are almost infinitely more fun if you have some form of partner with you, sexual, publishing, huckstering, what-

ever. Having a confidante who will share personal bitches of the day is almost essential for survival at many conventions I’ve attended. And as I observed above, if you have a partner for the weekend, it forestalls pesky fan boys from hitting on you all convention long (assuming that’s a problem for you). And even relationships that only span a single convention can be powerful events in a fannish life, creating new interests and connections that alter the course of fanzines, fan funds and science fiction.

But as I also observed in “Thank You, Gonad Factor,” fans as a subculture are also prone to sexually adventurous behavior, and conventions have inspired a lot of scenes that would not be suitable for audiences under 18. For a while, fannish memory seemed to recall that every great worldcon also had at least one great orgy story attached to it, mixed in about one for every five stories about getting sercon, Harlan Ellison, or memorable Peruvian chicken restaurants. And after the great gothic/modern primitive boom of the 1980s, even regional conventions began to have openly advertised S&M parties, and programs addressing all manner of sexual behavior and orientations. These are, needless to say, extremely fertile places to cruise for like-minded individuals with some time to kill.

The cruisiest convention I’ve ever attended is Minicon, although the San Diego Comicon deserves an honorable mention for creating the most amazing collection of unattainably beautiful bodies and scribbly guys and girls with cute little glasses in fannish history. But while Wiscon had the nick-

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name of “Pervertcon” in its early days, it was Minicon which always managed to communicate the most overt atmosphere of open deviance and indulgence. I mean, I can remember walking around in the hotel smoking a *cigar* at one Minicon, and no one even gave me a dirty look. A circle of predatory poker players, briefly including one year the late Gordon R. Dickson, took hundreds of dollars off me over a span of ten years, but I consider it to have been cheap entertainment. And since Madison and Minneapolis were so close, I was privy to knowledge of a host of inter-city relationships that flared and sparked brightest at Minicon.

Minicon also possesses a fey quality that helped inspire writers like Emma Bull and Steven Brust to adapt classic fantasy characters and themes to the streets of modern Minneapolis. Smoky, snarky music parties occasionally spin-off into dim snog-fests, and there’s always someone there who would like see if you will jump when they do — this! Many Minicons only survive in my memory as a dark collage of distant piano music, lizard-skin print spandex hall costumes, and *very intense* little games involving flashpaper and static electricity. Others were legendary collisions of small press and mail art talent, where luminaries like Luke McGuff and W. Joe Hoppe launched divinatory effigies and leapt atop the beds in poolside rooms to declaim furious sagas out of science fiction nightmare. Yeah! I know it got *some* people hot.

Sadly, I spent all too much of my convention youth in marathon Dungeons & Dragons games while the truly precocious among my peers were doing far more intimate things. Fandom has always attracted the under-socialized, and provides opportunities to develop an adult personality, but that process takes time, and some people prefer to remain focused on more innocent pursuits. I’m still playing with toy soldiers, after all. I think sometimes you have to be the stranger come to town in order to get away with the more flamboyant and excessive behaviors that are the stuff of boastful legend. Take, for example, the 1993 Worldcon in San Francisco — I would probably have been more hesitant to, um, *take* something like that if I were surrounded by local fans instead of a massive crowd lined up for the masquerade. And surely I would never have given in to the public giggling and groping at home. Some people have a gift for

instigating that kind of event — they’re always entertaining, but occasionally dangerous to know.

Even in relatively recent years, convention sex still has a curiously memorable quality to it. A few years ago, I went to Westercon in El Paso, Texas, a phenomenon which scientists are still powerless to explain. To be fair, it was the second-best convention I’ve ever been to in El Paso. Carrie chose not to make this mistake with me, and attended a family reunion in New Mexico the same weekend. By the time we were reunited on Monday afternoon, I was pretty desperate for contact with her, as well as relief from the heat — the air-conditioner in my room was near death, and all the ice machines in the building were broken.

We were in the snazzy marble bar of the main convention hotel when Carrie arrived to take me back to her family’s house. My bags were stored in the room Howard Waldrop was sharing with his then girlfriend, so I had to hit him up for the key before we took the express elevator up to its carpeted opulence.

Howard, native genius that he is, had turned the air conditioner up to the “Frostbite Falls” setting, and both Carrie and I, now more adapted to life in Seattle, felt deeply invigorated by the blast of cool air. After well over a decade of marriage, I’m not always so ardent after a separation of less than 72 hours, but the sudden immersion in that chill had us kissing and pawing at one another on Howard and Rhonda’s carpet. The fact that we would be spending the next 24 hours in close company with Carrie’s parents may also have lead us to seize the moment when it was presented to us. Happily, neither of the room’s inhabitants returned for those critical three minutes, and we were able to reassemble ourselves in due order. The only physical evidence was a tiny dark spot on the steely blue gray carpet, and I scrubbed at that with my shoe on the way out the door.

Our flammable grins and blushes were more difficult to conceal, and the depth of our gratitude for their luggage-sitting service was perhaps a trifle overstated. But that impulse of delight redeemed and defined the whole convention for me — a frustrating weekend in some ways, it had that ecstatic punctuation at the end that tipped the balance to the positive side. And served to give me hope that future weekends might end — or hopefully, begin — in a similar fashion. Vampire, Klingon or Spackulonian, I think our deepest satisfactions always remain human, and conventions will endure as long as they encourage and reinforce those human connections.

Many Minicons only survive in my memory as a dark collage of distant piano music, lizard-skin print spandex hall costumes, and *very intense* little games involving flashpaper and static electricity.

How now, High Brow

by Lesley Reece

So ten years ago, I had a “hitting-30 music crisis,” awaking one day to find that I could no longer stand rock & roll. I got over it by switching to classical music for a couple of years. Today, Beethoven and the Chemical Brothers co-exist, peacefully, side by side in my MP3 player, drowning out the other people on the bus as they complain about their jobs. Nor do I see inconsistency in that odd marriage — it turns out Bomb the Bass and Pound the Piano are the same concept, separated only by a couple of centuries.

But I’m going to be 40 pretty quick here, and now my brow is collapsing.

I’ll start about three decades back. Our house was full of books, all belonging to my English-professor dad. Unlike many of my friends’ parents, he let me read anything I wanted. Anything. Uncomprehending, but wanting to make Dad proud, I chewed my way through *The Crying of Lot 49*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Wise Blood*, even the first six or so pages of *Finnegan’s Wake* (to date, that is as far as I have got — Dad, if you’re reading this, I promise to keep trying).

But Dad likes poetry more than anything else, and poems are a lot more friendly toward a ten-year-old’s attention span. Fortunately, Dad has excellent taste. By the time I was fifteen I’d laid waste to the poetry section of his bookshelves: Coleridge and Wordsworth, Snyder and Ginsberg, Rilke and Rimbaud, Bishop and Stevens, Owen and Sasson. I read, and I retained.

My teen years didn’t go exactly as planned, however, and so through my twenties I continued to “educate myself” as I worked at low-paying jobs. I didn’t know what books to buy, so I developed a cover test. Were there any barbarians? Barbarians, check. OK, not that one. Day-glo colors? No thank you. Swooning women? How dare these publishers insult my Towering Intellect! *Raaar!* Barkeep, bring me a Nin, with a Brontë chaser, and make it snappy!

Gradually, my snobbery extended toward art (“I’m not going in there; I see a Nagel”), and food (I never ate top ramen without cilantro), and movies. Especially movies. A few years ago, some friends held an intervention at which I was forced to

watch both *The Return of the Jedi* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. I hadn’t seen them. I saw *Star Wars*, but I was fourteen then and I went with the whole family. By the time *Jedi* came out, I was already prancing off to see Cocteau’s *Orfée* (again).

I didn’t see *Star Wars* as science fiction. Everybody knew science fiction wasn’t about rocket ships or whatever. It was social criticism, and therefore permitted. Same deal with true crime. True crime isn’t about being scared of Ted Bundy, I told myself (though I was indeed scared of him until he was finally executed; he’d already escaped from prison once). Reading true crime books was studying human psychology. Anyway, wasn’t *In Cold Blood* first published as a serial in *The New Yorker*?

