

# "FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING" SURVIVES FANNISH PURITY TEST

**Have Gun, Will Eat Popcorn:** When I was working on my master's degree in Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University over 25 years ago, my idea of a great job was to become the next Leslie Fiedler. He was a critic famous for mediating between *academe* and mass media as he interpreted the way popular culture helped the public interact with the troubling issues of the day. In the meantime, I engaged in those consuming and passionate discussions with other graduate students in the Department of Popular Culture.

For example, Cindy Packard and I debated the merits of *Billy Jack* as we returned from the nearest big city – Toledo – where it was showing in the winter of 1975. In hindsight I'm tempted to say *Billy Jack* only dramatizes America's peculiar belief that the nonviolent philosophy taught by Gandhi and Martin Luther King ought to contain an exception for anyone who *really deserves* a kick in the head. On the other hand, Billy Jack's struggle and spectacular failure to abide by his own code were the very reason the movie became a kind of lightning-rod for those trying to recover their moral bearings after the civil rights and antiwar tempests of the Sixties. The film would have disappeared after an unprofitable initial release but for its stubborn creator, Tom Laughlin, and the movie's cult following -- one theater in Dayton showed it every week for two years. When Laughlin succeeded in getting it re-released, pop culture students flocked to study the film and the phenomenon.



Shannon Riojas, Lynn Maudlin, Diana Glycer and Lee Speth attending *LOTR* on opening day. (Photo from LA Times)

These old memories came rushing back to me in December when a reporter from the *LA Times* gathered a group of us around a restaurant table moments after we'd finished watching *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* on its first day in release.

How strange to be living out a version of that old fantasy, sought by the media for our opinion. The *Times*' Lynn Smith wanted to do a story on local Tolkien fans' reaction to the new movie. Smith contacted the head of the Mythopoeic Society and was put in touch with Lynn Maudlin, who gathered Diana and I, Lee Speth, Shannon Riojas (Maudlin's son) to see the movie with the reporter.

We lined up in front of the theater 90 minutes before showtime. We were surprised to be the first ones there, less surprised that nobody came in costume, though it mildly disappointed the reporter. (Times change – two decades ago I did wait outside a Westwood theater for the Bakshi *Lord of the Rings* with a long line of costumed Mythies.)

As we debriefed at a restaurant next door, we acknowledged Peter Jackson had made a good movie that was sufficiently faithful to Tolkien to be worth nitpicking

passionately. We spent a good couple of hours pouring out our compliments and complaints, not without an egotistical eye peeled for what the reporter thought worth jotting down. (She also recorded.)

Lynn Smith's article appeared in the *Times* on December 22, headlined "A Semi-Fantastic Voyage: Members of the Tolkien and Mythopoeic societies express feelings varying from joy to frustration after seeing 'The Lord of the Rings.'" Smith did an impressive job of extracting the spirit of our comments from the hours of material she gathered. I was happy to see she chose not to portray us as dorks, which might easily have happened after Lee Speth insisted on explaining Golfimbul to her, an eldritch cross between softball and kick-the-Dane's-head played late nights at Mythcon.

The article straightforwardly summarized our reactions, mainly in our own words. For example, Diana observed that in the book *Fellowship of the Ring* there's almost no fighting, but in the movie the battle scenes are relentless. "I needed breaks," Diana was quoted. "I felt that all the way through the whole film as if someone was hitting me upside the head, saying, 'This is monumental. Are you paying attention here?' The problem is, when there are really huge moments, you can't appreciate them." The article also captured our annoyance with the last scene of the movie, so contrary to the spirit of Tolkien. "'Let's go hunt some Orc' didn't really cut it for me," Maudlin said."

Hollywood had been so enamored with the movie that we were literally the first people reported in the *Times* having anything to say that wasn't effusive praise. A surprising number of acquaintances told me they read the article. They, too, invariably started the conversation saying, "I liked the movie." Well, all of us *liked* the movie, but what we'd been asked to do was speak to the issue of its faithfulness to the book. In any case, remembering my pretensions when I was at Bowling Green, I have to laugh at myself: when the moment arrived Mr. Popular Culture looked like just another literary curmudgeon in a clever plastic disguise...

**One Ringie-Dingie:** Plenty of expensive *Lord of the Rings* paraphernalia was marketed with the movie. If you've flown recently and paged through the Skymall catalog, you may have read the ad for an authentic gold replica of The One Ring for only \$295: "Displayed in a rich wood treasure box, the One Ring is cast in gold and features the inscription below in Elvish, an ancient



At a cruise stop in New Zealand, **Bruce Pelz** used these *Lord of the Rings* postage stamps to mail postcards with *Tripe Report* 52.

language of Middle-Earth.”

Tut tut! Gandalf said the *letters* are Elvish, but the *language* is Mordor! You can never be too careful when buying collectibles. And why should I be reassured that this recreation comes with a certificate of authenticity from New Line Cinema? It’s probably printed with the same magical red ink Hollywood accountants use to make the profits disappear from their books.

**Elves at Qumran?** Prior to the release of the movie, the October 2001 issue of *Wired* reported in detail about the epic verbal battles between self-appointed protectors of Tolkien’s “virtual world” and the makers of *The Fellowship of the Ring* movie. Slammed along the way were the handful of Mythopoeic Society members who have spent years studying Tolkien’s invented languages in their spare time:

“The issue is compounded by the fact that a tremendous amount of Tolkien’s linguistic material remains unpublished and in the hands of a fan cabal. In the early, 1990s, the estate made thousands of pages of Tolkien’s notes available to a handpicked crew of lin-

guists loosely known as the Elfconners. The group includes a NASA scientist named Carl Hostetter and a Berkeley record store clerk named Arden Smith. After promising not to share the material with others, the Elfconners were supposed to prepare and publish at least a portion of these writings. But a full decade after the Elfconners first received copies from Christopher Tolkien, the clique has published only a few early lexicons in their increasingly irregular journals – a situation that recalls nothing so much as the Dead Sea Scrolls controversy.”

Talk about exaggeration. The Dead Sea Scrolls had been in the hands of a select group of full-time professional scholars 40 years before the monopoly was broken. The Elvish linguists have day jobs and work with Tolkien’s material in their spare time. They are fortunate to have Christopher Tolkien’s permission to access these texts, and *Wired* must be infected by the hacker mentality to believe Hostetter, Smith and the rest should give away Tolkien’s material, inviting legal action against themselves.

*Wired* also claimed, “To make matters worse, the Elfconners have behaved as informal copyright police, pressuring other linguists not to publish their dictionaries and grammars. ‘It’s against all principles of scholarship and decency for one scholar to try to use the law to prevent another scholar from publishing,’ says David Salo, who has yet to publish his 366-page analysis of Sindarin for fear of an estate suit.”

Salo’s fears have been cleverly slanted to disregard the real issue: does his manuscript include material he needs the estate’s permission to publish? Until he gets that permission he is no more a victim of repression than someone who avoids shoplifting because the store has a video surveillance camera. (How often have I heard my wife, Diana, a C. S. Lewis scholar, discuss the need to get permission from Douglas Gresham when she quotes from the unpublished letters of his mother, Joy Davidman Lewis? This is how scholarship is properly done.)

