



Steve Green's contribution to the 287th mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, May 2009.

Turning the Wheel

It seems a lifetime since I bundled *No Exit #7* off to our then-official editor Milt Stevens. Ann and I were about to head up to North Yorkshire for our summer break, staying as usual in one of the converted outbuildings at a working farm in Wensleydale. I took that mailing – #283 – up with us and even began working on mailing comments for what would have become *No Exit #8*, adding a couple more when we stayed with Ann's mom in Wales the weekend after our return. It was late June, and about the only problem I was trying to solve was finding a venue to celebrate our silver anniversary that coming December.

As many of you will be aware, the following month's events drove a bulldozer through those petty concerns. Ann came down with what at first appeared to be a stomach bug, but which grew steadily worse, to the point that she decided to get herself checked out at our local hospital (coincidentally, her place of work since 1984). Eventually, the tests picked up an opportunistic *clostridium difficile* infection, offered a window by the lengthy programme of anti-biotics Ann had been under to cure a diabetes-related foot ulcer. Even when we were told she needed surgery to tackle the resulting bowel inflammation, I remained convinced all would be well in due course.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Ann's diabetes, diagnosed just months earlier, had apparently lain undiscovered for years. Her defences were severely weakened, and the best efforts of the medical team (many of whom knew her personally) couldn't

prevent the nightmare from becoming reality. Ann passed away on 29 July, aged just 46.

Nine months later, I still find it near-impossible to grasp, so deeply intertwined had our lives become since that evening in January 1982 when our friend Phil Greenaway introduced us in a pub in South Wales. (It was fitting that Phil, for both of us our oldest friend, was by my side that final afternoon as the life support machinery was geared down.)

But life carries on, in a fashion. I'm still involved in local politics, gradually cultivating an income stream from freelance journalism, collaborating with my old editorial partner Martin Tudor on the relaunch of our fanzine *Critical Wave* (#2.02 is currently trapped inside the laptop I was using in early March) and preparing to fly across to the Montreal worldcon in August, as European TAFF delegate.

None of this fills the void which overshadows each and every day, of course, but it's all part of the coping mechanism we adopt in the hope of making sense out of the senseless. The only way out is through, but sometimes I can't help but wonder whether the destination is worth the journey.

For now, though, there's *Cyffdydd*, which takes its title from the Welsh word for daybreak, a "new dawn" if you wish. FAPA's been part of my life for around two decades – of Ann's, too, for the period we had a joint membership – and it's a relationship I intend should continue.

Non-Commercial Break

At Randy Byers' suggestion, my TAFF campaign included a collection of my fanwriting from the period 1986-2008. It's available as a pdf file, downloadable from efanzines.com.



Comments on the 286th Mailing

Officialdom: I'm not convinced that we need to lose the office of FAPA president; whilst ceremonial, we could exploit it to a greater degree when occupied by someone with Robert Silverberg's profile (a personalised membership drive, perhaps?).

Rogers Cadenhead: Like Lloyd Penney, I find Harlan Ellison's behaviour colours my perception of his fiction. My friend Martin had a similar problem with John Brunner. I guess that's one of the drawbacks with sf fandom, where we get to have first-hand contact with those active in the field.

Keith Walker: As I head towards my half-century, my major physical problem (other than sleep apnea, which merely raises logistical hurdles) is arthritis in my left wrist, which I suspect relates to my breaking it in 1999. It can make driving a stick shift car a little difficult, one of the reasons I prefer motorways to "A" roads. ☐ Ann and I took art classes at a local arts centre for several years; if nothing else, it got us out of the house at least one evening each week.

Milt Stevens: First time I can recall the "alien terraforming" plotline is from an early issue of James Warren's b&w comics anthology *1984*, though it turned up again as recently as the latest season of *Doctor Who*. ☐ I really can't fathom the appeal of the Disney menagerie. Warners' creations were much more fun, especially Daffy and Bugs (it's long been my philosophy that we like to think we're Bugs Bunny, but are haunted by the realisation that we're actually Daffy Duck).

