



Peregrine Nations Vol. 7, No. 3 October 2007



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Art credits: Lee & J.J. MacFadden (cover), Alan White (masthead), Amy Harlib (3), Brad Foster (19)

This issue is dedicated to: My mother.

In PN 7.2, in the book review column, a character's name was misspelled. Siri Keeton is the correct spelling. PN regrets the error, and will administer 40 lashes to the Editrix. No tickets will be sold.

This issue of *Peregrine Nations* is a © 2007 J9 Press Publication, edited by J. G. Stinson, P.O. Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248. Publisher: Peter Sullivan, UK. **Copies available for \$2** or the Usual. A quarterly pubbing sked is intended. **All material in this publication was contributed for one-time use only, and copyrights belong to the contributors.** Contributions (LoCs, articles, reviews, art, etc.) can be sent to tropicsf at earthlink.net (please use Peregrine Nations in the subject) or via regular mail. Articles/reviews/art should be on the topics of science fiction, fantasy, horror, journeys, and, for the October ish, things that are scary. **No attachments unless previously arranged.** Clearly scanned artwork and queries are welcome. Loccers' e-mail addresses are spam-protected by using words where punctuation ought to go. Regular addresses still left out unless otherwise instructed. Fanzines reviewed will have their addresses included from now on, unless I forget again.

Next editorial deadline: Feb. 10, 2008.

Official Eastlake Village Turtle Rescue Member



Silent eLOCutions

[Editorial comments look like this.]

Sheryl Birkhead

November 2, 2007

I see mentions every now and then about the reports from the Nippon Worldcon but I must be reading the wrong zines since I think I have seen two actual Worldcon reports. I have not gotten any sense of the mesh/conflict of cultures -- not sure of what the attendees thought so I am not sure of the correct term. I hope **John Hertz** puts out some report that lets us all know the flavor and personality of the first eastern Worldcon.

[There may be such a report from John Hertz in a future ish of File 770; just a guess at this point, since he's done such with other Worldconreps.]

Ned Brooks

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Aug. 21, 2007

I wonder if it occurred to **Lyn McConchie** that the hybrid Bantam chicks would not suffer at all from falling from the top of a ladder. I have read that a mouse can fall down an elevator shaft and walk away unharmed. These chicks probably weigh only an ounce or so each and have considerable air-drag area.

I read Ward Moore's Bring the Jubilee not that long after its 1955 publication date. I have only a nodding acquaintance with the Civil War -- then or now -- but I thought it was an excellent novel and

went chasing his other works. None of them seemed nearly as good to me. But Moore's book is hardly the first to try to work out the effect of the South winning the war -- the Abbey Press published Frank Williams' Hallie Marshall in 1900. I don't remember now how well Moore handled the unlikely event -- the North was far more industrialized, and yet not dependent on the agricultural output of the South, so given the will, the North was bound to prevail. I had forgotten about the difference in the use of electricity in his alternate world -- hard to see how that could have happened. There were too many people working on electric power. If Tesla's multi-phase AC system was somehow not accepted, it would have delayed things reaching our current state -- but there were DC dynamos and distribution systems.

Cy Chauvin

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Sept. 5, 2007

I saw in SET where you admitted to not having read anything by Cordwainer Smith, and I recently finished rereading a number of his stories, so I just thought I'd make some suggestions. My favorites: "The Game of Rat & Dragon" (many people like that one), "A Planet Named Shayol" (I read this one first in an anthology, and lost track of it, and wondered for years who wrote that wonderful strange story about people who spontaneously grow extra body parts while imprisoned on a planet), "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard" (the image of this rainbow-like road arching into the sky has stayed with me for years), and "Mark Elf" (not usually mentioned by other people, but a very charming science fiction story that is very close to a fairy tale -- there's a girl that's slept for centuries, a telepathic bear, German robot machines). I recently found one Smith story that I apparently over-looked and read for the first time. I envy your "first time" experience with the stories, I hope you enjoy them! I do really think the short stories are better than his one novel or the fix-up "Quest

of Three Worlds."

I really enjoyed **Jim Sullivan**'s article about his first visit to the Big Apple and his experience on TV! As I wrote about his article on the monks and their auto repair shop, these articles are excellent enough and have wide enough appeal that they should appear in the newspaper Sunday supplements (assuming these are still published). [*Most of them have already appeared in other publications, most of which pay for articles; Jim is kind enough to offer me reprint rights when the initially-sold rights revert to him.*]

I remember my first trip to NYC. The only other big city I had been to was Toronto, which in the 1970's was so clean that the subway seemed like my mother's bathroom with its shining white tile. I arrived in NYC by Greyhound; my friend led me away to his house and we started entering this dark tunnel which looked like a sewer and I said "Stop! Where are we going?" It was the subway, of course...

The article about In the Year of the Comet is interesting, in part because of the contradictions **E.B. Frohvet** sets up. I sort of tend to agree that Wells now is mostly known for his science fiction, but it seems peculiar that **Frohvet** enjoys this book the most because he can most sympathize with the characters. This would tend to emphasize Wells's skills as an ordinary novelist. I haven't read any of his mainstream novels (I have an ancient hardcover of The Soul of a Bishop), but I wonder if a check with a bookstore would find any of his mainstream novels still in print? I also haven't read Comet, and I wonder about the central sf premise: Is this another disaster novel, or does the comet's gases do something to fundamentally change human behavior ("a miracle")? That might be a spoiler, I realize.

The cover's style reminds me quite a bit of **Sheryl Birkhead**'s style (the sort of cameo cut-outs), although the content seems a little more ferocious than I'd expect Sheryl to do! [*Amy Harlib did that cover, for those who are wondering.*]

This installment of **Chuck Conner**'s adventures in Gibraltar is almost homey compared with the previous installments, rather than exotic or quite so negative. Actually, his British-isms are occasionally

exotic enough that I'm lost.

I really quite enjoyed **Lyn McConchie**'s description of her bantam hen and the hen's encounter with a neighbor's rooster! My grandmother used to tell me stories about her banty hens (I believe some used to hide their nests in the trees). But if I've ever seen bantam hens, it was at a state fair long ago. People in the country aren't the only ones who suffer from loose animals, I've occasionally seen loose dogs running around in the city. And sometimes I suspect that people just let them loose rather than take the animals for a walk, although since we had a beagle who was always digging out from his pen, I try not to make judge-ments like that.

Paul Di Filippo

A meaty issue, PN #7.2 -- glad to see your fanac at such a high point!

E. B. Frohvet's essay on Wells made me want to re-read the Comet novel. He might like to check out Verne's Meteor Hunt, recently reissued, for comparative purposes.

E. B. Frohvet

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June 22, 2007

The nearest to a direct thematic descendant of Wells was probably John Wyndham. He took the basic premise of the Wells story (celestial event hugely changes the world), turned it upside down, thus The Day of the Triffids. In turn, you could make a case for James White: he took Wyndham's Out of the Deeps (itself influenced by Wells' War of the Worlds), twisted it sideways, and we get The Watch Below.