Meanwhile, despite the misleading impression given in *Wired*, the Elvish linguists are continuing to publish their results. A new, 40-page issue of one of their journals,



The complete set of New Zealand’s collectible LOTR movie stamps.



Director Peter Jackson won a major British award, but no Oscar.



Ian McKellen as Gandalf.

*Vinyar Tengwar*, features the first part (of two) of a presentation and analysis of five hitherto unpublished Quenya texts by J.R.R. Tolkien: his translations of five Catholic prayers: the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, the *Gloria Patri*, the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, and the *Litany of Loreto*. The first three are presented in this issue, with two more to come next issue. All five texts are edited by Patrick Wynne, Arden Smith, and Carl Hostetter.



A troll on the special effects set of the movie *Fellowship of the Ring* towers above New Zealand’s Prime Minister Helen Clark. In November, Clark announced a \$US 1.9 million program to promote New Zealand alongside the movie’s launch.

# Marie Rengstorff's Paradise Lost

Marie Rengstorff penned this literal "farewell address" to explain why she needed to move from the island of Hawaii to a condo in Maui:

I just re-read the article, "Is Your SF Club Dead Yet?" I read it online. I needed a link with a nicer world. Last night my yard had a pack of pit bulls in it. And, this morning, there was a dead pig not 20 feet from the entrance to our wilderness community. Ironically, our community is called "Kona Paradise." It should have been called "Pit Bull Haven." All the human deaths and maulings in this vicinity have been declared by the police to be "accidents." When I complained about one of four attacks to myself and/or my small dog, the police said, "Why don't you walk the other direction or drive your dog to a place to walk?" I am going to do as they say and more.

I am shipping my car to my condo on Maui. My house here is for sale, or it will be [this week.] I thought I could live in this version of the wild west. Nope. Domestic dog packs and crack heads are much more dangerous than lions or wars in Africa. I lived in Africa for 1-1/2 years and was never bothered by lions or soldiers, although I lived in the middle of both. Here, in the last 1-1/2 years, our general neighborhood suffered two deaths, two maulings requiring extensive hospital stays and multiple surgeries, one man knocked flat on his back but not seriously injured, and one lady who had to have help removing a pit bull mix from his attachment to her butt. That does not count the killing of the horse, where the rider escaped basically with only a few bruises when her horse was brought down. Nor does it count the death of a large herd of rare sheep which has just been shipped to New Guinea for breeding and then shipped back. A dog pack killed them all.

The killing of pigs does not count, because that is almost daily. We have many wild pigs which are hunted by both dogs and people, for sport.

The above was limited to the dog-inflicted injuries which made it from our community to the Honolulu TV news. As for the crack heads, the man next door stabbed his wife last February. The police did nothing. When he threatened to shoot her, a few months later, they did come out and talk with him.



His wife promised to keep it from happening again??? You figure that one out.

So, I'm moving to Maui. I have a great, but tiny, condo near the beach there. I will have to come back here, to the crack heads and pit bull packs, for a few days each month to clean up the jungle and the dirty floors, until my house is sold. I have been here, in Pit Bull Haven, for almost 10 days now. I can hardly wait to get back to Maui, the golden sand beaches, and the people who walk their dogs, and who even pick up their dog shit. This gorgeous paradise jungle feels like a prison cell. I cannot walk farther than one block or risk my life. Actually, I am not really safe outside my own door.

I have poison out, tablets in hamburger. One of the pit bulls has eaten quite a bit of it. It does not seem to phase him. It just saves him from having to return home for dinner. Last night, I did not have any spiked hamburger out. I guess that drove the pack to go kill a pig. They might have killed a cow as well. They had already driven one of the local cattle out onto a sharp ledge of lava where she could not get down by herself. She called plaintively all day, but was silent by morning.

This morning, a second neighbor put

some poison out as well. Perhaps he has a stronger version of poison. I will ask him for some of his.

I am talking about family dogs. The toughest is called Hula. His female owner, every morning, calls, "Here, Hula, sweetie." Every night, his male owner does the same. Sometimes, his male owner manages to catch Hula sweetie and carries him home. Hula sweetie does not come when called. Hula sweetie is still a growing puppy who already weighs about 85 pounds. Hula sweetie does not know how to walk on a lead.

I must run a few errands regarding putting my house on the market. Then I must drive my car 97 miles to the dock. Soon after that I will be back in Kihei, where a pack of pit bulls who kill children or a crack head who stabs his wife are considered, by the police and by the community, as wrongful acts.

I really did not think that dogs and drug addicts could drive me from my home in the rain forest of the Island of Hawaii. I had lived amid dangers before. I had lived in the middle of two African civil wars, the Wild West of the logging communities of the 1940s where

shoot-em-ups were as common as once a month, and slept in the open of Ethiopia and Kenya with lions all round. In comparison, the southern and south-eastern areas of the Island of Hawaii are exceedingly violent and corrupt. Those, and other back-country areas of Hawaii, will remain so until people want it otherwise.

This letter allowed me to let off steam about these 10-or-so days I returned to live in the middle of all these messes. I will return to the life on the beach at Kihei where I will be insulated, but only a bit, from these problems. I will be able to live in them enough to observe and write about them, but not have to face death daily. That level of danger begins to get irritating.

I must return to cutting back the jungle before it covers my fruit trees. I will miss those trees. They were just getting big and old enough to cut my food bill significantly. Sigh. And, I will miss Honaunau, where exists one of the most fantastic snorkeling locations on this globe. Later, perhaps in a few years, I will return to Honaunau, the traditional Hawaiian City of Refuge, as one of those tourists who don't have to notice the corruption and abuses. But I will notice because I have learned to see.

# Conventional Reportage

## *Thirteen Is Unlucky for ConCat* by H. L. Drake

On Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> a version of Stephen King's *It* came to town at Knoxville, Tennessee and got to the officers of ConCat 13 three days before their convention was scheduled to begin at the Knoxville Hyatt Regency hotel. *Vaporization!*

That morning, the hotel demanded that the committee (excuse the expression) regurgitate \$3,200 by the first day of the con. This, ConCat could not do. Thus, I received a phone call from Zig McMillan shortly before noon -- the daytime witching hour -- that the convention was cancelled. I recall thanking Zig, the Knoxville Area Science Fiction Association's current Treasurer, because I live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and the drive to Knoxville was going to be a long one and depending on my mood and my *derriere* possibly an overnight stay at a Superwhatever before arriving.

After the "Turkey weekend," Zig answered my questions about ConCat's situation. The con usually draws 250 each year. There were 50 preregistrations sent to KASFA and 35 rooms reserved at the hotel (mine being one of them). Most of the preregistrants have offered to let KASFA carry over their registration to ConCat 14 in 2002. Each KASFA board member made calls to people informing them about 13's cancellation.

According to Zig, the Knoxville Hyatt Regency has a less than pristine history with KASFA; e.g., (and I'm quoting Zig) "...last year if you called the 800 line and asked for a room for ConCat, you were told you had to call between 8-4 and ask for sales!" The Board will consider whether to change hotels in 2002 at its next meeting. The KASFA web site, <http://www.kasfa.org>, says planning begins immediately for 2002. Personally, I hope it's not at the same hotel.

