



APRIL 2007



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Art credits: Lyne Masamitsu (cover) (www.lynescreations.com), Alan White (masthead), Amy Harlib (3, 18), Alexis Gilliland (6, 25), Trinlay Khadro (9, 26), Sheryl Birkhead (12), Brad Foster (14, 25)

This issue is dedicated to: Everyone who tries, despite all the obstacles thrown at them. Great adversity doesn't always result in great achievement, but when it does, the achievement seems to burn all the brighter for it. To all who face seemingly insurmountable odds, I wish patience, strength, and love.

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Silent eLOCutions

[Editorial comments look like this.]

[The effervescent Chuck Connor, an eAPA colleague and PN contributor, sent his first PN loc via HTML in Web page form, just so he could include a bit of moving artwork (but no ActiveX material's in the code, he says). Chuck's currently involved in ramping up Phlizz, a new flavor of fanzine -- the kind discussed, off and on, on the fmzfen mailing list several years back. Earl

Kemp has done a bit of the same in his eI, but I think Chuck will be taking it to the next level. Personally, I'm very enthused about his ideas for his fanzine and can hardly wait to "experience" the first ish (some lucky ones of us have seen the alpha and beta ishes) -- which has already arrived. It'll require more than just reading, I'm sure. But I'll let the gent speak for himself now...]

Chuck Connor / 64 Chelwood Ave., Hatfield, HERTS AL10 0RE UK / April 12, 2007

Jan, Jan, Jan, Jan, Jan – a thousand and one – no a hundred-thousand and one – no, make that a billion and one (and remember, that's a true Limey billion, not some American fake billion that's short measure) apologies for not keeping track of eFanzines and the most recent PN!

I can only add that I've been busy at work of late but now

that I've got a few minutes to myself I want to hunker down and start hacking out a LoC? eLoC? EmLoC? – what is the correct fannish expression these days? The last time I messed with the correct fannish terms I got into trouble! (All I said was that my last paper fanzine was available for Letter of Comment (LoC) or a Card of Comment (CoC) – and that I would award a prize for the most impressive CoC to come my way between now and the next issue...) *[Insert editorial giggles here.]*

Curious to see dedications at the start of this issue. I suppose that they help to anchor things in time/history, as well as marking the passings. But why only deaths? *[Not all the dedications are for the departed; keep reading back ishes.]* I don't mean that they shouldn't be marked in some way or another, but I tend to find that I need to balance the more melancholy with something upbeat – a Yin /Yang, if you will, in that there should be something of Yin in Yang, and vice versa. *[See this's dedication.]* As it is, I'll be fishing around to find a recording of the Menotti piece.

About 33 years ago I used to hang around Real Time Records down in Felixstowe, which was run by a guy called Rob Cox. There was no real studio policy, and he would take any booking that came his way, literally. He had a wonderful philosophy for music and that was "You never know what you like, until you hear it." -- that was put over the door to the studio itself. It's something I've always held to, which is why I can listen to most things -- except most English early 20th C. composers (Vaughn Williams, etc), most dire German composers, and mid to late '70s disco.

This, of course, is why I can add to your Guess Who comment to Brad Foster, because the band also became Bachman Turner Overdrive – though as the GW they had a fun time really genre hopping, even going between 50s-style rawk'n'roll to some odd psychedelic/prog-rock stuff. As BTO, they had more success, but I guess you know all that...*[I had*

no idea that some of the GW members started BTO. Back in the Jurassic, when I was in my first year of college, I was in a cover band (a band that plays others' songs, for those unaware of the term) that did some BTO songs as they were popular at the time (mid to late 70s), but we never did any GW songs. I would've had a great time belting out "American Woman," I think, and secretly laughing at the stares I might've gotten as a result. I never changed the lyrics to "match" my gender, as I figured that wasn't my right since I didn't write the words. I got that singing gig, my first and only band job, because the rest of the band liked how I did the two Bad Company songs I sang for my audition. That was a time fraught with change for me, but the band was mostly great fun, and fulfilled a dream I'd had since first hearing the Beatles.]

Brad Foster's artwork is nothing short of stunning now that I can get to see it in colour. **Marty Cantor** requesting a paper edition (Lawd knows what you have on this guy – he was never like that 20 years ago)? **Lyn McConchie's** one of the few Kiwis to produce material for zines other than their own.

Alexis Gilliland suggests a pun-itive tax on punning? But that's the fun of words! Play with them, use them, produce something that gets others thinking outside the box! I have always had a love of words, even as a child I was fascinated by the likes of Ogden Nash, Lewis Carroll, Belloc ("That's Belloc's, Sir." "No it isn't, Constable, it's bloody poetry!"); it makes you think about what you're reading or saying. Never trust any of my mistakes (the hooker/hookah, for example), because I really do enjoy shooting 8-ball off three corners before dropping into the pocket.

E. B. Frohvet brings comment to the Hugos, and I have to ask just what is the fascination with the awards? [*Well, since you asked ... I'll break my own rule and tell you my opinion, but just this once. The fascination with them is the same fascination that exists for any award process. All awards, in my view, are*

*either popularity contests (which are a subversion of the brain's primitive insistence on primacy in any given group via attaching a price for participation in the primacy selection, namely group membership) or methods of honoring those of particular note for their **lifetime** achievements (i.e. the Nobel prizes, the MacArthur Foundation grant [[aka the genius award]], etc.), usually with a sizable monetary honorarium so the awardee can continue to do that for which they were honored. The latter examples don't require membership in any group, so far as I know.] Is it essential that they be won? [Depends on who you ask and the category in question. It's not essential to me to be nominated or awarded a Hugo for my fanzine, but were I a pro writer, I'd certainly be glad of either for the PR factor alone -- a hypocritical view, in some eyes, perhaps, but a practicality in today's publishing climate. I'd also be happy for any of my pro writer friends nominated for a Hugo, because it could mean those writers would continue to get contracts for their books and stories.]*

What purpose is served by winning one? [*For the pros, it means their publishers and agents get to add the phrase "Hugo winner" or "Hugo nominee" to the fronts of their books and in their press releases. For everyone else, it means what it means to the winners and/or nominees, which differs depending on who you're pointing at. And I think that sums up my view, so I won't yak on further on this topic.]*

So maybe it's time to set up something new? Something less biased? (Damn! Boy sure gonna go straight to Hell fer that!) [*I would rather no awards at all.]*

I don't see the levels of anarchy in the mainstream that I used to see in 'comix' such as Dennis Kitchen's productions, the ingenuity of such things as Fish Police (the original Fishwrap, rather than the later Comico, or even the TV series, which I never got to see), the original large format RAW – and yes, I've also been through the 2000AD phase (in fact, back in

1980, I interviewed Alan Grant -- then he was an up-coming, now he's considered the grandfather of the British genre.) But the likes of the X-Men, or Superman, or the re-vamped Batman? I did appreciate the re-working of The Shadow that DC ran for a while back in the late 80s or early 90s, but the rest never had any real appeal -- even the Dark Knight stuff -- and the politics also got to be beyond -- DC's proposed Parental Advisory warnings, and the brouhaha that produced. Would it be sacrilegious to say I also found The Watchmen with the re-styled smile to be a little tedious? (I think I still have some of Moore's old Luther Arkwright strip somewhere, possibly in the Edinburgh-based comic Near Myths -- but again, that was too long, too big, and too blousy...)

And then we're back into the need for labels again, with the SF or F? comments. Nailing my colors to the masthead, I'll say now that Fantasy (as in Sword & Sorcery, unfeasibly large weapons, and beefcake that appears to use rabbits as cod-pieces) isn't something I've ever been into. Arcana such as Clark Ashton Smith, William Hope Hodgson, etc, is a different matter -- that is dark and possessive and forbidding (as good fantasy should be) and leaves the stench of evil in your nostrils long after you have closed the covers. [*Lovecraft, anyone?*]

I think Fantasy should be akin to the Viking or Norse -- wrathful gods, vast landscapes, sweeping descriptions -- but not, repeat **not**, like the LotR stuff that came out for the cinema recently (and he was supposed to be a fan? Ask yourself this -- would it have been accepted if it had **not** ridden in on the fact that it was a version of LotR -- just released as a three part Fantasy epic?). [*Now you've gone and done it, Chuck...sigh...I suggest you google LotR reviews some time, and judge for yourself how "accepted" the film version of Tolkien's books was in both fandom and the movie industry's critical establishment. They weren't as universally approved as your comment implies.*]

Much enjoyed **Lyn's** "Murder In Much-Piddling" -- the village stuff I can easily relate to -- born in London, but grew up proper in Suffolk, the land of the webbed feet and 6 fingers. When the Vietnamese Boat People arrived in the late 60s they were, quite literally, treated as aliens by the "good" people of Halesworth, but those of us in the country surrounding the town had no problem at all. We showed them how to fish for carp, tench, and pike -- and they showed us how to cook it in ways we'd never seen before. Sadly they were only with us for about a year, and then moved off somewhere else.