As to whether C. J. Cherryh's Morgaine stories are Sf or fantasy, let us consider the words of Nhi Erij (from Gate of Ivrel, Chapter 7):

"I am not a man who believes in magic,

Vanye, and neither, I suspect, are you ... Things happen through the hands of men, not by wishes upon wands and out of thin air. Is that not so?"

Perhaps my verb "counterattack" was poorly chosen; after all these years, I sometimes still think in military terms. You and I, after all, are on the same side. And on the plus side, you have not arbitrarily dropped me from your mailing list, as some faneds have. [*Their loss.*]

I don't think we have any bears around here.

My general assumption is that mail is delivered; therefore, if someone fails to get back to me, presuming lack of interest strikes me as a reasonable assessment. [*Inquiring after a non-respondent's health is a good way to get a reply from folks, many times, even if one has no knowledge of any illness; John Hertz tried it on me and it worked a treat. <grin> Of course, I make no secret about my health problems, so anyone reading this who doesn't hear from me regularly ought to know why that happens.*]

After World War II, some of the German and Japanese leaders were tried for both "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity." Some were tried for one but not the other (Albert Kesselring, for instance). And some were acquitted. And some were hanged. It was all generally perceived among the Allies as just, at the time.

"Perry" is both a proper name and a common noun (a sort of brandy made from pear juice; it can be sweet, or have a bitter edge, depending on the pears used). Many of us do not see the point of paying US\$100 for a "supporting membership" merely to vote on the Lost Causes. [*On the other hand, one gets more for a supporting membership than just voting rights {or nominating and voting rights, for those who attend or support two years in a row}. There are the publications, and sometimes special goodies, for supporters as well as attendees. But it's still a popularity contest, you're right, and nothing either of us does is likely to change that; the nature of the field in terms of publishing pretty much precludes that. Not even Joe Major could read all the books eligible in a year, and he probably wouldn't want to, anyway {since some of them are bound to be stinkers}*]

To clarify my remark about fiction set in small towns: it offers the ease of keeping the number of characters to a reasonable level, and fewer distractions for an inexperienced writer to get side-tracked into. And it's easier to do setting also, and for much the same reason. The converse is true for big-city settings, every American being supposed to have a working knowledge of New York City, and every Brit of London.

I read, and still have, the first of John Barnes' series, A Million Open Doors. I found the second one tedious, the third unbearable, and gave up on the series after that. A promising start done in by terminal cleverness.

"Prunella" is a real word, a type of fabric.

Word of the Day: ptarmic. From the Greek, a noun: a substance which causes sneezing, as the ragweed *Ambrosia vulgaris* [*that sounds like it should translate to "cheap beer"*]; loosely, a substance which is popularly but erroneously thought to cause sneezing, as the skunk cabbage *Symplocarpus foetidus*. I got better things to do with my time that make up this sh*t, folks. [*Hey, *I* believe you...*].

Alexis Gilliland

4030 8th St. S., Arlington, VA 22204 / June 21, 2007

Sept. 7, 2007

I am pleased to report that I graduated from my course of radiation therapy on Aug. 28, and that the doctor seemed quite happy with how things had gone. He scheduled me to have psa testing semi-annually instead of quarterly, which is a good sign. [*Yay!*]

Lee and I and a volunteer or two are putting together a Web site, to display the cartoons I have on hand after 40-odd years of drawing the things. Counting the several hundred collaborations with Rotsler, it looks like we may have over 3,000 (including the three cartoon books, of course). The first two scanned up okay, but *The Waltzing Wizard* was printed on cheap paper and had a lot of show-

through. Therefore, because it was faster for me to redraw the cartoons than for Lee to clean them up on Photoshop, I have been redrawing the whole damn book (finished on Sept. 8th). SO we have been keeping busy and hope to have the site up and running by Hallowe'en. One of the things Lee is doing is cleaning up my text, as, for instance on page 16bI started to write have as hae, and drew the v over the e, which is legible but messy. [*A most worthwhile project; kindly provide the URL soon so I can go see, please?*]

Chuck Connor's continuing report on Gibraltar is excellent, clear writing which has something of interest to impart, bachelor house keeping, arson and gang wars -- good stuff.

Amy Harlib

Aug. 22, 2007

Just got the latest Peregrine Nations, with the egoboo of my art on the cover! Thanks! Enjoyed the book reviews and **Alexis Gilliland's** cartoons. I've been loving his witty art for over 30 years! Wow! **Jim Sullivan's** anecdote was a stand-out -- heck, I just enjoyed the whole thing!

John Hertz

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Sept. 25, 2007

Japan was wonderful. More soon, I hope (more about it to you -- more Japan soon would also be good).

Do you know Dickens' Bleak House (*Steam Engine Time* 7)? More on this too. [*I've not read it, but seen a BBC dramatization of the novel, which makes me want to read the book.*]

Jack Speer, in a letter to *Vanamonde*, once brilliantly converted my mis-misspelling of "poetsarcd" -- "Nothing is sacrd."

Who can keep up with **Chris Garcia**? You might as well try to stop a bandersnatch!

[*The preceding was from John's frequent envelope communication mode. I also received An Actual Letter! from him, as follows...*]

Oct. 29, 2007

New and old meeting
Imagined by none we know
Hundreds of years past;
Ore that they yet pointed to
Nevertheless glints at us.

"Nihon" is a better rendition of the Japanese name for their country than "Nippon," in turn better than "Japan," but there's nothing for it now. I wrote this (in *tanka* form, 5-7-5-7-7 syllables, ancestor of *haiku* in 5-7-5) on the way back from Nippon 2007, the 65th Worldcon and first in Asia.

I was struck by newness and oldness everywhere. A Japanese proverb is *On-ko chi-shin*, "Study the old to appreciate the new," and their two greatest works of literature may be the *Kokinshû* (Book of Old and New Poems), published in 905, and the *Shin Kokinshû* (New Book of Old and New Poems), published in 1205. A few days after the con, in a Tokyo garden with members of the con committee, I was trying to remember a famous acrostic poem about irises (it happens to be *Kokinshû* No. 410), and one of the concomm found it with her pocket computer.

Bashô, the great master of *haiku* (although he did not use that word, which came later), said "Do not follow in the footsteps of the ancients; seek what they sought." We went to where his cottage stood, and looked from where he looked at the Sumida River.

[*And that, folks, is probably the most succinct conrep ever written. Thank you, John, for sending it to me.*]

Trinlay Khadro

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Aug. 22, 2007

I might actually get to WindyCon, and whether I get there or not I will have a couple tables of my work in the Art Show there. Mostly amigurumi critters, some origami dragons, as well as knitted fannish wear. I'm pretty excited to be showing my work at such a big con, and have been getting ready for a couple months.