Randal A Everts: The last time I met Forry Ackerman was at the Festival of Fantastic Films in 2001, where he was engaged in conversation by Ron Bennett. Later that weekend, we all caught a bus to a nearby 1930s cinema, where Forry joined Ray Harryhausen on stage to introduce a special screening of *King Kong*.

Janice Morningstar: From a European perspective, McCain was perceived as a "more of the same" candidate and we really didn't savour the thought of Dubya: Phase II.

Tom Feller: Last time I tried downloading the fan-produced *Star Trek* material, they didn't seem to have the bandwidth to maintain a decent bps rate, but sounds like I need to check out those sites again. ☐ I can't say I'm particularly looking forward to flying across Canada and the USA this summer, but I dare say it'll all work out in the end.

Peggy Rae Sapienza: Considering your father's location at the time he wrote that letter home, he comes across as a true humanitarian. I'd like to have met him. ☐ I guess I was lucky no major controversies arose during my two years as FAPA veep.

Eric Leif Davin: Intriguing first-hand account of Ellison's famous "Writing in a bookshop window" stunt. Can't say I'm surprised to hear he managed to tune out the external universe, judging by other such anecdotes. ☐ Congratulations on your presidency.

Fred Lerner: For many years, Martin toyed with writing a novel set in a timeline where Alexander III of Macedon survived well into his thirties; the book never materialised, but he outlined his plans in *Attitude #7* (1996). ☐ Ref Dave Langford's comment on J K Rowling presaging her character's magical development through their names, another example would be *Sirius Black*, who gains the ability to morph into a dog.

John S Davis: The first of your contributions seemed to require a degree in mechanics to dismantle it (I still haven't worked out how to access page seven). ☐ A few of us have tried twisting Lloyd Penney's arm over FAPA, but he hasn't cracked yet. ☐ My sympathies on your recent hospitalisation; after the events of the past eight months, I know more about the dangers of bowel surgery than I'd ever wanted to.

Sandra Bond: Welcome back to FAPA, even if it sounds like you may soon be cutting our European membership down to two at some point soon. ☐ I have the first two albums by The Kaiser Chiefs, but after reading your comments, may check out a few tracks before contemplating buying the third.

Dale Speirs: Trading a half-litre bottle of vodka for 10 litres of petrol proves the Russians have a good grasp of priorities. ☐ I'm not convinced Will Smith appeared in *Wild, Wild West* due to political correctness, but because he and director Barry Sonnenfeld had just worked together on *Men in Black*. It was awful, in any case. ☐ The downturn in British paperzine production was notable at Novacon, when the usual stream of new 'zines on the Friday night had shrunk to barely a trickle.

Ben Indick: Britain's Cineworld chain has been broadcasting the "Live from the Met" series, with *La Cenerentola* due on 9 May, and I believe tickets are priced as for standard screenings. I've committed myself to seeing 50 movies at the cinema this year, partly as a way to get myself out of the house on a regular basis (too easy to sit alone but for the company of my own thoughts), but may have to revise that target upwards, seeing as I'd seen a total of 33 (plus one duplicate) by the end of April.

Robert Sabella: The first occasion I can recall nudity at a British convention (in the fancy dress, that is) was Seacon '79, when Kate Solomon sported a magnificent pair of wings and little else above the waist. Bizarrely, worldcon chair Peter Weston makes no mention of this in his memoir *With Stars in My Eyes*. ☐ Have to admit I'd quite like a weekend routine. Ann and I used to enjoy the fact that her schedule allowed us to take midweek breaks and avoid the usual traffic / crowds, but better a more regimented diary than this current limbo. ☐ Martin and I used to get slightly pissed off when *Locus* lifted news from *Critical Wave* without crediting us, but Brown seems to consider the usual journalistic / fannish niceties needn't apply to him.