What on earth was that "...should not be alarmed at the use of certain words"? I tell you, Lady, I couldn't Adam and Eve it! I ran me minces over it several times -- like yer does -- and I don't see nuffin' wrong wiv it no where! Okay, so maybe the image of my old Auntie Viv taking her tights off and using them as an emergency fan belt was a bit harsh -- but she said if I ever mentioned her varicose veins and surgical stockings I'd be brown bread, sure as eggs is eggs!

Unless you're talking about the Gibraltar Dog reference? Sometimes, when the manager of a greasy spoon isn't too particular about hygiene (personal and/or otherwise) you end up eating something that ain't quite kosher -- you might not notice on account of you being a little Brahms & Liszt -- and the following morning you end up barking at both ends down the Armitage. (Hah! Eat your heart out, Dick Van Dyke! I assume you were referring to the 'fag' references? Two countries -- one language...) [*It was an attempt at being slightly amusing, is all.*] The Dick Van Dyke reference is for his wonderfully "accurate" Cock-er-ney character in Mary Poppins. My father, (1911 -- 1981), a true Cockney, used to become really annoyed whenever that film was screened on TV.

To shift over to the book reviews -- and despite your best efforts to get me back into the genre, the first 4 reviews seem to complain about flaws in the reviewed works. Benford and Bear

never did hold much interest for me – I'm not a lover of hard science, and don't feel that a reader should have to have an intimate knowledge of quantum physics or bio-mechanical engineering, in order to appreciate the more subtle elements of a novel. But that's me.

Of the other three, I was never a Vinge fan, even after attempting to read some short stories, but the other two – Dead Witch and Blood Rites – look like they might have potential; even though Lyn doesn't like DW it may still be of interest to me as an introduction to the crossover genre. [*I liked it, if that helps at all.*] Anything other than the Alternative History stuff that was flooding the market a little while back. [*For a rather well-done alternative to AH, try Steven Barnes' Lion's Blood and Zulu Heart and the music Heather Alexander wrote to accompany them on her CD, Insh'Allah.*]

The "Pub Crawl" section was also a nice re-introduction, and I have to agree with you that Pixel's production values and style are incredibly classy and up-market (I've viewed only #12 so far), the writing is also good, relaxed and enjoyable. But the "clumping together" of LoC comments by subject/article/column means that you have to wait and decide when you have enough LoCs in order to fill out an issue, rather than just receiving one, doing a little top&tail sub-editing, and then knocking the piece to stencil. You can, of course, load the dice by just including those comments that fit your criteria, rather than doing some kind of balanced Pro/Con editing, but it shouldn't happen too often if the faned is any good (and despite what might be



said, **all** faneds have a bias, no matter how subconscious it might be.)

As for the "dropped word syndrome"? Who hasn't guilty of that mistake from time to time? [*Few, surely, but when it's a consistent problem, I think it's notable.*]

Re: Pete Western's Prolapse. It is the one thing that a lot of us were concerned about back in the early 1980s, and something that has been allowed to re-surface again, some 20+ years later. How can I put this without reverting to 72pt Caps? Brit Fandom of the late 70s, and 80s did not consist wholly and solely of Joey Nicholas, Alan Dorey, etc. There were masses of other fans out there doing their own thing (the mailing list for my own IDOMO, and later Thingummybob, cracked the 250+ mark), and although most of them have either moved on to other things (Pete Presford and Bryn Fortey have abandoned fandom in favour of small press) or passed on (Johnny Rickett, Vince Clarke, Ken Cheslin, AToM, Ethel Lindsay, Mae Strelkov) most are still out there just pootling along.

In the same way that I would never presume to lump you in with Arnie Katz & Co., please don't consider that all 1980s fandom was created from the same mould, because in some of those cases it was very much of the mildew and yeast varieties. [*It's because I haven't read and/or heard of most of the names and zines you mention here that I have that idea of 80s Brit-fandom. I even paid for a box of old fanzines from the Memory Hole, Greg Pickersgill's old home for fanzines, and I still had the same opinion. Short of someone pubbing a large fanzine or book on what the "rest" of 1980s Britfandom sounded like, I have no way to form a different viewpoint. Sorry.*]

One of the reasons why Rob Hansen hasn't taken his THEN (a history of Brit Fandom) beyond 1980 is that a lot of us just walked in and diversified far too much for the core/old school to keep track of. Our points of reference were different in a lot of cases, our associations were different. Fandom

stopped being a nice little backwater where everyone knew everyone else, and where in-jokes of in-jokes about in-jokes were thicker than flies around hot (well, you get the picture...)

Cyril Simsa reviewed some punk fanzines a month before we did (he was doing *Amonita* or *New Church* at the time) around 1980 or 1981, and the adverse comments we received in regard to using the word *fanzine* while talking about Small Press/Amateur Press/Music zines made me become more adamant to follow the path again and again. Come the finish, it wasn't unusual back then, once *IDOMO* had become established as a news & review point for anything and everything that came through the letterbox, to get 150 to 300 pieces of mail/items for review per month.

The problem with trying to find trace of us is that we were not ready to be labelled "Fannish" as defined by the 70s -- a lot of us really couldn't be bothered to restrict ourselves to The One True Path To Fannishness, and had a damn-sight more fun and happiness than most of the sad old bastards still around today. Certainly, one of the old habits I used to do was publish the mailing list as part of the zine itself, that way other faneds would be able to send off speculative copies in the knowledge that those people were actually, really interested. Not sure how things stand today with all the SPAM blocking and the like, but...*[I pub postal mail addresses where the owners allow, and email address with anti-spam techniques; other faneds do other things.]*

Sorry to get a bit soap-boxy there, but I really do feel strongly about this -- Joey is really just a cranky old Barclay's Banker (rhyming slang for Wanker) and should not be held up as being typical of the period (as they are wont to say on "The Antiques Roadshow.")

I enjoyed PN for its uncomplex layout, the ease with which it allowed me to become a part of it, and for the care you have obviously taken in producing it. *[Thanks, I do try to make*

it look purty.] If possible, could you add me to your e-list? -- mainly as I now see I've missed the deadline for the next issue, and that just isn't right. *[Done and done.]*

Dick Ellingsworth / 10 Broadwood Close, Warminster, Wiltshire
BA12 8PL UK

I've just read through the latest *Peregrine Nations* online, and thought I'd throw a loc in your direction while it's still fresh in my mind. To begin with the cover, very nice artwork *but* when a scientist "makes up his mind" he stops being a scientist...

To add my voice to the dangerous dogs wrangle, I think there's some truth to both sides of the argument. After all, different breeds have been bred to fight, or hunt, or whatever, and this entails selecting for natural psychological inclinations as well as for physical attributes. When I was at school, some fifty-odd years ago, I had a weekend job helping out in a nearby police dog training centre, working mostly with Alsatians and Labradors, and even before the training had really got under way, it was pretty obvious that the Alsatians were much more touchy and liable to snap at things. Which is not to say that they could not be taught to behave "nicely," but there was more effort involved.

Cats and water -- most cats seem to actually like water, one way or another. I had one who used to jump into the bath and yell at me until I turned the water on, just a little, and he'd sit and bat the trickle with his paws for hours. *[Well enough, but try dunking a cat into a warm bath because it's gotten into a bush with sticky sap and see how much Kitty appreciates it.]* Another one used to jump into the large pond across the road from here and swim after the ducks. Occasionally he'd catch one and bring it back alive and I'd have to shut him in the house while I released the bird back onto the pond. Yet another would run outside and roll around in the most torrential rain. Strange

animals but I wouldn't be without them.

Lyn McConchie's piece was fascinating. [*And welcome, too. I always appreciate getting an article from her, because she's a professional writer and doesn't get paid but in egoboo for what she sends me to pub here.*] The village where she lives sounds like paradise to me. "Much-Piddling-In-The-Marsh": She did mention the place name as being taken from one of the Carry On films, which prompted me to make the connection to "Much-Binding-In-The-Marsh" -- a wartime radio comedy in the UK, that ran through into the 1950s. One of the stars, Kenneth Horne, later starred in another radio comedy series with Kenneth Williams, who was one of the stars of the "Carry On..." films.

Chuck Connors' piece on Gibraltar was also extremely interesting. I was always dimly aware that things were a little out of the ordinary out there, but I hadn't realised just how bad it was. I'm looking forward to the next instalment. All of this is just by way of saying thanks for a great little zine. Keep 'em coming!

[*And again, in reply to my msg. on his first loc...*]

The radio shows may well have been heard in NZ -- they were made partly for the [armed] forces and would probably have been carried on the BBC World Service.

I'm not surprised you don't recognize my name -- I more or less gaffiated in '71 and have only recently been dragged back into the fold by the likes of Jim Linwood and Peter Weston [PW], and I'm now busily working my way through everything on efanazines.com. I had part of a letter quoted on the back page of PW's *Prolapse 4*, by way of easing myself back into things. I was introduced to fandom by Mike Moorcock in the late '50s and took over one of his fanzines when he became pro rather than fannish. I was fairly active in London fandom for a while and was part of Kingdon Road fandom, which PW

describes as the UK's Slan Shack. If you were to google 'ellingsworth moorcock' or 'ellingsworth burroughsiana' you'd find a few references. I'm already committed to writing an article on the (good?) old days for *Prolapse* but maybe I'll come up with something. I'm really getting back into the swing of things now.