So much for -- I think -- every con's planning committee biggest fear of all materializing in everyday life! We must try to keep in mind that hotel staffers are really nothing more than Vogon mundanes who can be so BEMish at times! Next year will be all right. Maybe. But it wouldn't hurt for us all to sleep with one eye open on our hotel front desks whenever we stop for the night or day while driving down our personal byways.

## *Glasgow Unopposed for 2005*

As expected, Glasgow, Scotland was the only 2005 Worldcon bid officially filed with ConJosé by the March 2 deadline for inclusion on the site selection ballot. UK in '05 still must win the vote, as the members of ConJosé could potentially reject their bid and pick an alternative site at the convention. However, this has never happened before.

The ballot is now available for download from the ConJosé web site at [http://www.conjose.org/wfs/wfsf\\_site.html](http://www.conjose.org/wfs/wfsf_site.html). It will be sent to all members with Progress Report 4 in May.

## *2005 NASFiC Bids*

### *The Kitty Pounces Back*

Though defeated in their bid for a Worldcon, the resilient Charlotte in 2004 committee plans to bid for the 2005 NASFiC. Irv Koch reports the group will bid for the 2005 NASFiC, led by a new chair. "It's all the Directors, Tracy Kremer, Mark Blackman, and Kathleen Meyer (awaiting her acceptance) as Chair. Based on what I understood when I phoned her, she's going to get a nationwide batch of BNFs or whatever for that committee."

Koch expects to resign as chair and director of the bid's nonprofit corporation, SECFI. "That was due to my having only signed up, when I started this deal, for one project. However, the recent crash knocked me out financially so I've got to get a full time job and won't have time anymore. Probably at the IRS...."

Charlotte will keep its Kitty Hawk mascot and probably use "The Kitty Pounces Back" as its slogan.

## *Seattle Enters the Lists*

The Seattle Westercon Organizing Committee (SWOC) has announced its intention to bid for the anticipated 2005 NASFiC. (Glasgow's bid for the 2005 Worldcon is presently unopposed and WSFS rules provide for a NASFiC to be held when the Worldcon takes place outside North America.)

SWOC wants to hold its NASFiC at the Hilton Seattle Airport Hotel and Convention Center from September 2-5, 2005. The bid committee and the Hilton have signed a contract to use the Convention Center and adjacent hotel. (The contract is voidable without penalty if the SWOC bid loses.) The standard room price has been set at \$129 plus tax (single to four person occupancy.) The Hilton Convention Center is located one half mile from Sea-Tac Airport, 20 minutes away from downtown Seattle by car. More information on the Hotel and Convention Center can be found at:

[www.seattleairport.hilton.com](http://www.seattleairport.hilton.com).

If the Glasgow bid is selected by voters at the 2002 Worldcon, the NASFiC site will be voted on a year later by TorCon 3 members.

One of fanhistory's coincidences is that the first NASFiC site selection was held at TorCon 2, in spite of the convention committee's refusal to administer the voting because they objected to the idea of the NASFiC.

SWOC has recently won the bid for the running of the 2003 Westercon on July 3-6, 2003. More information on SWOC can be found at their website:

[www.sfnorthwest.org/swoc](http://www.sfnorthwest.org/swoc)

## *UK in 2005 Forms Executive Board*

The UK in 2005 bid has formed an Executive Board to set policy for its potential Worldcon in Glasgow. According to KIM Campbell, the Executive Board will perform many of the functions that parent corporations carry out for US Worldcons.

The Board elected Campbell as its Conventor at the first meeting in November. Other elected officers are Vincent Docherty, Treasurer, and Colin Harris, Secretary. The Board also appointed Docherty to be Chair of the Operational Bid Committee.

The Board will be responsible for incorporating a UK company as a vehicle for financing the convention, approving the convention budget, setting initial membership rates, picking the Chair of the Operational Convention Committee, and considering potential Guests of Honor.

## *Moore Realizes We're Not Angels*

Murray Moore, Torcon 3's Hotel and Facilities Committee chair, is keeping his eye on how well local hotels handle unusual groups. He predicts the Holiday Inn will find fans much easier to serve than the 400-plus Hells Angels who recently gathered to celebrate the first anniversary of the Ontario chapter.

Moore, tounge-in-cheek, notes that fans and Hells Angels have the same problem dealing with the media: "News people don't go beyond taking photographs of the most photographic members of the group in their distinctive costume."

Moore was mildly disappointed to have missed the gathering: "[If I had attended] I could have gotten advice from their contract negotiator, Mad Dog Bob. I could have learned interesting tips by asking questions such as 'What is your weapons policy?', 'Were you able to negotiate late checkout?', 'How many Harleys have you managed to park here in the lobby?', and 'Did the hotel, anticipating a shooting, make you give them a large deposit?'"

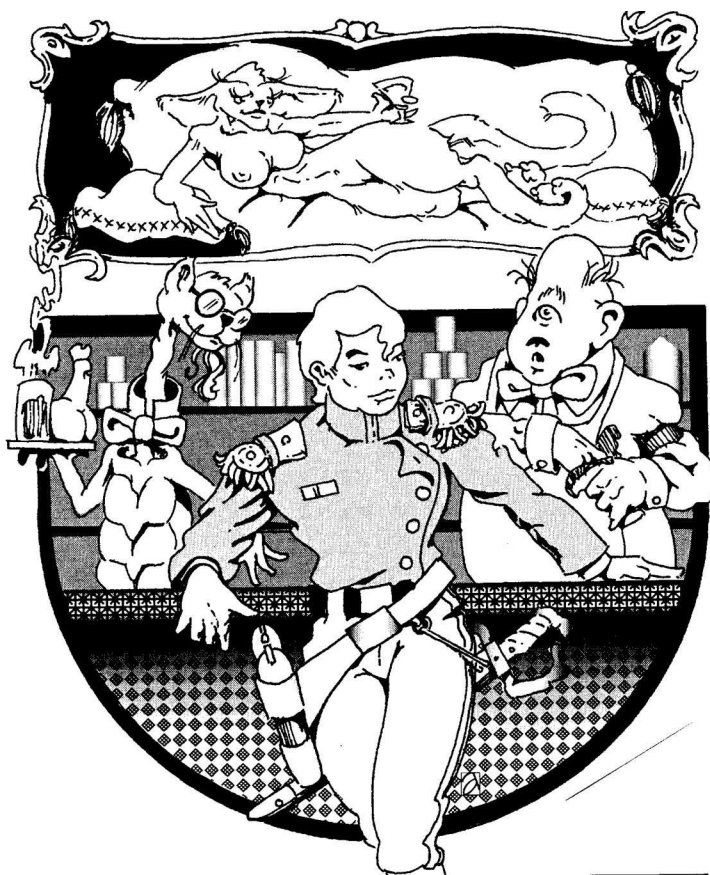
*OryCon 23, Portland OR, November 9-11, 2001. Reprinted from Fred Patten's APA-Lzine, Rabanos Radiactivos!, by permission.*

One of my panels at OryCon 23 was on "How SF Conventions Have Changed", with the description, "What's different between OryCon 3 and OryCon 23?" As I thought about it, I realized that I have a hard time telling the OryCons apart. And that certainly goes for OryCon 23. It was very pleasant, just like they always are; but nothing stood out. Just a couple of days afterwards, it is already blending into the generic "OryCon memory."

