

***The Drink Tank Issue 116***  
***The Second Annual Giant-Sized Annual!***

It was January 31st, 2005 and Bill Burns posted The Drink Tank issue 1 on eFanzines.com. That's how it all began. In the two years since, The Drink Tank has changed in many ways (lay-out, art, frequency, writers, etc) and stayed very much the same in other ways (Frank Wu, M, Jay, SaBean, Me, typos, ect). I'm awfully proud of my little Crudzine and I'm so happy that I've made it two years!

And this issue is special. The theme here is the last year, so there are art and articles from folks who debuted in 2006 or who have never had things in The Drink Tank before. That includes some big names (like Brad W. Foster, Kurt Erichsen, Harry Bell, etc) and a few folks you've probably never heard of. Oh yeah, and me. I'm the exception. I'll be all over this MoFo.

As always, there's no solid theme except for the number two. I'm so happy to have folks like Leigh Ann Hildebrand and Mark Valentine included. I'm all over the Year in Fandom and there's art all over the place! It'll be a fun one. At least once a year I can do an issue that I get right, and this one should be that issue!

I'm also going to have an important announcement at the end of the zine that might just make you smile. You'll see when you get there.

So, here's The Second Annual Giant Sized Annual of The Drink Tank!



**Art This Issue (and mucho Thanks to all y'all for your help!)**

**Brad W. Foster- Cover (Which will count as Page 1)**

**Kurt Erichson- Page 2, Page 16**

**Selina Phanara- Page 23, Page 27**

**Harry Bell- Page 15, Page 24**

**Robert Hole- Page 5**

**Espana Sheriff- Page 10**

**Josh Pektar- Page 17**

**Dan Barrett- Pages 18-22**

**Steve Green- Page 27 (Two)**

***Leigh Ann Hildebrand is good people. She first appeared in The Drink Tank issue 96.***

My dear Mr. Garcia,

I have always enjoyed the events I've had the pleasure to attend with you: Baycon, L.A.Con, and most recently, LOSCON.

Sadly, not every weekend can be spent with company as charming or in surroundings as pleasant. Sometimes, bad cons happen. Yes, I know, there are those who would say that there are no bad cons, just bad con experiences. I admit, I've had both, and that I recognize that one person's horrifically bad con is another's exhilarating drunken Klingon-enabled fuckfest, where the only downside is the lingering stains on the anatomically correct unicorn costume. But that said, I'd like to mark my 2006 entry into The Drunk Thing with a reminiscence of less happy days, to wit:

**Three Highly Pesky Cons I've Attended, Annotated**

### **3. 1992 Philcon**

There's a saying amongst some of my friends, "Philcon is where cars and relationships go to die." THIS was the Philcon where the legend began. I



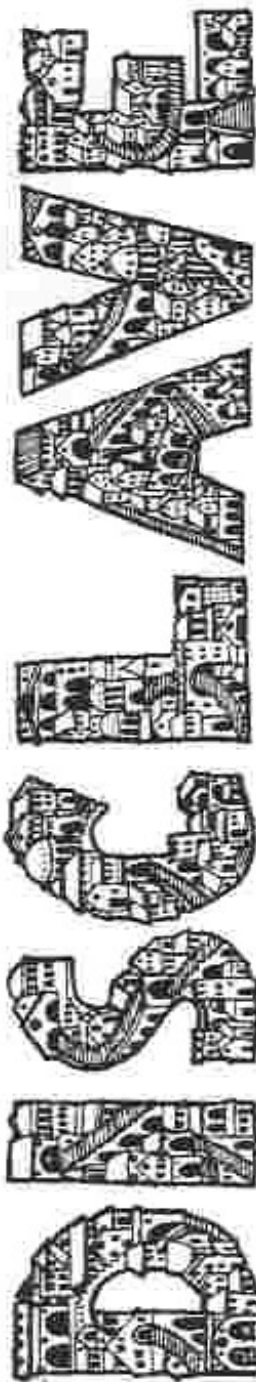
drove our total beater of a 1981 Corolla wagon to the con from Georgia. It just about gave out in Baltimore and nearly had to be pushed into the parking lot at the Adam's Mark. Much of what made the con abysmal falls outside the scope of this article, belonging as it does to the realm of dying relationships, but I can say that it was the sort of con that spawned recovery groups that met for years afterward. Can too much time spent in slow and non-moving elevators cause PTSD? This Philcon was a test laboratory to answer that question and others, perhaps better left unasked.

Bright Spot: My dinner at Susanna Foo's with RICHH, of alt.sex.buttharp fame. I thank the Internet that I got to know him, even briefly. If you're not familiar with his work, you should be.

### 3. 1997 Disclave (Yes, ♦that♦ Disclave)

I was there. Not only was I there, but I was there as part of the Special Interest community on *that* floor.

And this isn't on my list because of the Great Flood, but because of the personal inconvenience I suffered. I had a date to get laid at the con, and to that end, I had (I thought) made arrangements with one of the hosts of That Party to crash in one of the "social



space" rooms of the party, with the object of my err, frisk-interest. So I drove 12 hours to the con, and when I arrived, the other host of the party said he'd made no such agreement, and that no such space was available, as it had all been spoken for. In a fit of pique, I gathered up my frisking friend and retreated to a dorm room at UMBC, almost 45 minutes away. The accommodations were, well, less accommodating, and as a result, I didn't get what I'd come for. The next morning, we returned to the hotel and the aftermath of the Great Flood, as fabled in song and story. I did get to witness the apology (of a sort) of the

first-cause perpetrator of the flood.

Bright Spot: Well, I \*had\* been saying that the Special Interest community needed a big dramatic event at a con to shake them up about the risk issues involved in big open parties.

*And in at the top spot . . .*

### 1. 1993 Conclave, or Convex, or something like that

Most of the cons I've written about I attended alone, or with friends, but I started attending cons when I was married, way back in the '80's. By the mid-90's, my ex-husband was doing a few GoH stints a year at gaming cons.

He was in demand because of his writing for very popular game company and his incredible skills as a GM, but even more because he's a genuinely nice person who is willing to get up early in the morning and be on 3 or more panels a day, in addition to running games all night.

Anyway, he was invited to be the GoH at a brand new regional con that was being held in Navarre Beach, Florida. I have forgotten the name of the con, but it was Consomething - - Concave, Convex, like that. The con was aimed at a young audience who played the then nascent LARPs, stuff like that, so it was almost entirely an

under-30's crowd. The hotel itself was a Holiday Inn Holidome. A Holidome property has the majority of rooms opening directly onto a central indoor pool and open conference area. Because rooms open onto the space, guests have to go through that part of the conference space when they enter or leave their hotel rooms.

We were on the beach in Florida, in a room being paid for by the con. The first hint that there would be problems was when we passed through the Holidome and saw a Jon-Benet style fashion show and pageant going on in the floor space. It turns out that because it was a fairly popular family resort hotel, the "con block" of rooms was along the outside of the hotel, facing the beach and parking lot. The rooms facing the Holidome proper were filled mostly with families with young children. Southern, conservative, god-fearing families . . . with fresh-faced, god-fearing young children, many with considerable pageant experience.

It was about then that a very cheerful staff member who knew me from other Special Interest con events explained to me that they were particularly excited to be having an entire \*track\* of Special Interest programming, featuring a Slave Auction on Saturday. It was such an important event that they were going to hold it \*right there\* in the Holidome,

on Saturday afternoon.

Okay, I admit it. In a pure Stephen King slow-down-and-look-at-the-wreck moment, I showed up to watch this debacle go down, and it was every bit as wince-worthy as the very worst imagining you might have. It was an astounding trainwreck of an afternoon: gothyperv boys in leather harnesses led their lingerie-clad girlfriends around the pool while horrified parents pulled the curtains and hid in their hotel rooms, or tried to bypass the whole thing by leading their children, hands clapped over eyes, out of the immediate vicinity and out to the far safer beach. Leashed girls dressed entirely in black packing



wrap and ball gags crawled around the pool while they waited to be auctioned, while in the background, children ran out of hotel room doors and paused in innocence-tainting shock until their parents came out of the room as well, shrieked, and dragged the children back to safety. When I pointed out that guests of the hotel who were not attending the con were being made uncomfortable, the staff seemed to find it very amusing, and blamed the hotel.

