

DRINK



TANK

**OK, that's a Mo Starkey cover and I love it. I asked for it for a certain massive cross-over, but timing being what it is, it didn't happen. Still, I loves it and I'm glad she gave it to me to run.**

**What's in this issue? Well, there's a lovely book review from Howeird, a nice article from a fellow named Taral. A piece from myself about Anticipation and a little piece from a certain recently elected TAFF delegate by the name of Steve Green. I'm saying that it's gonna be a short and fun little issue.**



## **Growing Up in 1/6G**

### **A book review**

#### **By howeird**

Blame Potlatch. I went to meet one of my sci-fi idols, Ursula K. Le Guin, whose multimedia work *Always Coming Home* was one of the two books of honor. By showing up just for the panel on her book, I missed the one on the other book of honor, John M. Ford's *Growing Up Weightless*. But there was enough discussion about it at other panels and in the con suite that finding a copy seemed like a good idea.

It wasn't.

I don't know if it was laziness in the aftermath of winning a World Fantasy Award and making the short list for the Nebula, or abysmal editing by the Bantam folks whose 1994 paperback edition will soon go up for auction at BASFA, or just poor writing, but I found the book almost unreadable.

The title should have clued me in. The story is about a moon colony. People living there are not going to be weightless. But "Growing Up In 1/6 Of Earth Gravity" is not a very catchy title, so...

When I was in college, a friend of mine named Cassandra kept an index card file of every character, place and plot possibility for the novel she

was working on. There were hundreds of cards, most of them with half a dozen or more annotations on them. She talked about the characters in her book not only as real people, but at a depth only their analysts would know. She knew every step on every path on every continent of her book's world. She even had invented a whole new vocabulary, based on a mixture of English and her native Hawaiian.

*Growing Up Weightless* has the feel of Cassandra's book, sliced and diced into 261 paperback pages. We are hit with an enormous amount of non-intuitive slang and jargon, much of which is never used enough or explained sufficiently for the average reader to comprehend. None of the characters are fleshed out to the point where we can be sympathetic. New key words and major plot arcs are dropped on us from nowhere, at random intervals during the novel. This is a novel which the author has so thoroughly thought out that he forgets the reader is new to this world, and plows ahead as if we know what he knows.

The basic outline is brilliant. The son of a composer-turned-revolutionary is part of a Robin Hood era LARP group, the game made more real by some cyber magic Ford doesn't go into. The father is now chairman of the water board, a very important and powerful man. The son wants



nothing more than to get away from his father. Another part of the outline is there are complex social and political interactions in both the LARP gang and the water board. The revolution, by the way, was against all the Earth countries which used to own the lunar colonies.

In addition to the Lunar slang, Ford has his characters greeting each other and making small talk in Russian, Japanese, Hebrew, and Spanish, without even hints, let alone translation, for those 90% of his readers who do not know more than “hello/goodbye/thank you” in those languages, if that much. The Hebrew transliteration is not very good, it took me a couple of seconds to identify it. Along those lines, two or three times characters mention in passing that the locals call the place “Lunna”, with a short “u”. But this is mostly lost by the author continuing to spell it Luna, and by not making a point of it. Had I not heard about this affectation at a Potlatch panel, I would not have even noticed it in the book.

The exciting social interactions never gel. All the teenagers in the LARP keep their feelings to themselves, and while there are hints that all the girls are in love with the main character, nothing comes out into the open.

Another part of the outline is “the kids go on a big train adventure to the furthest colony”. It sounds pretty

sinister and world-changing. I was disappointed at what it turned out to be. There are a lot of little ideas in the book which have great potential which never mature.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to readability is Ford’s (and his editors’) almost total ineptness at transitions. At the start Ford is experimenting with sliding from one character to the next in a kind of stream of consciousness form. He’ll have the son come home, do something, talk to his father, and go to his room. The next paragraph is his father talking to his mother, or a board member on the vid unit. As we get further into the book these non-transitioned changes of scene become more abrupt and less graceful. There are points where a new chapter should start, but all we get is a new paragraph.

Because of the choppy style, the shallow characters, the last-minute plot bombs and just a general lack of continuity, what could have been a poignant, touching ending falls flat. Blame that pesky 1/6 G.