I admit, there were a few holes in my persona: I listened furtively to Elvis albums, enjoyed the occasional bowl of Froot Loops, watched Bugs Bunny when I got up early enough, read the tabloids. But those were just quirks. Quirks kept me from being a snob, right? Right. The rest of the time, my brow was high. Why, I could hardly see my hair.

And then Oprah Winfrey happened.

I should say here that although I have never watched her show, I do approve of Oprah. Anyone who can lose and gain and lose 90 pounds in front of the entire nation has my automatic respect. Not to mention, she reads. But that was the problem.

I first heard of Oprah’s Book Club in 1997, when I started working at Amazon.com. I couldn’t help but hear of it; I was on the phones in the Customer Service Department:

Customer: Where’s my book?

Me: What book is that?

Customer: My Oprah book!

Me: Do you remember the title?

Customer: It’s the one that Oprah talked about on today’s show.

Me (searching for “Oprah book” on Lycos): OK, let me look...

Checking the Oprah list on our website, I found several books I would actually consider reading. I even read one of them (*She’s Come Undone* by Wally Lamb) and rather liked it. A television personality

Or, how I learned to stop worrying and love the story

pushing literary fiction. Ironic. Hip. Even quirky. And people were actually reading. Thumbs up.

I didn't go to a lot of bookstores for a few years. Amazon offered employees free shipping; books simply appeared on my desk. Then I got laid off. I had lots of time to browse, but what I found disturbed me.

The literary fiction section had changed. Before, I'd been able to count on my cover test to point me in the right direction. Now, my roadmap had been ruined in a rain of—well, of Oprah books. Suitably odd-looking women peered at me from the covers of trade paperbacks. Blurbs praised “wonderfully eccentric” characters and “unexpected yet inspiring” stories.

I didn't want to read about odd women; I already was one. Unexpected didn't sound good either. Unemployed and uncertain, I needed the comfort of a *bildungsroman*, the stillness of an epiphany. Where were all the books that would make me feel smarter?

In denial, I tried several different stores, until I finally understood: writers are poor. They want to sell books. Oprah books sell, therefore...gah. May you gain it all back, Oprah. I stalked off toward the Penguin section.

I loved the Penguin section. It was always so relaxing to stand there and look at all those beautiful black spines, knowing that any one of them I picked would automatically be good for me. But that day, I made a terrible discovery. I'd read all the Penguins I was interested in, at least the ones in that store. I checked several times, but alas, it was true: I'd been assigned many Penguins in college; the rest I'd read for jollies. I poked through a couple I'd previously passed over, but I wasn't in the mood

for any of them and I knew it. A couple of weeks before, I'd even read *Moby Dick* after swearing I never would, all the while feeling as if I'd stooped to drinking the mouthwash.

My bookless state suddenly seemed that much more desperate, but I wasn't going home without something to read. Grimly, I turned toward the SF&F shelves.

I saw a Philip K. Dick I hadn't read, and I was headed for the register when I noticed how short it was. Only a few hundred pages—too thin, too thin! With my lack of other obligations, it would last me only a few days. And then what would I do? I turned back to the shelves.

Hum, there was a fat one I hadn't seen. I picked it up. *A Game of Thrones*, by George RR Martin. No barbarians, swooning women, or Day-glo on the cover, but there was a king, which was often a bad sign. Taking a deep breath, I opened the book at the middle and read a couple of paragraphs. It didn't stink. I closed it again. I looked at the spine. Two inches thick. I looked in my wallet. I could afford it and the PKD both. I bought them.

I read the PKD (*We Can Build You*) first. Two days. On the third day, I threw *A Game of Thrones* in my backpack and went to the gym. I started reading on the bus, paused briefly to sign in at the gym counter, and then sat on a bench in the deserted locker room, reading my head off, workout almost forgotten. Brow completely forgotten.

I wasn't learning anything, no, but the book had a story. So many years, I'd been reading for educational purposes only; I'd lost sight of the story, and this one was great. Kings, wars, tribes, undead creepy-crawlies, a planet where each season could last decades! Best of all, it took two weeks to finish. I bought the other two in the series, and read those too. I was hooked.

And so, for the last year or more, I've been heading right for the SF&F section. Picking good stuff is easy; I just check the spine width, give it the “read a couple paragraphs out of the middle” test, and if it passes, I buy it. Nothing fazes me, not even sweaty, overcoated guys who creep up and mutter, “I liked that one” (that was *This Alien Shore* by CS Friedman, and by gum, I liked it too).

Oprah's going a different route. Recently, she announced the revival of her book club, with a series called “Traveling with the Classics.” She's going to read Shakespeare, and Austen, and the Brontës, and America is going to read them with her. Probably. Whatever. I'll be the only Day-glo cover on the bus, but I don't care. I'm a quirky woman with an adjusted brow. It just doesn't matter anymore.



Celluloid Fantasia

by Stu Shiffman

2003

Not everyone realizes that the original pulp tales of Zorro by Johnston McCulley, and their film adaptations, are set in an alternate history Neverland. The original story, "The Curse of Capistrano," is set in southern California around Los Angeles (and nowhere near San Juan Capistrano) in the early nineteenth century under Spanish-ruled Mexico (or New Spain). McCulley conflates the periods of the great missions and that of the haciendas and the dons. Most action occurs in what he refers to as the "presidio" of Los Angeles, although the only *presidios* in California were located in Monterey and San Francisco. Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1822 and the Californias gained a measure of self-rule in 1838. McCulley may have taken inspiration from Jose Maria Avila who participated in the 1831 revolt against Imperial Mexico, as well as the murderous exploits of the *Californio* bandit Joaquin Murrieta (1830-1853), eventually hunted down by the American Captain Harry Love. All this, and a modicum of Robin Hood and the Scarlet Pimpernel, shows up in his bold heroic creation.

¡Que lastima!

The Mask of Zero!

At least, that was one of the original working titles (along with *Firecrackers* and *Foxfires*) for the Marx Brothers film that eventually became *After the Fox* (Paramount, 1933). Designed as a sendup of the classic Douglas Fairbanks silent, *After the Fox* is the forgotten entry in the Brothers' series of social deconstructions and a box office failure. Ah, if only they had used that "The Mask of Zero" title...

The premise is classic Zorro: around 1820, the son of a Californian nobleman comes home from Spain to find his native land under a villainous dictatorship. While presenting the public aspect of a useless and brainless aristocratic fop, he takes up the challenge to fight tyranny in the guise of

a masked swordsman. *After the Fox*, however, has a few twists in the tale: The old *alcalde* **Don Alejandro** (whose portrait is based on Frenchy Marx) has died in mysterious circumstances in an ambush, and his son Diego recalled from Spain in the hope that he will become the new *alcalde*. **Doña Margareten** (played by Margaret Dumont), who has inherited the largest land grant in all the Californias, is being pressured by the new *alcalde*, **Trabaja!** (Charles Middleton), and **Captain Ramón** to donate twenty million in gold to the purse of



the *presidio* or face the loss of her property. The Indians are being enslaved, the missions stripped of their lands and the peons oppressed.

“Oy,” cries one curiously Yiddish peon, “I yam beink oppresst!”

It is then that **Don Diego T. Beigel** (Groucho) returns from Spain on the good ship *Enchilada*, flush with his winnings from cards and accompanied by his Italian valet **Piccarello** (Chico). He is welcomed back to his old family hacienda by the mute family servant **Reubio O’Higgins** (Harpo). They are also welcomed by a large musical number lead by Doña Margareten and young **Don Cesar** (Zeppo), who is attracted to Trabajal’s “ward” **Señorita Lupe** (Thelma Todd). Doña Margareten’s own daughter **Lolita** is in love with Don Cesar. Lolita, in her turn, is being pressured to marry Captain Ramón. It’s all rather complicated. This is the setting of the famous “Una Noche en Los Angeles,” written by the team of Kalmar & Ruby.

At the end of the number, Captain Ramón (Edgar Kennedy) and **Sergeant Gonzales** (Billy Gilbert) try to arrest Don Diego. They are so turned around by Don Diego, Piccarello and O’Higgins that they keep walking out of an upper window and landing in a pig wallow.

Doña Margareten’s plan is that Don Diego T. Beigel will take up the cause to fight tyranny.