A further observation on PN and your comments about locs, or the lack of them, for e-zines. It may be that you get locs where others don't, because PN is designed with a web readership in mind. (In fact, if I were at all sarcastic about some zines, I'd just say it was designed - period!) There's nothing more frustrating than continually having to scroll up and down pages that have been laid out for paper, in two columns, with illos breaking up the text... And when those dreaded words, "continued on page x" occur, I feel like screaming. That's irritating enough in a paper zine but it's awful beyond description on screen... Rant over, but I'm sure you see what I mean, since PN is so nicely laid out.

Brad W Foster / bwfoster at junos.com
www.jabberwockygraphix.com
PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016

I hate to have to admit my ignorance, but I don't get the cover. What has Stephen Hawking been up to that this is referencing? All I know I learn on tv, and the only thing from that is he has moved to Springfield on "The Simpsons". Should I broaden my sources of information? [*Indeed. See my editorial.*]

Joe Major's loc mentions he has been told that most of the Fan Artist nominees are those who appear at con art shows. Uh, no, quite the opposite, in fact. That's why it is pretty much the same group of names year after year, since there has not been much in the way of new artists getting in here. Frank Wu came out of the art shows, and a few other folks over the



years have. But check out the listing of nominees at <http://web2.airmail.net/tharvia/charts/fanartist.html> and you'll see the vast majority are, indeed, fanzine artists.

I liked **Lyn's** essay on small-town living. I took particular note of how her mail would be delivered to her with the barest of information. I always appreciated that the post office could decode so many badly scrawled addresses and get the vast majority to the proper folks. You put a single dot out of place in an email, however, and you are lost.

E. B. Frohvet / 4716 Dorsey Hall Dr. #506, Ellicott City, MD 21042 / Mar. 9, 2007

Recently re-read my favorite Andre Norton novel, The Stars Are Ours. Except for the giant computer as a single isolated entity -- in short, failure to anticipate the Internet, which I think is a forgivable flaw in a 1954 book [*not to mention not anticipating the personal computer*] -- it holds up very well. James White's 1974 The Dream Millennium [*sic*] differs in all details, but is almost the identical plot. [*Neither first nor last, I'm sure, to have done this.*] When was the last time I looked for Andre Norton books in my local library? Oh, I don't know -- last week? [*Good on yer, then.*] Almost without exception the ones they had were [copyrighted] 2000 or later, mainly ones written by others (Mercedes Lackey, Sherwood Smith, Lyn McConchie) in series Norton started many years ago. [*A practice others have picked up, of having other writers less well-known write in a well-known writer's worlds, with permission and usually some kind of final authorization, as I understand it.*] Some of these are quite good; I especially enjoyed Lyn's new Witch World novel,

Silver May Tarnish. However, I'll stand by my opinion that the best of Norton's work, especially her SF, was [published] pre-1980. [*If I ever get the chance to read more Norton, I may end up agreeing with you.*]

If a dog comes out into the public street to attack me, that is not "prejudice" on my part. I may not have met as many dogs as you have, but I think I've met a sufficient sample to observe patterns. [*But it's still all down to perceptions -- yours and mine on dogs are in opposition in several respects, obviously. To wind up this discussion, I offer a further piece of advice (there are others in this loccol): If you think you may meet a dangerous animal on a walk, carry a can of Mace. Any loose animal which attacks you will be diverted successfully, in most cases (bears are tougher, I hear), and any owners attempting to bring suit can be counter-sued for having a dangerous animal roaming the streets (most localities have some sort of ordinance on this). Mace, as you likely already know, also works well on human attackers. <grin>*]

Re: ICFA, I once obtained, from Arthur Hlavaty if memory serves, the name of the person arranging programming for the ICFA. I wrote indicating my interest, but also stated that I was not an academic, just someone who had read a lot of SF. No response, not even the courtesy of saying, "We're not interested." [*The lack of reply could have been caused by several things other than the one you posit (i.e., your letter was lost in the mail and never delivered, or delivered and later lost, or delivered and considered and set aside for further perusal and then lost). Without followup inquiry, how would you or anyone know what happened to your letter? As one of my Army "spook school" instructors oft reminded students: "Never assume anything -- 'cause it'll make an ass out of U and me."*]

"Of "graphic novels," I am entitled to say that (a) I really don't see how they differ from comic books much, and (b) They don't interest me. [*Not disputing your right to an opinion, just*

trying to update your database, as it were. If you're not interested, no biggie.] Has it occurred to you that, whenever anyone disagrees with you, you counterattack? [Perceptions, again. You apparently see counterattack where I see response and intellectual engagement. This loccol is based on comment and response to same, from readers and the editor alike. If you're feeling picked on, I didn't mean to offend or target you, but if you make a comment with which I take issue or which I choose to augment, I'll do it. If yer gonna fire yer gun, be ready to git fired back at, eh?]

Oh Ghod, attempting to define SF again: Haven't we been over this? *[Yes, and I'm going to shut up about it now, as it's obviously another Bone.]*

Alex Slate: There's a difference between "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity." The Sept. 11, 2001 attack falls into the latter category. *[I had a comment, but it broke...]*

Lyn McConchie: I wonder if mystery stories set in rural villages doesn't have anything to do with rural life at all, it's just an overused literary motif? *[Duck and cover, folks! <grin>]*

Alexis Gilliland / 4030 8th St. S., Arlington, VA 22204 / Mar. 22, 2007

Many thanks for PN 6.4, which arrived about the time I went in for my annual check-up. Why was this check-up different from all other check-ups? Well, you get old and eventually the doctor will want some extra tests. The colonoscopy (which I had been putting off) was long overdue, and the blood work showed my PSR value was elevated, so a biopsy on my prostate was in order. The short version is that several polyps removed from my colon were non-cancerous, but my prostate was. A distraction, to be sure. The good news is that my prostate cancer was caught early and -- I have an appointment with another doctor -- should be treatable. So your

fanzine was neglected in the press of other business, but one hopes we'll both survive. *[Indeed, that is my same wish and prayer for you; recover soon and fully.]*

John Purcell: I had been a member of WSFA for more than 40 years, hosting the club for nearly 39 (not 29) and was dismissed *[sic]* "for the good of the club" *[sic]* with less than 24 hours notice. We went to the following meeting, where the offer of a plaque was made and declined, and left early. We haven't been back since, and have no intention of returning. Will I continue to be "a presence in fandom"? Yes, since fandom is not WSFA and vice versa. *[Readers are reminded that there are other perspectives on the events referenced here, and PN does not back any particular version of those events.]* Last weekend we went up to Lunacon, for instance, where Lee and I were each on several panels. There should be no trouble finding other outlets for my cartoons and fannish writing which I do for fun and not out of any sense of duty. Health permitting, I expect to continue attending conventions, though maybe not the same ones as before.

John Hertz / April 2, 2007

[John continues to send handwritten locs on the backs of envelopes (surely an amusement for USPS workers who sneak a peek, and a delight to me) in which he includes copies of his eminently readable Vanamonde; any errors in spelling or usage are the fault of the editor's ability to decipher John's handwriting. Thus, words [in brackets] without italics are my decipherment.]

Thanks as ever for Perry *[I do love that nickname, thanks, John!]*; 6.4 arrived with glorious color, admirable contents, and a format that is really a pain. May this be your gravest crime. *[And may your gravest crime be that you send*

your fanzine to those outside its member apa, five trifold sheets at a time, a year after its pub date; I admire all else about V. and wish I could be as succinct as you.]

When someone barks how he would nominate and vote for Hugos to work and [workers I think] unworthy, if only he could attend, I feel excused from reminding him of supporting memberships. But more generally I am mystified by how we ignore them. What could be more fannish -- a way of taking a vital part while in the comfort of one's own dwelling? Fanzines arose for communicating without having to transport one's body around.

How are you? *[Quite a lot better, thanks for asking; I had a rather serious bout of depression in March and April, but am much improved thanks to my doctors, my acupuncturist and my family therapist. I hope you are well and thriving.]*

Sue Jones / sue.tortoise at btinternet.com
Mar 5, 2007

I very much enjoyed reading about **Lyn McConchie's** village. I lived in a South Shropshire village for eight years and we too had our share of local "characters," although nobody quite as outstanding as the chap who counts the posts and the lady who haunts the cemetery. Sadly, our village has grown bigger in the last couple of decades, and the era of knowing, and being known by, everyone has gone. But it's still a far cry from living in the county town, as I now do, where you're doing well if you even know the names of your neighbours. (There are even folk in this block of six flats whom I wouldn't recognize in the street, out of context.)

It was this sense of not knowing my neighbours that led me to join the local town-centre residents association a couple of years ago. Now I do see familiar faces in the street, can put a few names to faces, and generally feel a little more a part of the

community than before.