So, that was awkward and embarrassing, but that wasn't the end of the awkwardness. Though my husband had originally been invited to the con as a comped GoH -- and we had made clear we were on a very tight budget -- sometime late Saturday the staff handler asked if he would pay for the rest of our meals himself and just let them know how much they were, because they were having a "little cash flow problem". We didn't realize how big this problem was until we went to check out and discovered that the con couldn't actually cover the cost of the room, either. (As a note to your readers who may protest that plenty of cons expect guests to pay for their rooms, memberships, etc, I'd like to point out that I have no problem with that if that's made clear up front, but to offer to cover a GoH and then tell them at the end of the con, "Oops, um, sorry, the con chair has maxed out his credit card and can't pay for your room")

is the very heart of pesky misrepresentation.)

In the end, we ended up having to pay for the con with part of the rent money, and learned a lesson about new little regional cons and funding. The con also changed my opinion on the public displays of Special Interests at cons, making me one of an evidently rare class of people who is both pro-Special Interest and yet against big public slave auction sorts of things, at least at cons. Oh, by the way, I don't think they ever held another one. Problems finding a hotel, or something like that.

Bright Spot: Well, hey, a con held \*on the beach\*, in Florida. They could even LARP on the beach. And well, the sight of uniformly pale goths chicks \*on the beach\*. No, really.

In closing, my congratulations on another successful year of publication. May you have as many more as you want.

Cordially yours,

Leigh Ann Hildebrand

PS: "It was an itsy bitsy teeny weeny black and cobweb lace bikini that she wore for the first time today..."

***It's hard for me to think of a bad con-going experience, though there are lots of bad moments at various cons, seldom related to the con itself. I know M's worst con experience was at a convention where she had a run-in with a Fanzine Fan on a panel who informed her that the zine she was doing wasn't fanzine. Apparently this did not sit well with M and she***

***stopped producing the zine. I once broke my foot at a con, going down a flight of stairs. I've hit my head and fell at cons. Maybe the worst con I ever went to was the one that lost my membership and staff badge and couldn't find it. This was at the time they did pictures on buttons, so I had to be someone else all weekend. Maybe it's the one with the food poisoning. That was pretty harsh.***







***Ed Green is a good guy. I'm quite happy to have him in The Drink Tank, where his first piece appeared in Issue 98.***

***Family  
by Ed Green***

I envy those people who know their family history for generations in the past. When I hear tales of what Great Grand Uncle Ralph did, I feel a bit of emptiness inside of me.

Why?

It's my family.

On my father's side of the family, we come from Scotland. Mom's side is the Italian bunch. While as a child I had a fair amount of contact with her parents, my dad's relatives (outside of his mom) were few and far between.

Nana Green passed away from cancer when I was about 5 years old. She lived above us in the Brownstone apartment building that she owned in Brooklyn, New York. What I remember of her was a small wrinkled old woman with a strong Scottish accent, and a lot of love. Hugging, and holding and story telling.

As the years went by, I learned that the Green side of the family came from Edinburgh, and was part of the Strachan clan. I heard the stories of Nellie (Nana's name) emigrating from Scotland, and her early years in New York. She made a living buying abandoned luggage and trunks from the local passenger ship lines. Dad used to say that she had x-ray vision. She almost never bought something that didn't have some treasure in it, something that would bring a nice price from a local pawn shop, or sold on the street. Years later, she was dealing in antiques. But beyond that, not much was ever said. Nothing about her family back home, why she came and what she left behind.

And that was the way it was years ago. When people came to America, they came here to change their life, so the old country no longer really mattered. Back then, a trip to America was a permanent, one way adventure. Was she running from something? Someone? Or was she able to see her future in that cold

land?

And why my interest in the Scottish side of the family? I'm not sure. Maybe it was her accent. Rich and wonderful even as an old, wrinkled woman, barely taller than I was at four years of age.

Maybe it was the time that the Black Watch Pipes and Drums toured NYC, sometime after she died and dad took us all to see them at Madison Square Garden. Maybe it was my feeling his excitement, his connection.

Maybe it was the bagpipes themselves. I spent 20 years in the military. I don't know about any other group, but the US military has a serious jones for the pipes. And other things Scottish.

Did you know that the US Air Force has an official, registered tartan?

And you'd be surprised the places that have 'official' tartans. Registered, and available. Texas, where I was born has its own tartan. Hell, there's an official one for the United States!

I know – a good deal of this is designed to take the money, gently, out of the pockets of people.

But it doesn't matter all that much to me. It's family. A small connection perhaps.

Still, I always wondered...

In the mid-90s, while attending a Scottish games event in Southern California, I got a clue that the

Strachan clan might actually be part of a tribe (The Mar Tribe). I'd never known that there were tribes in Scotland, but then I hadn't done a lot of research on the topic either. There was a sample of the tribe tartan, and I got a computer print out of it.

But even with some searching around the Internet, I never managed to get conformation of all that. Never really expected to get that much. My interest was there, but time and energy never quiet lined up so I could do some serious research.

But, then the plans for the 2005 Worldcon started to come into focus for me, and my partner Liz Mortensen. Liz was going to run the Hugo Losers party, and as a member of the Executive Committee, my being there would probably be a good thing.

As we started sharing our plans with our friends, Jim Briggs suggested that we'd be in Scotland in time to take a day trip to see an event called 'The Tattoo'. An evening long military marching band event. It was a yearly thing, and I'd seen clips of over the years.

And it was in Edinburgh.

My understanding was that if any city on the planet had a chance of having info about my family clan, well, Edinburgh would be it. Part of the business the city thrived on was people like me coming to town and ordering tartans. There would be a handful or

more of stores there. It was likely I'd find a sample of the thing.

There was a feeling of... coming home when our train pulled into the Edinburgh train station.

It was a dark, and parts of it certainly hadn't been cleaned in years. Not because anyone didn't care, but cleaning the ironworks that support the glass in the roof a hundred or so feet above the tracks didn't happen that often.

And it was incredible. Old. Old in a good Sherlock Holmes story kind of way. A city that you always read about, but couldn't believe in.

I looked around as Liz and I stepped off the train and thought of my grandmother. "She was here. Okay, not at this specific location. But, if I

could look back into time, I might get a look... It would have only been 90 some odd years..."

How hard could it be to peer into the past? I mean really. What if it really meant something important? What if I really tried...?

At 5 years old, when she was still alive, 90 years seemed as long as a million years. At 50, when she'd been gone for 45 years, it somehow seemed almost possible. Could I reach out somehow? Just a brief glance of her. To see the emotion in her eyes. Was someone there to see her off?

Tearful hugs?

Or was she alone?

But no vision from the past came to me. Instead, a fairly short walk to the apartment we'd crash at that night to drop off our bags, then dinner and finally the long march to the Castle and the Tattoo.

Anticipation...

But that part of the trip seemed to fall apart. While our group was going to the Tattoo, I managed to bounce into three different tartan shops. Two never heard of the Clan. One did, and thought they had a sample available of the tartan.

Of course they didn't. One very hopeful hint was that I managed to find the actual spelling of the clan name. Nana had, of course, taken her husband's name and none of the documents I had listed her maiden



Coat of Arms and Tartan swatch provided  
Courtesy of Jason Potts: [http://www.potts.net.au/tree/origin/strachan\\_name.html](http://www.potts.net.au/tree/origin/strachan_name.html)

name.

Except for that, it was a tremendous night. Jim Briggs and I sat next to each other, and would occasionally comment on the military units and their ability to march in such tight formations. Tough to march in a step when it's just you and your other soldiers shoulder to shoulder. Throw in drums, bagpipes and other musical instruments, and we should have seen a half dozen injuries.

Instead, just some damn impressive close order drill. And during the night, the sky clouded over and there was mist and light rain. Of course, it was Scotland, what else would you expect? It was great.

But I was still a little disappointed.

In my family, as a kid, you learned to accept disappointments. Comes from the typical insanity that an alcoholic as a parent brings. I didn't find out more about Nana or her side of the family. By any reasonable expectations, how could I expect to do that? There wasn't time to even begin any family research. Hell, couldn't even spend the time looking for the one token I have of her side of the family. So, I once again buried the feeling and tried to forget it. It's okay. It's how I grew up and how even today I still cope with life.