I've also been having a lot of fun making amigurumi stuffies and selling them on Etsy (see above), it's a much more artist friendly market than eBay. Everything has a set price, and all handmade work. Almost all my items are One of A kind too. On eBay everyone's looking for a deal, and don't necessarily care if the item is unique or handmade. I definitely recommend Etsy to artists and crafters out there, fannish or not. I'm quite happy with it. (tickled pink actually.)

I also have a lot of photos up on flickr (my name there is trinlayk).

Since I won't be getting to Worldcon in Yokohama, nor will most of Milwaukee fandom, our local APA collation party on Saturday is going to be Japan themed. I hope the weather improves as KT and I have cute yukata to wear and plan to assemble "gummy sushi" for the event fruit roll ups for nori, Swedish fish, cinnamon imperials and marshmallows for the rice).

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August 21, 2007

Issue 7.1 "Silent eLOCutions" --

Chuck Connor: Your father has support from a knowledgeable source when it comes to decrying Dick van Dyke's failings at a Cockney persona. P. L. Travers saw an early screening of the movie

and told the reps that fortunately they had enough time to reshoot. She was unaware of the dynamics of movies in general and the Poopy Panda Pals in particular. (You should be aware that their requirements for doing a movie version of The Star Beast were ALLrights, yes including the original book.)

E. B. Frohvet: Given that mystery stories don't seem to have much to do with real crime (I can't begin to pretend to universality, but I don't think I have ever read of a real-world incident where a bunch of well-to-do people, all with an animus against their host, were invited to a weekend at his place and, when he was found dead, a moment-by-moment itinerary of their actions turned out to be the key clue) I really don't see why mystery stories set in rural villages should have anything to do with rural life either.

John Hertz: But with the prices of postage and the like going up, even supporting memberships are beyond the purses of some. Or at least they don't consider the price worth the bother. So they propose cheap voting-only memberships. That way lies The Guardsman . . .

Eric Mayer: I suppose it depends on the day and the location. The first time we went to Canada, it was easy both ways. The second time we went to Canada, I had to go to the Immigration office and explain that I had a lot of cash and a hotel reservation before they would let me in. If Montreal wins, I will remember to bring the last progress report/dernier rapport du progres.

John Purcell: I know what you mean about small town life. We love going to Aunt Delta's in Pembroke, a small town in the Pennyrile of Kentucky. For about two days at a time. The time I bashed in the car's oil pan and we had to spend five days there had us all going up the wall.

"Captain Roadkill Rides Again": It looks like Spaniards learned to drive from Italians. Poorly. (Here in the States, we only bother with one-finger salutes. No doubt Chuck can classify this as lazy Yankism.)

"Will the Real Swamp Thing Please Stand Up?": Congrat-

ulations, Madame President. [*Thanks, but it didn't last long; I resigned in October, too much stress all at once {and not all club-related} causing a UC flare-up that put me a week behind everything.*]

Issue 7.2, "Silent eLOCutions" --

Cy Chauvin: I got the impression that the fourth Earthsea book, Tehanu, was LeGuin's equivalent of the opening chapter of every Riverworld book after the third, the "Everything you thought you knew is wrong." The review of the Earthsea series in the *Spectator* (Addison & Steele, not Emmett Tyrell) devoted about a sentence to that book.

"A Feast of Jackals": (Review of Bring the Jubilee) You see, it was all the fault of Hodge Backmacker being coshed on the head by Colonel Harry Flashman to cover up his latest example of knavery, cowardice, greed, and lust. The blow injured his ability to tell truth from fantasy and after reading tons of Frank Reade Jr. dime novels, followed by The Time Machine . . .

"A Personal Reflection..." by **E. B. Frohvet**: But the central character of The Time Machine does have a name, Moses Nebogipfel. It was cut out of the final manuscript, but "The Chronic Argonauts" the original draft, has it. (And the narrator is named Hillyer.)

Lloyd Penney

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August 30, 2007

I did enjoy **Chuck** Connor's *Phlizz* 1, and number 2 has just arrived. Yet to have a look at it, but if it's anything like the first one, the mini-CD should be fun to explore, to see what he's got tucked away on that little thing. My own fascination with the Hugos is its history and prestige, no matter what's happened to it over the last few decades. When I first started reading the SF anthologies, the two most fascinating ideas I saw about this thing called fandom were the Worldcon and the Hugos. Books edited by Wollheim, Carr and Gold would make comment on the legendary people who won those shiny

silvery rockets, awards that have been given out for more than 50 years.

I got to the Worldcon many times, but the Hugos ... when it comes to getting onto the ballot, I've come tantalizingly close. There's still lots of future to come -- who knows? (By the way, **Chuck** probably knows that there is a large furniture store in Toronto called Idomo.)

We are most fortunate that fandom has become large enough to accommodate most opinions and models of what fandom should be. I am sure that my style of writing is lost on some, and I know some doubt that I should have any place in fandom at all. However, I have also enjoyed careers in masquerade, convention running and hospitality management (con suites and green rooms), with varying lengths and degrees of success, and have found that there are niches for all, no matter their interest or way of fannish self-expression. Those who claim otherwise just haven't seen enough of fandom's other interests the way I have.

With all that in mind, a welcome back to the asylum to **Dick Ellington**, whose name I recognize from some of the fannish histories I have. You, sir, have joined a long line of fans returning from the Glades of Gafia.

I can understand where **E.B. Frohvet** comes from -- locols and some e-lists are designed to be areas where we have conversations, mostly gentle and sometimes animated. However, there are some who abuse this with the general rejoinder, "I disagree, and you're an idiot." I don't expect all sweetness and light in fandom, never disappointed there, but if this is the response you get in a general conversation, I'd wonder about the rationality of the person you're trying to converse with. We can agree to disagree, and perhaps find common ground later on other topics.

The eFanzines site is a good one for getting the word out to those who wish [to hear about new ishes of] fanzines. You can subscribe to the site's notification service, or just subscribe the Fmzfen list. For too long, people felt that by simply posting something on their

website, everyone would find out about it, and it just didn't and couldn't happen. That was too passive. E-mail lists, automatic notifications and the like get the word out; "come and see what I have on my site." Being proactive gets the job done, and the word out.

Eric Mayer should know that only recently were Canadian border guards armed. When he was crossing into Canada, they were unarmed and friendly. American guards are surly, and some of them have been just plain rude and arrogant, but they've let us across because our papers were in order, passports ready, plus printout of hotel reservation and flyer for the convention we were going to, and a receipt from the duty-free shop, which provides an accurate timestamp for our crossing the border. That is especially important for coming back; that receipt can prove you were in the United States as long as you claim you were.

My loc: never thought to mention Bachman-Turner Overdrive. Randy Bachman and Burton Cummings aren't kids any more, but they still tour from time to time, singing Guess Who and BTO classics, and having a good time with their long-time fans. [*They did a gig at our local casino about a month ago. I didn't go, but did think about it.*]

True, the Canadian government could have chosen not to change DST at the same time as the Bush regime, but the confusion that would have come about not only in Canada, but with businesses in the US doing business with and bring goods into Canada, would have cost a lot of money.