Chuck Connor's essay on life in Gibraltar was also most educational. More please!

Joseph Nicholas certainly had a reputation for being harsh to faneds. So when he got onto my mailing list for *Tortoise*, I was a bit apprehensive -- to say the least. (My ego was very frail as a newcomer to zinedom.) I needn't have worried: however well deserved that reputation may have been in the old days, Joseph in the 21st century is a different chap. His locs to *Tortoise* have been unfailingly polite, usually very interesting and always well worth reading, as is the fairly regular email-zine he writes with Judith Hanna "What We've Been Up To." I enjoy hearing from him. Maybe you should send him PN and see for yourself? *[I'm not that interested in increasing my readership. I'm glad for you that his locs to your fanzine have been as you describe.]*

Joseph T. Major / jtmajor at iglou.com
1409 Christy Ave., Louisville, KY 40204-2040 / Feb. 20, 2007

So Robert Anton Wilson has departed for the planet (or mini-planet) Eris, that strange dark orb at the very rim of our solar system...

"Yuggoth... is a strange dark orb at the very rim of our solar system... There are mighty cities on Yuggoth— great tiers of terraced towers built of black stone... The sun shines there no brighter than a star, but the beings need no light. They have other subtler senses, and put no windows in their great houses and temples... The black rivers of pitch that flow under those mysterious cyclopean bridges— things built by some elder race extinct and forgotten before the beings came to Yuggoth from the ultimate voids—ought to be enough to make any man a

Dante or Poe if he can keep sane long enough to tell what he has seen..."

—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Whisperer in Darkness"

Silent eLOCutions:

Schenk's "Steam Bird" is, more than anything, technological wish-fulfillment. This puts it in the same category as dirigible stories. Most of them aren't published as SF per se. Consider for example how in Ernest Callenbach's Ecotopia the streets have been allowed to crumble away and yet there is never a problem with fires spreading because the fire equipment has had catastrophic encounters with a pothole. (This comes from James Nicholl, by the way.)

The two issues of *Plokta* arrived not long after I wrote you. I still agree they are getting increasingly infrequent, scanty, and in general losing "it". [*"It"? If you mean that essential je ne sais quois that has always characterized Plokta, I disagree. I still find its contents highly amusing, though perhaps the Cabal has mellowed with age -- and the Cabal can take that as a challenge, if it so desires. You guys still got those headbands?...*]

All right . . . "[O]ne can well imagine that some kafir [a non-Muslim] being let into the dar al-Islam [Islamic lands] from the dar al-Harb [non Islamic-lands] should be punished for violating the sharia [Islamic law]." In his original country, I add. As we see today, where Somali cab drivers won't take people with dogs. [*I often find that it is not the basic tenets of a religious belief that are weird and dangerous, but how different people interpret those tenets; thus, fundamentalists of all stripes are misnamed, for if they were indeed getting back to the basic of their faiths, they wouldn't be shooting at each other.*]

Eric Mayer: Well, I'll give you an ending--

". . . Juno let her bodice fall to the ground, and in but her loincloth stood there, her arms out, enticing. Conan thrust with his sword and rammed it into her belly to the hilts. Juno fell forward, a look of death in her eyes, "Why . . ." coming from her mouth in a bubble of blood.

"But Juno was a [*and that, dear readers, is where Joe left off. Anyone care to pick up the story and run with it?*]

John Purcell: Langford does one *Ansible* a month, distributed by email to a large list. So that depends on your definition of "more stuff into fanzines".

Says a-you, Jan needs to institute a pun tax? Oh Pun, says a-me! (One of the things I liked about the early *Asimov's* was the elaborate Feghoots they had, the capper being the one where the character, wanting to get the interview with the extremely eccentric editor, stepped onto the gorge scissors to be lowered into the icy chasm of Psi Sans Friction's mega-scene.) [::groaning::]

"Murder in Much-Piddling-in-the-Marsh": Since there's no loos to be found out there, what's a chap out in the fen going to do?

"Avengers" fans will remember Little-Storping-on-the-Swuff in "Murdersville". Talk about interesting town names.

"Granite of the Apes": We have cigarette smugglers here too, thanks to a low tax rate and modern interstate highways. Ten to fifteen gross of cartons is more like that here. We have corruption, too.

How much does it cost to buy votes in Gib?

"Pub Crawl": I think the attitude stems from a



revulsion against gentility. Gentility didn't stop the world wars, the de-pression, or the retreat from empire, so sod it all. Authenticity is being coarse, vulgar, narsty, and vicious; spike your hair and your face, wear boots with big sharpened hobnails in them, and bung up anyone who isn't in our lot. *[Um, wasn't that the essence of the punk movement in the late 1970s and onward? Or was that your point?]*

When Anthony Burgess wrote about this attitude in A Clockwork Orange and 1985 he thought it was distasteful, and couldn't imagine his thugs without some redeeming cultural grace (Alex in the former book is a classical music expert, and in the latter, the muggers mug you in Latin). And that's why they call it science fiction.

"The Free Book Deal": I have to wonder how well prosecutor/detective/Sight-gifted Lee Enfield would get along with the hero of Cole's and Bunch's space opera epos, Sten. Bang on, I bet. *[Can't say, haven't read them. How 'bout you read the Duane and let us know?]*

Eric Mayer

Marty Cantor mentions that somehow he doesn't get around to reading electronic fanzines as readily as paper ones. Since I limit myself to ezines I'm not sure I wouldn't suffer from the same problem but I don't think I would. The problem I do have with electronic zines is that I LoC them on the same indolent schedule as I did paper ones. I have an rss feed to Bill Burn's eFanzines. I know instantly when zines are posted and can download and read them immediately, but my replies might as well be by snail mail.

I do think you're doing well to receive sufficient LoCs to an electronic publication. No doubt when zines had limited circulations and readers needed to remain on the editor's mailing list there was more incentive to respond. *(The paper*

version of PN is a limited-circulation fanzine, which is why people who don't reply within three ishes get chucked off its mailing list.] I used to get about a 50% response to Groggy, but that's because I could only ditto/hecto and afford to mail 60 or 70 copies. While I liked getting that many letters, I hated that I couldn't make my zine more widely available. Today, ezines are out there for anyone to read. Theoretically the audience is unlimited, which is great, but on the other hand readers are not "required" to respond and, probably, the fact that the zines aren't directed to them personally also makes the reading of them and writing to the editors seem less urgent. *[The responses I prefer are those that were prompted by PN's content, not by any editorial kow-towing to the readers. PN readers who've seen more than one ish ought to know that I talk to them via my loccol, and a bit in my editorial, and that's it. I don't go begging for content, either (though I do ask politely, on occasion), it just comes in. You aren't one of the people you're describing, and thank you for that, and for pointing out one of the most irritating aspects of certain fen so I could rant about it.]*

Editors could password protect zines and send the passwords to loccers and other faneds in "trade" but that would run counter to the whole ethos of the internet. On the other hand, if you took the position that you were producing your zine for a small community and not the whole world, then it would make sense. Such an arrangement would be more open than, say, passworded blogs or private mailing lists. *[Which is exactly what some faneds have done, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's their right to restrict their readership.]*

Wonderful cover by **Alan White** by the way. I like the subtle colors.

I enjoyed Chuck Connor's article. I like his writing a lot. Gibraltar doesn't sound like my kind of place. I wonder, have any of things he described changed since 1994? Are things

better? Worse? I certainly wouldn't want to cross that border. I used to get hassled crossing from Niagara Falls into Canada. I guess I have the look of someone who doesn't care for authority let alone guys displaying weapons. Funny thing, the Canadian border guards were laid back and friendly, and didn't make an overt display of weaponry, though they must have been armed, while the Americans -- in addition to pointedly keeping their firearms in plain view -- were surly and suspicious. And I was an American. *[That's how they're trained, and it could have been the instructions from their immediate supervisor that caused that behavior, or maybe they'd just thwarted a major smuggling plot before you went through the border. One never knows unless one asks. If you spent most of your day catching people trying to smuggle things into the U.S., I think you might be surly and suspicious, too; it's a job hazard of all military and law enforcement organizations, I think.]*

Lyn McConchie's account of small village life was also a good read. Sounds like somewhat of a throwback to the old days when all places were smaller and towns would have "eccentrics" or "characters" rather than "mentally ill" or "trouble-makers." Of course, the most forgiving place, when it came to eccentricity, that I ever lived was New York City. There are so many different sorts of people packed in there that behavior that would make someone stand out in a smaller place wasn't even noticed.

Nice in-depth fanzine reviews also. I'm just as glad I passed on that one issue of *Prolapse* you talked a bit about. A lot of UK fanac back in the eighties struck me as repulsive at the time, although a lot of people seemed to think it was all dreadfully clever, and I avoided it. I could never understand people getting kudos for acting like creeps.

Anyway, I should tack on a last sentence so as not to end on that note! Nice issue.