Just shrug and say to yourself, "It's family".

The next day, we went back to Glasgow and picked up our luggage from the hotel. The train was a wonderful ride, just looking out the window and watching the glory and beauty of the Scottish countryside. The trip to the airport, and line standing was fairly routine. Long and slightly annoying, but nothing unusual.

Having gotten clear through all the levels and screenings, we headed over to our boarding area. Across from one of the last currency exchange shops was the usual "Separate the tourist from their money" stand. This one had about a dozen short tons of "Scottish" stuff designed to catch the eye of someone heading home.

Liz wanted to pick up a couple of items for friends, so I watched our carry on luggage while she went in.

Right in front of the shop, and me, was one of those revolving stands, and it had row after row of highly overpriced note pads, each with a different clan tartan on it - along with the clan coat of arms. I pulled it around, more out of boredom than anything else.

A... D... F... .

*S, huh? Sure might as well look.  
Nothing else going on.*



## Strachan

strachan, a small village  
some 20 miles west of  
Aberdeen in Scotland  
Framingham School  
Clan Centre and Gift Shop

Major Ben Strachan  
Militarist  
Strachan  
and Strachan  
Grimston AB21 5AS  
Scotland UK

Clan Centre  
Gift Shop  
Books and more  
clan gifts etc

M... O... R...

*Son of a bitch... you've got to be kidding me.*

Nope - sure enough there is a notebook with "Strachan" on the front. I grab the thing and look. Sure enough it \*does\* look like the tartan I saw years ago.

About that time, Liz comes out of the store with something in her hand.

"Look, honey!" She has a huge smile on her face as she hands me two key fobs. How wonderful that she found them! Yes indeed, both are Strachan!

Of course I buy one of the fobs and the notebook.

I should be happy, I guess. Maybe I'm so tired and anxious about our flight home, I can't feel something more than the small wave of irony that came over me.

A damn airport gift shop.  
All this way, years of



disappointments and I find a connection at an airport gift shop. Sure, why not... if you knew my family, well...

It's family.

Back home, I tell some people about this, and with a little pride trot out the family motto. It's in Latin, and I don't have time to go online and translate it, but by Ghod, I have a family motto, its in Latin, and its gotta be cool!

When I'm at the LASFS, I tell my friends about it. And since all knowledge is contained in fandom, I'm pretty sure someone will give me a clue. And sure enough, John DeChancie knows a little Latin.

"Non Timeo Sed Caveo"?

"Hmmm... Not afraid... Wary? Something like that..."

Huh?

Okay, so with that as a lead and some time on the internet, I get the translation.

"Not Afraid But Cautious"

Huh? What, my ancient Scottish ancestors stood on a hill and yelled that as the rest of the loons painted blue went screaming past them into combat?

"We'll cover the rear, you all go ahead!"

Grump...

Not what I would have selected myself. Hell, even the old Reagan saw, "Trust, but verify." sounds better.

Double grump – if there's an afterlife, I'm looking up some of the family and ask some rather pointed questions about this.

But many of my friends think it makes perfect sense. Several of them point out that my stint handling a bomb sniffing police dog. I never refused to go into a search scene. I was pretty damn careful, and did everything I could to cut the odds in my favor, but I never refused to go in and do the job.

Okay.

Still not what I would have selected, but what the hell.

I thought a bit more about what I did know about Nellie. I came to the realization that I knew some important things about her.

She was a Strachan. While she might have been cautious about things in life, she wasn't afraid to leave home and kin when the time came. She was a loving woman to her family.

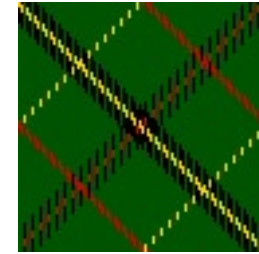
Suddenly I understood. The connection came.

That sample of the tartan that I have, and the Latin motto?

It isn't a piece of cloth and four words from a dead language.

It's family.

You can find more info at <http://www.genealogicaljourneys.com/strawnc0.htm>



Components of the Strawn Family  
Name Coat of Arms

The Shield: Gold with a black stag at gaze.

The Crest: A demi deer with a thistle in its mouth.

The motto: "Non Timeo Sed Caveo"

Information taken from Website:  
[Family History Research & Fine  
Heraldic Art](http://www.familyhistoryresearch.com)

According to Family History Research The Strawn family can trace their ancestors back to the ancient territories of the British Isles between the 11th and 12th centuries. The Strawn family traces their ancestral roots back to Pictish origin, and first appeared in ancient medieval records in Kincardineshire. That from very early on the Strawn family not only held lands and estates in the British Isles but were also actively allied with other influential families. They also branched out into other territories and holdings, before taking the long voyage to the new world.

Information taken from the Website:

[James Wolf Heraldry](#)

*Origin:* Scottish

Spelling variations include: Strachan, Strawn, Strachen, Straughan, Straghan, Strain and many more. First found in Kincardineshire where they had been seated from ancient times. Some of the first settlers of this name or some of its variants were: William Straughan settled in Virginia in 1635; George Straughan settled in New Jersey in 1773; James Straham settled in Maryland in 1774; Robert Strachan settled in New England in 1773; and others.

Description of Strachan Coats of Arms

- STRACHAN (Brigton, Scotland, 16th century) - Argent a crescent gules on a chief azure three roses of the first
- STRACHAN (Glenkindle, Co. Aberdeen) - Azure a stag trippant or, attired and unguled gules. Crest - A stag standing at gaze, as in the arms
- STRACHAN (Thornton, Co. Kincardine, bart., 1625, as recorded circa 1740) - Or, a hart at gaze azure attired sable. Crest - A demi stag springing or, holding in his mouth a thistle proper

- STRACHAN (William Strachen, Counsellor-at-Law, London, said to be representative of Thornton, 1756) - Azure a stag trippant or, attired and unguled gules. Crest - An arm and hand holding a scymitar bendways proper. Supporters - Two foresters clothed vert, with capes sable a belt round their waists and staves in their hands proper
- STRACHAN (Inchtuthill, Scotland, bart., 1685) - Or, a hart at gaze azure attired sable a bordure gules. Crest - A demi stag springing or, holding a thistle in his mouth all proper
- STRACHAN (Leven, Co. Fife, 1672) - Per pale gules and azure on a mount in base vert a stag trippant argent
- STRACHAN (Tarrie, Co. Forfar, 1739) - Azure on a mount in base proper a stag trippant or, attired and unguled gules in the dexter chief point a star of six rays, and in the sinister an increscent of the last. Crest - A ship in full sail proper

(Burke's General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland & Wales, by Sir Bernard Burke, Genealogical Publishing Co. Baltimore MD 1969)



***I met Mark Valentine through The Everlasting Club APA and he was kind enough to submit a great piece on The Scarlet Pimpernel for Issue 100. Here's another one about the Number Two Detective!***

***IN THE SHADOW OF SHERLOCK:  
R. Austin Freeman and Dr  
Thorndyke  
by Mark Valentine***

Who is second to Sherlock Holmes as a detective ? Who is second to Arthur Conan Doyle as a writer of detective fiction ? Two rather different questions, but both sure to be warmly debated. However, for many, the answers are clear. Dr Thorndyke of the Middle Temple, the expert in “medical jurisprudence”, is very close to the great man in his attention to detail, his calm reasoning, and his flashes of ingenuity. And his creator, Richard Austin Freeman, is the eternal vice-captain in the team of great crime writers of the Golden Age.