Yvonne had the surgery on her back, but the carpal surgery never took place. Some therapy seems to have helped and avoid further pain. She still has to watch how she works at her desk. She is finishing a long-term contract at Castrol Canada, and (fingers crossed) may start a new job soon at Bayer Canada.

Editing letters for the local: sure, it would be nice to take the stage and say your piece via your loc, but taking out the vital parts of various locs and putting them together creates a conversation between the editor and several correspondents. That can be as entertaining and

informative to read as any article.

Maybe you, Jan, and **Gregg Trend** can tell me something: **Chris Garcia** has mentioned something here and there about a future Worldcon bid coming out of Detroit. Have either of you heard anything about that? Chris won't reveal sources, so perhaps it might be some wishful thinking. [*Nary a peep.*]

I am currently reading Peter Watts' Blindsight on my PDA. He set up the novel as a downloadable file much the same way Charles Stross and Cory Doctorow have done, and I believe Peter is Canadian, too, so even though I had no vote, he would have had my support. [*He is indeed Canadian.*]

Congratulations on becoming the N3F president, in spite of what so many think about it. I was a member of the Star Trek Welcomittee for 15 years, so I know how difficult it can be to get things done when lots of geography separate the members of the executive, so good luck with the next year.

I hope **John Hertz** will indeed write a trip report, and while I wouldn't want to deprive you of it, Jan, if John were to publish it himself, some serious money could be raised for fan funds everywhere. [*Which is what I recently told him in a letter, so with any luck it'll happen.*]

I don't like military SF, but I think I'd like alternate history novels if they weren't so militarily minded. I did read Harry Turtledove's book [about] what if the Neanderthals didn't die off. (Also have A World of Difference.) I prefer my SF utopian.

I've read a lot of C.J. Cherryh, but not much recently. A Cherryh fanzine will be interesting to read.

I start a new work assignment tomorrow with the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, and will be doing some data entry in their offices before they move to the nearby Metro Toronto Convention Centre for their annual convention.

John Purcell

Aug. 26, 2007

That cover by **Lyne Masamitsu** (7.1) is really wonderful! Like **Brad Foster** said in his loc on PN #7.2, it is an interesting collage effect, but I am a sucker for other-world landscapes and funky space art. This one satisfies both urges, and you should get more by Lyne. Good stuff!

The main thing I want to address in this loc is the comment that **Alexis Gilliland** made to me in your lettercolumn. It is good to know that Alexis will continue to be a presence in fandom at large; that makes faneditors like thee and me very happy. Getting his cartoons in the mail is always a delight and a treat. Thank you for those, Alexis; your work is always appreciated. As for what happened in the WSFS, I have no concept of the forces in play that resulted in certain events, and frankly it's none of my business. Besides, like he said in this loc, he does his "cartoons and fannish writing ...for fun and not out of any sense of duty." That is exactly what fanac is supposed to be: fun due to personal choice. Speaking for myself, I turn to fandom to get away from the stupidity of real-world blues and the politics of my place of employment. Remember: that was the original intent of the term GAFIA. No matter what, some day I would like to meet Alexis and Lee to say hello and chat him up for more artwork. He seems like an interesting fellow, and being in fandom for over 40 years is pretty dangd impressive. And before I forget, Alexis, you have my continued best wishes for your good health and recovery.

Sept. 9, 2007

Amy Harlib's cover reminded me of the various bits of art that she used to send me back when I was producing *This House*. Yes, that was a while ago, and a subtle hint that I would love to have some recent artistic efforts from Amy; *Askance* would benefit mightily from her presence. She also writes good book reviews, which you should notice if you get **R Laurraine Tutihasi's** FAPA-zine, *Feline*

Mewsings. Amy is definitely one of the Good People in Fandom, and I'm glad to see that she is still actively involved.

The book reviews this issue included a nice variety, and I was interested to read **Cy Chauvin's** review of Bring the Jubilee. This was pointed out to my wife, who is taking a history class at Sam Houston State University, and she is working on a research paper about the Civil War at the moment. Valerie thought a moment, and figured she didn't have the time or inclination right now to read it, but noted the book for future reference. Then there are also the Harry Turtle-dove books about the American Civil War, too, but I digress a bit here. Thank you for the reviews.

"Granite of the Apes, Part 3" continues to be entertaining and enlightening reading. In a bit of an odd way, it reminded me of the first apartment I lived in up in Minneapolis: the basement apartment in an old building (ca. 1920 or so) where six or seven fans had established residence. It had its idiosyncrasies, but nothing like the Brit House **Chuck Connor** had to deal with. Still, this made me a bit reflective of those "getting by" days of relatively long ago. A good bit of writing, this, and I look forward to the remaining installments.

I agree with **E.B. Frohvet's** assessment of In the Days of the Comet, which was made into a movie, I believe, but I will have to check on the Internet to see if that's true or not. The book I have read, and found it interesting -- definitely a slam on the society that Wells was raised in -- and mildly prophetic. Recently I found a first edition copy of The Croquet Player (1937) at the Half-Price Bookstore in town, and it was in excellent condition. This was another bleak vision of mankind's possibilities, and very reflective of Wells' socialist views. Still, interesting reading if you kept in mind what was going on in the world at that time and what Wells' philosophical views were like.

Joy V. Smith

<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

Aug 30, 2007

Wow, you have been busy catching up with your fanac! I'm glad you took time to get outside to pick rocks and sit and watch the waves. Those are two of the things I enjoy also. (Down here in Florida we usually have to buy our rocks.)

I enjoyed the book reviews -- Blindsight sounds intriguing -- and **E. B. Frohvet**'s in-depth look at H. G. Wells' In the Days of the Comet. Jim Sullivan's article about his trip to NYC was fun; I think it's fantastic that he got to be an extra, which is something I've always wanted to do.

I look forward to learning what happened next on Lyn McConchie's homestead. I'm glad she saved the chicks!

The challenges are non-stop on the "Granite of the Apes"! And his apartment furnishings remind me a bit of my first apartment; I had a hot plate. I never would have thought of cooking on a toaster! And I enjoyed his report on the crooks and the car chase. I will never, ever vacation on Gibraltar. Thank you, Chuck Connor, for sharing your life there.

WAHF: Dave Szurek.

A Feast of Jackals

book reviews by Cy Chauvin

Swordspoint by Ellen Kushner, 1987.

After reading the sequel (Privilege of the Sword, 1996), I had to reread the original. As is so often the case, I am surprised more by what I 'remembered' as being in the novel (and is not actually there!) than by what I've forgotten or not noticed upon my first reading.

