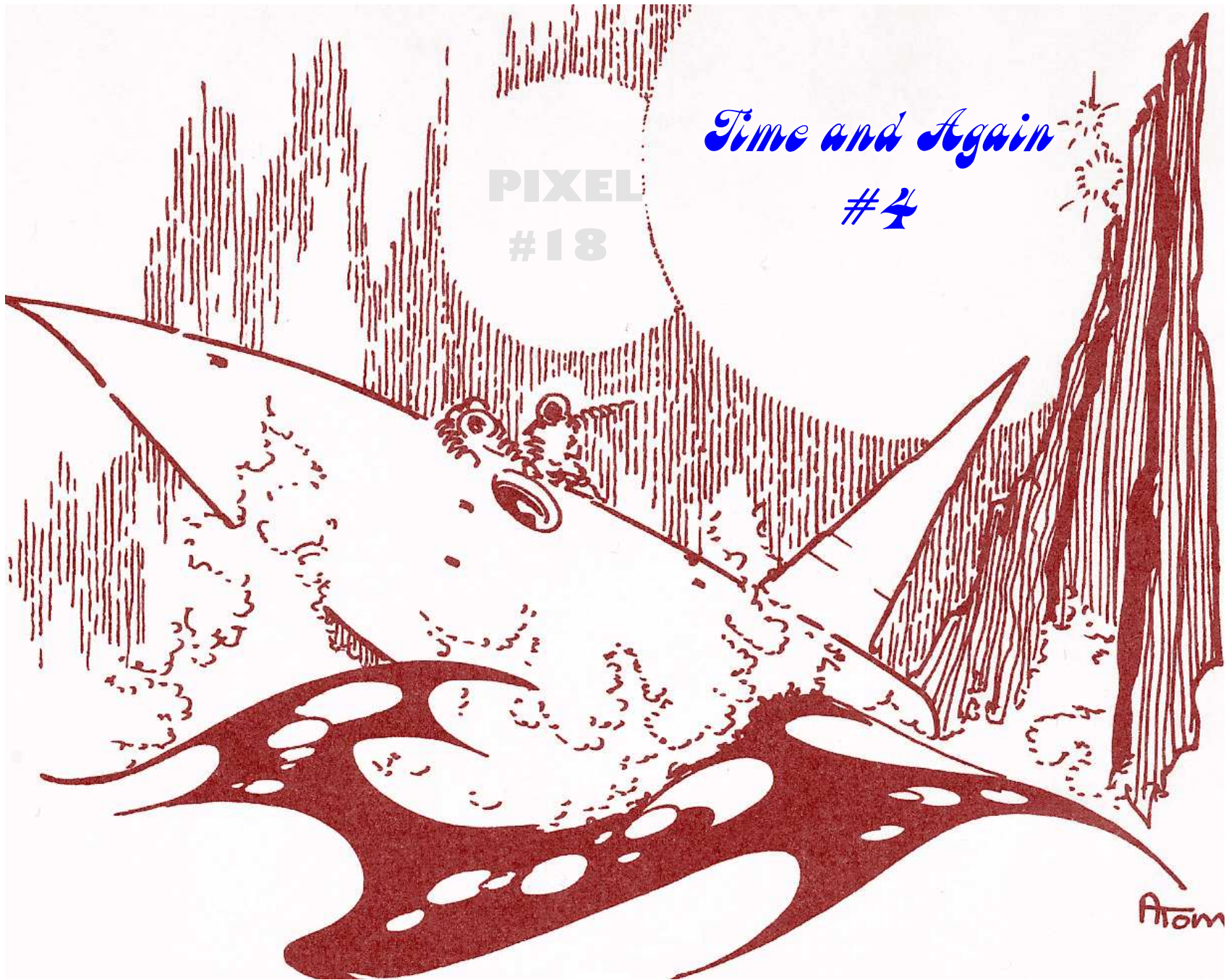


Time and Again

PIXEL

#18

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Wordwhipping

- 03 Diabologic - [Dave Locke](#) - editorial
- 07 All I Want For Christmas is a Hand Grenade - [Curt Phillips](#)
- 11 By The Numbers - [John Purcell](#)
- 18 Much Nothings About Ado: Whither Weather - [Lee Lavell](#) - column
- 20 Found in Collection: The Next Generation (excess babbage) - [Chris Garcia](#)
- 23 Notes From Byzantium: Kings of Terror - [Eric Mayer](#) - column
- 26 Pure Quill Pixelated - lettercolumn