Freeman was born in London in 1862, and one of the incidental pleasures of his books is the way they explore the many forgotten streets, squares and courtyards of the capital. Like Dickens (a favourite writer of his) before him, and like Freeman’s contemporary, Victorian horror writer Arthur Machen, he evokes the by-ways

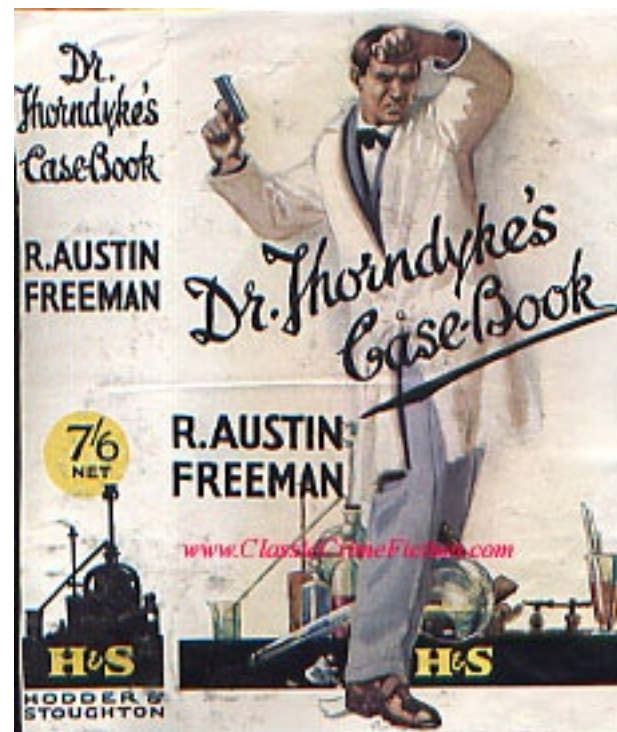
of the great city so well, it is almost like a character itself in many of his books. From fairly humble beginnings – his father was a tailor and his mother a dressmaker – Freeman gained a medical qualification and secured a colonial appointment as a doctor in West Africa. Fever drove him back to Britain when he was aged thirty and for a while it wasn’t clear what he would do next. Strikingly like Conan Doyle, he served as a locum doctor and used his ample spare time - when patients were unreasonably healthy - to write short stories.

In around thirty books, from *The Red Thumb Mark* of 1907 to *The Jacob Street Mystery* of 1942, Freeman

brought a strong imagination to bear. Nearly all his cases feature the eminent Dr Thorndyke, whose investigations allow Freeman full rein to demonstrate his shrewd plotting and strong sense of the possibilities of forensic science, long before this was widely practised.

He is also notable for his willingness to innovate in the field of crime fiction. Freeman was one of the first, with *The Singing Bone* (1912), to deploy the “inverted” crime story. The reader knows who the murderer is from the outset, and the pleasure is in seeing how he can possibly be uncovered. This was an audacious move, but it’s generally recognised that Freeman makes it work. “The interest focuses on the unexpected significance of trivial circumstances,” he explained, and he recommended that the reader should pause after all the facts are laid out, to assess these. I am not so sure myself that this vicarious sleuthing is always the real interest of his tales though. I think he underestimates his own skill at creating a sinister atmosphere, and the reader’s enjoyment of the lofty omniscience of Dr Thorndyke.

Another of his innovations was to tell the story from the standpoint of the villain, as in *The Exploits of Danby Croker* (1916). Though most crime fiction is written from the side of law and order, in fact Freeman found that the reader can also enjoy seeing a





roguish character get away with it ! Of course, E.W. Hornung had done that with the Raffles stories, but Freeman brings great gusto to his bounders and reprobates.

Freeman's career began, in fact, with just such a character. Under the pseudonym of Clifford Ashdown, a name that disguised a collaboration with Dr J J Pitcairn (a prison surgeon he assisted in one of his temporary posts), he published in 1902 *The Adventures of Romney Pringle*. His hero – if that's quite the right word – is in theory a literary agent but actually a consummate con man – if such a distinction is possible. A second series was published in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1904 (though not collected in book form until 1969). Alas, something seems to have happened to mar his friendship with Pitcairn. Freeman was soon writing on his own, and under his own name, and Romney Pringle was heard of no more.

It's some consolation, though, that in his place Freeman gave us his magisterial Dr Thorndyke. By making him both a qualified medical man and a barrister, Freeman gives his detective a highly advantageous set of skills and qualities for the investigation of crime. He is ably assisted by his Watson, Dr Christopher Jervis, by a solicitor, Mr Brodribb, who sometimes introduces cases to him, and by his factotum, Mr Polton – a craftsman in all things

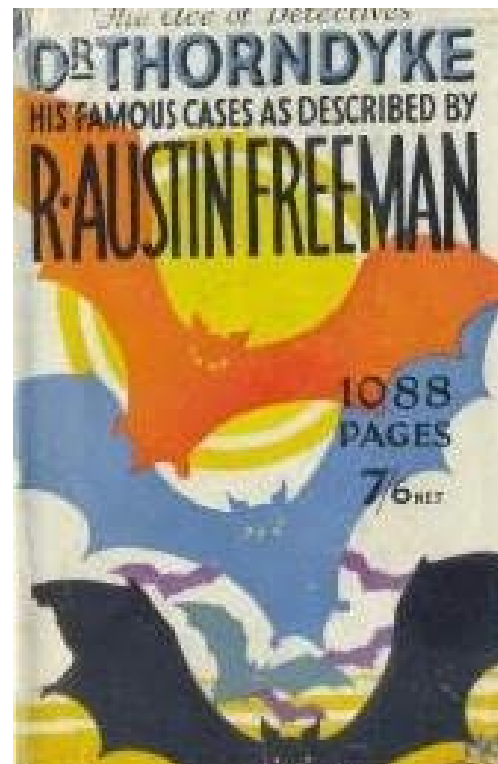
of the laboratory or workshop. The latter is essential to Thorndyke's work, because, throughout the many novels and stories recounting his cases, Thorndyke makes great practical use of scientific experiments, for example with hair, shreds of clothing, soil, anything in fact that might yield up secrets invisible to the naked eye. It has been claimed that in many of these Freeman was actually ahead of the real detectives of his day, and that the methods Thorndyke deploys were taken seriously and studied by the Surete and Scotland Yard.

And there is no doubt Freeman saw this detailed analytical work as

being at the heart of his stories. "The Detective Story differs from all other forms of fiction in that its interest is primarily intellectual," he asserted. He conceded (perhaps a little grudgingly) that "emotion, dramatic action, humour, pathos, "love interest"" might also be allowed, but as "mere accessory factors".

Some critics, conversely, have thought that all this scrutiny with scientific apparatus can give the books a cold, clinical air, and that the excitement of genius – such as one feels in the presence of Holmes – is missing from his more ponderous rival. But this is mostly unfair. Perhaps occasionally, some of the analytical detail is a little too minutely described. Yet most of the time it is briskly done, throws light on interesting subjects, and seems to the lay reader entirely sound. And Freeman often infuses Thorndyke with human warmth and a determination to aid the distressed and perplexed that counter-balances all this hard logic.

Freeman was also clear that the author must play fair with the reader and laid out three rules to ensure this: "1. The problem must be susceptible of at least approximate solution by the reader; 2. The solution...must be absolutely conclusive and convincing; 3. No material fact must be withheld from the reader. All the cards must be honestly laid on the table...". Now, how



many detective writers consistently obey all those ?

Perhaps his first great success was with *The Eye of Osiris* (1911), an excellent mystery involving a museum, a missing Professor, and a mummy, still highly-regarded today, and reprinted in paperback as an Oxford classic not so long ago. The novel caught the imagination of readers who were in thrall to the exotic symbols and magical allure of ancient Egypt, which authors such as Bram Stoker (*The Jewel of the Seven Stars*), H. Rider Haggard (*Cleopatra*, etc), and Sax Rohmer (*The Green Eyes of Bast* and others) had fostered.

Another highly regarded novel is *Mr Pottermack's Oversight* (1930), which makes excellent use of Freeman's two unconventional techniques I mentioned earlier: the 'inverted' story, and sympathy with the villain. In this case, Mr Pottermack is being blackmailed. He does away with his persecutor, as the reader finds out very early on, and uses an ingenious device to quite literally lay a false trail. So – we know who the murderer is, and how he did it. But our interest is wonderfully sustained as we watch how Thorndyke uncovers his deception, even though we almost don't want him to.