Richard St. Vier is the best swordsman in Riverside (a city in

Kushner's alternate world), and he is hired by the nobles who rule it to fight in duels. The nobles fight duels by proxy, hiring swordsmen to defend their honor and power. I was disappointed in the sequel because I believed that it had fewer sword fights than Swordspoint, but that is actually not the case -- Swordspoint actually only has one real sword fight (the others all occur off-stage). Alec and Richard are lovers, which seemed more low-key on the first read than the second. I didn't remember the play contained in the book; nor Kushner's poetry, which seems appropriate and fitting. Alec has an acid mouth, which doesn't seem to have changed in both books, although he isn't as shrill as in the sequel. Some of the humor actually made laugh out loud this time!

The book contains no magic or fantasy besides its creation of this wickedly arcane alternate world, but the pen is always mightier than the sword in the best author's hands. My reread raises my opinion of the sequel; they're closer to equal in quality.

The Gate of Time by Philip Jose Farmer, 1966-1970.

This book starts out well: Roger Two Hawks is shot down in a bombing raid over the Nazi oil center in Romania during World War II. But Roger feels an odd sensation as his plane is attacked by a German fighter, and when they crash-land, the country he and his partner O'Brien are in seems oddly primitive. He sees no telephone or electric lights, and none of the roads are paved.

The woman they try to talk to at a farmhouse does not speak Romanian or German or any of the (many) languages he is familiar with; a strange antique type of armored car with wooden and iron wheels comes up to the house and the woman hides him in the cellar. He finds a strange mask with painted eyes there. The books remains interesting until Roger finds an atlas in a bombed house and his suspicions that he is in an alternate world are confirmed ("Have you read any science fiction?" he asks O'Brien -- is that anyway to explain things?).

In this novel, the New World is just a few islands between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. I anticipated some new technologies might be introduced into this more primitive world (one of the "things" that push my "enjoy" buttons), but instead there is just one gunfight, battle or narrow escape after another. This could have been a much better novel.



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The Art Of Urban Survival

Granite Of The Apes 4: Gibraltar in the 1990s

by Chuck Connor

I suppose that one consolation in life is that, although I am possibly over-independent in some respects, I have never been one for the deadly art of Supermarketing.

In fact, it must have been around the end of 1980 that I finally departed the joys of Chatham and the Medway Towns, and which was about the last time I ever did any serious Supermarketing.

Until now, that is.

Back then things were a little different. For a start the only real 'shopping' was for the likes of tea, coffee, sugar, milk (though we never had a fridge in Grenville 208 mess, *HMS Pembroke*, Chatham, Kent), and other essentials such as rummaging around the record bins or down the second-hand shops hunting books and the like.

Now, after nearly 2 years shoreside (a record for moi I have to admit) I find that although I haven't lost the distaste of Supermarketing I am at least becoming a bit more adept at surviving.

Take, for example, Northwood. There were several choices in how you approached shopping in that area. First off, you didn't make a move from the safety of the base until 0900 — which was when you could be sure that all the dickheads and retards had gone off to work and that you weren't likely to be hit by one of them coming out of their driveways and onto the pavement at 70 mph. It should also be noted at this point that between the hours of 0730 and 0845 cyclists in this area become invisible, but that's another story....

If you went into Northwood itself you were confronted with a typical Commuter Ghosttown (and snobbish as well — the Cancer Research charity shop priced ex-Watford Library books at £2.00 when the libraries themselves had them at 50p to £1.50 for large 'coffee table' stuff. Okay, so it might be going to a good cause, but there are limits to profiteering, to say the least!), and Northwood Hills, was almost as bad. Pinner remained a thrutchingly bad place in my mind -- again, bureaucratic old biddies at the Pinner library couldn't believe I didn't have a driving licence, wouldn't take my RN ID card as proof of ID:

"Do you have a letter with your name and address on it?"

"Not with me, but I do have this ID which even has a photo of me on it for visual checking."

"No, dear, we need a letter with your name and address on it..."

In Pinner it seems that passes which get me into virtually any military/security covered base (and have photographic proof of ID)

rate lower than a letter with your name and address on it. I did not go back to Warrior, wordprocess myself a letter (replete with some juicy opening comment) and try again. I took a train into Watford and joined a much better library system completely, with the added incentive of being able to cycle in and make a half day of the trip.

In fact, I think it was around about that time I actually ‘adopted’ Watford as my shopping zone of preference.

Then, of course, I got shifted out to Gibraltar, and a whole new lifestyle of shopping.

As I’ve said before, Gib is not a Duty Free Port anymore, even though it still likes to claim it is (and yes, the price of alcohol and tobacco goods are cheap, but you could get a much better deal for electrical stuff out of your local CURRYS/DIXONS in many respects — one of them being a genuine warranty that the retailer doesn’t deny all knowledge of if you take defective goods back to them. Another famous Gibraltarian custom, the customer’s warranty lasts until they leave the shop when it becomes “f*ck off I don’t sell this model.”) — which means that most of the goods do not have any price tags on them at all. This allows the shopkeeper to check the weekly civvy dockyard berthing plans and from the information gained they can then work out what days to hike the prices up (ie, if a ship comes in the prices are raised for the duration of their visit) and by how much (American and Western European ships seem to generate the ‘best’ price hikes.)

Sadly, you in the UK don’t have the joys of not only fighting down an already inflated price by haggling, but also having to check to see that what is in the sealed box you have taken from the shop is in fact (a) the same model, (b) not someone else’s defective return, and (c) working.

Isn’t that simple? Don’t forget that you are always dealing in cash here — use of a credit/debit card gets you another 10% price hike, and no insurance coverage either, like wot they say on the telly.

Country of Origin is also another good spiker of discounts, and it isn’t difficult to spot the unusual situation of having Spanish people

come over into Gibraltar to purchase Spanish goods and then take them back over to their side of the line.

You see, the trick is that once goods are marked for export from Spain there is a large amount of tax removed prior to selling to the export/import trade. This means that, if I were to make contact on the Spanish side, I could buy Spanish goods at a very reduced price, provided I take them over the line into Gibraltar (or ship them wherever — for now, let’s stick with Gibraltar.) Now, normally, Gibraltar charges between 12 - 12½% import tax on everything other than groceries. Get the picture? I can ship into Gib tons of foodstuffs which I have bought from the Spanish at a cut price, no customs to pay, slap a bit of a price hike on the goods (but not enough to equal the Spanish price) and all of a sudden I’m getting Spanish customers coming over to buy Spanish branded goods at ‘discount’ prices.

Good business tactics? Not if you’re whining and dripping like a septic finger that the Spanish are victimising you as a nation/race/government for this kind of economic undermining (and don’t forget that Spain is made up of little local governors and an overall political system) as well as doing little/nothing about the smuggling and money laundering going on virtually out in the open.

[Before I forget, ref the De Rosso brothers: the one who was hit by the boat oar is still in hospital, apparently blind in one eye and requiring major reconstructive bone surgery (nose, cheeks, jaw - anything that got in the way of the wood). It appears that the only way he can get the money for the surgery is by suing the guy who did it, but this is the same guy who is suing De Rosso for criminal destruction of property in that they torched his boat in the first place). Rumour has it that these cases will go for a good couple of years before even seeing the light of a courtroom. The second De Rosso is still on the run and most definitely in Spain somewhere — or else he’s fish food.]