Friday morning I flew to Portland on Alaska Airlines. Like my flight to ConiFur a couple of weeks earlier, I got to L.A. International Airport a couple of hours early to find that one hour early would have been plenty of time. I wish that all my flights were as smooth as this one was: it left on time, arrived about ten minutes early; my suitcase was one of the first unloaded, and I reached the pickup area for the hotel vans just as the Doubletree Columbia River's was stopping on its half-hourly round trip. I was at the hotel by 1:30, in plenty of time for my first panel at 4:00.

The con's badges this year created a lot of double-takes. Real Musgrave was the Artist Guest-of-Honor, and the badge featured one of his Pocket Dragons in color. Not the usual moss-green with a pinkish belly, but yellow with red highlights. From further away than about a foot, it was indistinguishable from Pikachu; giving the initial impression that this was a Pokemon convention! OryCon this year was having trouble with the computers at its Registration table, resulting in a long line for at-the-door memberships from the main lobby down the hall into the first sleeping wing. Like Anthrocon, the con apologized for its computer glitches, but used them to promote preregistering for next year since preregistered members' badges and packets were available for immediate pickup. It also guaranteed getting into the con.

Several years ago I used the OryCon as an example of how to keep constant track of attendance/membership since each issue of its newsletter had the latest membership total. OryCon stopped this a couple of years ago when the attendance regularly reached the hotel's maximum of 1,600. Since then, OryCon has been able to count on filling its last few memberships with at-the-door joiners; the only question is how soon after the



## OryCon 23

### Report by Fred Patten

con opens on Friday will 1,600 be reached and latecomers told to join earlier next year?

My 4:00 p.m. panel was "Is Alternate History Becoming a Publishing Sub-Genre?", a.k.a. "An exploration into the trend of alternate history novels and series." Other panelists were James Fiscus, Laura Ann Gilman (OryCon's Editor GoH, who publishes lots of Alternate History), and Writer GoH Melanie Rawn, drafted to fill in for a panelist who was not at the con. Unfortunately, she had to leave early to prepare for her 5:00 p.m. GoH presentation. Gilman pretty well carried the panel, since as an Editor for Roc Books she was the only one with any expertise in publishing it. She said that alternate histories were clearly growing in popularity, but whether they ever became a sub-genre depended upon your definition of the term. There were two kinds of alternate history; time-travel stories, where someone goes to the past and tries to change it; and stories in which history developed differently. The former is science-fiction and is clearly accepted as such by s-f fans. The latter is arguably either fantasy or speculative main-

stream fiction. Readers looking for clear-cut s-f may consider it a cheat, while readers looking for genre fantasy usually consider it not fantastic enough. After Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall*, the plot of a man being transported to the past by being struck by lightning has been used up; and a non s-f reader is not interested in stories about going into the past by technological means. The general public is only interested in alternate history as speculative mainstream fiction if it is about some major event that everyone knows about; that is why there are so many "if the South had won the Civil War" novels outside of the s-f genre. One of the minor headaches in publishing "history developed differently" novels is coming up with packaging (a cover illustration) that will make the book look like s-f rather than a straight historical novel misshelved in the s-f section. Gil-

man made several other interesting observations; Fiscus and I mostly just sat back and listened to her.

My next panel was right after, conveniently in the same room: "Favorite Non-Superhero Comics," described as "Heroism without spandex." This was a little confusing; were we (John DeCamp, Tom Galloway, and David Lohkamp) supposed to name our favorite comics without superheroes (which could include the likes of Barks' Uncle Scrooge and Meyer's Sugar & Spike), or only those with heroes who did not wear costumes or have superpowers (like *Sakai's Usagi Yojimbo*; or *Age of Bronze*, Shanower's retelling of *The Iliad*)? We ended up pretty much just naming all the comic books that we could think of that had any literary/intellectual merit, which almost by definition were non-superhero; throwing in the few worthwhile superhero titles we liked because, "The characters may be superheroes but they're not really 'superhero comics.'"; Busiek's *Astro City* and Moore's *Top Ten*. My list included the Foglios' *Girl Genius*, McNeill's *Finder*, Lash's *Supernatural-Law*, Barr's *Desert Peach*, Crilly's *Akiko*, and Medley's *Castle Waiting*. Several others that I would have mentioned were named first by others, like Smith's *Bone*, Barr's *Stinz*, and DC/Vertigo's *Books of Magic* and *The Dreaming*.

I spent most of Friday evening split between the "Artshow Artists' Reception", to which all program participants were invited; and the con-long "OryCon 23 Anime Room Party" organized by the NOVA club to celebrate its tenth anniversary. The Art Show was crowded and had some interesting work (Mark Ferrari's fantasy landscapes; Alan Clark's illustrations for a children's fantasy picture book), but was mostly of the "nothing I'd want to buy even if I had the money" category. The anime room party (an old-fashioned video program run by a club in a member's room, not a part of the con's program) was proud of having a subtitled bootleg video of *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door*, which was only released theatrically in Japan in early September and is still playing in some cities. However, the video quality was so poor that I gave up watching it after a while. It looks good enough (with an extremely topical bioterrorist plot) that I will wait until I can see a sharper copy with more legible subtitles to appreciate it properly.

Saturday started with a "free Cereal & Cartoons" breakfast like ConiFur had, though OryCon's "cartoons" were videos of British TV s-f: *Max Headroom* and *The Prisoner*. My first panel on Saturday, at 10:00 a.m., was another on Alternate History: "Futures of the Past." "What could have happened if..." Other panelists were Steven Barnes, Dan Duval, Chris McKitterick, and Mike Moscoe. This concentrated on "history developed differently" rather than attempts to change the past. The discussion revolved mostly around broad cultural differences rather than specific changes. Individual leaders and even nations might be different, but would North American culture be vastly changed if the American colonies had not become independent from Great Britain, or if Lincoln had not elected in 1860? One example discussed at some length was what if the Native Americans had not been so vulnerable to European diseases? A major reason for the settlement of America by Europeans was the devastation of the Indians by the new diseases just when they needed to defend their cultures. What if the Viking attempt to establish a colony 500 years before Columbus had resulted in the spread of European diseases then, so that by the time of serious European colonization in the 16th & 17th centuries, the Native Americans had already gone through the plagues and rebuilt their populations with disease-resistant warriors?

Barnes talked about his new novel to be published early next year, *Lion's Blood*, in which Socrates does not commit suicide but accepts exile from Athens and takes his philosophical teachings to Egypt, resulting in a world 2,000 years later in which America is colonized by Islamic Black nations with White slaves. (Although it was not brought

up here, the cover of *Lion's Blood* illustrated Gilman's point at my previous panel. It shows two young men, one Black and one White, in vaguely late 19th century traveling clothes, and definitely looks like a Western or a historical novel about exploring the American frontier. It would not catch the eye of any reader looking for s-f including alternate history. This is part of a deliberate effort to market the book as mainstream/Black literature rather than as genre s-f.)