DOÑA MARGARETEN

You are called to your destiny, Señor,
Without a question.
I’d like to offer this with your permission,
As a suggestion:
I really think that you should be a Hero!

ALL

We really think that he should be a Hero!
And wear a mask and everything! He must become
a Hero!

GROUCHO

Although it would please me to fight the strong
— save the throng — and say “So Long”!
Suppose that I swashed my buckle and everything
went wrong?

DOÑA MARGARETEN

A true Hero can do no wrong!

(*Those assembled surround him, and the sound of
musket fire is heard — Groucho calls:*)

GROUCHO

Ah, better to be a live coward that a deceased
Hero — a fighting Zero —

But still... we must unite against the common enemy and concentrate our forces.

Be Captain Blood and the Scarlet Pimpernel!

Call the troops, ring the bell!

It’s war for now so bring the horses!

(*Groucho, Chico and Harpo all try to climb on table
to strike heroic poses, all fall off*)

Fade Out.

Soon, the *alcalde* suspects that the new savior of the oppressed, the mysterious masked **Fox**, is really Don Diego. Trabajal sends Sergeant Gonzales to recruit Don Diego’s servants to spy for him. Piccarello and O’Higgins get him so confused, in the hilarious “Spy Money” scene, that he leaves them with the sack of gold and himself with nothing. Meanwhile, Don Diego romances both Doña Margareten for her property and Señorita Lupe for her sensual attraction. The latter tries to elicit information on the Fox.

It all ends with the night time capture of the Fox, after the beloved “Mirror” sequences (a classic of silent comedy) where Groucho, Chico and Harpo are identically disguised, and he’s revealed as Piccarello behind the mask. What a surprise! A spectacular trial for treason to the *alcalde* and Spain follows. Don Diego serves as Piccarello’s defense attorney, poor fellow. Groucho as Don Diego leads the *alcalde* and his prosecutor a merry musical dance of logical illogic as he demolishes the court’s pretensions to justice and the *alcalde*’s power.

ALCALDE

Why did you become a traitor, Piccarello? Were you driven to it by an unhappy childhood; do you suffer from neuroses?

CHICO

I no gotta new-rosis. My uncle, he’s-a gotta flower shop, he’s-a got plenty new-rosis.

GROUCHO

I object!

ALCALDE

Why do you object?

GROUCHO

Have you read this script?

ALCALDE

That’s an irrelevance!

CHICO

No, irrelevance are what Indian princes ride.

ALCALDE

Indian princes? Princes!

GROUCHO

Good—I'll have cheese princes and potato pancakes with sour cream.

At the end, a rider enters to announce that Mexico, and California, are now free of the Spanish Crown. The assembly reprises "Una Noche en Los Angeles." Groucho as Don Diego ends up in the silken arms of Señorita Lupe, while Lolita will be wed to Don Cesar. Doña Margareten begins to sing a patriotic anthem and is pelted with fruit by the Brothers.

The film was directed by Leo McCarey; and was written by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, with additional dialogue by Arthur Sheekman and Nat Perrin.

It was after this notable comic success but commercial flop that their contract was not renewed, Zeppo left to pursue a successful career as an agent, and Groucho and Chico signed with NBC to do their short-lived 1934–5 radio series *Skyrocket T. Flywheel & Company*. For his part, Harpo toured Soviet Russia. In the radio series, inspired by the success of the popular *Buck Rogers* newspaper comic strip, Groucho plays bunko artist and pulp writer **Ulysses T. Flywheel** who, on a visit to the dentist, gets an overdose of nitrous oxide and falls into suspended animation for a thousand years. There, in the ruins of old Low Hangles, he is revived by Italian archaeologist **Rivelli** who mistakes him for his ancient creation Skyrocket Flyboy, whose science fictional adventures from the ancient *Skyrocket Adventure Stories* form the cornerstone of classical literature and history as it is known to the future civilization. Rivelli and his American assistant **M'oli M'olloi** expect Flywheel to lead the tattered remnants of A'mer'ca to reunite and throw out the Sci Khans of High Tartary:

RIVELLI

Joosta like I tell you, you make-a the beeg revolting... make-a the New-nited States.

GROUCHO

(aside)

Well, you certainly know about revolting.

(to Rivelli)

You seem to be under a misapprehension, Professor Rivelli, I'm no super-science hero!

RIVELLI

I was misapprehended onst, but they expoonge the

court record. That's a good joke, eh, boss?

GROUCHO

(aside)

This is my point—restrict immigration.

(to Rivelli)

Listen, Rivelli, can I sell you a ticket to the Fireman's Ball? It's a five-dollar ticket, and it's yours for a buck and a half.

M'OLI

Professor Rivelli—that ticket is from the Twentieth Century!

GROUCHO

Oh, it's an ancient train ticket? Then it's an antique and cheap at twice the price! What, don't have three bucks? What would you take to run into an open manhole, Rivelli?

RIVELLI

Just the cover charge.

GROUCHO

I'm going to relax on my chaise lounge... and stop worrying about alien menaces, except you, Rivelli.

RIVELLI

I had dat kind of a lounge yesterday—chaise and crackers.

Thanks to the Radio Spirits CD reissues, and to the collection of scripts edited by Michael Barson and published by Pantheon as *Skyrocket T. Flywheel!* in 1988, we can still enjoy its foolish pleasures.



The Legion of Space

Who can ever forget the thrill of reading “The Legion of Space”...for the first time? The first part of this classic began in the April issue and ran for six breathtaking installments. The adventures of John Star, Giles Habibula, the mighty Hal Samdu, and Jay Kalam on the evil world of the Medusae, the planet Yarkand, as they fought to save the lovely Aladoree Anthar and the secret weapon, AKKA, which she alone held in her mind and which was the only salvation of Earth, were high adventure indeed with a Sense of Wonder in ample measure.

— Alva Rogers in *A Requiem for Astounding* (Advent, 1964)

Jack Williamson’s *The Legion of Space* is a classic of science fiction and usually recognized as one of the best examples of pre-John W. Campbell space opera. It may be as some claim that, even in its 1947 revisions, it suffers from paper-thin motivation and characterizations, its science merely plausible techno-babble. Still, it’s great fun. *Star Wars* (if you recall that late 1970s version of the *Lensman* cycle) had led me to rediscover the pleasures of 1930s space opera in the works of Doc Smith, Williamson, Campbell and Edmond Hamilton. Thank you for that, George Lucas.

The Early Williamson recounts a tale of the story’s origin, how Williamson had heard in a college class that Henryk Sienkiewicz had “borrowed the characters of Dumas’ musketeers and Shakespeare’s Sir John Falstaff for a series of historical novels,” and Jack had thought that he could do the same trick for science fiction. Giles Habibula is the most impressive (Falstaff and more) and greatly amusing.

There’s no real reason why we shouldn’t remember the future.

— Jack Williamson, *The Legion of Space* (1934)

The *Legion of Space* was first made into a serial in 1935, as *The Rocketeer Legion*.

Twelve episodes of creaky early science-fiction action with many innovative moments (often compared favorably to *The Phantom Empire*, *Undersea Kingdom* and the *Flash Gordon* cycle) tell the streamlined story and are most notable for the casting of the young John Wayne as Hal Samdu, Noah Beery, Jr. as Jay Kalam and Billy Gilbert as cranky old Giles Habibula. Lon Chaney, Jr. and Joe Sawyer also appear, the latter an actor now best remembered as Sgt. Biff O’Hara in TV’s *Adventures of Rin-Tin-Tin*. It was shot on studio soundstages and the most alien locations that southern California could provide.

It was remade as *The Legion of Space* in Hollywood’s *annus mirabilis*, 1939, as a class A picture directed by George Stevens and adapted by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur from elements of both *The Legion of Space* and *The Cometeers*, with script by Joel Sayre and Fred Guiol. William Faulkner was among those uncredited writers who contributed to the final script. The film score by Alfred Newman is magnificent and currently available on CD from Varese Sarabande. The leads included Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., with Olivia DeHaviland as Aladoree Anthar. Originally, W. C. Fields was rumored to be cast as Giles Habibula (see Aljean Harmetz’s marvelous *The Making of The Legion of Space*) but the final casting was that of S. K. “Cuddles” Sakall, which allowed him to stretch the usual characters he played.