Lloyd Penney / 1706-24 Eva Rd.,
Etobicoke, ON CANADA
M9C 2B2 / March 14, 2007

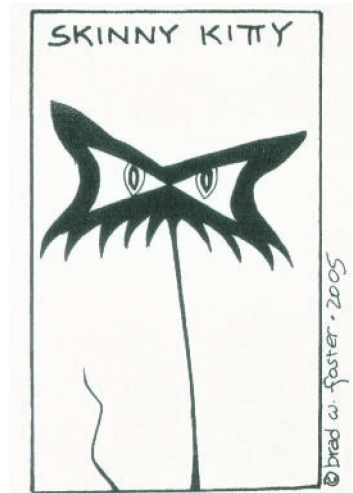
Ah, The Guess Who -- Burton Cummings, Randy Bachman, Domenic Troiano, such good music. Canadian rock at its best, and all from a bunch of kids from Winnipeg.

Brad Foster: Don't criticize your own use of color in your artwork. After all, those FAAn Award certificates have great color in them, and you're just getting better at it. Next time you see Butterscotch, give him a skritch behind the ears for us. I think he needs it.

I know that e-fanzines are available at any time, with no need to trade or even provide The Usual, but I check eFanzines.com regularly, and I'm on lists where Bill Burns will notify the members if there's a new .pdfzine ready to download, or link to another site.

How does anyone become well-read in SF? I suppose it could be done with an infinite amount of time and money. It is a good thing to be well-read in SF; wish it was still possible to even come close.

Lyn McConchie's article about national laws reminds me of something that just happened -- Daylight Savings Time. Now, I think the concept itself is a good idea, but the decision to move it up two weeks was a unilateral decision from the Bush regime, without consultation with anyone else that might happen to live on this continent. The Harper regime here was forced to follow suit to avoid confusion. *[The Canadian government could have chosen otherwise; they are, after all, a sovereign nation, are they not? And the U.S. lived well enough for*



years with some states not changing their timepieces for DST when it went into effect in the rest of the country. That practice has changed, though, as commerce has globalized even further and essentially forced the change so that business people won't be late for their meetings, poor things. Can you tell I have a long sarcastic streak when it comes to corporations?]

Yvonne's toe has healed, my eye is still healing, and Yvonne is now anticipating two rounds of surgery, one on her back, and another on each wrist to relieve the pain of carpal tunnel syndrome. [*Ouch. Hope all goes well.*] I guess we're now at the age where our health is our prime consideration. My new glasses are on order, and should be here in a week or so. It will be a pleasure to have decent sight for the first time in three months.

Good book reviews, and they remind me that I need to read more by the Greys, Bear and Benford.

Your experiences at those holiday craft shows you mention remind me of my own days of running dealers rooms at local conventions. It is the rare dealer who will actually make money on the weekend, after expenses. A lot of this is done for the egoboo of having people rave over your creations, and actually having people pay you for them is a bonus. Ad Astra '07 was on about ten days ago, and only one dealer did well, and he's a professional publisher of books on space. [*Making a profit at a craft show or at an SF con will always have several factors involved. The fact that I didn't have to travel more than 5 miles for any of the craft shows I've so far worked has been a major factor, as any profit I made over my booth fee was, in my eyes, a bonus. I did a show last month, first time it'd been held, and made my booth fee back plus four bucks. It was a bust for several vendors, and the show may not be held next year; I haven't heard one way or the other yet. It was tied to a women's festival that lasts five days with events all over the county, and that may have contributed to the low turn-out. It was held the*

day before Mother's Day, so I was expecting more of a crowd for that reason, but it didn't happen. Many have also blamed lack of advertising.]

Mark Plummer / Croydon, UK

In PN6.4 you review *Pixel* and note **David Burton's** adoption of the lettercol structure wherein comments are grouped according to column title. I can tell you that the format's definitely *not* original to David, although I don't know where and when it originated. Funnily enough, the subject came up at a panel during the recent Corflu, where a number of fanzine editors were giving their perspective on letters of comment. Geri Sullivan mentioned what David is now doing, and an audience member came up with a citation for the format that I can't now remember but which went back to the seventies or even the sixties and which thus may have been the first, but none of the grey heads in the room could remember a specific founder.

It's different strokes and everything, I guess, but I can't say I like the practice myself. We did use it in the first couple of issues of *Banana Wings* back in 1996 but switched back to the more conventional format from #4. Murray Moore had something to say on the subject in the letter column of that issue: "... all letters of comment are about the letter writer, which is why I dislike the practice of cutting letters and lumping together the comments of LOCers on the same subject. My LOC is my chance to take the printed stage. I don't want to be interrupted." [*Then what's the point of editing the letters, Murray?*] And interestingly I see that in my response to Murray I refer to a debate on the thematic editing of letter columns in *Zenith* -- not Pete Weston's near-contemporary 1960s *Zenith* but Harry Turner's original *Zenith* from 1942, so that pushes the practice back even further.

First off, I have to relate what Chris Garcia has said about you and your zine in the latest *Science Fiction in San Francisco* (the 40th issue, just out today). And it's all good, believe me! Chris stated that he feels *Peregrine Nations* is one of the most consistent zines being produced right now, a statement that I happen to agree with. You and your zine received votes in the recent FAAn Award voting. I forget offhand how many, but I do know for a fact that your efforts in fan pubbing have been duly noted and are now part of the permanent record. You may sleep easily knowing that you are now assured of being a footnote in the fannish history book. Ghoshow, what an honor... I am being silly, of course; however, I happen to think that awards are fine and dandy since it is the acceptance and recognition by our peers that means more to me than anything else. *[My viewpoint's noted elsewhere.]* Then again, I could tell you that right now I am giving you the Corflu Quire-approved official egoboo gesture, but maybe I won't. You are a dainty and well-educated soul, I understand. *[Dainty, my ass...that's an insult to a 9-year veteran of the U.S. Army! <g>]*

Your lettercolumn continues to amaze me. It really is constructed more like an apa with mailing comments flying back and forth than a traditional type of loccol commenting only on the articles in the previous issue. Sometimes you have a conversation string that's been going for the better part of a year in your zine, which is something that one normally doesn't run across in fanzines. It certainly does, though, make for interesting reading. However you do it, keep it up, Jan. I certainly enjoy the results. *[Thank my loccers, rather, it's all their credit.]*

Brad Foster's comments about Cindy working her dog magic charm to befriend that humongous dog made me smile.

My wife Valerie has the same touch. Of course, it helps that she's vet tech-trained, but animals seem to sense that she's not a threat and will be kind to them. *[It's my theory that all dogs know immediately which humans will give them "butt-scritches" (scratches at their tail base) and which ones won't, and it all has to do with their ability to sense threatening from non-threatening beings, human or otherwise. The advice I would give to people who aren't sure how to deal with dogs are: 1) Never walk through an area you don't already know without either a large stick or a can of Mace, in order to avoid the problem E.B. had with reckless dog owners; 2) Never approach a dog without its human's permission if they are met on the street; 3) Never run from a dog, for you will only increase whatever prey-drive reaction made them run toward you in the first place (loud, single-syllable sounds such as "Hey!" or a series of same can distract the dog from its advance); and 4) Never look a dog straight in the eye when you first meet it, for that is challenge and aggression to them. There are, admittedly, dogs who cannot be dominated or distracted, and in such cases going up as fast as possible, if one can do so, is highly recommended.]*

E.B. Frohvet's reference to the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore reminds me of when I used to attend student recitals [locally] many years ago. As a matter of fact, last year when I was teaching at Montgomery College I had a few hours between classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so when there were noontime concerts and recitals on campus -- for free! bring your lunch! -- I used to sit and enjoy them. Those students are talented and always presented wonderful recitals. In a way, I kind of miss that here on the Bryan campus of Blinn College; no music department at this campus, but there is one at Blinn's main campus in Brenham, Texas, about 42 miles away.

Eric Mayer: You just re-read [The Stars My Destination](#), too? I did that between semesters and enjoyed it just as much as I did umpty-ump years ago. It is one of my all-time favorite

science fiction novels.

Reading **Lyn McConchie's** article, "Murder in Much-Piddling-in-the-Marsh," was a bit of an eye-opener for me. I am such a big-city person it's silly. Living in such a rural setting would probably drive me right over the edge and I'd end up being one of the village idiots. At the best, I'd be one of the village eccentrics, which probably wouldn't be so bad. It certainly sounds like Lyn gets away with murder -- or at least, carrying deadly weapons down the main street -- in her village, so that may not be such a bad thing after all. I like the name of her village: Norsewood. Sounds very Scandinavian and rugged. It is also much more easily pronounceable than Waikicamoo-cau. [*But not as funny.*]

Remind me never to accept a teaching job in Gibraltar; I don't think I'd like it there, let alone survive. **Chuck Connor** does make it sound more than just exotic: "dangerous" is a much more descriptive adjective that leaps to mind after reading his article. And there's more to come? Yeesh. Sounds like another interesting installment next issue. I will be here awaiting its arrival.