Then you have the crazy situation with petrol. The Spanish price of petrol is much higher than it is in Gibraltar (where it is at 33 - 37p per litre). This means that there have been queues of Spanish

motorists trying to get through the border so as to take advantage of this kind of thing (not helped by the fact that there are now some five garages just as you come into Gibraltar on the Airport road). For one it means that the queues coming back into Gib are horrific time-wise, and two the amount of Spanish drivers around that area (see H&V3 ref their habit of stopping *on* a roundabout). This also gives you massive queues going into Spain as well (where the Spanish drivers burn more fuel than they normally would and thus nullify their savings) — sometimes as long as 4 hours. You think you’ve seen motorway rage? Come down and see the professionals sometime.

But this seems to have deviated away from the fact that there are also two ‘large’ hypermarkets over the line that are accessible via cycling (okay, so CONTENENTE is about a 2-hour round cycle on the hard shoulder of Spanish motorways, but I’ve been there several times and enjoyed the journeys both there and back.) It’s more a case of shopping around and working on something simple like 200 potatoes to the £, but the state of warranty is more than a little bit of a joke, even if the goods are branded with something that is recognisable.

SAFWAYS were onto a winner when they built their larger stores (the one out by the airport has since closed down, but that might be due to the fact that it couldn’t compete with the duty-free shops in the airport complex itself) but now that they’ve been ticking over for about 12 months, it looks like there’s been a little bit of mutual price adoption between SAFWAYS and the good old NAAFI (now rumoured to be considering pulling out of Gibraltar, though not sure why that should be — I suspect that the ground rent and the like are taking their toll), though it would take a bit of comparison between the UK National and the Gibraltar prices to see what the crack is.

That aside, there are some goodies to be had, but only if you’re quick and adept. Bread is always the hardest to get your mitts on at cut prices, and I can assure you that I only once took the offer of 24 finger rolls and a freebie tin of ‘hot dogs’ (seriously bland and barfable salmonella torpedoes that tasted of cardboard no matter what

I doctored them up with.)

No, it’s the good old red stickers that tell the world that they’re on the verge of rotting in the bag (ie their Sell By/Best By date is nigh) — Bar Code Cancelled! — that attract the supermarket scum, the bargain zombies, the comestibles vampires who are just waiting to drain the almost lifeless corpses of their remaining life-force. And believe me, when I get that wire shopping basket in my hand I’m a real bitch of a bargain hunter, whether I can eat it or not!

But, hey, don’t get me wrong here, the flat *isn’t* full of useless bits and bobs (well, not as full as it could be, I suppose, but that’s another story), it’s just the fact that a dented tin of, say, soup, or meatballs, or mixed veg, or whatever, is going to keep and will come in handy for that rushed meal, or the late evening quiet snack. So, maybe, okay, the cupboard is a little full at the moment but so what? It’s going to get colder some time soon and when it does, well, need I say more?

The trouble is that I’m not the only one going for these bright red stickers. The Spanish and the Gibraltarians also go for this kind of thing with a voracity that puts Pit Bull Terriers to shame. This has led me to perfect the art of the overhand swoop — reaching over someone’s shoulders, or brushing around people, in order to grab a slice of a bargain while the Gibraltarians or Spanish gabble away as to whether or not the bargain is really worth it. Ha! Fools! Utter fools! It’s easier to bag a bargain, walk off, check it through and then, if you don’t feel that it’s worth it, you can always put it back on the shelf again. That way you’re sure of hanging onto your prize (if it turns out to be one, that is) rather than standing around and watching the supply dry up in front of your eyes.

No, it’s a sad fact of shopping that, in the land where a loaf of bread is 99p, it really is survival of the fittest!

Leventer is the correct English spelling of the thing (rather than the *Gibraltar Chronical* version I printed last time) which is a solid cloud over the top of the Rock, a lack of any breezes and a general clinging mugginess that sends tempers off the scale.

You Can Shimmy? So Can Jimmy! But Can You Waddle?

Granite Of The Apes part #5

So there you are, it's a Friday night and the call of the wild is tugging at the fact that you've been cooped up all week (or been smoothing your bum to the bone on a series of shifts) and you have this wild desire to go out and *do something* before you go flat crazy.

Despite the lyrics of the song, Saturday night at the movies *isn't* a good idea, mainly as it is the time when the new movie of the week is being screened for the second or third time (and thus its reputation of being either good or bad has gotten around to the masses) and the cinema is going to be packed to the gills. The fact that during the weekdays there can be no more than about 20 or 40 a night (max) I still fail to see how the wretched thing makes enough to survive or to rent/import the movies in the first place. True, when it's packed it's packed. But when it's dead you can smell the formaldehyde for miles.

Let me take this opportunity here to describe this mecca to the Celluloid God commonly known as The Queen's on Queens (and run by a couple of happily heterosexual gentlemen, thank you very much!). Take the old music-hall conversions of the post-WW II late 40s. You go through a pair of large plate glass doors with mock-art deco angular designs in gold, having bought your ticket outside the cinema from a woman in a little booth. There are times when I've sat on the opposite wall and waited for Dillinger to finally come out and be gunned down by the Feds — it has that kind of external feel to it even though the building is rather non-descript and stands in the middle of what is now a large traffic control island, part of the Main

Street One Way system that allows you to double back.

The foyer is the only thing that appears to be truncated in some respects, though it does have the usual left and right hand stairways that lead up to the more expensive seats in the circle. It's sort of like the TARDIS in reverse, massive on the outside, and tiny in the first part of the building. On the right is also the kiosk where they sell all kinds of rattling-packaged sugar bombs, warm 'Coke' (brown and frothy, not white and granular, though I have to admit I've never actually *asked* her if she has any of the latter...), packets of crisps and buckets of popcorn. And no, you can't take any Smarties into the circle and go flicking them off the barrier top into the huddled masses below. They don't sell Smarties....

If you've only shelled out three quid then it's the regular stalls for you and this is where it gets a little weird in that four quid takes you into the circle, but apart from the fact that you're higher up and don't have to strain your neck to get a decent angle of vision there is little else that makes it special. They even use the same kind of large, comfortable, armchair-style seats (none of this folding seat the size of a fire bucket crap you get in the UK) that are worth the cost of entrance alone. I mean, these are seats for sitting in and enjoying an evening's entertainment (be it good or bad at least the seats are comfy!) and with an extremely rare sound system (Dolby Stereo that actually works rather than being so channel orientated that it cuts the cinema in half with one side booming in your ear and the other just a whisper) to match the oversized screen.