The glorious MGM Technicolor version (alas, too early for CinemaScope and stereophonic sound),



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QUARANTINED COSMOS

IN CINEMASCOPE AND COLOR



produced in 1948, was directed by George Sidney and adapted by Robert Ardrey. Lana Turner played Aladoree while Gene Kelly, Van Heflin, Gig Young and Robert Coote were cast as the other heroic leads. Walter Slezak was Giles Habibula, giving a sense of the disreputable that earlier versions had lacked. Vincent Price, Keenan Wynn and Angela Lansbury were among other notable featured actors. Some critics, notably including Leonard Maltin, think that Van Heflin's characterization bogs down the action. I'm not sure that I agree, although it is interesting to compare to the 1974 Richard Lester version. I remember going to see both as a double feature at the Film Forum in New York in the 1980s.

This 1948 version is the best of all of the adaptations for pure excitement with Gene Kelly doing all his own stunts and making the null gravity sequence look to be the most believable until those in 2001. I think that I've worn out my VHS copy, providing another reason to step up to DVD.

Mentioning all that cinematic high technology that Hollywood was promoting in the 1950s to compete with the appeal of television makes me think of *Silk Stockings*. MGM's *Silk Stockings* (from the stage version, music and lyrics by Cole Porter and book by Abe Burrows, George S. Kaufman & Leueen MacGrath) was a widescreen remake of the classic Ernst Lubitsch comedy *Ninotchka*, and featured the Cole Porter tune "Stereophonic Sound," sung by Fred Astaire and Esther Williams, which said everyone wanted the latest widescreen technical breakthroughs:

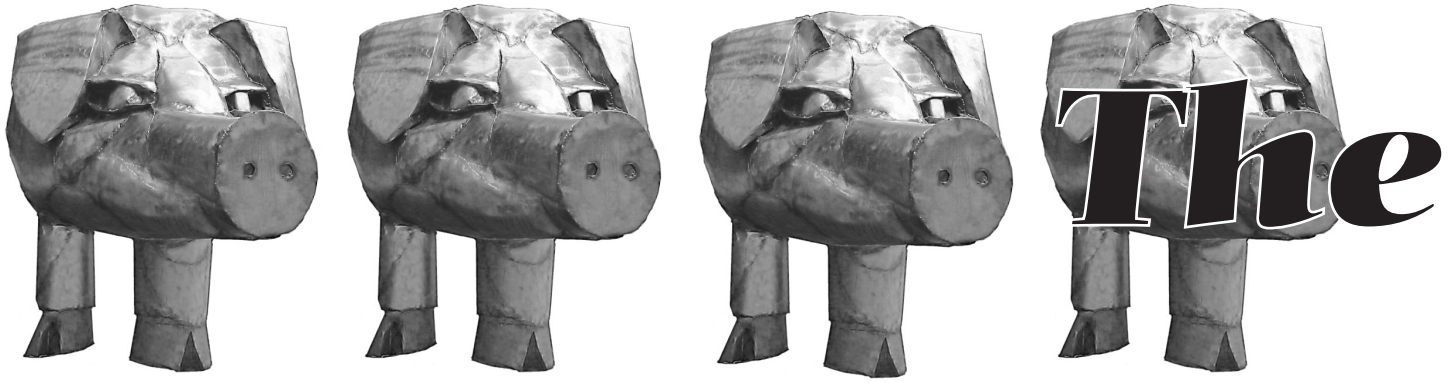
*"You've gotta have glorious Technicolor,
Breathtaking CinemaScope and
Stereophonic sound!"*

It's a marvelous film, and additionally hilarious for the science fiction fan. Soviet envoy Nina Yashenko (Cyd Charisse) and composer Peter Ilyich Boroff (a blend of Theremin and Prokofiev) find that his composition "Ode to a Tractor" is being used for a musical version of a *Forbidden Planet*-style film, here called *Quarantined Cosmos*. I love "The Robot's Song" and Cyd Charisse's dance sequences. Esther Williams is great too when she sings the very silly "Empress of Outer Space" for the film within the film in the character of "Miranda," telling how the alpha-female became Monarch of the Greelish race. It's enough to give anyone "The Red Blues"!

Check out the film soundtrack with the MGM Studio Orchestra conducted by Andre Previn (Carol Richards sings for Cyd Charisse). The latest CD version has art by Vincent DiFate.

Next Time?

Next installment, I hope to focus on the late 1960s phenomenon of *Dominic Flandry, Agent of Terra* on the small screen, which catapulted Ross Martin to stardom, and Nicholas van Rijn (as portrayed by Victor Buono) and the Polesotechnic League on the big screen, as well as the forgotten Republic serial set at the 1939 New York World's Fair, *The Phantom of the Fair*.



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Alexis Gilliland

Thank you for *Chunga 3* which arrived with disconcerting promptness after #2, due no doubt to your participation in the TAFF race. (Oh, you said as much? Never mind.) I see that Andy Hooper is promoting the FAAn Awards for what he considers good and sufficient reasons. A theoretical objection is that the fanzine universe is too diffuse, too dispersed, to have a coherent readership. That is, so many fanzines are coming out that nobody has time to read them all, and the electorate, numbering in the thousands, must choose among scores of titles with print runs in the hundreds. Perhaps it would be possible to include a postcard with each fanzine so that the electorate could rate what they read while it was still fresh in memory—a postcard sent to some central rating authority. Or perhaps not. One imagines Andy buried under an avalanche of hundreds of thousands of cards a year. His present system is at least doable. Over four elections he has received five ballots from people he didn't think of as "stone fanzine fans" and only one from a name he didn't recognize. It would be interesting to know the size of his electoral universe, which represents some fraction (half?) of the existing SFmzF.

The Hugo awards are suggestive of the number involved, in that the fan artist award (the one I pay attention to) draws about 50 nominations and 250 votes. We note also that for whatever reason the fan Hugos tend to be dominated by a few individuals, as shown by Charlie Brown's beaucoup Hugos for best fanzine, best semi-prozine and best fanwriter, while Dave Langford has recently dominated the lists as best fan writer, with numerous Hugos for his fanzine *Ansible*, which he has recently declared a semi-prozine. In 1987, when the semi-prozine Hugo was created, I fruitlessly argued that they ought to establish three categories, Beginner, with no Hugos, Journeyman, with one to three, and Master, with four or more. In such a system Brown and Langford would have been duking it out in the

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Master class a long time ago. Andy might consider such a division of the FAAn awards to ensure a more equitable division of egoboo, but perhaps his electorate already factors in past honors received.

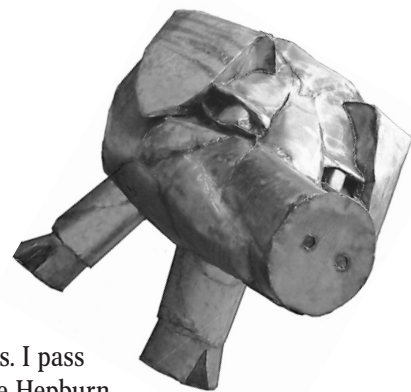
The number of FAAn award ballots cast has fluctuated a lot from year to year since I took over, particularly when you include the dramatic drop associated with Corflu Shinsplash. There were 55 total ballots in 2001, down from 58 in 2000. I'm not sure how many ballots Victor received, but I believe it was somewhere in the 40s. I absolutely agree that the problem right now is encouraging more people to vote for the fanzines they enjoy, even if they don't receive a fraction of the fanzines of all forms published. I would desperately love to get more ballots from Britain; you would think the fine performance of British writers and artists in the awards every year would encourage more British participation, but there is still some perception that the FAAns are an explicitly American award. If someone would like to volunteer to be a British agent for FAAn ballot collection and publicity, I bet that would make a big difference. I guess my dream is to secure something like 100 ballots, because then the point totals would be really impressive-looking, and clearly the award would look like more of an honor from the outside. But to me, having 45 of the most obsessed and ardent fanzine fans choose your title or work as the best is still pretty wonderful.