Robert Sabella / visionsofparadise.blogspot.com/ April 10, 2007

I really enjoyed Peregrine Nations 6.4 (although your numbering system is beginning to rival Dale Speirs' system in its arcane nature). [*Sigh. I thot it'd be obvious by now, but apparently not to all. Each volume is a year's time, from April to January, since April was the month in which PN debuted; the number always stops at 4 because PN pubs quarterly. Thus, 7.1 is the first ish of the seventh year of publication.*]

My very favorite part was **Lyn McConchie's** "Murder in Much-Piddling-in-the-Marsh" and its discussion of her eccentric little village. It reminded me of those little towns in the Adirondacks where Jean and I camp periodically. We actually owned

an old camphouse on Oneida Lake briefly which we inherited from Jean's father, a very nice little house, and a beautifully rustic area, but since it had been built in 1912 it was on the verge of collapsing. It was also 6 hours away from us and very inconvenient to spend much time there, so we did not feel it was worthwhile putting \$\$ into it and sold it instead. But I love the Adirondacks and would consider retiring there except the boys will likely not be close to there, plus Jean is from Central New York and has no desire to return to those winters again. But I enjoy visiting such places, and reading about them.

Good reviews, as usual. I like Greg Benford's fiction a lot, but never read Artifact. In spite of Cy's reservations about the novel, he hooked me with "This novel has both a human story and adventure ... and a wonderfully intense scientific puzzle." I'll add it to my extensive Recommended Reading list.

Pixel is a zine I had never heard of until this year's FAAN Awards when it was mentioned in recommendations. Now I've started reading it, and find it certainly worth all the fuss it's gotten. Good stuff which, as you stated, definitely deserves a wider audience.

Joy V. Smith

Beautiful cover! I love the formatting; but I'm not sure what the message to Stephen Hawking means... [*See my editorial.*]

Marty Cantor: I also prefer reading my zines on paper. I like to relax while reading, which means I'm not on the computer.

I enjoyed **Lyn McConchie's** piece on village life -- and the title. I vaguely remember the "Carry On..." movies, btw, and would like to see the St. Trinian's series again.

Chuck Connor's article on living on Gibraltar was interesting. It doesn't sound like a nice place to visit or live.

Thanks for the book reviews; I didn't see any I'd like to read, except perhaps for the Dresden Files book. I read an excerpt from the latest book (Proven Guilty, as I recall) in the series recently, which interested me enough that I looked at the first episode of the series on the SciFi Channel. The books, I think, are much better than the TV series. And thanks for the zine reviews too. (I find historic background interesting even if it does make my hair stand on end.)

Welcome to Michigan, unless you were previously a resident. *[For brief periods, I did live in Michigan, but most of my growing up was done in southern Maryland, Prince Georges County to be exact.]*

I had quite a few *Galaxys* from the '50s (dating back to 1951.) A friend of mine in grade school, 1/2 grade ahead, was a subscriber so I read his copies first (pre-August 1955 copies I bought in a downtown used bookstore with a huge used-magazine section -- wow, the bargains I passed up then...I was buying mostly ASF & F&SF from the early '50s, because I didn't like pulps.) I got some (dozens) of pulps later from an electrical engineer my Dad knew, and a renter who rented from my mother-in-law's mother. That fellow left pulps, Arkham House, Fantasy Press, and Gnome Press books in lieu of rent. Imagine my surprise when Martha, my mother-in-law, gave me a large box and said, "I guess you'd be interested in these." That was about 1977. I sold all but my favorites long ago.

Peregrine Nations 7.1

tale....the climate-controlled inside storage area where much of my semi-non-critical collections are stored had a roof leak in early 2005. All they did was mop the floor, never calling me about it, because, as the manager said, "Nobody complained and we didn't know the melt water had leaked into storage rooms." Yeah. So the damp boxes collapsed (they were record keeping boxes), and got moldy inside (I only went there once every 2 months.) They compensated me to my satisfaction, but never again will I trust one of those places.

Yes, I miss Howard (DeVore) very much. As I mentioned, I knew him personally since I was 15. I took part in the videoed memorial at Worldcon in Anaheim last year. The old & the great faanish fans of yor are leaving us at an ever more rapid rate. Too bad a Worldcon Cmte. had to wait so long to honor Howard.

My only contact with the N3F was in the rooms they had at Worldcons to promote the org. I enjoyed the coffee and munchies. I've known Ted White thru his zines since 1958, and met him for the first time in person in at Worldcon in 1959. I thought he was "old." He was 21 1/2 and I was 16! There were many more teenagers in fmz fandom in the 1950s & '60s than there are now (none doing even SF ezines?) I'm 63, now.

Spousal death: my first wife died of endometrial cancer, 5 December 2003. She was only 57. We were married 31 years. She didn't read SF/F (only watched SF movies and variations on StarTrek & X-Files and the like.) She went to many Worldcons & a few regional/local cons with me, but that was more of a vacation for her. Early on she went to the art show, huxter rooms, and the masquerade, but then she didn't bother to get a membership anymore. She liked a few of the people in the Wayne Third Foundation. She particularly liked Cy. We had parties and picnics at the house in the 1980s (but then she got too busy with what were essentially 2 jobs that ran over into the weekend.) We took our son (born in October,

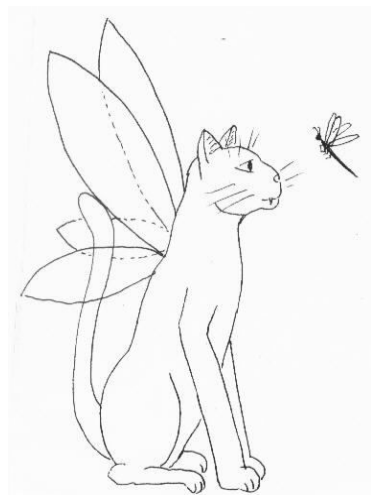
1976) to NASFiC (the first one in 1979) & Worldcons until 1998, but he mostly toured the cities with Monica. Tho he learned (taught himself, that is) to read when he was 2 1/2 he never had any interest in SF/F. In fiction, he liked mysteries, but most of his unassigned reading was non-fiction (which he also collected.) He's a Vice Consul in the US Foreign Service now.

My 2nd wife is an SF (hard science only, please) & mystery reader since grade school. She likes cons & fandom, especially science panels and filking (she is a semi-professional singer in a semi-professional choir-- when she was a youth she sang in a professional choir that sang with the Detroit Symphony Orch.) Audrey felt right at home at the Worldcon in Boston in 2004.

We got married in July 2005 and late that month and into August we combined a vacation in Britain with the Worldcon in Glasgow. We've got a long back story to our friendship (e.g., I've known her since the 2nd grade, but hadn't seen her for 38 years until 28 February 2004!)

Your jewelry looks interesting. [*Thanks. I'm revising the ad, since the original ad looked too dark when printed in b&w for the paper version of PN.*]

WAHF: Amy Harlib (more art & 2 notes; thanks, Amy!), Sheryl Birkhead, Ned Brooks ("I remember corresponding and trading zines with Chuck Connor when he was on Gibraltar ... last zine I sent him bounced, and you don't give [an address] here..." -- check thish's loccol for Chuck Connor's address, Ned), and Paul Di Filippo ("Whenever I can get a 1st-hand perspective on an exotic place, I'm a happy camper! The design & art were outstanding too, as always!" [with a copy of Joe R. Lansdale's The Bottoms; gee, Paul, howdya know I liked Lansdale?!?]). Thanks to you all.



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A Feast of Jackals:

book reviews by divers hands

The Armies of Memory by John Barnes, Tor, hc, 2006

The problem with this book, being the closer of a series, is that it doesn't deliver the sensawunda ending that a series-ending book should. So Giraut Leones is a spy, a well-known Nou Occitan musician and composer, liked by the ladies, and one of the few among humanity's Thousand Cultures population still in his original body at the age of 50. One is left wondering why one should care. Too much Superman and way too weak krypton story elements -- not enough realism and angst for me.

The plot device of the psypyx (cool name) is irksome; if one can never truly die, then what's the point of the book? Some people are untransferrable. Okay, so they die. Sad, but

there you are. The characters who aren't transferrable into a psypyx are not characters to whom one feels particularly close.

Perhaps the problem with reading a series-ending novel first is that the reader doesn't have the emotional investment that would likely be made by starting with the series opener and continuing through to the end. But in my view, even a series closer should have something in it that would make the reader want to find the other books and read them, then read the last book again. Given the current practice of three-months-and-yer-outta-there among many publishers, finding earlier novels in a series can be difficult, but there's always the local library, InterLibrary Loan, and used booksellers both in buildings and on the Web.

I've read other series-ending books that made me want to go read the whole series in order. This book didn't evoke that desire. Instead, it evoked the "ho hum, just another planetary romance with touches of Heinlein and Asimov, nothing really innovative, let's find another book" response. Barnes' writing is competent enough, but this novel has the same problem as Tatja Grimm's World (the Overcompetent Man Syndrome and whizzbang tech that doesn't seem to surprise anyone). The annoying thing about that is that I enjoyed reading Mother of Storms and Gaudeamus, and I wanted to like this one as well.