I spent an hour browsing through the Dealers' Room, then since it was a beautiful day outside the hotel, I wandered over to explore the huge Jantzen Beach shopping center that was built several years ago. I did not get any farther than the Barnes & Noble bookshop. It was no different from the Barnes & Nobles in L.A., but in L.A. I always have too much to do to spend hours browsing in bookshops. This one kept me occupied until time to get back to the con for my 2:00 p.m. panel on "How SF Conventions Have Changed", in the Fan Lounge. Other official panelists were Clifton Amsbury, Suzanne Tompkins, Art Widner, and Julie Zetterberg; and we welcomed someone from the audience whose first con had been OryCon 3. We did not stick to the Pocket Program's "What's different between OryCon 3 and OryCon 23?" description; in fact, we hardly mentioned it. With Cliff Amsbury and Art Widner on the panel, we covered the differences in cons from the 1930s to the '50s to the '70s to the present. Tompkins is a professional convention organizer, so she was particularly aware of changes in s-f con organization from the just-rent-some-hall-a-couple-of-months-before-the-con days up to the late 1950s to today's need for elaborate contracts signed a year or more ahead of time. This led to stories of some major con disasters, which we continued discussing for about a half-hour after the panel ended even though there had been a separate "Disastercon" panel the previous day.

I spent most of the rest of the afternoon in the Dealers' Room, and most of the evening until after midnight in the NOVA club's anime video room. They were also advertising SakuraCon, the "Pacific Northwest Anime Convention" in Seattle, which is holding its 5th annual con next April.

I slept late Sunday morning and did not get up much before the noon hotel checkout time. I was not particularly interested in any of the programming just then, so I did something that I have not previously done at a con: I went into the Internet Cafe to read the last couple of days' worth of Internet comic strips on "Bestiaria.com" and "The Belfry: Furry Comics Online" ([www.belfry.com](http://www.belfry.com)), instead of waiting until I got home. (I am still not computer-literate enough to know how to get my own e-mail on a computer besides my own.) My final panel was one of the con's

last at 3:00 p.m.: "How 2001 Differs from 2001," with John Cramer, Dan Duval, Tom Galloway, and Wolf Read. "Well, we haven't made it to Jupiter, and we have more computers. How else does the year 2001 differ from the movie 2001?"

Cramer, who writes a regular science-fact column for *Analog*, dominated this panel. Unlike Saturday's panel on convention history, this one stuck rigidly to the Pocket Program summary. If a 2001 prediction was not in the movie 2001, we ignored it except in passing. The con was already packing up and being torn down by the time this panel ended. A Dead Dog Party was announced for that evening, but I took the hotel's 5:30 shuttle to the airport for my flight home.

### Notes in a Bottle

**John Hertz**, in *Vanamonde 451*, took up the gauntlet Evelyn Leeper implicitly threw down when she reported Darrell Schweitzer is the only person to rhyme "Cthulhu" in a limerick. John replies:

"Hey, Abbott! I think it's Cthulhu!"  
 "Such blubbering never will do, Lou.  
 When we met Frankenstein  
 The box office was fine;  
 You knew our next would be a lulu."

**Wilson Tucker**, the modern Paul Revere, sounded this clarion call to everyone in his e-mail address book:

"Warning. Write your Congressman now. Astounding discovery. Scholars have learned that Newton and his Law are unAmerican. A foreign alien law rules the United States! Alert your Congressman. British citizen Isaac Newton announced Law of Gravity in 1687 and forced it on the unsuspecting world. Early Congress did nothing to stop this foreign incursion. Rectify this foreign alien meddling now and write your Congressman. Repeal the shackles of the Law of Gravity!

"Scholars tell us the foreigner Newton spent his life in apple orchards, eating the fruit of neighbors' trees. British citizens were helpless and suffered his Law under the heavy rule of the kingdom. Not even the weighty House of Lords to dared repeal it. Now is the opportunity to redress a wrong. The Twenty-first Century has no need of an alien law of gravitation. Contact your Congressman today! Send this message to every patriotic American in your address book. Don't think, do it. Urge them to forward it to every name in their address book. Fight to repeal this foreign alien unAmerican law of gravity."

## CON-VERSION 18

by Dale Speirs



Calgary's annual gencon Con-Version had its 18th edition on the weekend of August 10-12, 2001, in beautiful downtown Cowtown. Well, it was downtown anyway; like every other large city in the world, its downtown core is generic skyscrapers and car parks.

While waiting for the Opening Ceremonies on Friday evening, I wandered into the Dealer Bourse to kill a bit of time and lighten my wallet by buying pulps. I got into a conversation with Cliff Samuels, a founder and a past just-about-everything of Con-Version, not to mention this year's Toastmaster. I asked him about rumors of a Calgary Worldcon or Westercon bid. He said that the ideas had been floated out into the ether, but while there was lots of enthusiasm, there was a lack of local volunteers who were both serious and competent, so the idea was left to float onward out to wherever it is that Pioneer 10 is nowadays.

The Opening Ceremonies were brisk and efficient as always. The Guests of Honour were invited to come forward and briefly mention what panels they would be on. Author GoH was David Drake, Science GoH was Dr. Bill Brooks, Media GoH was Dirk Benedict, Artist GoH was Jean-Pierre Normand, and Writers Workshop GoHs were Patrick and Honna Swenson. And from there to the first panel.

**Robots In Space:** This panel carried on the old debate of whether we should put our money into robot probes or International Tin Cans, pardon me, International Space Stations. Dr. Brooks, an associate of the Canadian Space Agency, said that robots are essential to lead the way for humans so the first explorers know what to expect. Entrepreneurs will wait for robot pathfinders to go first at government expense. Private industry will only take humans into space if the money is there, such

as tourism (already done once by the Russians but as a government agency) and mining.

Another panelist, Blair Petterson, noted that remote probes needed intelligence to respond to unforeseen events. We cannot take direct control due to the long lag times for command responses, even at light speed, and even in our humble stellar system. Humans will always have the ability to deal with unforeseen events better

than advanced robot probes. Someone said that it is better to sacrifice a robot's life than human lives, which brought up the Challenger and other space tragedies. The discussion then went into the details of the trouble and expense of maintaining human life in space, and the amount of work that goes into designing a spacesuit. Audience members remarked that excessive use of robots will make people lazy, at which point the panel veered off topic to discuss the influence of automation and television on us.

**The Truth Is Out There:** This was the conspiracy panel, which was also the last panel of Friday evening and therefore allowed to run longer. Advice to convention programme schedulers; this is not a one-hour panel, as it doesn't take much to get everybody heated up about their favorite conspiracies. This panel was dominated by Blair Petterson, whose day job is a barrister in Edmonton (200 km north of Calgary). As a consequence, he spends a lot of time in Court of Queen's Bench dealing with the aftermath of unsuccessful conspiracies. He said you never hear about the successful conspiracies. Conspiracies require complete trust among its members, a rare thing anywhere. What usually exposes most conspiracies is a disgruntled employee, ex-spouse, or jealous neighbor or friend.