Ah, the screen. There is enough distance from the screen to the projector housing to allow for a really impressive focal area — certainly a lot bigger than quite a few UK cinemas I've been in — which means that colour and clarity are good. One of the problems with some of the smaller cinemas/multi-screen monsters is that the focal distance is short, which means that the screen area is small and the colours become concentrated/intense, causing the eye muscles to tighten a little bit in a reflexive action (like squinting in harsh sunlight — don't forget that while the film is running the only real source of

light is the screen, thus your pupils will be more dilated.)

This distance was wonderful for mellowing out the showings of BATMAN FOREVER — apart from getting about a 100 foot squared shot of Val Kilmar's bum encased in rubber. Hardly my thing but it did get a couple of squeals from some ladies in the audience. At least I think they were ladies.... which, despite every other nerk saying Tim Burton had nothing to do with it (which he did! If only people would read the credits!) had a lot of the standard TB 'darkness', and still very Gothic as well.

Now, all of this would be wonderful but for the people who go to the cinema. Many years ago I remember my late father talking about the early days of cinema. He was born in 1911 and, unlike 'The Jazz Singer' 's supposed whirlwind success, he could still remember the silent movies and all the hassles that when with them. It was from him that I heard tell of children being taken into the cinema by their parents or grandparents in order to read out the dialogue cards as the parents/grandparents either suffered from poor eyesight or just simply couldn't read. I could relate to that, having been in Copenhagen just after the European release of Mel Brooks' 'Silent Movie.' Short historical note: Brooks did 'Young Frankenstein' in black & white but with sound, and he did 'Silent Movie' in colour but without sound, reverting to a musical soundtrack and dialogue cards. Okay, for those who want to get pedantic I think there is one or possibly two words uttered right at the very end, but that's not the point here. Anyway, several of us knew what was on the go, but we didn't expect the fact that first up would come the English dialogue card, followed several seconds later by the Danish version. This led to a situation where the four or five of us were laughing or giggling at the comedy, then a few seconds later most of the rest of the cinema would be laughing. By having that second or two loss of synchronicity it made you very self-conscious about your reactions.

Whatever, Gibraltar screens all its movies in English and without subtitles, and before you think it, no you don't know exactly what's coming because believe me, it's worse!

Over the weekend there is normally an afternoon showing, whereas during the week there is only the evening showing. I have been to several afternoon showings and survived to honestly say "never again!" Okay, not only do the parents/grandparents take along their bi-lingual offspring, all of whom feel it's their *duty* to shout out the storyline/dialogue in Gibraltarian mainly as Granny is a deaf old bat and also by shouting it makes the little shites feel important.

But wait, that isn't all! The afternoon screening is fun for all the family, and the Gibraltarians take the whole of the family. They also take packed lunches/snacks, six-packs of beer, bottles of wine — I have even been trapped between a couple of people (?) who, halfway through the film, pulled out newspaper-wrapped donor kebabs and started eating them while they were still hot.

And this is in the circle. The stalls are like a wretched zoo and I'm pretty sure that the management have several emergency cattle prods in case the skirmishes get a bit too heated.

Having said all that, during the weekday showings it is blissfully quiet, sparsely populated by people who have come for the movie (and not a bloody picnic!), relaxing, modern and cheap.

So much for that entertainment, what else does Gibraltar have to offer? Well very little else to be honest. Most of the old pubs and meeting holes have now closed down due to declining business (the Navy 'money' input having dropped from something like 40% down to 9% or even as low as 6%), there are no clubs offering alternatives — there is a branch of the Masons (a Masonic Lodge is, I believe, the correct term, says he typing this whilst wearing a leather pinny and with left breast exposed...) but they're a bit choosy as to who can join. As are the newly arriving 'retired' Russian 'Mafia' black market lords who can be seen from time to time, though they tend to keep themselves to themselves at the moment.

There's the bowling alley (provided you don't mind supplying someone from your team/crew to re-set the pins back by hand), the evening classes at the Education Centre (again, because of the 45% local employment law this is also staffed by Gibraltarians,

which has led to several language problems, even on the RSA course I'm supposed to be working on at the moment), the local football and rugby teams (provided you don't mind playing on surfaces that look very similar to industrial grinding powder) or television (which, as mentioned before, is swarming with channels, but nothing really worth watching on all 11 of them — sorry, make that 12 as we now have BBC PRIME back, but have lost TCC/The Family Channel to the darling marrieds who wanted the Disney Channel for their offspring. I'm sorry, but Mickey Ducks at 06:30 are not my kind of television....). There is the radio, but that's BFBS ONE and TWO, both of which seem to work to a common denominator of chart top 20/Golden Oldies and manage to make it sound like it's Amateur Hour every time the DJ gets near the microphone. The Local Gibraltar Radio (when run in English) makes RADIO TWO sound like a rave party.

I suppose it could be said to be unfair that I'm painting a bit of a depressive picture of Gibraltar with these episodes, but I'm not. What I'm getting antsy about is the amount of screwed up opportunities that present themselves out here but which are either ignored (because they don't make any money) or cliqued to the point of no return.

To illustrate that last comment, I'll tell you about my getting onto the RSA course. I wanted to get onto a 'certificated' course (one recognised by civvies) because I can type and word process quite happily but don't have any of the old City & Guilds 777 Part II certificates (which they no longer do.) So the easiest way would be to go down the Education Centre and set myself up with some courses. No?

Yes, 'No' was the answer the first time I tried it. "We are fully booked up for RSA courses," says one of the administrators, and having read her course membership book while she flicked through it I could see that she was fully booked — Mrs., Mrs., Ms., Mrs., Ms. and Ms. ... So much for the fact that the Education Centre is supposed to cater for Service personnel first, and the fact that when I enquired

there were still about seven days to go before the books were officially opened.

I found out later that I could well have applied to take the RSA exams I wanted to, used my own equipment and word processor (in fact, for one of the exams I could actually bring in the manuals for it and work it out from them...), but that came from the Army Education Officer who was also teaching night classes.

But this year is a little different, I was able to get onto the list by pushing the fact that I'm due for resettlement shortly and that an RSA certificate(s) would be an advantage. Great. I now have the first exam in November and three weeks into the course the woman supposedly teaching the class has finally told me what I'm supposed to be doing for a syllabus (not a mock exam, just the bits of the syllabus I don't know). Three weeks for this kind of information? Thankfully I'm not paying for the lessons!

But, hey, let's hear it for Celine, the class instructor! A wonderful woman (if you yourself are also female — if you're male you just get ignored) and one who deserves every penny of her £10.00 an hour tutorial fees (including the 30-minute coffee breaks she decides to take as & when she feels like it.)

See what I mean about the opportunities thing? There is no drive, no emphasis, no motivation (and I'm not just talking about Celine here either, but Gibraltar in general) with the only guideline being to see just how much you can rip a person off for. I mean why should I pay £15.00 for either a Chinese or Indian meal in Gibraltar when I can just hop over the border and pay £10.00 for much better quality and more generous portions at that?