Jason Burnett: My own laptop bit the dust last summer, but the hard drive was salvaged and I use it for portable memory. I used Ann's laptop for about eight months or so, then that developed a registry error (coinciding with a Windows update, which I view with some suspicion). Although it may well be possible to fix this, my professional need for web access forced me to splash out on a new laptop, only realising afterwards that it lacked the appropriate connections for my ageing printer (so I now own a new scanner / printer). It never ends, does it? ☐ If you're into fanhistory, might I recommend Peter Weston's fanzine *Prolapse* (just renamed *Relapse*), available via eFanzines?

Steve & Vicki Ogden: Fascinating bit of research there. I was poised to express surprise Jean Frost's *Jabberwocky* attracted so much interest, but the dates indicate it was a namesake. I guess a 1960s fanzine with cover art by Dikto and fiction by King and Moorcock would do rather well on eBay.

Norm Metcalf: An obsession with membership numbers, rather than an sf-oriented programme, is a trend I've long had problems with, particularly at Eastercons. Indeed, the Mexicons were developed as a response to this drift towards a three-ring circus where the programme book resembles a tv guide. Much as I enjoyed the socialising this Easter, there was an absurd amount going on, not least the scheduling of Tim Powers' GoH speech against the art auction, which seemed not only stupid, but downright rude.

Gordon Eklund: I wouldn't say I regarded *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* with actual loathing, but I certainly wasn't as hooked as many of the reviewers. Seeing as we both appear to be engaged in movie marathons, perhaps we should compare notes on this year's fare in a future mailing. ☐ I was recently sounded out for a job which involved a 90-minute commute by car; I politely declined, although I have taken on a couple of freelance assignments since. It just wasn't worth the hassle.

Roger Wells: Britain experienced blizzards several months ago, and civilisation ground to a halt. Unfortunately, this coincided with the rise in “citizen journalism”, so news broadcasts were packed with photos of snowmen taken on mobile phones. Hardly what I expect from the BBC.

R-Laurraine Tutihasi: Ann would have loved to set up a decent telescope in our back garden, but the local light pollution made that pointless (I’m about 10 miles out of Birmingham, with an international airport five miles in the opposite direction). Very occasionally, often during stays in Wales or Yorkshire, we’d get a spectacular night sky, but astronomy is a dead-end hobby in vast swathes of the UK.

Movie Reviews

***Lat den ratte komma in* (2008):** Repackaged as *Let the Right One In* for its belated UK release, this is the most intoxicating blend of childhood sensitivity and gutsy fantasy since *Pan’s Labyrinth*. By turns a convincing portrait of preteen terrors (bullying, divorce, first love) and a gory vampire thriller, it’s utterly engaging and shockingly effective, with stand-out performances from the two leads (Lina Leandersson is stunning as the sometimes sweet, occasionally feral Eli). By a wide margin, the best horror film I’ve seen this year.

***Lesbian Vampire Killers* (2009):** The first big screen pairing of rising BBC3 “stars” James Corden and Mathew Horne is many things - unfocussed, flabby (even at 86 minutes), ultimately tedious (quite an achievement for a movie featuring semi-nude female vamps) - but the one thing it isn’t is another *Shaun of the Dead*. *LSK* is neither as good as it could have been, nor as bad as some of the critics have indicated: another misfiring

British sf / horror comedy, in other words, to join the ranks of *Evil Aliens*, *The Revenge of Billy the Kid* and *When Evil Calls*. You’ll have far more fun watching the “Lesbian Vampire Lovers of Lust” episode of *Dr Terrible’s House of Horrible*.

Sixteen Weeks On

*Nothing lasts forever
No one stays the same
This is no rehearsal
Life is not a game*

*Some believe they’re special
That the rest of us are wrong
Convince themselves the middle verse will
Stretch beyond the song*

*I still recall our meeting
The life and love we made
But joy’s a dream, and fleeting,
When even ours could fade*

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