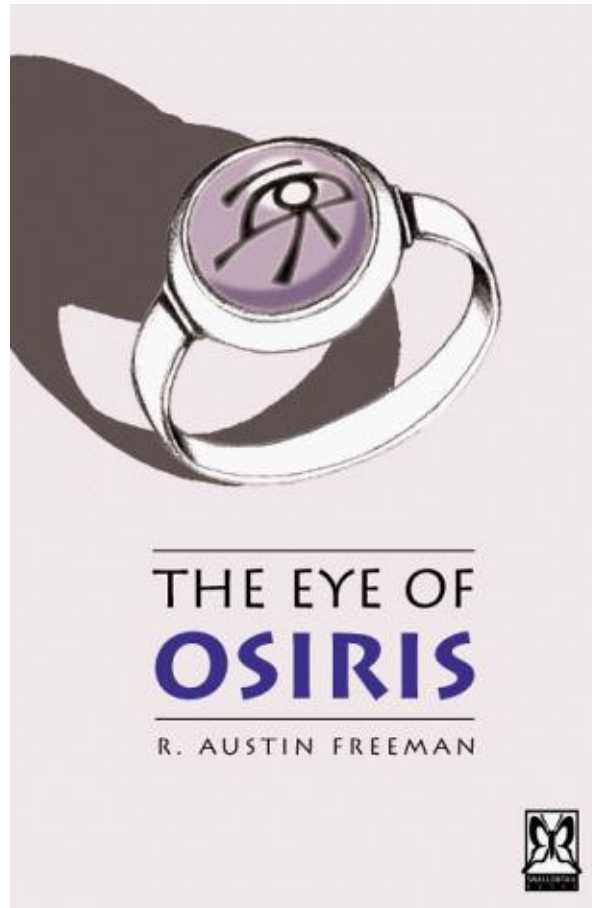
Undoubtedly one of the most startlingly bizarre of his books is *For the Defence: Dr Thorndyke* (1934), in

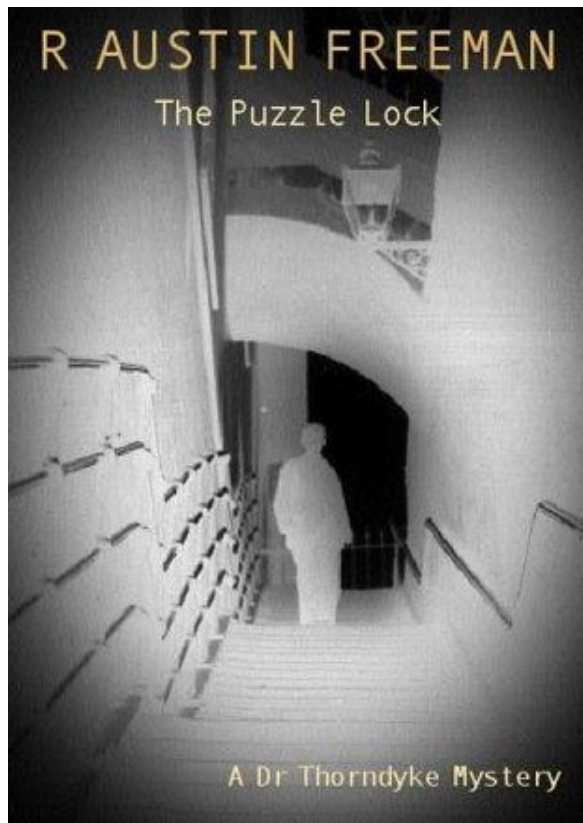
which an innocent young man ends up (through an extraordinary set of incidents) standing trial for murdering himself. The book takes astonishing liberties with the laws of coincidence, but somehow the reader still has to keep on with the book, slack-jawed at the author's impudence. I've often wondered if Freeman did it for a bet, if only with himself !

Freeman went on producing a new crime novel at roughly the rate of one a year – indeed, some

dustwrappers actually announced it as if it were a regular annual event – “Mr Freeman's 1930 Novel”. It's fair to say that he always maintained a sound standard, though some critics sense the later titles strain at the possibilities a little. Also, perhaps understandably, he seems to have lost the appetite to innovate, and we remain in the essentially Edwardian world of his first books.

So, by the time of Freeman's death in September 1943 at Gravesend, Kent, the place he had made his home for nearly 40 years, his fame had faded a little. That Golden Age atmosphere was no longer so much in demand. But over time, collectors began to rediscover his work and appreciate anew how satisfying it is. It is fair to say that a good half-dozen of Freeman's books ought to be in every connoisseur's crime fiction collection. But the true savant will want to track down them all – after me, of course.





- The Red Thumbmark (1907)
- John Thorndyke's Cases (1909; in America, Dr. Thorndyke's Cases)
- The Eye of Osiris (1911; in America, The Vanishing Man)
- The Singing Bone (1912; in America, The Adventures of Dr. Thorndyke; 5 stories)
- The Mystery of 31, New Inn (1912)
- A Silent Witness (1914)

- The Uttermost Farthing (1914; in America, A Savant's Vendetta)
- The Exploits of Danby Croker (1916)
- The Great Portrait Mystery (1918; 7 stories)
- Helen Vardon's Confession (1922)
- Dr. Thorndyke's Case-book (1923; in America, The Blue Scarab; 7 stories)
- The Cat's Eye (1923)
- The Mystery of Angelina Frood (1924)
- The Puzzle Lock (1925; 9 stories)
- The Shadow of the Wolf (1925)
- The D'Arblay Mystery (1926)
- The Magic Casket (1927; 9 stories)
- The Surprising Experiences of Mr. Shuttlebury Cobb (1927)
- A Certain Dr. Thorndyke (1927)
- Flighty Phyllis (1928)
- As a Thief in the Night (1928)
- Mr. Pottermack's Oversight (1930)

- Pontifex, Son and Thorndyke (1931)
- When Rogues Fall Out (1932; in America, Dr. Thorndyke's Discovery)
- Dr. Thorndyke Intervenes (1933)
- For the Defence: Dr. Thorndyke (1934)
- The Penrose Mystery (1936)
- Felo de Se? (1937; in America, Death at the Inn)
- The Stoneware Monkey (1938)
- Mr. Polton Explains (1940)
- The Jacob Street Mystery (1942; in America, The Unconscious Witness)

#### **Uncollected stories**

1. The Sign of the Ram (1911)
2. The Mystery of Hoo Marsh (1917)
3. The Mystery of the Seven Banana Skins (1933)

#### **Story collections by Clifford Ashdown (written with J.J. Pitcairn)**

1. The Adventures of Romney Pringle (1902; 6 stories)
2. The Further Adventures of Romney Pringle (1969; 6 stories)
3. From a Surgeon's Diary (1975; 6 stories)





***For the Want of a Tire, a Con was Lost...***

***by Christopher J. Garcia***

I went to Further Confusion, the local furry convention. That's right, I went, but mostly it was to help out at the BayCon and Westercon Fan Table and hit one or two of the parties. It was actually almost exactly like every other con I've been to at the DoubleTree, except there were a lot more tails and fur ears.

On Sunday, I agreed to sit at the BayCon table, figuring I'd get to sit for a couple of hours, then I'd go and help Gen get new tires, come back and sit a little more.

It didn't quite work out that way.

You see, I heard her say "We've gotta go to the Tire place on San Carlos (big street in San Jose maybe 3 miles from home) because that's where I have the warranty. What she said was she had to go to the place IN San Carlos (25 miles up the road). SO, instead of just calling AAA to tow it to the tire place, I had to go and buy a spare, take off the old tire and put on the new one, drive it via backstreets to San Carlos (which took nearly an hour) and then get the tires, wait for them to put them on and then drive back.

Start Time: 1pm

End Time: 6:15

As it would appear, I did not sit at the fan table again on Sunday.

I get dizzy watching them

Uranus has rings too



Meanwhile on Mt. Olympus, Jupiter moons Saturn

**Letter Graded Mail**  
**Sent to [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)**  
**by my Gentle Readers**

**Hey, hey, hey, It's John Purcell!**

Once again it's time to go Lloyd Penney on you and write an loc about your zines. Hard habits are bad to die. Or something like that.

DT #112; Cool covers you've been running lately. Anahita Pelaneshgli is very stylish, and I really like it. Dramatic and mysterious, yet color-coordinated. Very nice.

I love comedy - most normal people do - in all sorts of versions, and I even use some of the funny stuff on YouTube in my classes when it matches course content. Humor makes a learning objective more palatable and effective. In fact, funny commercials, intentional or otherwise, are wonderful and help people remember the product being pitched. SNL's old fake-commercials are wonderful examples of this. I still remember the spots for Colon Blow cereal and the two-seater toilet ("for those intimate moments you share"). Funny, funny stuff. Loved the Bass-o-matic 76 ads.