—Andy

Joseph Nicholas

I read Andy Hooper's piece on Star Trek with interest, although I've never really followed Trek per se. I watched the original series when it was first broadcast in Britain, but more because it was a genuine attempt at adult science fiction—the only other programme on offer was the BBC's long-run-

Iron Pig



ning *Dr Who*, clearly aimed at a younger audience — than because it was any good: the future it offered, although pretending to be an advanced cosmopolitan civilisation, was clearly not much more than a shinier version of the American Dream. (The stark contrast between this and the contemporary shambles of the US's Vietnam misadventure needs little explication.) More importantly, the original *Star Trek* was not broadcast in the UK until after it had been cancelled in the USA, and after the first of the Apollo moon landings — a time when it was becoming clear that the assumption on which *Star Trek* was based (that the moon landings would be merely the first step on an expanding wave of solar and stellar exploration) was unjustified: that the political will to continue anything of the sort was entirely absent.

So the resurrection of *Star Trek* twenty or so years later, as *The Next Generation*, roused little interest (at least in me) — it was an alternate future, on a time-line which had diverged from ours some time in the recent past, and therefore little more than a curio. (Besides, my tastes had moved on.) This wasn't helped by the peculiar circumstances in which *The Next Generation* arrived in the UK: the initial rights were bought by a video distribution company, which delayed television broadcast for some years (until 1990, I think). Then, because it was science fiction (and science fiction is, you know, not proper drama), the BBC chose to show it early in the kidult period (that mythical time between 6.00pm and 9.00pm when families are supposed to be at home together), when I was still at work. (We did not then have a video recorder.) In consequence, I have never seen an episode.

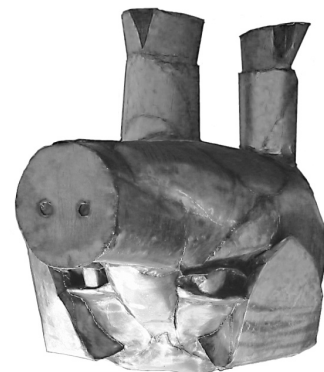
Nor have I seen an episode of *Deep Space Nine* — indeed, I don't know if it was ever shown on terrestrial broadcast TV in this country. I did see the first few episodes of *Voyager*, but more because they followed something else than because I actually wanted to — I knew that I should be thinking "Gosh, science fiction! With real production values!", but instead dismissed it because I didn't have enough background knowledge of the *Star Trek* universe. And, as Andy says, it wasn't very interesting. (The first few episodes were pretty dread-

ful in any case. Dreadful plotwise, that is. I pass in silence over Kate Mulgrew's Katherine Hepburn impression.)

Enterprise. Well, I know that exists. Somewhere. It was launched in the UK with a high degree of media coverage (mostly focused on the lead actor, Scott Bakula, than the concept itself), but seems to have sunk without trace. As did *Andromeda* before that, and *Stargate SG1* before that, both being transferred from their original broadcast slots to late Sunday afternoons on Channel 4 — a true graveyard. Even *Superman: The Early Years* got a higher profile early evening run (although I didn't watch that either).

I have seen all the *Star Trek* films, however (because I thought I should). The less said about some of them, the better — if Andy thinks that *Insurrection* was terrible, he should see the latest, *Nemesis*. A total mess from beginning to end, this features a scene in which the *Enterprise* rams a Romulan battleship, driving its saucer deep into the hull of the latter. The Romulan then pulls itself clear by engaging reverse thrust. Presumably we are supposed to believe this manoeuvre succeeds because the fabric of space itself is viscous enough to hold the *Enterprise* back. Truly, the *Star Trek* universe is very different from ours!

As to the other contents of the second issue — I read them, I enjoyed them, but have nothing to say about them. (See — a letterhack who doesn't strain to make meaningful comment about everything.) So the above will have to do.



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In these (possibly pre-) apocalyptic times, with, we are told, irony deceased or at best listlessly coughing up its last blood-flecked sputum in some shabby dead-end alley, it's damned refreshing to find a well-educated adult willing to argue that sf, with its rich and ironical history of recomplicated relations between the reader/writer's consensus and various imagined or displaced versions of the universe, can yet be navigated meaningfully by means of the pole star of prediction. This stubborn overvaluation of rhetoric, weaving shreds of logic into tattered clothing, flattens the lived "aha" into the overdetermined "of course."

Similarly, though lack of TV means I can't vouch for the sequel series, *Star Trek* explicitly referenced Vietnam (several times, including an episode where the series' oft-noted semi-Luddistic impulse is called into action to reimpose the stinking, bleeding horrors of combat to warring societies whose members off themselves in accordance to computerized body counts), as well as sustainable ecology, racial harmony (including US TV's first interracial kiss) and gender equality, which you might agree is doing pretty good for a show originally conceived as *Wagon Train* in space.

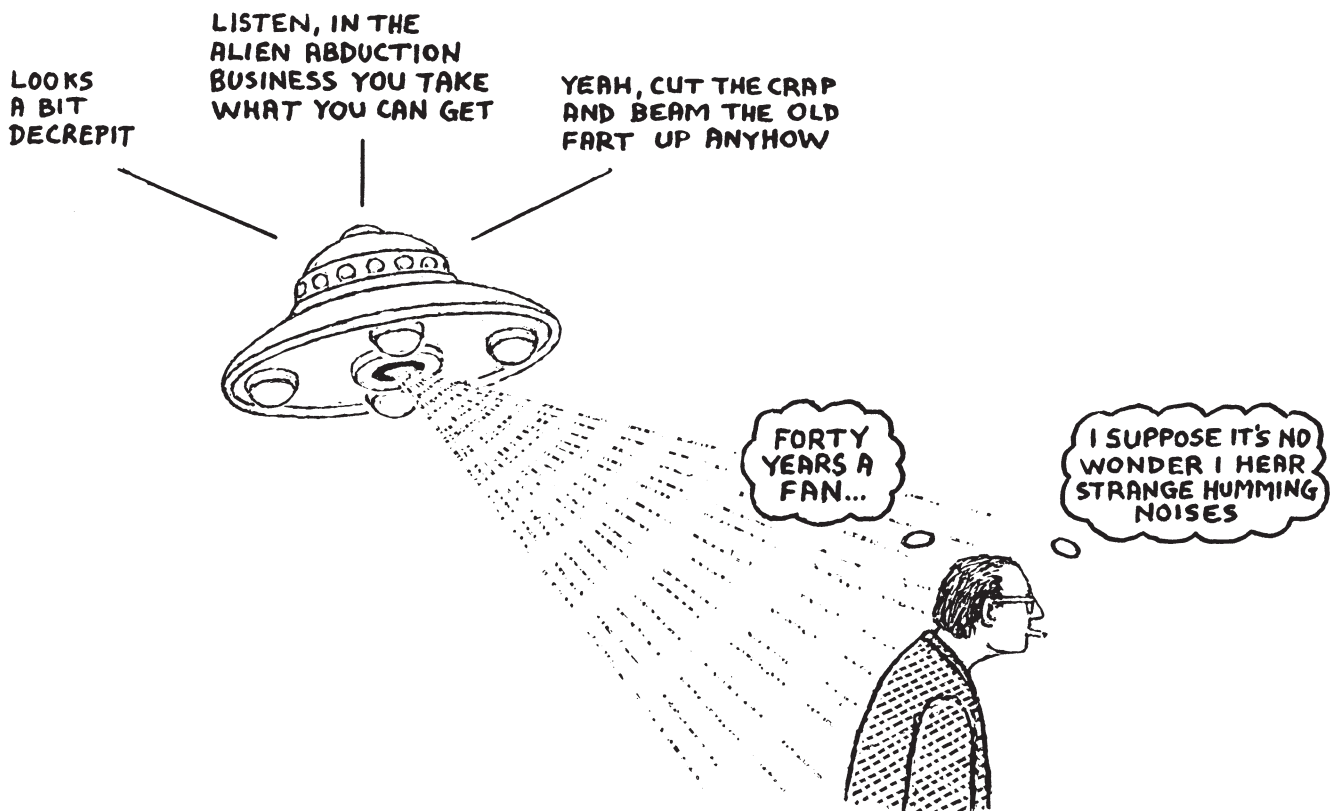
In closing, I'm sure you agree 1000% that the newer futures are always the best ones, and there are far too few places to discuss *Star Trek* at great length in public. Thank you.