How do they survive in Gibraltar? The answer is that they don't. They change hands so frequently or just close down, unless they are from the previous era when ex-pats were thick on the ground and had their set of watering holes. Now it's a mad scramble to offer as much of 'little England' as possible to the tourists who keep coming to this pimple of rock — Union Jacks and Fish'N'Chip shops, cafes offering "Traditional British Fry-Ups" and franchised versions

of Marks & Sparks and BHS.

And over the border in deepest darkest Southern Spain, where the men are men, the women are women and the Guardia Civil are licensed sociopaths, there is a sense of tradition, a sense of pride and an atmosphere of adventure rather than stagnation. Believe me, there is more life in Croyley Green on a wet Sunday than there is in Gibraltar at the moment.

Even the cable car ticket sellers who roam the streets have given up pushing their tickets, or so it seems to me, and the cable car is the most exciting thing around at the moment, and most of us are just waiting for it to drop off its cables.

Of course, now that I've finished my Open Uni courses for this year I have a few months of rest (the results won't be out until late December or more likely early January) and may well gain a little more from Gibraltar, but the air of stagnation still seems to sit over the rock like the winter storm clouds that have gathered of late — we are in CET (Central European Time, which means that it now gets dark around 1630 - 1700-ish) and the rains are due for either November or early December. If they don't come then we could be into heavy water rationing out here, again.

But what of the memories that I'll be taking away with me when I finally go in February? There's been the cycling, the flat moving and the collecting of bits & bobs that I seem to want to hang onto (the cooker, some bathroom shelving, some books from the remains of the St. Johns Library I found stacked in 6 cardboard boxes that were going to be thrown out from the mess). There have been evenings over in Spain where the nights stretched out into early morning, with good food (Chinese, Indian, Spanish) and some unusual wines (Spanish and Portuguese), some of the social life from the Married patch (though not much), getting my driving licence and discovering the 'joys' of car maintenance, and the glorious, glorious weather...

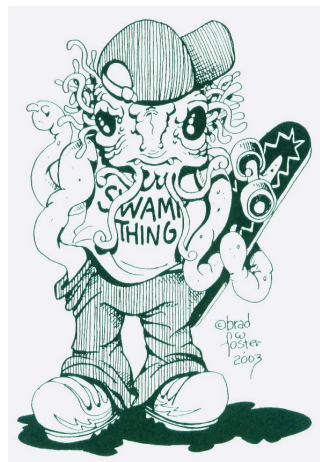
So it looks like I will be moving away from here and back to the UK in late February — back to Northwood, if the grapevine is any

judge of things, though whether that's good or bad remains to be seen, mainly as I understand there's now a manpower problem at the base and that could well mean problems with leave and time off (yes, there are days I sit and wonder just exactly what an 8 - 4 or a 9 - 5 job would be like — normally about 0300 hrs when the shift is turning into a pile of caca....). Of course, it could all change and I'll be cross-drafted somewhere else, but thinking on it, it would be interesting to get back to Northwood, start seeing some movies as and when they come out, get back to the old Watford libraries (and start in on their music & spoken word sections again), going into Harrow for the Open University 'night classes,' cycling into places like Rickmansworth, or Croyley Green and sweet talking the old biddies in the Oxfam & Sue Ryder shops into letting me have second-hand books at cut prices, maybe even getting back to the Skinners on the third Tuesday of the month, 4 channels on the TV, rummaging through RITZ VIDEO dump-bins for the £1.50 end-of-the-shelf-life tapes, the Record & Tape Exchange down Nottingham Gate, GLR on the radio... and, of course, there will *always* be muffins for tea, won't there?

It's still all cotton-candy-wool-gathering at the moment, and it's made me realise just how 'chewing gum & string' Gibraltar really is when you have to stay here, work here, and live here rather than just visit on holiday or on a day trip from Spain. Will I miss Victor, or the drug & cigarette scuffles (no further news of the DeRosso brothers, alas), the weird closing times, the over-priced goods, the hassles when out shopping? I doubt it. Even Rooke is now undergoing a facelift and will become tri-service when the metamorphosis is complete. Britannia House will be no more when that happens, and that, I suspect, will seal the memories once and for all.

Ah, all this reminiscing and sentimentality is doing me no good. I'm off up the 300+ steps to the top of the Rock with a bag full of fruit peelings and a heavy set of toecaps. Time to drop-kick a few apes....

Will the Real Swamp Thing Please Stand Up?



Thanks again to Chuck Connor for enlivening these pages with his memories of Life on the Rock.

Some of you have already heard, but this is the official announcement. What you hold in your hands is the penultimate ish of *Peregrine Nations*.

When I started pubbing this thing seven years ago, I was told that I should only do so if I wanted to, and when it stopped being fun, I should quit pubbing it. I've taken that advice. PN has become more of a chore than a

labor of love, so it's time to bid it adieu. The final ish, dated January 2008, will be done and out by the end of February 2008.

I'm not leaving fanzinedom behind completely. I'll still co-edit *Steam Engine Time* with Bruce Gillespie, and expect to pub at least a few more ishes of the C.J. Cherryh-focused journal *Ribbons*. Those will be the only fanzines for which I'll do editorial work; I've resigned from the Editorial Cabal of the N3F clubzine as well, for health reasons.

It's possible that I may write more locs, or articles, but don't hold your breath. I have plenty of things to do which could fill up the time I previously spent doing PN. Faneds who have sent me their fanzines in trade can cease sending me their pubs whenever they choose; I expect to not have time to read them in the next several months.

Part of what I'll be doing, instead, is writing. There are ideas swirling in my head, and they aren't going away, so I've resolved to start writing them down this year, and there's no

point in waiting around for that.

There are also the editorial services (Peregrine Editorial Services) and the jewelry business (Shirley's Daughter) to finalize and make official (by acquiring business licenses), to include getting the latter's Web site up and running. I'll continue to work in both fields as long as my health holds up.

* * *

No one got holiday cards on time this year because December was a melt-down month for me, emotionally. It seems I don't actually have a problem with New Year's Day, which is the day Kenn died, but with Christmas Day itself. Looking back, that's been the day I've felt most like glass about to shatter since 2002. I don't know why, yet. Perhaps my therapist can help me figure that out. But I really need to get a handle on it before next winter, as I really, really don't want a repeat of the freakout I had for Christmas 2007. Depression does hurt, as the drug ad says. In more ways than one, let me assure you. I didn't attempt to do myself bodily harm, but I sure as hell wanted to disappear for a while, and that's too close for comfort for me.

To counteract the effect of Christmas Day, on New Year's Eve I sat up to watch Dick Clark (still recovering from a stroke, he valiantly soldiered on through thickened speech and never missed a beat, bless his ageless self) count down the ball as it dropped in NYC's Times Square, and at midnight lifted my glass of tippie (cream soda and a little light rum) to the screen and said, "Here's to the new year being a damn sight better than the old one."

I wish the same for all of you. See you in the last ish.