SF novelist Leslie Gadallah was on the panel, and noted that the only way two people can be absolutely certain a secret is kept is if one of them is dead. Many paranoids confuse low-probability but actually occurring events (such as Lee Harvey Oswald's lucky shot) with conspiracy and refuse to accept that random events do happen. An audience member remarked that some conspiracy theorists are in it for fun, while someone else said it was just an advanced form of gossip.

Gadallah said that many people would rather think their lives are a mess because of a conspiracy by government or multinationals instead of admitting personal responsibility.

A new motivation for believing in conspiracies that I hadn't heard before is that it is part of the innate human pattern recognition. Under this proposal by Petterson, conspiracy beliefs persist for the same reason that visual pattern recognition persists in humans. False alarms (is that a tiger over there ready to pounce on me?) are better than false complacency (naw, that's just a shadow, GROWL, CHOMP, CHOMP). Thus they persist in humans even though the evolutionary need for them may not be there anymore.

**International Space Station:** "Is it worth it?" was the question put to the panel. The consensus was that yes, it was worth doing, and yes, it is overpriced and serves no useful purpose. Dr. Brooks, said the best thing about it was that it has fostered international co-operation and provided valuable lessons on how people behave both on the ground and in space. Blair Petterson mentioned the Apollo/Soyuz rendezvous as the predecessor to the ISS.

Canada's share of the ISS is 3%, mostly for the Canadarm 2 that is used to construct the space station. This is not enough for politicians to do any serious thinking about why Canuck astronauts are roaming around in low orbit. Brooks said the timidity of the space bureaucracy is not due to fear of another Challenger incident but rather accusations of wasted money by opposition parties. The demand for accountability in spending \$100 million forces the creation of paper trails, so that if the matter erupts during Question Period in the House of Commons, then the CSA officials have themselves covered.

An audience member suggested that a lunar colony was more important than a tin can in orbit, to which Brooks responded that we should go to Mars before we return to the Moon. Someone remarked that zero-G space stations are evolutionary dead ends, since they will be of little help in designing long-term space habitats such as space arks or Mars ships. In the present day, they are poor experimental platforms due to vibrations and noise.

**Extraterrestrial Cataclysms:** Dr. William Serjeant (University of Saskatchewan) started off his presentation on this subject by saying that people use the term 'mass extinction' loosely. He applies it only to where a great diversity of taxonomic groups become

extinct, not localized extinctions. The first real mass extinction was at the end of the Permian age about 250 megayears ago, when 97% of all life forms became extinct from an unknown cause, probably not an impact. Serjeant concentrated on the more famous Cretaceous extinction. He pointed out that most of the dinosaur groups faded out at various times before the termination of the Cretaceous 65 megayears ago, and a few persisted briefly into the following Palaeocene period. The Cretaceous extinction was not an abrupt termination but an inconclusive ending.

**The Future Of Monsters:** Panelist William Serjeant, whom we last saw speaking as a professor of geology in the Extraterrestrial Cataclysms panel, changed hats and identities, and spoke at this panel under his pen name of Anthony Swithin, with which he writes his fantasy novels. The question put to the panel was "What makes a scary monster?" Swithin said words suggest horror better than pictures because the former allow a reader to visualize his own worst fears, whereas a picture loses impact. Paula Johanson (*Tesseracts* editor) agreed, saying that wet, messy scenes cannot be as monstrous as what is not seen but only implied.

Robyn Herrington (short story writer whose day job is an editor at the University of Calgary) said the most frightening monsters are those roaming typical suburbs that we can relate to, the stereotypical "But he was a quiet man!" interview that neighbors give to the news media after the serial killer is arrested. Monsters in some fantastical background such as a pseudo-medieval place or another planet are competing with the background, which distracts the reader from the monster. An audience member mentioned that frightening monsters are those which act with intelligence, not just blindly roaring about but cold and calculating and out to get you. Rebecca Bradley (fantasy novelist) said monsters of the future will be tiny things like viruses or nanotechnology, such as an airborne Ebola-type virus with a long latency period.

**New Planets:** Con-Version always has a strong turnout for science panels, and this presentation by local astronomer Roland Dechesne was no exception. He presented a colorful slide show on the 80 or so extra-solar planets currently known. Random motion of gas clouds in a galaxy will always have some angular momentum, and the cloud will therefore eventually flatten into a disk. The cloud diameter is greater than our solar system in most nebula. Planets are hard for astronomers to separate from the disk of the parent star; spectral methods are most commonly used to do this. Only Jupiter-class or greater planets are found, since the technology does not yet exist to identify smaller planets. The searches are emphasizing Sun-type or red dwarf stars, as there is not much point in checking pulsars or obviously

unstable systems. Astronomers are not just looking for planets *per se*, but planets nearby that may have life. Gas giants could have life on their satellites.

**Conventions Past, Present, And Future:** This panel started off with a discussion about the ideal type of chairman. A dictator who runs the show efficiently makes for a well-remembered convention by the general membership, as much as he may be detested by the tiny clique of SMOFs and BOFs who think they are true fandom. The genial chairman who gets on well with everyone but can't or won't hold the committee chairmen responsible is the one who produces disasters.

It was asked from the audience if there is any future for conventions in this Internet age. The answer was a resounding yes, on the premise that SF conventions are the only place where geeks can socialize on equitable terms. Other benefits of conventions are a place for editors and publishers to gather for deal making, and as a place for awards such as Hugos and Auroras.

The most disquieting moment of Con-Version came when a neo arrived for this panel a bit late and the panelists had to not only explain basic terms to him such as 'Worldcon', but also explain that most conventions emphasize literary SF. This neo was used to the idea that an SF convention was something you paid admission to and sat back to watch bit-part actors do a question-and-answer session. It was frightening to have to explain the concept of volunteerism to him, a typical 'fan' not of the future but of the present.

**Gigantologies:** "Why do book series go on forever?" asked moderator Tony King at the start of this panel. He then mimicked a televangelist, pointing at panelists David Drake, Dave Duncan, and Ann Marston, and shouted "Do these sinners repent?" The answer, as it turned out, was 'No' from all of them, all three of whom have SF novel series. Duncan said that endless serials are a time-honored tradition thousands of years old. Ancient bards didn't recite entire epic poems in one sitting, but told such favorites as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in installments. Conversely, many epic poems were stretched out from their shorter, original versions because the audience wanted more.

Drake said he found it was better for him to write non-series stories in between installments of his series, for otherwise the labor dragged on him. Some authors want to stop a series but faced with a \$3 million contract for more of the same they can't refuse. He said he sets up his own series so that he is comfortable with himself artistically if he goes on longer than intended. Marston said it is difficult for writers to break loose, while Drake said to the contrary that a successful author shouldn't force a publisher to take a non-series if it leads to bad feelings.

The consensus of the panel was that gigantologies exist because they sell, no matter that a few fans might complain.

**E-Publishing:** It used to be that aspiring small-press authors would print off chapbooks of sample chapters of their latest novel and give them away at SF conventions. Nowadays it's floppies. I have no intention of using one of them in my computer but I took a sample floppy from the freebie table as a new type of collectible.