—carl

Ulrika O'Brien

It must have been at Corflu UK that I first heard Lilian's theory of fanwriting. "Good fanwriting has to be by people you know." Nah. I don't think so. Teresa Nielsen Hayden's "God and I" (or, roll your own example) is good fanwriting even to total strangers of the woman herself. Trust me on this. I'm a relative neo to faanish fanzine fandom, so I've read quite a bit of fanwriting by people I didn't know yet, or never will. Some of it rocked my socks.

Being by people you know is what grants temporary stay of execution to otherwise crap writing. The only possible reason to read endless re-hashes of went-to-the-pub-got-sideways-said-stupid-shit-woke-up-hung-over fanwriting is to comb it for tidbits of gossip about people you're interested in. Fanzine gossip is the primate grooming of our particular tribe. That isn't what makes the writing good; it's just what compels our interest. Yeah, yeah, fanzine does still have to be from/of/by/about our tribe. Mostly. Except when it doesn't. What Anne Fadiman writes is sometimes amazingly good fanwriting from a nearby but more literary faniverse. You can hardly read of her family's proofreading mania without crying, "Sister!" You surely can't read of Norman Podhoretz's dealings with *The Family* without harkening to your favorite fannish hothead and the complex and incestuous fan feuds our tribal myths are built on.



On the other hand, if the writer is writing exclusively for people she knows, the result is often obscure and inaccessible to the general reader. (Hence, LiveJournal.) Such writing just contributes to the perceived cliquishness of trufandom. Which I suspect may be the point, but which may also be inimical to the long-term health of zine fandom.

Are fanzines just a substitute for sex or love? Isn't everything, except sex, and love? Why does it matter whether it's a substitute for sex and love, so long as it's interesting? Are we sad little bunnies who won't get laid because we fan our ac? Possibly, though I doubt it. But if so, so what? Aren't we getting a little long in the tooth to still be desperately seeking approval and love by the metrics of the cool kids?

Speaking of Zevon, I swear I saw him in Capitol Hill last week. Hal and I were having a late dinner at Chang's and I look up from my sizzling heap o' Mongolian barbecue to see this guy across the room: skinny, tanned dude with a wizened, satirical face, haloed by a chaos of graying mid-brown frizzing hair and some seriously scraggy beard, surmounted by just the right sort of little, round glasses. Toward the end of his meal, he found the fortune in his cookie amusing enough to hand over to his dinnermate to share the joke. Hard to be wrong about the dark humor in that smile. Whoever it really was, I may have spooked him a bit; it was that hard not to stare. I was tempted to ask him if people ever mistake him for Warren Zevon, but didn't, just in the unlikely case it was the man. I don't like to bug celebrities; it would be particularly uncool to bug Zevon while he's trying to make the most of whatever time he's got. Besides, what could he possibly be doing in Seattle?

Much of the best fan writing is by people you know, but there have also been utterly perfect fanzine moments delivered to my door by people I never laid eyes on in my life. I don't think I was ever in the same half of the globe as Mae Strelkov, but I'll never forget her evocations of the rustic life in the Argentine timber. And I can't ever meet a lot of the great fan writers who had the poor fortune to expire before I ever entered fandom, but I like to think they issued little gestures of friendship in fanzine form that endure beyond their corporeal demise.

Fanzines are not a substitute for sex and love; they are, at their best, ardent solicitations of sex and love and every other form of human contact. Works, too.

—Andy



As for Zevon, I haven't heard any gossip to the effect that he's in town, but it wouldn't completely shock me to hear that he was getting treatment at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

—Randy

Lloyd Penney

A fan fund, especially one of the major ones, is difficult to run, and any direction is welcome, especially in the form of a manual so you can refer to it as you will. When Yvonne and I won CUFF (admittedly, a minor fund) in 1998, it wasn't difficult... CUFF has never had a ballot on which to vote for competing candidates, it's always been won by acclamation. (This may change this year... both Garth Spencer and Andrew Murdoch have expressed interest in running for the CUFF trip that will take the lucky winner to Torcon 3.) We wanted to see the fan fund continue, since it always seems to be on the brink of collapse, and there are some who would shut the whole thing down if they could get their hands on it. We took our trip (all the way to Montréal), attended the convention, participated in the Convention and Aurora Awards ceremony, and wrote up our trip report. Still have a few copies, if anyone's interested...

John Foyster

[as transcribed by Yvonne Rousseau from John's dictation]

Randy—In 'Why I Ran for TAFF', one of the things I didn't discover in your description was the idea of sending TAFF reports. It's the same in Andy's discussion, 'Thank You Gonad Factor'. Whether it's Randy or Andy, there's no mention of the old reason of publishing a report about a TAFF trip. That used to matter. Now it doesn't. I wonder if fans will ever go back to the old-fashioned way.

In 'Catch of the Day', Jerry is now really showing himself all the problems in publishing fanzines, and I think it's terrific.

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WAHF**Luke McGuff:***Was that really by Art?***Gary Deindorfer:***But mainly, I wanted to write to you to tell you that I hope you received my note a while ago, promising a "substantial" loc on the Chungas, which I admit I like "after all." "Yes."*

Jukka Halme**Kate Yule**kyule@spiritone.com

In 'The Iron Pig', in Ron Bennett's letter: gosh, the first time I visited Kuala Lumpur was over 13 years ago, in October 1989; my most recent visit was during the first three months of 2001. The Art Gallery is still there, but you can get much better food than Ron describes, though some visitors to Kuala Lumpur still prefer the colonial-style Colosseum restaurant. In Ipoh, Ron, I suggest you could still get the roast beef dinner you enjoyed, but I used to choose Indian food when visiting Ipoh. And in both Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh, there's a lot of stuff in Malaysian restaurants a good deal better than you would get twenty years ago.

John was the first person to point out my failure to promise a TAFF report, and I'm sad that he didn't live to chide me for the equivocal response that I originally wrote to his letter. Basically, I said that I understood the trip report to be one of the responsibilities that a TAFF delegate takes on, but that a promise to write one doesn't seem to be an indicator for actually getting one done. In short, the promise to write a trip report isn't worth much, so I didn't make the promise. In retrospect, however, I see that mentioning the trip report is part of the TAFF process, if only to keep the ideal expectation in mind for voters and prospective candidates. So I will take this opportunity to say that I fully intend to write a trip report. Thanks to John for prodding me on this point. I'm sorry he won't be here to read the report—or to prod me to get cracking on writing it. RIP, John.

—Randy

I hereby pledge that Randy will have a place to publish his TAFF report, and a fair and constant goad toward its completion. Writing the report is the fun part of TAFF, fer Ghusakes.

—Andy

Robert Michael Sabella

Chunga 2 was another issue full of good reading. I particularly enjoyed "Zefram Cochrane and the Crisis in Federation Continuity". I was a *Star Trek* fan for many years, watching every episode of the original series several times each in syndication and every episode of *The Next Generation* faithfully as well. I kind of lost interest though when they started running concurrent series such as *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*, so that when *TNG* ended I slowly drifted away, and have not watched much tv sf at all since. I avoided *Babylon 5*, not through lack of interest, but the fact that most fans emphasized the importance of watching all the episodes

in sequence, and I could never convince myself that was something I actually wanted to do faithfully.

I still looked forward to the *Star Trek* movies though and I thought *First Contact* was very good "backfill" for the entire *Trek* universe, one of the better movies in the series. The character of Zefram Cochrane was an inspired creation, although how much of that was due to the talents of James Cromwell, one of the better character actors, I don't know. I did not recall the episode "Metamorphosis" at all, nor the version of Cochrane portrayed in it. Perhaps I will go look for it now in syndication (somewhere!)

Other highlights of the issue were your Halloween article and the numerous reviews (Robert Lichtman's fanzine reviews, *Fallout*, and the restored *Metropolis*). A fine issue indeed.

Kate Yule

Having taken care to vote promptly, I've now gotten around to reading the zine. Good stuff, guys. A good solid zine, which could be heard as praising with faint damns but I mean it in a good way. Carl, excellent layout. Legible; clear; just decorative enough; white space. (A hair more gutter?) I almost didn't notice the linos, down in the bottom margin. They become something like the "easter eggs" on DVDs. Andy, that's quite a letter to Lilian. Seattle Corflu was quite the seething mass of hormones, wasn't it? Congratulations on penning a piece that names names yet will, I think, not induce anyone to want to take you by the shoulders and shake until done. (Previous editorializing of yours has been known to have that effect, generally to your honest bafflement.)