Artwork

Cover [Arthur Thomson](#)

03 [William Rotsler](#)

23, 26 [Brad Foster](#)

31 [Grant Canfield](#)

18 <http://www.customroadsign.com>

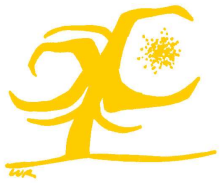
2, 25 <http://www.darkroastedblend.com>

28 from *The Onion*

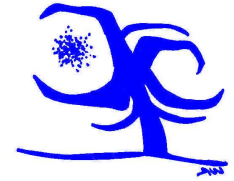
34, 38 <http://xkcd.com> the Net's best webcomic

All else nicked from the Net





Diabologic editorial, by *Dave Locke*



"Since we cannot know all that there is to be known about anything, we ought to know a little about everything." -- Blaise Pascal

In the dim, dark ages of the late 1940s and early 1950s I'd lie on my back on the lawn at night with my hands behind my head. I'd often get a fairly decent view of the night sky, before the area of the town I lived in became overgrown with streetlamps. This was pre-satellite. Just moon, planets, and stars primarily populating the view. However, since it wasn't the pre-airplane era (honestly, it wasn't), there'd occasionally be one or more of those.

Despite my interest in astronomy I could never identify constellations. For someone with as much pattern recognition as I have, it failed me altogether with astronomy. Seeing connect-the-dots constellation overlays on sky maps, I still failed to see the images. Personally I think the ancient people who saw these animals and other figures in the heavens were early crack smokers. If you can see them, though, I'm sure there are other explanations.

I always thought I was fortunate to not be able to visualize most all constellations. The Big Dipper was pretty much the extent of it, and that's known as an asterism, and only part of a constellation which overall is supposed to look like a big bear. I never saw bears, nor birds of paradise, eagles, rams, herdsmen, dogs, crabs, giraffes, centaurs, whales, swans, dragons, lions, wolves, horses,

scorpions, virgins, or any of the other ancient constellations. If for some reason the night sky had been hidden from us until, say, yesterday, I suspect we'd be on our way to having constellations which look like SUVs, TVs, dildos, and cellphones. And I wouldn't be able to make them out, either. Which is good, because I never wanted to see these things in the sky. I wanted to see stars and planets. I could go elsewhere to see the other things, and also I wouldn't have to wait until night.

Astronomy might explain my early interest in math. I can remember lying on the lawn and wondering how many stars were up there in the night sky. I started counting, but soon realized it was an impossible task. So I arbitrarily divided the sky into fourths, like a pie. Then I chose one of the pieces, counted the stars, and multiplied by four. This was okay and served the purpose at the time, but soon enough I realized there were problems with this approach. What if I hadn't divided the night sky evenly? How many stars were hidden behind those modestly tall buildings to the south, or behind that steep hill to the north? Not to mention those houses to the east and west. Unfortunately, studying math never resulted in solving these problems.

Studying astronomy, or a value of it which equalled reading a few books on the topic, served mainly to take the shine off some of my fascination with the topic. No, not with the night sky, or later with all those magnificent

false-color images of astronomical objects. With the science itself.

As I learned more about science in general, as opposed to any science in particular, I gained increasingly more respect for it. What some others had said about it came to ring true. As for science itself, early-on I learned that *"equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure science."* -- Edwin P Hubble. That seemed to bring things down to the simplicity of truth.

The self-correction of the scientific method also made much sense. *"In much of all science, there are no permanent truths; there is a set of approximations, getting closer and closer, and people must always be ready to revise what has been in the past thought to be the absolute gospel truth."* -- Carl Sagan. *"In science, fact can only mean confirmed to such a degree that it would be perverse to withhold provisional assent. I suppose that apples might start to rise tomorrow, but the possibility does not merit equal time in physics classrooms."* -- Stephen J. Gould. Richard Feynman wrote: *"Scientific knowledge is a body of statements of varying degrees of certainty -- some most unsure, some nearly sure, but none absolutely certain"* and *"Science is what we have learned about how to keep from fooling ourselves."*

The editors of *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, writing *"In Science We Trust"* said: *"All scientific knowledge is provisional. Everything that science "knows," even the most mundane facts and long-established theories, is subject to reexamination as new information comes in. The latest ideas and data are the most provisional of all. Some recantations will be unavoidable. This is not a weakness of science; this is its glory. No endeavor rivals science in its incre-*

mental progress toward a more complete understanding of the observable world."