SNL had a great cast back in the day; I haven't watched the show since the late 80s, it's gone downhill so badly. But I have seen the Dick-in-a-Box skit on YouTube; dang, that one is funny!

**Try and Find 'Box in a Box'. It's**



**even better.**

But my general impression of SNL is that it is nowhere near as cutting edge as it used to be. The problem with the show is that somewhere around 1990 the show became a staple, a desired place for bands to be showcased, and the quality of the cast plummeted. It is just not a funny show anymore, and has become acculturized, not counter-culture like it was in the beginning. The first ten to fifteen years were SNL's best, with occasional brilliance poking through ever since. This is a tragedy. I am afraid that

SNL needs to be retired; it has run its course.

***I still find it funny at times. There's a lot of misses, but the hits are still very good. They've got some great young talent (like Kristen Wiig, Bill Hader and Jason Sudakis) though the writing needs an overhaul.***

Howeird's article was good reading, and I really liked the photos, especially the one of the split monument. I really have no desire to live in California again; this does not rule out every visiting or going to a con out there. Howeird reminds me of the early morn-



ing 4.2 scale earthquake I experienced when I lived in Tarzana with my first wife. It sounded like someone laid into the wall with a massive sledgehammer, knocking stuff off the walls and jangling the joint for a few moments. Awakened by the jolt - it was something like four in the morning - I wasn't scared, just surprised.

Nothing was severely damaged, either, so no big deal. Still, I can say that I've lived through an earthquake. A small one, but an earthquake is still an earthquake.

**Still, I'd rather have Earthquakes than floods or hurricanes. We did have a tornado that was less than 500 feet from where I was driving once.**

I am sorry to read of your friend's death. He was a good looking young man. Now I really would like to see "The Chick Magnet" and "Saving Pockets." It is really tragic - I know; I hate that word, too - that he went out by his own hands (drugs), but I don't know what else to say except that I am sorry that it happened. You are right: he was too young.

**You can find The Chick Magnet and Saving Pockets on YouTube. Search for ssprinkles.**

DT #113: The cover says it all. Too many kids wear Che Guevara t-shirts without understanding what he did and what he stood for. Che has become chic, which would make him



sick. That is not what the revolution was all about.

**Yeah, the Revolution was all about depriving the Man and making it hard for me to get Cuban Cigars!**

Hey, I am glad you caught up on your loc-publishing backlog.

I liked Bill Mazeroski; he was a good player. Eric Mayer's right: if the Maz can make the baseball hall of fame, there is hope for Devo and the Dolls to make it into the rock and roll hall of fame.

**Yeah. Devo is often seen as a One-Hit Wonder, though they were around forever, made great albums and influenced a generation of musicians. I'm actually madder that Kraftwerk isn't in.**

Holy Mary, mother of God, but I remember that box of Sugar Smacks you have on page 5! Which reminds me: need breakfast and some more coffee. Be right back.

**Now you're makin' me hungry!**

OK. I'm back. Miss me?

Gawd, but that photo of Jayne Mansfield was enough to make me get down on my knees and thank the Lord for creating the female form. Gorgeous woman. Marilyn Monroe, too, for that matter. The funny thing is that nowadays they would both be considered overweight by today's modeling standards. How strange is that, I ask you?

**I'd still take either of them over Kate Moss or Gisele. Not to say that there aren't hot curvy models nowadays, but they're all in the Plus-sized category (And the Torrid mailers they did for Christmas had some of the hottest women I've ever seen)**

Good to see Ted White's back to loccking and all. I had a feeling that he's been busy with work recently, and he is one of the people I am really looking forward to meeting at Corflu.

**You and me both, brutha!**

Awesome photo of your once and future girlfriend on the last page. Hey,

I'll make a deal with you: I'll strangle M's mother while you go for Zoe. If that doesn't work, introduce me to Zoe. Dang, she's hawt, Chris!

***I like M's Mom! She was always really nice to me!***

All the best!

John

***Thanks Much, John! And now, in his Drink Tank LoC debut, is Dr. Gregory Benford!***

Chris:

Never did see you at worldcon...

***Me and My Buddy Jason saw you in one of the halls and I wanted to stop and introduce myself, but sadly we were already late for something or another and I never got another chance!***

Liked the new issue.

Ted White's solitaire addiction reminds me of me about age 16, when I played chess, bridge, solitaire etc... and suddenly realized that the thinking needed was just like actual mathematics, which I was also learning. My mother was a Grand Master in bridge and I played in chess tournaments, and it was fun, but... ***Grand Master in Bridge is a tough thing to accomplish. I've never been great at Bridge, but I've been trying to improve lately.***

In an hour I dropped all such games and have never gone back. Might as well do the work for



productive gain! So I got a doctorate in mathematical physics, and indeed most of my early reputation was for fairly elaborate calculations. I did count cards in blackjack and poker, and even gambled in Vegas for profit - which worked, back when Vegas had style. I played at the \$50 blackjack table in jacket and tie (which brought many freebies from the casino); last I was there, I sat at the same table next to a guy in shorts and Tshirt.

***I always wearing a shirt and tie when I'm gambling, and if they allow it, my Donnegal Tweed hat. I'm not much of a card counter, but once in a while I'll play some single deck and do the easy count.***

Only later did I start doing

experiments, and ran a high energy density plasma lab for 25 years. Now I'm running a genetic diagnostics company, and though I know little biology, can follow the numerical intricacies of genetics in a qualitative way. Math is a bridge. Some fall off it, but...

***You see, that's smarts! I'm a decent adder and counter (limited OCD can actually be a plus in life!) but I barely understand any of the mathematical principles beyond square roots...though I do know how to run a large number sieve to calculate primes beyond 2 to the 27th. It comes with working at the museum.***

Solitaire elicits the pleasures of concentration without real gain, which is a trap as I see it. But if your employer is paying, as Ted's is...

Gregory

***Good point. I've managed to avoid playing solitaire for almost two days...though now I might return to the Dark Mistress!***

***Thanks Much, Greg!***

***And Now, Lloyd Penney!***

Dear Chris:

Time you got another loc from me. As usual, I've got several issues to respond to. I got a Palm Tungsten E2 and connecting keyboard and memory



card. Not only am I typing this up on the Palm, but I've also got the .pdfs on the Palm as well. The Plokta folks would be proud of me. Here's some comments on issues 111 to 113.

***Wow! Lloyd Penney is LoCing from the Not Too Distant Future!***

111...I didn't know much about the national film registry, and I don't think much of some of their choices, but one place you should check out is the National Film Board of Canada, [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca). Lots of amateur films, and Leonard Maltin is one of their biggest fans. We definitely keep track of Canadians who make it big in Hollywood, and Mary Pickford was among the first.

***The NFBoc is a great place, though they don't release a lot of their stuff. One of the things they're holding on to is Birdlings, one of the first Computer Animated movies by Rene Pardo and Marshall McLuhan. I'm working on a short video thing that shows the early history of Computer Animation (from 1965 through 1990) and there are a few NFBoc pieces on it.***

I'd never been to a LASFS meeting until the one at LAcon IV, but Yvonne had been to one in May when she was at a major space conference in May, and that one was at the clubhouse.

***I'm hoping to make another meeting at some point in the next year or so.***

***Good folks, and it turns out that my buddy Steve Sprinkles lives right around the corner.***

Sixty-one dollars to get into a studio tour? Too dear for my tastes. There's a popular area in the eastern downtown area where many Canadian



movies and TV series were shot, and its been converted into an artist's area. ***I must visit it when I make my way out there (and who knows when that'll be!)***

I do wonder how we survived our childhoods, seeing how much of it we've denied to our own kids. How did we survive lawn darts, getting hit, eating lead paint...we're either supermen, or our kids might as well be wrapped in bubble wrap.

***Good point, and no matter what we do, kids still get hurt one way or another!***

I remember what I was trying to remember last time... The Arrogant Worms have a song called "Jesus' Brother Bob", look it up! Here's the lyrics...