Randy, *bon chance!* I could go over to the TAFF site and see when/whether the race is over but don't dare get caught in the Web, as I am supposed to be somewhere in 10 minutes helping kids want to learn to read. Have got the 3rd-grader hooked on Akiko comic books but the kindergartener just wants to page through Harry Potter and point out all the instances of the word Quiddich. This gets old.

I won! I won!

Ahem. Thanks for the *bon chance*.

—Randy

Brad W. Foster

Well, sitting here iced-in when I thought I would be on the road down to San Antonio. My Mom had surgery last week, and various sisters, nieces, nephews, friends and me have volunteered to help her at home through the healing time. However, nasty ice storm moved in last night, and forget the 400 miles

of highway. I can't even back the van out of our driveway. So, a perfect day to stay inside and catch up on paperwork!

Loved "Confessions of a Dot-Communist". I'm sitting at the computer reading the zine, and I kept shouting out lines to Cindy in the kitchen so she would laugh too. (If I could ever get her to write locs, people would love her observations on so many of the zines that come in here. But, though she won't, zines do have two appreciative sets of eyes (or sometimes, my eyes and her ears) when they arrive here.)

Oh, hey, how could I miss adding what I'm sure is just one of many "great cover" comments, too!

Got to go, lots more to write, got to spread the wealth... well, the nonsense, around!

David Bratman

Chunga TAFF, Chunga Chunga TAFF. There, that's five words. Say it as if you're imitating a steam locomotive.

I enjoyed Andy's evaluation of the gonad appeal of this year's TAFF candidates. But I'm glad I already voted; it might make me terribly self-conscious to have to choose after that.

Art can put cream on his cereal if he wants, but I'm a real eccentric: I eat it dry.

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The Journal of Federation Studies

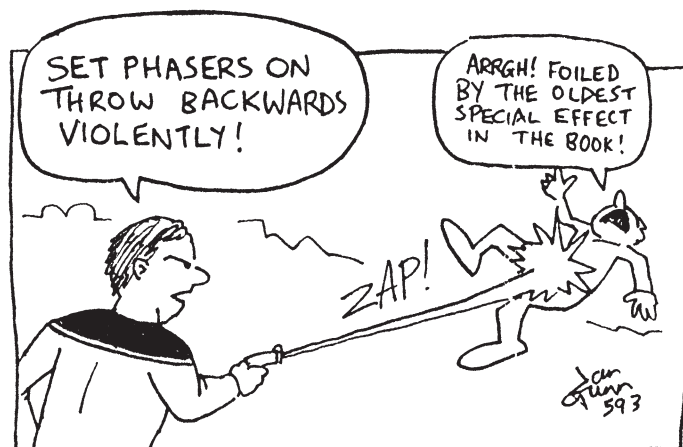
New Subspace Transmissions:

I was delighted to see the highly polarized yet cheerful response to my article "Zefram Cochrane and the Crisis in Federation Continuity" in *Chunga* #3. *Star Trek* has been ubiquitous background noise for some people, and difficult to find for others. But apparently the one part of the franchise that is habitually available to all *Chunga* readers are the movies, and now — with two apparent turkeys in a row — the overall health of the property is in its gravest condition ever. For my part, I still haven't been to see *Star Trek: Nemesis*, and I rather doubt now that I'm going to go see it before it reaches a cable TV service.

I was curious to see the Reman race, some sort of suppressed and secret minority in the Romulan Empire, as they seemed to look a lot like Max Schreck in *Nosferatu*. But every piece of information I garnered about the plot sounded more stupid than the last, and I couldn't bring myself to spend money to see it. Before it was even released, there was a lot of muttering that this would be the last movie with the "current" crew, i.e., the "Next Generation" including Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, et al. I don't think I'm honestly going to miss them that much; the best of them were always attached to so much cartoony business that it was hard to suspend disbelief long enough to identify with them. Perhaps the very best thing about *Star Trek: The Next Generation* were the lavishly orchestrated soundtracks, which can make for striking listening without all that Federation thud and blunder to distract you.

Meanwhile, word is that no one at Paramount is exactly struck dumb with glee at the performance of *Enterprise* over its first two seasons, and if renewed, it will under a great big gun in the fall of 2003. If the axe should fall again, we will be left without any contemporary *Star Trek* TV series for the first time since 1986. And then, of course, the serious analysis can actually begin.

My own interest in the *Star Trek* universe is still very much connected with the toys it has inspired, and I'm about to break down and buy one of the Art Asylum "Warp Noise" *Enterprise* models before they disappear from the local store shelves. It's a fabulous toy on a number of grounds, not least the electronic crescendo that seems to issue from the warp core at the touch of a button. But even more wonderful is the fact that the engine nacelles and connecting booms are firmly molded and held in place with screws. Anyone who



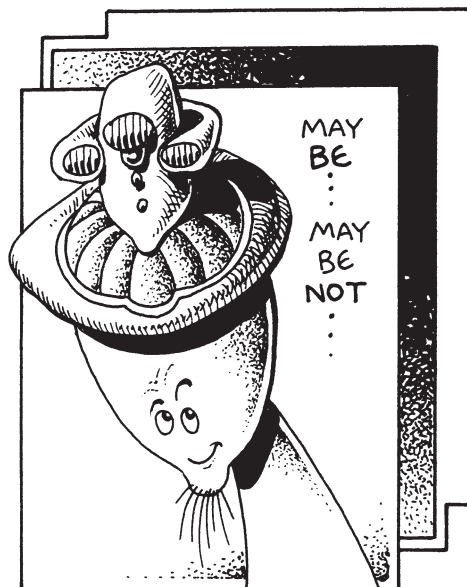
ever tried to build one of the AMT model kits of the *Enterprise* back in the 1970s appreciates the freedom from the gummy horror of trying to attach large and weight-bearing masses of plastic to one another with classic airplane glue. And then when they tried to take the good glue away from us and replaced it with that lemon-scented crap that wouldn't bond paper. I'm still pissed off about that. Yes, yes, you want to wipe out birth defects; but I have a starship to build here!

TNN continues to air episodes of *ST:TNG* under the title of *Trek Uncut* on Friday nights, asking cast members like Wil Wheaton and Marina Sirtis to take time out from their busy schedules on various shopping networks to tell breathless anecdotes of what fun it was to labor under Gene Roddenberry's withered hand. Since it doesn't require us to actually watch to follow the program, we frequently turn it on during the hurly-burly of food preparation.

Last week we chopped curry veggies to an episode from the first season, when everyone was still amazingly skinny and Worf so endearingly snaggle-toothed, like a Klingon version of Oliver J. Dragon. The episode featured the crew's second encounter with the omnipotent Q, as portrayed by the ever-ready John DeLancie, the William Campbell of the 1980s. One of the many confusing assertions that Q offered was that the much-touted human sense of right and wrong would melt away in the presence of absolute power, and to test that theory, he conferred his "Q Powers" on the ship's second officer, the not-yet bearded William Riker.

Nothing goes right, of course; Riker's efforts to

BORN-AGAIN AGNOSTIC



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utilize his power generally cause havoc. And when he attempts to give each of the flag crew their fondest wish before relinquishing his powers, the scene plays like a cheesy recapitulation of the end of *The Wizard of Oz*. Even Geordi Laforge, given the chance to replace his sightless eyes with burning brown and functional peepers, can't stomach the putative "cost" of his miracle. It's written with all the sensitive invention of an episode of *Davey & Goliath*, but one little point caught my ear and made me pay attention for a moment.

At various times, the crew engages in open speculation about what the Q's motives for manipulating them may be. After Riker is made part of the Q continuum for a time, he reports that he senses the Q are covetous of certain elements of the human personality, such as our determination and our inquisitive nature. Leaving aside the dubious distinction which these concepts seem to provide, the real bombshell is the idea that the Q would like to assimilate elements of the human organism. This is, as even casual Trekkers know, the constant cry of the menacing Borg, who exist only to assimilate other organisms in their quest for nominal perfection. Given the fact that it was Q who first put the *Enterprise* in contact with the Borg a little over a year after the episode we watched last week originally aired, their seemingly similar goals inspired disturbing theories of potential common cause between the two. Was the contact with the Borg meant to communicate the ultimate inevitability of universal assimilation to humanity, who would naturally prefer the painless chaos of the Q continuum to life as a drone?