***TAFF Winner Steve Green has more to say at the end of this issue, and I’ve got a bunch of thoughts too. The most important is that this has got to be the best WorldCon in ages. We’ve gotta show Steve a good time and it shouldn’t be hard with all the good stuff around the con. I mean, it’ll be crazy fun, that’s for sure, and the TAFF auction should be a good time and raise some decent money. The TAFF Scarf will be up on the block and that alone should net 300 bucks. I’ll be starting the bidding at 150, and I’m betting we’ll be a good number for it, especially after we show the Photo book around with everyone who’s been wearing the scarf.***

***And there are more plans, including the famous trip to Au Pied de Cochon, the Foot of the Pig, and my adventures in Poutine. I’m afraid Linda will not be at all happy with me on our trip because I’m going to be gobbling poutine the entire time and she’ll likely want some more variety. it does seem a shame that I am so weak I can not do but to answer the siren’s song of potato, cheese and gravy when there is so much great food around the city. I am so shamed! I will be making a trip, some 7 miles, to Potato Patati and hopefully to the bowling alley with the most amazing bowling alley food of all-time!***

# Looting the Worldcon

**by Taral Wayne**

The Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto had closed. Kids had gone back to school. Maybe I should've done my tax return, due back in April, but I was too restless for that. I was watching too much Teletoon for my own good, too. The summer had gone by much too fast. Winter, as usual, would keep me holed up with three months of vile weather. I was already growing stagnant, and the next invitation I got to go anywhere, I told myself, I was damn well going.

First Thursdays are held in a middle-class watering hole with chicken Fajitas and Japanese beers on the menu – the sort of place fans *tend* to hang out. Bars with BBQ wings and Mexican beers are where jocks hang out. Where the fans hung out was called the Fox's Den, and was a relatively short stroll down University Avenue from the subway station, which did much to commend its unimaginative fare. I didn't normally go to these events, even though I was dimly aware of them. It's not entirely that I'm anti-social, curmudgeonly, and set in my ways. (Though that was certainly part of the reason.) I just

didn't feel entirely at home with a crowd in which I recognized so few faces. In the previous two or three years I had attended only a couple of times, and found myself seated with a few people I often saw anyway. If my argument that I didn't know anyone was brushed away, I could turn around and claim I could see *those* people anytime. Missing First Thursdays was

easy.

But of late I'd been dragged to a few more of these fan gatherings in the spirit of a friendly "intervention." Hope Leibowitz might twist my arm, or perhaps Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz would offer to pick up the tab, and sometimes Murray Moore would send me e-mail and suggest we discuss "business." It was often an honest excuse, at that. Murray had taken some of my Energumen CD's to Corflu, for instance. First I needed to bring him a few. Then I had to pick up the unsold disks after the con. But, left to my own devices, I'm either just not motivated enough to make the effort of showing up each First Thursday of the month, or I'd forget what day of the week it was, and what month.

Restless as I was, that month I didn't actually have my arm twisted very far. There was "business," too. Murray had been at the Worldcon a couple of weeks earlier, and came back from Denver with my Hugo nominee's loot. Not the actual award, unfortunately, but some other stuff given to the runners-up as consolation. There was a program book to start, a couple of booklets for this or that, and my unused invitation to the Pre-Hugo Party. I had never once been able to attend one, no matter how many times nominated. That year I'd given mine to Robert Charles Wilson and his wife Sharry. Had I won, Bob would have



Image from Taral Wayne

delivered my acceptance speech. Since I didn't win, I shelved the speech with all the others. I'm getting entirely too much practice writing them, but none giving them. \*sigh\*

Murray mentioned over the phone that he had a special pen for me that was made by the con for all the nominees. Did it shoot death beams, I asked? No, probably not, said Murray. More likely it just wrote, and it had the name of the con on the outside. That was kinda neat anyway, I said. Later I discovered it was not only a pen, but a USB "thumb" drive, which in fact turned out to be more useful than a death ray. Maybe not as cool, but definitely more practical.

And Murray had my Hugo pin. My seventh, \*double sigh\*.

At one time, when Worldcons didn't have million-dollar budgets and \$200 dollar membership fees, what you got with your Hugo nomination was *squat*. You had your name mentioned in the program book the one time, and that was all. Only the winners were printed in the program book, year after year. But for the last 20 years, the nominees have been presented a snazzy rocket-shaped, chromed pin. It was just like its larger cousin, only you wore it instead of showing it off on the bookshelf.