If you haven't heard of me  
I wouldn't be surprised  
I bet you know my relatives  
Their names will never die  
My mother is a saint  
And my brother is a god  
But all I am is Jesus' brother Bob

Jesus' brother Bob, Jesus' brother Bob  
A nobody relative of the son of God  
If only I'd been born just a little sooner  
I'd be more than the brother of God  
Junior

I have to take the ferry  
To cross the Galilee



But not my brother  
No not him  
He walks across for free

I finally get to work  
'Bout a quarter after nine  
Already he's turning water into wine

Jesus' brother Bob, Jesus' brother Bob  
A nobody relative of the son of God  
If only I'd been born just a little sooner  
I'd be more than the brother of God  
Junior

One day when I was home  
I heard a mighty roar  
(\*audience\* ROAR!!)  
There were a thousand people  
Right outside the door  
Help us, Jesus, help us!  
Came the cheering from the mob  
But then they got a look at me  
Oh nuts, it's only Bob

Jesus' brother Bob, Jesus' brother Bob  
A nobody relative of the son of God  
If only I'd been born just a little sooner  
I'd be more than the brother of God  
Junior

He died upon the cross  
I thought that I was free  
Finally people would get to know  
Me for me  
(Hi Bob, Hi, Judas!)  
This was my big chance  
To finally get ahead



The next thing you know  
He's rising from the dead

Jesus' brother Bob, Jesus' brother Bob  
A nobody relative of the son of God  
If only I'd been born just a little sooner  
I'd be more than the brother of God  
Junior

Everybody!  
Jesus' brother Bob, Jesus' brother Bob  
A nobody relative of the son of God  
If only I'd been born just a little sooner  
I'd be more than the brother of God  
Junior

Aaaa-Bob

Let's get down, let's get dirty, let's get  
sacrilegious!

112...Hey , we're back on the big  
computer again. It's fun to have the  
Palm, the keyboard and memory card,  
but it's mostly for portability. It's good  
until I can afford a decent laptop, and  
we're finding out how many of these  
overpriced laptops are crap.

***My big problem with laptops is the  
hard drive. I need 20G+ a year, so  
I have to have big hard drives. I've  
got a desktop system right now  
that's got a 250G and a 133G drive  
that's rapidly gettin' full!***

SNL was another show I never  
really watched because there was  
always something else to do on a  
Saturday night. And Howie obviously  
wasn't paying attention when things  
were shaking...they may have been a  
little further down than he was used  
to.

***This opens up the door to so many  
gags that I'm not even going to  
walk through...***

My condolences on the death  
of Jon Chapman. I know of what you  
speak...a friend of our friend Molly Moo  
died about a week ago. Her name was  
Monica, and she was only 38. She fell  
off a street corner, and broke her leg.  
The break caused a clot that went to

her lung, and she was dead in days. We were all shocked, and Molly flew from Windsor to Ottawa (about 500 miles) to be at the funeral. She should be on her way back today.

***Tha's awful. Wrestler Chris Candido died the exact same way. It's a shame when young folks go like that.***

113...What, Chay Guava or something like that? Hey, it's before your time, kid...

***Quite true, though I did see Motorcycle Diaries not too long ago.***

I remember the Chicago Worldcon in 2000...we were mourning the death of Joe Mayhew, and there was a party that had Joe as the centre of attention...on a credenza, there were picture of Joe, his Worldcon badge for Chicon 2000, and his cremation urn. Creepy? No, Joe was where he would have wanted to be, and we would have wanted to have him there, too. Hate to say it, but I really like the graphic on page 4. Popular Culture really does Suck. And when did Vulcans eat cereal? I've never seen that before.

***I think I'd seen one of the Vulcan Sugar Smack boxes at a Trek Con about 10 years ago, but when I refound it on line, I had to put it in an issue.***

I am gonna miss that convention in Austin. Yvonne is going to Dallas in May, and if there's enough money, I



might go.

***QuireFlu is sounding better and better every day. I'm psyched!***

That's Mike Jittlov's stuff? I miss his stuff. He was a guest of ours at a convention in Toronto in 1983 called Millennium. Yvonne was able to make a accurate reproduction of the Wizard of Speed and Time costume. I've been on his website...is he doing anything new, or is he just living off his past glories?

***He's got projects, but nothing that he's doin' himself. He's got a great resume but he never really made the effort to break into the biz, instead deciding to go his own way. Guys***

***like Kevin Smith can do that and make it by giving a little, but Jittlov never seemed to be able to do that.***

I play a lot of Solitaire on my Palm, and Space Cadet Pinball on my computer. Horrible wastes of time, and relaxing, too. I may have lost a job some years ago because I had the chart of symbols from MS Word up on the screen, and my boss (who was also one of the four partners of the firm) thought I had a game up. I denied it, but he would not be swayed. He made the stupid assumption, and he was going to stick by it.

***Ouch! That's rough. We're a Solitaire playin' workplace, mostly because everything'll still be old tomorrow!***

Hugs to M and SaBean and Judith...hope to hear from them again soon. Take it easy, Chris, I'm all done, and I'll get this ready for the e-mails and the LJ. See you soon. There's probably another issue in the works. Yours, Lloyd Penney.

***Yeah, Judith was up for MacWorld and I briefly saw her. I also got a call from M not too long ago. It's always good to hear from them, but as I understand it, they've got some big fish to fry at the moment!***

***Thanks much, Lloyd!***

### ***On Matter DrinkTankOgical!***

So, you're reading what amounts to the Drink Tank's big 2007 issue. Well, maybe that's not true, but it is one of the issues that I feel will define the year. Last year it was the 100 Words Issue which was the one that really set up the year in my eyes. It had a lot of pieces from a lot of people on a lot of subjects. It was really what set-up the big Issue 100 thing that I still regard as the best Drink Tank issue yet (Partly due to people like Niall Harrison, Mark Valentine, Earl Kemp and others who don't usually show up in the pages of TDT) and it really got me thinking about what I wanna do with The Drink Tank over the long-term.

Last year, I took a bunch of micro-breaks. There would be a couple of weeks where you wouldn't see an issue of The Drink Tank because I was working on a bigger, better issue. Case in point: This Were WorldCons. I took about a week and a half off from my regular weekly sched and I put out an issue that I thought was pretty good. There was Mark Plummer, Ted White, John Purcell, Me, My Pops and James Bacon writin' about our WorldCons. I thought it was a helluva issue, though it did not live up to my hopes that I'd be able to cover every (or at least most) of the WorldCons there have ever been. I've taken it as my mission to complete the original goal over the next few years.



*Selima*  
2007

And so I announce that I'm looking for more! If you've ever been to a WorldCon, particularly an older WorldCon, write it up so I can add it to the This Were WorldCons II issue that's coming up around the first of August. I might also do a This Were NASFiCs if I get enough people willing to write about them. You never really know until folks start sendin' you stuff.

And other than this issue, the Montreal shill issue, The WorldCon issues, and probably an issue on Rock 'n Roll in the late portion of the year, I'm not going to be doing too many themed issues. Well, maybe one or two others that just present themselves (like last year's Tombstone issue). That just goes to show you never can tell!



That Over There is a piece of Art from Harry Bell. If you've read fanzines, you've seen his art. He's a hugely popular fan artist and he's even been nominated for a Hugo as well as being awarded the Rotsler Award a couple of years ago.

Bringing Harry to QuireFlu is currently the goal of the Get Harry! Fan Fund. I haven't heard how they're doing, but I'm sure that there's still time to support this wonderful cause. You should check out <http://www.cosmicminds.net/harry.html> and see if anything appeals to you (like the Bellissimo! The Harry Bell Fan Art Anthology) and help to bring this pillar of Fan Art to the US!

Now, I know what you're thinking: "Chris, you're the guy who keeps pushing TAFF. Why support this Fund which could draw interest away from your favourite fund?"

The answer? Because Harry's a good guy and he should come out and play with the rest of the Fanzinistas! Plus, just the idea of Harry coming to QuireFlu seems to have drawn the Brits out much the same way that CorFlucisco (which is what I've renamed CorFlu Titanium) drew out Brits because of Bruce Gillespie's visit. Among those coming are Mark and Claire or Banana Wings, and Peter Weston! It's a great group.

So go, right now, and support Get Harry! I'll wait here...



***Vanessa Van Wagner is a fine LA fan. She's a wonderful writer and she's one of the forces behind The Minute Sixty and the LosCon Fanzine in an Hour.***

***Old Fans, New Friends: a Con Report on EnigmaconX by Vanessa Van Wagner***

This weekend was Enigmacon X, a one-day con put on by Enigma, the SF/fantasy/horror and gaming club at UCLA. It is a small fun con held in the UCLA Student Union.