Meanwhile, at a panel, David Drake mentioned that he thinks too many authors are fretting needlessly about fiction posted on the Web, or people charging for Website access. He said it was a form of road rage not worth it to get excited over. "Walk away," he said. Life is too short to be consumed by anger over minor things.

**The Shire:** Anthony Swithin made this presentation, a reconstruction of the geography and socioeconomics of the *Lord of the Rings* books. This included geological maps with fault lines and sedimentology, using Swithin's experience as a professional geologist. Not that hard to do either; many people don't realize that every mountain range has its fault lines, and if an author mentions in passing that a character fell off a ledge of limestone, you can immediately identify the past history of that mountain. (Limestones are marine rocks, therefore any cliff of limestone was once a seabed subsequently uplifted by tectonic movements on a geological fault.) From there, Swithin went on to discuss his own books, part of the Rockall series. He based the geography of this series on his native Shrewsbury, England, and his knowledge of geology.

**Guest Of Honor Speeches:** The speeches were brief, unremarkable, and not worth reporting. What struck me was that the most science fictional moment of the entire convention occurred at the beginning of the speeches. Toastmaster Cliff Samuels asked audience members to please turn off their cellphones. About half the audience reached for their pockets or purses. Go back to the first SF convention in the world, back in 1936 in Leeds, England, and those attendees would have agreed that pocket-sized communicators were real SF, right up there with aircars and lunar colonies. Now we take them so much for granted that convention runners everywhere consider them as a part of the mundane world. Cellphones are science fiction!

**Things To Come:** Next year's Con-Version will also be Convention 22, at which the Prix Aurora Awards will be presented. The Auroras are Canada's equivalent of the Hugos. Con-Version 20 will be on the weekend of August 9-11, 2002.

# THREE BY WOOSTER

## *Martin Morse Wooster Reports on Capclave, Bouchercon and Corflu*

### **Capclave**

**Beltsville, MD**

**September 28-30, 2001**

**Report by Martin Morse Wooster**

"NO STUPID TERRORIST IS GOING TO RUIN MY CONVENTION." The signs were everywhere, at the first Washington, D.C. sf convention since the notorious 1997 Disclave. The convention even began with a group discussion of the tragedies of September 11. Then everyone ate chocolate and felt better.

The terrorists did seem to have one major influence on Capclave; the approximately 150 attendees seemed determined to enjoy themselves. Indeed, a good time was had by all.

Capclave was held in the Sheraton College Park (which, fanhistorians should note, is a different hotel than the Sheraton College Park that cancelled the 1998 Disclave). The organizers were determined that the convention would not be a revival of Disclave. Capclave was smaller, but had more programming--and more sf-related programming--than Disclaves had. Instead of a fancy program book, participants were given a pamphlet. And the giant "Disclave" con suites of 1990s Disclaves were replaced with a pretty spartan con suite. (And there was no need to card anyone, since Capclaves had no beer.)

Perhaps the most important difference between Disclaves and Capclaves is that Capclave is trying to be a literary sf convention, a smaller version of Readercon. Given that WSFA has, throughout its history, prided itself on being a party-oriented club indifferent or even hostile to sf, I didn't think they could pull off this transformation, but they did. There was one track of programming, and most of the programs were about science fiction. The small dealers room actually had five book dealers, and most reported good sales. The only media-related item was one Buffy panel; fewer than five of the members wore costumes. (Nor was there a video room or any other media-related activity.)

The Disclaves of the 1990s were shrinking and ailing; a stronger con would have survived the 1997 debacle. In contrast, most fans treated Capclave as if it were an old friend who had been in the hospital for a long time, but that everyone was happy to see become healthy again. The convention also served as a WSFA alumni reunion; among

the former WSFA fans who travelled great distances for the event were Kent Bloom, Jack Heneghan, and Elaine Normandy from Denver, and Avedon Carol and Rob Hansen from England. (No one I talked to had any problems with airlines in getting to Washington.)

I didn't see many panels, but the ones I attended were pretty sharp. GoH Gardner Dozois was an amiable guest, participating in a funny interview with Michael Swanwick that was in part a live version of their recent book *Being Gardner Dozois*. Dozois also amiably awarded the prizes for the first 50 members to book rooms in the hotel.

I also enjoyed a panel on science in sf that featured Catherine Asaro and Charles Sheffield. (Sheffield noted that his novel *Brother to Dragons* not only featured a global economic collapse in 2001, but also predicted that the National Mall would be a fortress surrounded by barbed wire!)

If WSFA keeps Capclave focused on sf and in the same hotel (Disclave's decline was in part due to being in five hotels in five years) they will have created a con worth savoring.

### **Bouchercon 32**

**Arlington, VA**

**November 1-4, 2001**

**Report by Martin Morse Wooster**

My father taught me many things, but one of them was that, when it came to popular entertainment, there was no boundary between genres. Sometimes sf hits the spot. Sometimes a mystery would do. Sometimes you read adventure novels. It all depended on what mood you were in.

So I expected I would enjoy Bouchercon 32, the first Bouchercon I've been to in 15 years. And for the most part I had a good time. But the barrier between sf and mystery fans is much higher than it used to be.

I only found one other local fan, Patrick McGuire, who decided to go to Bouchercon. Far more went to the World Fantasy Convention in Montreal, even though one convention was in another country and this one was a subway ride away. I found a few vestigial connections to sf, such as an essay in the program book by Len and June Moffatt about Anthony Boucher's widow, Phyllis White, who died in 2000. There were also two couples I met where the husband read sf and

dutifully went along with his mystery-loving wife.

The most surprising tie to our fandom, however, is that "Tuckerization" is now entering the language. I learned this because I overheard one conversation talking about who this Tucker fellow was. They thought he was an ornery fan who pestered the pros into putting him in their books. I did my part by telling them who Tucker was (and that his mysteries are quite good.)

So what sort of convention was Bouchercon? Well, they're much larger than they used to be. The Bouchercon I went to in 1986 had 300 fans, and Bob Briney told me that a Bouchercon was like the Worldcon in the 1950s. But Bouchercons have grown much bigger, the 1997 one in Monterey was, with 2500 attendees, the largest. This year Bouchercon capped their registration at 1500, although I heard there were about 200 cancellations as result of September 11, and they were accepting some at-the-door registrations.

Bouchercon also hired pros to run the dealer's room and organize the registration. They even contracted out the Anthony Awards (their version of the Hugos) to pros; winners got a Waterford crystal shaped like the Capitol Dome. Even the "hospitality lounge" only had hotel-supplied tea and coffee (which was paid for by New American Library.)

The pros did about as well in running a convention as fans do, with the major exception of the Anthony Awards banquet, where some tables were reserved, some were partially-reserved, and some were open. But the pros forgot to tell many attendees (including me) about this peculiar seating scheme, leading to lots of yelling. They would have done better to have full tables reserved and some clearly set aside for fans without connections.

But the end result of having a professionally-run "fan" convention was that it seemed quite cold and sterile. This feeling was enhanced by the fact that most of the panelists were mid-list writers who came to Bouchercon to sell! sell! sell! their books. Ninety percent of the fliers in the hospitality lounge were from authors trying to persuade you to buy their mysteries. Some of the gimmicks were appreciated; I enjoyed the Reese's peanut butter cups supplied by writer Alex Matthews. Other gimmicks were dumb, such as the writer who put little cards above the urinals saying, "Who the hell is (Jane Hack)."