That is, you wore it if you didn't give a rat's ass if it fell on the floor and you lost it. I only wore one of my pins,

the first, at one convention. I was puttering around the dealer's room, carrying boxes of books for someone. The corner of the box must have jogged the pin, because a while later I looked down at my shirt, and there was no Hugo pin! Gone! Some other bastard would find it, and go around showing off *my* Hugo pin on *his* unworthy shirt! I searched the floor of the dealers' room frantically. Twice, but no sign of the pin. Since leaping into action had failed, it was time for desperate measures – I stopped and thought. An idea came to me. The last box I carried had been open. I searched the bottom, and *there* was the pin. Blessed thinking-organ, I will never underestimate you again!

The last of the rocket pins was distributed in 2007 – by Nippon, I suppose. I had been told the guy



who made these died, and there aren't any more. The replacement was described to me by Murray as being more conventional. I have hoped it would look alright, but it was a sight-unseen and I was all ready to be disappointed. I liked the tradition. I liked the symbolism of the rocket ship. I liked looking at the long row of them representing my unconsummated ambitions. What will the new pin look like at the end of my row, I wondered?

The next day, I expected to find out.

As it happened, the new pin was reasonably attractive and dignified. It was a rectangle of black enamel with a silver rocket ship on it. It would still look incongruous at the end of my row of pins framed on the wall, but if it turned out to be the start of a new row of uniform pins, it wouldn't be so bad. I have a suspicion, however. It heckles from the balcony like Statler & Waldorf. It says that from now on, every Worldcon will design its own, completely different pin. No matter... Fozzy Bear shoots back, "that's alright, I won't be nominated again anyway!"

But the fact is, I *was* nominated again. It came a little unexpectedly on top of the GoH gig. Can that much good luck happen to one person? What next? Will I actually *win* the Hugo, fer gawd's sake?

It could happen. For one thing, Steve Stiles did a very generous thing.



He suggested a few months ago that, should we both be nominated again this year, that he would withdraw his name. Steve believes that we rob each other of enough votes that to put one or the other of us over the top, if the vote wasn't split. He went on to say that since I was a guest at the next Worldcon to boot, it would likely be my best shot at the Hugo, ever. It would only be fair, of course, that I honour Steve's gesture with one of my own the following year, *especially* if I were to win *this* year.

A couple of weaknesses in Steve's plan occur to me. For one, I'm not sure that even between us we ever had enough votes to topple one of the perennial winners. The artists aren't popular with some "fringe" of fandom. They're just as popular among Core Fandom (or Fandom Prime) as well. This doesn't seem to be an "us" vs. "them" situation, really. A second weakness is that we obviously can't predict whether either of us will be nominated as fanartists in 2010. A third occurs to me. Even without my competition, Steve would be in the running during a year the Worldcon is held in Australia. It would not surprise me in the least if whatever advantage might accrue to Steve from my withdrawal would be offset if there were a homegrown, Aussie, fanartist in the running too.

But 2010 is still in the future,

and who can predict the future? For that matter, this year's Hugo is still very much in the future. We can only cross our fingers and hope for the best for the both of us.

Meanwhile, it's fun being a GoH for a Worldcon. I've taken endless advantage of the situation. Some people might call it work, but I've found it to be an opportunity to show my art and writing, and that, for me, has been what this is all about.

From the start, the con kindly included in their Progress Reports the advert for the CD of *Energumen* I produced last year. They used some of my art as well. When I suggested a collection of art in PR 3, the con readily consented. There might be another in the Souvenir Book. I asked next if I could do the cover of a Progress Report, and it was suggested I could have number four. Oh boy, did I knock myself out on that!

Although I digress, let me expand on the PR 4 cover anyway. I took a penciled piece I had done for a minor "cause" last year. I had done a drawing of Saara Mar on Mars, (in which she made a passing reference that a 100<sup>th</sup> issue was nothing to boast of, since she was turning 228 herself that summer.) It had always been in the back of my mind that I'd find a larger audience for it at a later date. When the editor of the PR's gave the green light, I added an extension to



the 8 ½ by 11 drawing so it conformed with the unusual proportions of Anticipation progress reports. The real work went into colouring the expanded work in Photoshop, depicting the natural hues of the Martian landscape as accurately as I could. It appears likely at this writing that a version of this drawing might also be used as the con's name badge.