Or, as Robert Todd Carroll wrote: *"It would be foolish to reject science because of errors by scientists."*

There are other things to be learned about science over the years.

"Inevitably, scientists will sometimes be just plain wrong-- they make mistakes. Interpretation of evidence leaves room for error. Moreover, scientists aren't saints. They can be swayed by careerism, by money, by ego. Biases and prejudices can blind them. As individuals, they are no more or less flawed than those from any other walk of life. Over time, however, science rises above narrow interests and corrects itself more reliably than any other institution through such practices as the open publication of results and methods." -- the editors, *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, *"In Science We Trust"*.

To state that another way: *"Science as it really is: fallible, human and tentative, after probabilities rather than absolute certainties."* -- Robert Todd Carroll

"While scientists and technocrats will exhibit their fair share of inertial pettiness, the rejection of a potential new paradigm by the relevant experts is inevitably due to that institutionalized skepticism without which science no longer functions as a means to finding reliable knowledge. There are, after all, an infinite number of spectacular but erroneous breakthroughs for every one that stands the test of time. With these overwhelming odds, skepticism serves as the immune system for science, protecting the well-tested body of reliable knowledge from chronic infection by pathological phenomena that may play well in the media but can't be reproduced in the laboratory." -- Gary Taubes, *"Rethinking the Paradigm Paradigm"*, *Tech-*

nology Review 11/01.

Ah, the media. From Ben Goldacre's *Bad Science* column in the *Guardian*: *"in the media, as you will have noticed, science is about absolute truth statements from arbitrary authority figures in white coats, rather than clear descriptions of studies and the reasons why people draw conclusions from them."*

You have to be careful when paying attention to what the media says about anything, but particularly about science. However, as a lot of us learn, we have to be careful about what the scientists say, also.

Carl Sagan noted: *"There are many hypotheses in science which are wrong. That's perfectly all right; they're the aperture to finding out what's right."*

"More and more I think personality and temperament drives scholars and scientists to their conclusions, as much as evidence and logic." -- Michael Shermer.

"Modern understanding of the universe is built not only on images from giant telescopes but also on the rivalries and stubborn opinions of those who collect and interpret the data." -- Corey S. Powell reviewing Michael Hawkins' *"Hunting Down The Universe"*.

"Whatever the real state of the universe, science's is never steady. It proceeds not by inevitable reason but by a contentious mangle of agenda, temperament, group psychology and, yes, repeatable measurement. Discoverers remain intractably human, however their universe came into being or wherever it might be going." -- Richard Powers.

"Science and its practitioners can be as selective as history and historians. ... Each may try to support their positions with bits of scientific scaffolding. But once you realise the need to bring the same scepticism to science as

to a political or theological argument, you are halfway to a more informed decision." -- Barbara Amiel

Swerving back to astronomy, though, I didn't know all of his when I first tumbled into a problem with how scientists deal with things. I knew I'd wandered onto a path loaded down with soft cowpatties, though. It started out with a mere terminology problem. While the term "further refinements" may be perfectly okay, and mean exactly that, sometimes a further refinement is merely a perceived correction. Which results in a new ... shall we say ... pronouncement. This kind of thing -- too many refinements and too many pronouncements -- made the astronomers look bad, because it didn't appear that they were consistent when individually offering up different answers to the same question.

The first major question I had concerned the distance from the earth to the sun. On average, that is, because otherwise the answer depends on Earth's position in orbit. The NASA site will tell you that astronomers *"agreed to a made up unit of distance called the Astronomical Unit (AU). They also decided that Earth to Sun (ES) is 1 AU."* This is an important number which impacts a metric ton of other calculations. So how far is the Earth from the Sun? 93 million miles, roughly, right? 92,870,000 was the last refined pronouncement, and that was in 1911.