Bouchercon was very light on evening programming, but astonishingly opened the day with seven sessions at 8:30 a.m. One of those was the vampire panel, featuring Laurel Hamilton. But at that early hour, it was probably only attended by the undead. And if 8:30 a.m. was too late for you, there were a few breakfasts that began at 7:00 a.m.!

But Bouchercon did get some things right. Someone had hypnotic power over the publishers; I came home with seven hardcovers, three trade paperbacks, two prozines, six paperbacks and one limited-edition short story, all in an attractive book bag. I thus came home with about \$175 worth of books, easily recouping my \$100 admission. In addition, *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* dedicated its December issue to Bouchercon, featuring stories by GoHs Edward D. Hoch and Peter Lovesey. (The Hoch story was set at Bouchercon.)

I also liked the fact that in a Thursday evening ceremony for minor awards (the Barry and Macavity fan awards, and the Herodotus Award for historical mysteries) they also had a ceremony for all Anthony Award nominees. Each nominee got an attractive plaque.

Some of the panels were interesting. The genre-busting Joe Lansdale was interviewed by Douglas Winter for an hour. Lansdale explained that he decided to write in all genres in part because of a childhood spent consuming large quantities of adventure fiction of all types. The youthful Lansdale was also impressed by *Gene Autry and the Phantom Empire*, which featured singing cowboys and giant robots. Lansdale revealed that one of the proudest moments in his career came after a Lone Ranger comic he wrote in which Tonto slugged the Lone Ranger on the first page (the Masked Man deserved it). But Rush Limbaugh featured the comic on his television show as proof of America's moral degeneracy.

Also fun was a panel of mystery editors featuring three British crime editors (who accompanied 20 British writers.) All of the editors explained that they were free to reject what they pleased, but had to get approval from committees for anything they wanted to buy. The editors also revealed what sorts of mysteries they can't stand; one British editor can't stand American books where children suffered because both parents worked. St. Martin's crime editor Keith Kahla was bothered by mysteries "where the cat *talks*."

All in all, I had a good time at Bouchercon. But I wish future Bouchercon organizers would attend some sf conventions. Bouchercon would be more fun if it was once again more fannish.

#### Anthony Award Winners:

Best Fan Publication: *Mystery News*, Chris Aldrich and Lynn Kaczmarek, eds.

Best Non-Fiction/Critical Work: *100 Favorite Mysteries of the Century*, Jim Huang, ed.

Best Anthology/Short Story Collection: *Master's Choice II*, Lawrence Block, ed.

Best Short Story: "The Problem of the Potting Shed," Edward D. Hoch

Best Paperback Original: *Death Dances to a Reggae Beat*, Kate Grilley

Best First Mystery: *Death of a Red Heroine*, Qiu Xiaolong

Best Novel: *A Place of Execution*, Val McDermid

### *Corflu Valentine* *Annapolis, Maryland* *February 14-17, 2002* *by Martin Morse Wooster*

"I am frequently asked why I go to Corflu. Many UK fans don't see why I travel 3000 miles to attend a little convention when I could instead travel 300 miles to attend a large one.

Such people are beyond saving."

--Ian Sorensen, *Snapshot*

I'll confess I'm not a typical Corflu attendee. I'm a sercon fanzine fan, not a fannish one, and I only went 25 miles to Corflu Valentine. But I nonetheless had a fine time.

Corflu Valentine was the smallest convention I've been to in 25 years. The attendance was somewhere between 30 and 40 (35 fen attended the banquet). About ten UK fans crossed the Atlantic, making Corflu probably the only American con with one-third of its attendees from Britain. Art Widner decided to skip Corflu this year, making Ted White the only fan to attend all 19 Corflus.

There was a program, but a small one. A panel on whether fannish and sercon fanzine fans could get along was spoiled by there being no sercon fen in the room (except for me). Far better was *The Booze Brothers*, a very silly musical by Ian Sorensen, which was sort of a fannish amalgam of *The Blues Brothers* and *Yes, Minister*. The cast, headed by Sorensen and John Harvey as Jake and Elwood Booze, had a good time wearing goofy hats and fooling around with inflatable guitars. Cast members included Moshe Feder, Frank Lunney, Mike Scott, and Pete Weston. Special kudos go to Claire Briarley, in real life a senior British civil servant, for her portrayal of "Sir Humphrey."

Corflu GoHs are chosen at the convention, and this year the honor went to Moshe Feder, who spent all weekend working on his speech. Feder explained that, although he hasn't published a genzine since *Placebo 5* in 1977, he still felt fannish. He thanked Barry Smirnoff and Lou Stathis for introducing him

to fandom in the early 1970s. Though a full-time Tor editor (who urged the audience to buy Donald Kingsbury's *Psychohistorical Crisis*, which he edited), Feder said he still took part in fan activities, including running a monthly fan party and running The Third Level, a newsgroup for fans who also like trains.

Feder also read a message from Harry Warner, Jr., who regretted not being able to attend, and added that it was a good thing that Corflu was not in Hagerstown, because the sewage treatment plant had broken down and the water was undrinkable!

Winners of the Fanzine Achievement Activity Awards (FAANs) for 2002:

Past Presidents, Fan Writers of America (fwa): Eve and John Harvey

Best Letterhack: Lloyd Penney

Best New Fanzine Fan: Max

Best Fan Artist: David Hicks

Best Fan Writer: Alison Freebairn

Best Fanzine: *Wabe*

Corflu 20 will be held in Madison, Wisconsin at the Best Western InnTowner between April 25-27 2003. It will be hosted by the editors of *Wabe*, Jae Leslie Adams, Tracy Benton, and Bill Bodden.

### *Short Waves*

**Greg Benford** is profiled in *Science Magazine's* September issue by interviewer Robert Irons. The article covers Benford's work as a scientist and sf writer (and as a teenaged fanzine editor.) It's located online at:

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/293/5537/1984>

**Steven, Elaine and Robin Silver** received the newest addition to their family, **Melanie Shira Silver**, on August 26 at 1:06 a.m. She weighed 7 pounds, 3.4 ounces.

**Bill Warren** reminds faneditors he still has plenty of Bill Rotsler art available for faneditors. He requests that the art appear in paper fanzines first. Contact Bill at his e-mail address: [BillyBond@aol.com](mailto:BillyBond@aol.com)

Fanartist **Kurt Erichsen** is now scanning all his illos of the past 30+ years into his computer. He's finding it a mixed blessing:

"Gaaa! The stuff I'd drawn I totally forgot about. A lot has been lost (nearly everything before 1978). Probably deserves to have been lost, but there are a few things I wish I still had from the old days."

Check out his web page:

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/KErichsen/>

**Leah Zeldes Smith**, who wrote last issue about the trip she and Dick took to Tokyo, has posted online:

[http://www.interact.com/~rhes/fan/japan\\_fans.html](http://www.interact.com/~rhes/fan/japan_fans.html)

They include pictures of the Nippon in 2007 bid committee.