Perhaps I was pushing my luck when I offered to do a colour T-Shirt for Anticipation as well. But they accepted that idea, too. You may thank a suggestion by Steve Stiles that I had to include a funny-animal skunk in the shirt. I did, and put him on skates. A hockey theme seemed perfect – after all, Montreal is the home of not only the best bagels and smoked deli meat in Canada, but also the legendary “Habs.” In the end, I had to drop the pastiche of the famous “Montreal Canadién” logo (as a capital “A” rather than a “C”), but otherwise the design was given the go-ahead.

The editor of the Souvenir Book then asked for something written. I jumped at the chance to show off my faculty with words, too. As it happened, there was something else old I could revise for Anticipation. One of my on-and-off-again projects is to eventually put all of my old fanwriting into word documents. (While I've made a good start, there's a long way to go still.) Not long before, I had finished

a humorous story about a friend of mine back in the 80's. He was a big Star Trek fan, so I wrote him into a “Mary Jane” story with a decidedly un-romantic twist. I think he was pleased. At least we didn't stop being friends. I asked if he minded my re-using this, and he said as long as I changed his name in the story, it was fine with him. (Wait until he discovers I dedicated to him anyway.) The newly-tweaked version is a bit longer – and I hope quite a bit funnier.

I've gotten a lot out of the Worldcon, no question of it. I was given the chance to show off in a variety of different ways, and took full advantage of them. And they “pay” me for this, too! Imagine that on top of all this fun, I get a free membership, a trip to Montreal, a room on the con's tab, and a per diem as well. I thought I'd died and gone to fan heaven.

On the other hand, I like to think I've earned my keep.

About the only thing I had wanted to do – but won't be doing for this year's Worldcon – is designing the Hugo itself. They picked someone else. No doubt they had a good reason for this, and in retrospect I see that it's just as well that they did.

I'll be involved in the Hugo ceremonies, a novelty for me in itself. That's bad enough. I have fairly little experience speaking to a crowd. Certainly, none has ever

been larger than about forty, and the circumstances no more intimidating than an ordinary panel. I might freeze up. I also have no clothing suitable to any affair of greater dignity than scaling fish. What if everyone around me is dressed to the nines while I'm in jogging pants and a Ditto T-Shirt? But there are worse possibilities...

Suppose I have to present a Hugo to myself? The only circumstance that could possibly make it worse is if the Hugo I gave myself was also one I designed myself, don't you think?



Art by Sara Teagans





TAFF Scarf, of course.

**In the meantime,** I'm toying with putting together a second volume of *Are You Still Here?*, following up my initial selection of assorted fanwriting from the period 1986-2008 with one laying greater emphasis on extracts from this column (both here and its earlier incarnation in *Apparatchik*), as well as articles published during the so-called "Birmingham Renaissance". If anyone's interested, the first volume can be viewed and/or downloaded from

**The call came in shortly before noon.** Chris had stayed up late on his side of the Big Pond, Bridget had risen early on hers, and the results were in. Tobes Valois had warned me the smart money was on my winning this year's TAFF race, but I pointed out that I needed the silly money as well; guess I managed to attract both.

Anyhow, the Fates willing, I'll be jetting out to Montreal this summer and joining the milling throng at Anticipation, the Canadian worldcon. My worthy opponent, Tom Womack, is also hoping to drop in during this very first stage of the trip, which may well prove the only occasion a TAFF delegate has been heckled from the audience by

the other candidate.

My plans from that point onwards are still in flux, but certainly include visits to Seattle and the Bay Area, hopefully with stopovers in the Midwest before I head home via the East Coast. *Drink Tank* readers with LiveJournal accounts are invited to join the community [taff2009](http://taff2009), where I'll be throwing together the various suggestions and roughing out my itinerary. After all, the central thrust of this fund, and the reason it's survived an astounding fifty-five years, is the opportunity it offers to renew past contacts and to forge entirely new ones, creating lasting bonds across the ocean. Plus the chance to model the

[eFanzines.com](http://eFanzines.com), which I was delighted to see win a second FAAn Award last month.



Art from Steve Green.