--- J.G. Stinson

Posted to Death by Dean James. Kensington Mysteries, pb, March 2003.

This first novel in the Simon Kirby-Jones series is a very English and genuinely amusing read. Simon Kirby-Jones is an American vampire who's packed his bags and gone to live in the English village of Snupperton Mumsley, where he has been given a small charming cottage by an old friend, and where he can hear all the gossip, involve himself in village life, and solve

a recent murder. Simon can join eagerly in village life both by day and night, since a new drug allows vampires to discard their need to drink blood or fear the sun, and for Simon, a busybody in the purest form of the words, life is now one long sweet song. Oh, and just to add to the twists embodied in this book, Simon is also gay.

So, he finds a man who attracts him, and begins to enjoy village life. But in small villages there tend to be feuds. And here the current one is between Lady Prunella Blitherington and Abigail Winterton over which play the local drama society should perform. Then Abigail is found strangled. Simon is determined to discover the culprit, while other village events continue on from that -- and they certainly do.

In an unobtrusive way this book is something of a parody of many English Village murder mysteries. The characters are out of the 1930s, but that touch of wit and humor makes the book all the more readable. The parody is never too broad nor does it descend to vulgarity. I found by the end of the story, I liked Simon and his friends, and have bought the next in the series, Faked to Death.

If you enjoy this sub-genre, then Posted to Death is a member in good standing. It has charm and humor, a reasonable mystery and interesting characters, and an excellent background. It's a throwback to many of the 1930s English vintage cosies -- with a twist. A pleasant and interesting read and -- to me at least -- worth the book's cost. Recommended to those who don't mind a gay main characters and enjoy a drop of the older vintage. ---Lyn McConchie

The Privilege of the Sword by Ellen Kushner, 2006.

The long awaited sequel to Swordspoint! This novel starts slowly; it took me until page 50 before I couldn't say "stop"! It has less swordplay than I would have preferred (and

I'm surprised by this admission myself: I was looking for a final climactic swords scene, and truly was disappointed). That's the problem of sequels: do you do more of the same, or something truly new?

Admirably, Kushner has done something mostly new, introducing a girl who is taken up by her uncle "the mad duke" (Alec of Swordspoint), and required to take instruction in the sword. Kushner is convincing, and the changes in gender are convincing.

The book also may be deeper than Swordspoint because of its reversal of standard gender roles, and its notion that if woman could fight as well as men they wouldn't be forced into marriages they don't want. (But Riverside is not the same as our world.) The book has much of the same witty dialogue as its prequel. --- Cy Chauvin

The Free Book Deal

Contest 20 asked, "What word does Gully Foyle have tattooed on his face in Alfred Bester's The Stars My Destination?" No one entered the regular-mail contest, so Jo Clayton's Drum Warning goes off to the library. Four entrants in the online contest got the correct answer, and the winner of Diane Duane's Stealing the Elf-King's Roses is Gregg Trend. Congrats, Gregg, your book will be on its way to you as soon as you send me a regular-mail address where you'll receive it.

Sadly, this will be the last Free Book Deal contest award offered within these pages. USPS rates have made continuing it to all readers unfeasible, as the cost of shipping books to other countries has gone through the proverbial roof. I decided that if I had to exclude my non-U.S. readers, then I had to exclude all readers. The local library will become the new beneficiary of my extra tomes. To all who entered the contests, my thanks and I hope you enjoyed your prizes. To those who dithered and never

entered, sorry, time's up. It was fun coming up with questions, but it seems this was never a really popular item, so perhaps it's outlived its time (if it ever had one).

Today's word: HUMICUBATION: lowering oneself to the ground as a gesture of humility. Brought to you by E.B. Frohvet.

Captain Roadkill Rides Again!

Granite Of The Apes #2

by Chuck Connor

[Once again, our intrepid journaliste provides an installment from his notes on living in Gibraltar. The plural "you" used here is left in for nostalgic reasons, and it would take too much time to edit out all the reader references, so deal with it. This time it's bicycles. Oh, dear...]

I can honestly say that most of you people know of my love of cycling, but there are things I have to do, and one of them is get a driving licence for when I leave the RN. I suppose it would have been logical to have gone for it in the UK but as luck would have it, most of my time in the RN has been spent on ships and at sea -- or sea based units -- and odd as it may sound a driving licence isn't a really useful thing to have for sea work (not when the engines are Rolls Royce and drink F76 by the CuM, or are diesel Deltics for that matter -- we'll leave the old steam stuff out of this as they're now a thing of the past, alas). But, as crazy as it may seem, I am now in a position to gain a UK driving licence over here, and for a price that is much cheaper, both for lessons and for the licence itself.

Of course, the driving style is a little different. Well, not so much different... more **alien** to that in the UK in that one

of the requirements of the Gibraltar Driving Test is that you must know the test route intimately (and believe me, in some cases that means biblically as well). There are also several different approaches that would never work in the UK, and the fact that you hardly ever move out of 2nd & 3rd gear is one of them. They also drive on the right-hand side of the road and use left-hand drive cars. Wonderful if I ever get to America, but in the UK this could prove interesting, to say the least (and yes, the first time I reflexed for a gear change I grabbed hold of the window winder. Ha ha, yes, get it out of your system now for heaven's sake!)

Roundabouts also take on a new concept in mechanical suicide in that you run them anti-clockwise. This wouldn't be so bad except for what is quaintly called The Spanish Variation. Spaniards in cars are like giving a baby a bottle of nitro and telling it not to shake it. They have this annoying habit of giving way to the right, even if they are on a roundabout already. Fine, you may say, as this allows you to enter the roundabout system without oncoming traffic. Except (and there is always an exception is there not, oh best beloveds?) that when they approach a roundabout they expect you to do the same. As the expression goes "No effing way, Jose!" as they are driving in Gibraltar, not Spain, and will always attempt to barge you into the island in the middle. Cute, but no cigar. That belongs to the Gibraltarians themselves. It is perfectly okay to reverse up a one-way street, reverse out into oncoming traffic, reverse around corners without indicating ... Okay, so this may happen in the UK (and I know it does from my days cycling around Watford, Northwood, Croxly Green, etc.) but what is missing from the UK is the Mediterranean Mentality.

Let me run through a typical start up routine. Get into the car. No requirement for seatbelts (yep, we are talking mechanised suicide as I said). Check the following: Seat, windows (wound down), mirrors (bend the external one to the car body

so that it doesn't get knocked off when someone passes you on the main road, make sure you can see the stickers and the decorations hanging from the back window in the rear view mirror -- any sight of the road or approaching vehicles will automatically equate to a failure of your test.) Turn the radio on, normally to a Spanish station playing 12" extended remix techno, and adjust volume to around 90 to 120db. Check that the horn functions. Now you are ready to start the car.

Once started, put into first gear, AND DO NOT USE THE INDICATOR (to use this would probably invalidate any warranty the car might have left and is another automatic failure of your test). Stamp down on the accelerator and remove foot completely from the clutch peddle. Slam on the brakes, stick head out of window (hence the checking that it was open, thus preventing any kind of personal injury) and shout at the top of your voice "El Stooovo! Stupida Puta!" at anything that may have had to perform an emergency stop in order to prevent an accident. Drive off in a cloud of burning rubber, sticking your left hand out of the open window (see above) and performing a vigorous two-fingered salute.

Having thus become mobile, the steering position is derived from the markings on the road -- follow the white lines which appear on the centre and you know that if anyone hits you then they must have been over on your side of the road. Failing that, going down the centre of the road prevents people from overtaking you and thus allows you to command pole position when race gear shifting, which is obligatory when changing from first to second to third in under the prescribed 5 seconds (seven seconds if retuning the radio to a station that the examiner has asked you to find for him/her -- flamenco is normally around the 88 to 90.7MHz, heavy rock between 92.5 and 96.4MHz, and BFBS is between 101 and 104MHz. Do not fall for the old RADIO FIVE ALIVE trick between Monday and Friday, as it is only broadcast relayed on the weekend.)

Once into the main flow of the traffic it is important to continually check the steering linkage/tracking of the car and the best way to do this is to weave from side to side in a slow and casual manner, unless approaching a zebra crossing. Unlike the UK variation, the true zebra crossing is designed to clear the carburettor of any dirt and grit that may impede your engine's performance and should you fall foul of any pedestrians who have attempted to cross (and who have stopped you from forward motion, despite swerving into the oncoming lane) you must rev your engine repeatedly until the unsightly aberrations have moved off the sainted road. Failure to rev may well induce a sense of safety in the pedestrians which may lead to further attempts at using zebra crossings while traffic are on the roads.

The performance of controlled maneuvers such as three-point turns, reverse parking (left and right), GIVE WAY and STOP signs, should all be handled at around 40 to 50kph -- or in the case of the three-pointer, leaving about 1mm of hot rubber on the road surface. Hill starts should be performed by first freewheeling to a more level ground, and the art of reversing down a hill should be conducted without first putting the car in reverse gear -- to do so may well warn other motorists of your intentions and will gain you negative points for showing courtesy.