The Ackerman Union grand ballroom was the heart of the con, where panels, fan tables, and most of the gaming were located. The Southern California Browncoats ([socalbrowncoats.com](http://socalbrowncoats.com)) were very much in evidence. They ran an RPG, a fan table and several Firefly-related panels.

Southern California con supersaurus LOSCON ([loscon.org](http://loscon.org)) was there, informing everyone of the fun to be had at LOSCON 34, with its intriguing theme of archeology in SF.

#### ***Panels:***

The independent filmmaker's panel covered a range of topics, including methods of finding backers, why Kinko's is the preferred day job of indie filmmakers, and how to explain to your relatives that no, you don't work at Pixar. Aaron Vanek told about shooting in Super 8. Glenn Jason Hanna and Heather R. Wilbur showed a cartoon short of some pencil roughs they have been working on. They tried shopping it around and were told it was "too smart". We fans found it charming.

Mechanized Propulsion Systems ([www.mechaps.com](http://www.mechaps.com)) based in

Rosamond near the Mojave Spaceport, is designing the first bipedal humanoid anime style mecha. MPS foresees a future where mecha will be in common use in manufacturing and military settings. As is so often the case, the Q & A was the best part. "When can I ride one?" was the first question. "What's it like to sit on it?" asked an undergrad, twinkling away at the test pilot after he played a recording of the engine. Naughty girl!

Three I didn't get to : a video game industry seminar with local gaming pros offering advice on breaking into the industry, a Firefly costuming panel, and the how to run a con/gripe session.

### **Gaming:**

They had projection screen video gaming (mainly people playing Guitar Hero), two Magic The Gathering tournaments, and many board game set ups.

They also had anime and SF screening rooms and a reading room with assorted manga, prozines, classic and recent SF. Oh, and to all the old-farts old-guard fans who say young gamer types don't read, when I made a circuit at about 4 P.M., I noticed the following:

Screening room: 2 people

Anime room: 3 people

Reading room: 9 people - full, with

assorted others wandering in to browse.

This was a very relaxed and friendly con. We were clearly the elder statesmen here, but that was fine - kind of fun, actually. Kudos to all the volunteers, everyone from Enigma, the UCLA Japanese Animation Club and con chairs Patrick Aghajanian and Tom Lai for putting together a fine opportunity for fans to come together and make new friends.



***Frank Wu introduced us to Lindsa not too long ago and she's a nice gal! I'm happy to have her here and I think that her first article for The Drink Tank was in issue 99!***

***Nine Hundred Grandmothers by R.A. Lafferty***

***What's In a Name? or, Which Is More Important, The End or the Beginning?  
or, Will A Nice-Guy-Scientist Kill to***

### ***Get The Answer to Life? By Lindsa***

R.A. Lafferty was laughing a lot when he wrote "Nine Hundred Grandmothers", a short story in the framework of the classic *ultra-intelligent humans discover new land and exploit a native people group* on a lonely asteroid somewhere in a universe. He knew by mentioning in the first paragraph, "How Did It All Begin?" (capitalized as written) that he could trap the scientific genius with the theme of question of origin, and get away with totally saying something different that no one would get. Maybe. But, I digress. The title here is, "What's In a Name?, or Which Is More Important, The End or the Beginning?, or Will A Nice-Guy-Scientist Kill to Get The Answer to Life?" ~ The point being that this story has more questions than answers. You, the gentle reader, get to be the thoughtful answer-bearer.

"Nine Hundred Grandmothers" is a wonderful, provocative short story about a young genius-guy Special Aspects Man named Ceran. He was on an Expedition with Commander Manbreaker Crag and a roisterous rabble of other re-named rough men like George Blood and Trouble Trent. At the naming, Ceran Swicegood could also have chosen a fierce, feisty, heroic name that would have given him a

man-sized, intimidating personality fit for pirate-plundering, but he declined. The Special Aspects Man's job was to provide a bit of "cultural twist" according to the Expedition charter, and why would that require a tough new name? The author states, "that is where he made his mistake." But is that *really* where he made his mistake?

You see, Ceran was a nice guy. He liked the Proavitoi non-humanoids, and was more interested in learning about their culture than in pillaging treasure. He enjoyed hanging out with his Proavitoi mentor/translator Nokoma, who was female, he was pretty sure. Though the explorers called them "Monkey Faces", the Proavitoi were a race of beings with a catchy, intelligent sense of humor, reverence, great politeness, flowing hands, and deep secrets. Manbreaker was determined to take what he could from the gentle savages, however, and turned the pressure on Ceran to find out more about the natives' precious "living dolls" in the hope to market them profitably.

The Proavitoi said they didn't die, and Ceran thought that had something to do with the "living dolls." When he asked her about this, Nokoma cheerfully joked with him as she told him that she had 900 grandmothers in her house. Ceran at first struggled to believe this, but his insatiable curiosity got the best of him. He surmised that



if what she said was true, the ultimate grandmothers from the Beginning could tell him How It All Began. He soon was driven to find and meet Nokoma's ancestors at any cost.

His roughneck peers at first persecuted Ceran for his seeming foolishness, but Manbreaker was a bit more thoughtful. He decided that the "stupid creatures," if they never

die, may have some sort of organic chemistry or instinctive ability which if marketed, could make him the "patent medicine King of the Universes!" Deploring Ceran's passionate zeal for the Origin instead of for an elixir to Eternity, he bellowed: "It don't make a damn how it began, you fool! It might not have to end!"

As the story progresses, Ceran finds that the "living dolls" are really the ancestors who become smaller and more beautiful with age. His craze to discover the Origin of the Universe And Perhaps Then All Universes grips his heart like a vice and squeezes most of the niceness out. Continuing down the path, generation to generation below, the culture-aware Special Aspects Man becomes increasingly furtive, rude and downright mean, forcing himself on the small creatures even when they protest, determinedly hunting down their deep secret.

Ceran Swicegood finally gets to the eldest of the eldest and excitedly asks, "Is this the end of it? Is this the beginning?" The uproar of fluttering, giggly laughter that greets him is humiliating and frustrating. As he persists in asking about The Beginning, the eldest bee-sized, cheerful grandmother laughingly informs the cultural explorer that she will not tell him the secret unless he performs their cultural Ritual with them.



Every year at Ritual time, the younger generations ask the elders about the Beginning, but are told they first have to guess. As they guess, the elders tease them and laugh, saying, “No, no, no, it was something nine times as wild as that!” . The joking hilarity continues with “high time” laughing and light, cheerful carrying-on for three days. But Ceran wasn’t in a laughing mood, and he didn’t want to play a guessing game for three days. As he held the ancient grandmother between his finger and thumb, he impatiently threatened the little laughing Proavitoi, “Tell me at once or I will crush you!”

What happened next? If you perform the cultural Ritual with me, I will tell you...



***I’m working on a new project. Yes, this is the monster at the end of the book that I mentioned earlier. The new project is The Drink Tank Presents- series of audio programmes. These will be what the kids are calling Podcasts based on various things that’ll run between 10 and 30 minutes. I’m thinking 5 to 10 a year, with the first one popping up in May, hopefully in time for BayCon.***

***As a result of this plan, I’m cutting back on a few things (membership to eAPA for a while and a few articles just won’t be happening) and as I said in the last issue of last year, I’ll only be doing 40 or so issues of The Drink Tank this year. Or at least I say that.***

***It should be fun! The two scripts I’ve got are Notes From The Investigation of a Very Big Hole and one that’ll tie-in with Again...Chris for TAFF! That’ll be fun.***

***So, a slight slow-down for a while as I get things ready. It’ll be interesting and I’m hoping that you’ll all join me for the fun! I’m not sure 100 % on all the details yet (like voice actors, though I’ve had a couple of offers from people, and I’ve done some voice acting myself) and I’m betting it’ll be something that a lot of folks could get into.***



***And so it ends! I’ve had a great time working on this issue and I’ll be giving you more in the future. Depending on the level of response to the Montreal Issue (already pretty high), I might do a mostly LoCs issue next week. Then, probably nothing until after CorFlu.***