Prior to that we've seen lots of numbers in our classroom textbooks. Among them we've had 13 million miles (Kepler), 82 mil (Roemer), 100 mil (Huygens), 91 mil (Foucault), 93 mil (Gill), and even one determination of 95,298,260 miles which, you must admit, sounds very precise.

This wouldn't do. Too many "further refinements" and "pronouncements" on the subject and astronomers felt it

necessary to obtain some badly needed cooperation. So they set up a dogma refinery in Paris in 1911 and voted on the most likely distance from the Earth to the Sun. What? Wait a minute, they voted on it? Well, yes. From *The AD 2000 Æther Theory. Absolutely Æther. The Basics - CHAPTER SIX SEEKING THE SPEED OF LIGHT*, 2000 AD, Robert Lanigan-O'Keeffe, Sydney, Australia: "*The 1911 Paris Conference adopted a value of 92,870,000 miles (149,450,000 Km) . Immediately , this change to the orbital diameter would change the (1838) distance measurements to the closest stars and Römer's 976 timing discrepancy , giving light speed a new value , of around 190,307 miles per second (306,205 km/sec).*"

If you'll refer to your copy of *The Universe Around Us* by Sir James Jeans (you'll have to; I couldn't find my copy the last time I moved...), I'll tell you of two things in it based on some notes I took a long time ago.

Look at the footnote on page 23. I say page 23, but of course it's probably a different page in your copy. Sir James Jeans spills the beans. The footnote says there was a conference of astronomers in Paris in 1911. They "adopted" 92,870,000 miles as "the most likely value" for the mean distance from Earth to Sun. 92,870,000 miles. A number no doubt as accurate and precise as the process which generated it.

Okay, now flip ahead to page 227 in my missing copy of *The Universe Around Us* by Sir James Jeans. It reveals that with a slowness comparable to the second coming of Christ, our planet is drifting away from its primary and "*exact calculation shows that its average distance from the Sun increases at the rate of about a metre a century*".

This means that by "*exact calculation*" we're able to identify an annual difference of one centimetre in a

length of 92,870,000 miles which has been "adopted" as "*a most likely value*". As Eric Frank Russell once noted, "*If this be part of science then this part shall be defined: it is manifest twaddle.*"

In 1941, according to *SCIENCE-SUPPLEMENT VOL. 94, No. 2447*, "*Astronomers were considerably shocked to find, according to their most recent measurements, that the sun is more than 100,000 miles farther from the earth than was previously supposed. These measurements now give its mean distance as 93,003,000 miles in place of the formerly accepted 92,870,000 miles.*" I've seen other numbers, as well, meaning apparently that further refinement continues to be overwhelmingly unavoidable, but I don't know how much any of them have, or will, catch on. 92,870,000 was, indeed, the last refined pronouncement. As voted on. I wonder if that election was rigged, too?

Now I wonder if counting one-quarter of the sky, and then multiplying by four to determine the number of stars, was all that unscientific.

This is just one example, of course. I've rigorously held back on talking about more (like, say, the 1983 ERAS satellite and what its pretty-much ignored findings mean to astronomical distances). No, that's okay, don't thank me.

So Hubble pretty much pegged it when he said that "*equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure science.*" And, tossed in for free is this quote: "*'We astronomers really can be spherical bastards,' said one scientist. Not having heard the term before, I leaned over and inquired what he meant. 'Spherical bastard,' he repeated, 'a term left over from Edwin Hubble's day to describe a malcontent from any angle.'*" -- Eric J. Chaisson, *THE HUBBLE WARS*

All I Want For Christmas is a Hand Grenade

by Curt Phillips



Here's a true Christmas story for you...

By the way, you'll be amused to know that my hospital's Nursing Dept. had a Christmas story contest last year and a shortened version of this was my entry. Not only did I not win but I got a sharp note back from the contest judge taking me to task for "mocking the spirit of Christmas." That was better than the first prize would have been!

Ah, Christmas. Who among us cannot say that our memories of Christmas - particularly those from our childhood - are the most vivid memories we have? Mine certainly are. Some of them are very good memories indeed; walking through the woods with my Dad to cut the Christmas tree, families gathering at Grandma's house in the mountains of East Tennessee, huge feasts of wonderful things to eat, and mounds of vibrantly wrapped presents under a massive fir tree in Grandma's living room. Other memories are maybe not so good, like the Uncle who drank a little too much and insisted that we all join him in singing along with an Elvis record of "Blue Christmas" - a family Christmas tradition which usually inspired Granddaddy's old bloodhound to howl throughout the entire record. Who could blame the poor animal? We were truly awful on that song.