But would the Q ever need to pursue such a strategy? The Q are not God, in any accepted definition of the title, yet they have the power to alter reality in remarkable ways. The true extent of their effect on the history of the Star Trek galaxy has yet to be fully appreciated or explored.

In other news, our friend Karrie Dunning attended one of those pay-per-view media conventions in the area, and reported that it was chock full of minor *Deep Space Nine* characters celebrating the tenth anniversary of that program by hitting the road to tell anecdotes and sign autographs. Unfortunately, since she had never seen the program herself, she was no more able to identify them all than Joseph Nicholas. She was there to see James Marsden, who plays Spike on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; He wrote "bite me" on a picture for her.

—Andy

Rain City Tangler

by Ulrika O'Brien

THE IMMORTAL CALM — Harry Warner, Jr., aged 80, died in his home in Hagerstown, MD, on February 17. All our lettercols will never be the same. Mr. Warner will be remembered as fandom's most reliable and enduring letterhack. With a fannish career that stretched through seven decades and thousands of letters of comment, Warner touched the lives and thoughts of seemingly every fan to pub an ish since the 1930s, offering up kind words, praise, and personal reminiscence in precisely two pages of closely spaced typescript. No less will he be remembered for his seminal fan histories, *All Our Yesterdays*, and *A Wealth of Fable*, chronicling fandom of the 1940s and 1950s from original sources out of his personal collection. With three Hugos to his name, and his zine *Horizons* a fixture of FAPA since 1939, it seemed Mr. Warner did nearly every fannish thing a private and reclusive man could do from the remove of Hagerstown. His departure leaves a hole in fandom that cannot be filled.

Richard Lynch keeps us abreast of the legal disposition of the Warner estate, reporting to Memory Hole that Mr. Warner's will has been found. In brief (and unofficially, until the will is read), while letters found with the will explicitly indicates Mr. Warner's intention to donate his fanzine collection to the UC Riverside collections, and to earmark \$10,000 to cover costs of transfer, these letters were not attached to the will, and as such do not count as part of it. The will itself does not explicitly dispose of the fanzine collection, but leaves the bulk of the Warner estate *in toto* to his church. Efforts are in progress, through the former acting Probate, to contact the church in hopes of securing agreement to pass the collection on to Riverside.

THAT'S NOT TOO MANY — 2003 marks the 20th consecutive summer of the Clarion West Writers' Workshop. Alert fans will note that Clarion West is therefore just concluding its 19th year, but hair-splitting will not deter the steering committee from kicking off a year of special celebrations to run through the conclusion of the 21st workshop in 2004. Look for the Clarion 20th Anniversary Party

on Saturday, July 6th, at the Seattle Westercon. More treats still to come.

THE ELEPHANT REMEMBERED — A memorial fanzine honoring Bruce Pelz is in the works, to be edited by John Hertz, and Len and June Moffat. The editors plan to work along the same model as *Buttontack: The Rick Sneary Memorial Fanzine*. Writings both by Mr. Pelz and about him will be included, as may sheet music, tarot cards, photographs, neckties, samplers, postcards... 'scuse me, poctsarcds... stained-glass windows, in an attempt to distill the depth and breadth of Mr. Pelz's fanac. Look for a forthcoming flyer from Mr. Hertz, soliciting contributions and suggestions of material, or contact him directly at 236 S. Coronado St., Apt. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057.

SAVING YOU THE PRICE OF A MOVIE TICKET — Knife-em-up "thriller" *The Hunted* is in no wise endorsed by the *Chunga* news desk, but fannes too fond of Tommy Lee Jones to stay away were heard to laugh out loud when an otherwise regrettable screenwriter let slip his crypto-fannishness:

"I thought you were on the wagon."

"I was. The wheels fell off."

WHEN YOU'RE IN A HOLE, STOP DIGGING — In the grand tradition of Whack-A-Mole, someone claiming to be A Certain SF Pro appeared suddenly, and repeatedly, in an unrelated comment thread of Jo Walton's LiveJournal to offer several installments of his version of the now-famous Boskone Coke Tossing Incident. The intent seems to have been to restore himself to the role of wronged innocent in the eyes of the just and the unjust, but risible references to Ms. Walton's "posse," her "minions," and her "renowned touchiness," along with an unfortunate magnanimity in allowing her a perfect right to be at an open party hosted by her publisher, provided enough unintentional laughs that the overall effect fell wide of the mark. Opinions differ whether the *coup de grace* lay in ingenuous confessions that untold lurkers supported Mr. Pro in e-mail, or in the bland encomiums on the value of objectivity.

*Fully-hopped
tales of the
extrapolative
neighborhood*

WE CAN REMEMBER IT FOR YOU, BOAT MAIL —

Greg Pickersgill is keen to liberate thirty-odd linear feet of his house from under the remaining Memory Hole duplicates. Even American aspirants to these historical documents may not go away empty-handed. While Mr. Pickersgill wants it made abundantly clear that what remains is strictly “second division material...[nothing] that is likely to be the *Brennschluss* of its time, never mind the *Hyphen*,” with that caveat he says, “if you or anyone else wants to send me 50USD (or even multiples thereof) I will send them a foot of fanzines, more or less. Maybe even with some change.” Better yet, detailed want-lists of fanzines are welcomed and encouraged, and will be filled as available for the price of shipping. Greg Pickersgill, 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverford West, Pembrokeshire SA61 2XG, UK.

TAFF STUFF ONLINE — EBay Magnate Andy Hooper has taken up the fundraising gauntlet to keep little TAFF ragamuffins off Seattle streets by sending them to the streets of Britain. He offers publisher proofs, books, fanzines, t-shirts, art, toys, and all manner of keen things you can't possibly live without for sale for the benefit of the Transatlantic Fan Fund, all on eBay. Come spend your money on cool stuff in a fabulous fannish cause! Or, donate your white elephants for auction to make room for the new cool stuff you buy! Send our editor to camp! To sign up for the auction notification list, email: TAFFfund-subscribe@yahooroups.com Or contact Mr. Hooper to donate salable goods to the cause. Or both. Act now, and all that.

AND THE ARMS HAVE COFFEE STAINS — In August of 2002, the Seattle Experience Music Project, Paul Allen's cutting-edge pop museum, quietly closed down its James Brown Soul Party virtual reality amusement ride, and began making plans to replace it with a series of exhibits that will con-

stitute a new museum within the museum. On April 17th, it was announced that the new wing is to be devoted entirely to the history and cultural impact of science fiction. Author Greg Bear was on hand for the announcement and will work with the project in some capacity, but his most significant contribution at the press conference was to wince visibly whenever someone used the phrase “sci-fi.” Curators pledged to cover the entire history of the genre, so some reference to print sf — probably including a lavish gallery of cover BEMs and brass brassieres — will be scattered among the artifacts left homeless by the closure of Planet Hollywood. But of course, the single item mentioned in every news story on the announcement is a prop captain's chair “from the original starship *Enterprise*.”

(Andy)

MY GOD, IT'S FULL OF SAND — News desk war correspondent Terry Karney reports from Kuwait:

0900 26 Mar 03 — Today I am living on Mars. Wind and dust are everywhere, and the clouds add a filter, so the light was red on the way to chow. There was no horizon, and as the day goes on the camp seems empty. No one is outside unless they have someplace to go, head down against the driving grit and the chill wind.

The regular sorts of training continue, day to day. Maybe not the same tasks, but the same sort of routine. Life is routine. It was routine before I got deployed. So the only difference is in the details.

That and the twitchiness. A week ago I did not know what it sounded like when a Patriot battery fired. Now I hear them and only stop for a moment, waiting in the pregnant pause for the “Giant Voice” to let us know that incoming is on the way. We used to noticeably stop, now it is just a momentary pause. But the other day, just after a shower, a fan started and I froze, another guy stuck his head out and we laughed, roughly, at how much it had sounded like the siren, albeit distant.