Lastly, in the event of an accident, you should be able to argue fluently in Gibraltarian, Spanish, Moroccan, English, German and Russian before exchanging medical insurance details (required for claims and counter-claims for whiplash, etc). Any attempt to exchange motor insurance details will result in an immediate failure due to a lack of Gibraltarian Road User Knowledge -- they don't have any.

Thank you, and happy motoring the Mediterranean Way. (And if you think that the above is being sarcastic, all of those events I have seen since I started taking driving lessons. I need

to pass the Gib test in order to get my licence for civvy street. The question is: Is the UK ready for me in 1996? Aggressive driving? JDR, you ain't seen nothing yet.....)

PEDALING MY ASS OFF

As I said earlier, I have a love of cycling, and one of the first things I did out here was to get myself a second-hand mountain bike. They are cheap out here, and second-hand (when they come up for grabs) they are ridiculously cheap. I bought one from a family whose children had become bored with the thing (and who hand managed to put a slight buckle into the back wheel). It was a marble grey thing, had to have a bit of work on it (sorting out the gears from the shambles that it had been left in -- poor changeover tensions and a mass of grit clogged with oil, new back tire where a flat spot had been worn, new brakes & cables, general housekeeping really) and I was more than happy with it.

I went over the border on a regular basis on that bike. I could snap the gears and drive off with the knowledge that it wasn't doing any harm to the machine. I was getting used to that bike. Hell, I'd even come off it once, over the border in La Linea.

It had been raining, and despite that I had decided that I could do with a run out to Pryca (the hypermarket in La Linea) for some odds & sods, and a bit of exercise. Now, normally, using the machine I have in the UK (a Stag Pegasus) there would be little problem with the aluminium rims. This one, being cheap Spanish, had black painted steel rims. Yes, I'd cranked the brakes up so they were sharp, I know that I had traction there, and was more than happy to run in the wet despite the nuggets in cars.

So, it was up, over the border, hit the motorway (yes, you can cycle on the motorway in Spain), round a couple of round-

abouts and into the hypermarket. I got in before the downpour, and stopped for a light meal over there as well (to describe the market itself would take pages -- it is a wonderful treasure trove of bargains, food, gadgets, oddities, essentials -- I spend an hour in there just walking about before I buy something I need.

On the way back I went around the first roundabout and onto the straight. Cranked the gears back up to 18, hammered down a little bit, and then something shot out into the road. The next bit is supposition as I don't honestly remember much but, something caught my field of vision, I slammed on the brakes, felt the back wheel fishtail into a skid, pushed the front wheel into the same direction and started to put my foot down. Felt the bike start to go out from under me, took my foot off the road and went limp (thus preventing groin strain -- something I could well do without). Let go of the handlebars, pushed the peddles away from me (thus clearing the bike from me) and rolled into a ball up over the gutter and onto the pavement. There were a few sort of stunned locals who looked on while all this was happening, and I know that when I got up I was angry as hell. Angry? I wanted to slaughter something.

What I didn't expect to see was an old Alsatian dog sitting in the middle of the road, with its head cocked to one side looking at me. It had tried to cross the road (I presume) and hadn't heard me. It was white around the mouth, and its eyes had that slate grey opaqueness of age, which was why I say it hadn't heard me -- it couldn't have seen me if it had tried.

I picked up the bike (undamaged) and put it against a shop front, checked myself for damage (nothing, apart from a bruised back which I took out in a hot bath that evening) and turned to the dog and shouted at it to "Come here, you little wanker!" To my amazement the dog actually came to me, tail between its legs, and sat down in front of me. I shouted again at it (something like "You stupid son of a bitch" which was, looking back on it, stating the somewhat obvious) -- but the poor thing

looked so damn pitiful and helpless that I actually bent down and petted the thing, rubbing it on the top of its head and behind its ears (all the stupid things you do when you pet a dog or a cat). That was a bit of a crazy thing to do owing to the fact that rabies is still quite active around Spain and I didn't know anything about the dog whatsoever, let alone why it was out and about on its own. I remember that the poor thing was shivering and that I was actually trying to calm it down.

After about 2 minutes I got up, put the bike back in the road, cranked the peddle ready for the off, checked behind me, and then told the dog to be careful next time (something like "remember the Green Cross Code" which seems totally inane and I put it down to approaching shock, your honour) before I stepped down and cycled off. It wasn't until I was in the bath, easing the back and thinking about the incident, that I realized that not one of the onlookers had come near me at all -- not even to see if I was okay. They let me cycle away even though I may well have had some head damage (well, more than normal). Why? I don't know.

The point is that the bike was now starting to become a part of my life, it was gaining a history, something I could talk about, memories, whatever you want to call it. Then, last Thursday (15th December 1995?), some fucker stole that bike.

They walked into the lobby of the flats and took it even though the back wheel was chained up solid, despite the fact that the front cones were loosened for packing with grease, despite the fact that it was rusty, paint chipped, tatty saddle, bent back wheel. Some thieving little fucker walked in and bodily lifted it with the intent of taking it away. Why? I don't know. What I do know is that the loss of that bike hurt more than coming off it.

It's hard to describe, without sounding materialistic about things, but I have lived in a social environment I doubt many reading this could comprehend or appreciate. I take things for

granted, social mores and taboos that mean nothing and may well seem totally illogical to "outsiders" and I will not even attempt to explain any of them here (apart from the one I'm trying to explain in my usual roundabout way) because your terms of reference are totally different to mine. But I had taken that bike from tat to something, it had become a part of me and I would have thought nothing of lending it to someone who might have needed it for whatever reason. Yet, to have it taken without any rhyme or reason -- without any "need" other than personal gain -- still makes me feel bitter in some respects.

I am, I freely admit, no saint and I am having to come to terms with the fact that I will have to adjust to a different way of life when I leave the Navy, but I doubt that, in the "society" I live in at present there is as little disregard and/or respect for personal property as what I have experienced of late.

Postscript: I have another bike now -- 3rd hand, 10-speed racer with narrow rims, same kind of damaged back wheel due to someone not knowing what they were doing but easily repairable (it's what a spoke spanner's for), drop handlebars with snatch brakes, a very nice machine in fact -- but it's not the same. No memories. I have 12 months to rectify the situation, and I hope I do. Thank you & goodnight.





Will the Real Swamp Thing Please Stand Up?

editorial

The cover of PN 6.4 was my subtle way of blending science and music; I had rented a Tori Amos DVD from Netflix while editing that ish and "when you gonna make up your mind?" is a line from one of her songs. I used it to refer to the recent news that Stephen

Hawking had changed his views on one of his major scientific theories, and Alan White's art seemed to fit that idea. So, in a way, that cover was a collage of sound and vision. Bowie fans will recognize that as a Bowie reference. I'm feeling musical these days, so sue me.

Convention news of potential interest:

1) Corflu Silver will be held the April 25-27, 2008 weekend at the Plaza Hotel in Downtown Las Vegas. Room rates are \$35 midweek, \$72 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Reservations must be made prior to March 22, 2008 for the special Corflu rate. Membership is \$60 attending (£35). Send checks payable to Joyce Katz at 909 Eugene Cernan St., Las Vegas, NV 89145. You can submit funds via Paypal. Account Joyce Marie Katz. Email is JoyceWorley1 at cox.net. Early purchase of memberships greatly appreciated.

2) Alan Rosenthal wrote on Trufen.net: "The rumors of a Ditto revival are true. We will be combining Ditto with ArtCon this year in order to celebrate Art Widner's 90th birthday in grand style. Ditto / ArtCon will be held in Gualala, CA, the weekend of October 26-28, 2007. Memberships will be \$30 before September 30th and \$40 at the door. Checks should be

made out to Alan Rosenthal and sent to P.O. Box 75684, Seattle, WA 98175-0684. We can also accept payment via PayPal; please contact me off line for more information."

3) Conclave 32, Oct. 12-14, 2007, Crowne Plaze Hotel (Detroit Metro Airport), Romulus, MI. Lit GoH: Kim Harrison (Dead Witch Walking, etc.). Artist GoH: Don Maitz. Fan GoH: Richard Tucholka. Web: www.conclavesf.org. Regional con held since 1976.

Because I know them a bit better than just by name, I include here news of two nominees for the 2007 Hugo award: Peter Watts (for his novel, Blindsight) and Joseph T. Major (for his non-fiction study, Heinlein's Children). I wish you both the best of luck.

I've been elected N3F president for a year, and so far things are going along rather well. I'm trying to bind up places where slippage has occurred and get some things moving again that had gone to sleep, and I think the directorate will be an active one this year. I plan to stay out of their way as much as possible, for they're the actual governing body of the club. I've already announced that I won't run for any N3F office in the next election, as I think the several years as a director and a year as president are enough for me.

Besides, I'm supposed to start this summer that novel I've been threatening to write for nearly a decade. Then again, maybe I'll write a different one. :)