Years later when I was working on my first real job as a movie theater projectionist I ran a film called A CHRISTMAS STORY. It's a classic now and you'll certainly see it in the TV listings this holiday season. If you've ever seen it, you'll have a small idea of what Christmas was like in my family when I was growing up, but Christmas in the Phillips family in those days was a lot busier and a lot louder. Let me tell you about one such Christmas.

It was the Christmas of 1972 and was memorable for a number of reasons, but the most important one as far as I was concerned was that my Uncle Buddy had just returned from 6 years in the US Marine Corps. You'll recall that those were years when the United States in general and the US Marine Corps in particular were rather deeply involved in the War in Vietnam, but don't worry; this isn't going to be *that* kind of Christmas story. Uncle Buddy was

home now, his war and service over. Dad had driven into Bristol to pick up his younger brother at the bus station and brought him directly home to the Christmas Eve family gathering at Grandma's house. He made a terrific entrance dressed in his green Marine Corps uniform, and the first thing he said to all of us after he came in through the front door was, "Ya'll take a good look at this uniform. It's the last time you'll ever see it on me", and 5 minutes later he was in his more traditional blue jeans and flannel shirt.

On Buddy's last leave a couple of years earlier I got him off to myself and started asking him a lot of questions - the kind a 12-year old usually asks - about the Marine Corps, and admitted when he asked that I was thinking about joining up myself when I was older. He looked at me a moment and then said, "Curt, let's go fishing". And so we did. We drove over to the lake, and took out a boat and after we'd gotten our lines wet, Uncle Buddy said, "Curt, let me answer all those questions you had and tell you some of the things I've seen lately. I'm not going to tell you a single thing that I don't believe to be the gospel truth, but I might as well start by telling you that I'm going to do my best to talk you out of any notion about you ever joining the Marine Corps". And so we passed the afternoon talking and fishing. Lots of questions were asked and answered. Some of it I didn't particularly accept at the time, but the years have convinced me that Uncle Buddy had been true to his word and had told me nothing but the truth.

So I never joined the Marine Corps, but between the times I grew up in and the strong military tradition in my family I maintained a lifelong interest in the military and in national service and eventually found other ways to

serve my country. But that's a topic for another article. On this Christmas of 1972, Uncle Buddy was home for Christmas and after everyone had exchanged greetings and been served up with another round of pie and coffee, Buddy gave me the high sign and sent me back to his room to fetch one of his duffel bags from which he dispensed several presents to various family members. I got a camouflaged combat helmet - which I'm pretty sure he was supposed to turn in before he mustered out of service, but then Buddy had been an MP in the Marines and probably got away with a couple of things here and there. And later that night when we went out to the front porch (where the men-folk in our family traditionally gathered to do our pocket knife swapping and talk about trucks and dogs and politics and other such business that the ladies wouldn't allow us to discuss in polite company indoors) Buddy brought out a real prize, sure to delight any 14-year-old American boy who'd been raised on John Wayne movies and re-runs of *Combat!* on TV. My Uncle Buddy gave me a USMC grenade simulator that he'd liberated on his way out of the service. Now, perhaps I should explain that this wasn't one of those fake metal grenades that you see in Army surplus stores that don't have an explosive charge; this was a fully operational grenade explosive that lacked only the metal jacket that would - under field conditions - become shrapnel when a combat grenade explodes. This thing was meant to get Marine recruits used to the explosion itself and was commonly used in boot camp. Personally, I thought an actual Marine Corps grenade simulator was the perfect gift for the 14 year old nephew of a Marine, but about that time my mother came looking for me with the remarkable instinct that she displays (even today) whenever I'm standing around examin-

ing explosive devices. Mom assessed the situation instantly and announced in clear and ringing tones that I would *not*, in fact, maintain possession of that grenade. She turned her steely glare from me and aimed it at Uncle Buddy.

“And *YOU*,” she intoned. “What were you *thinking*”, giving a hand grenade to a *child*?” I started to object to this scurrilous assessment - I was 14, after all - but on further consideration I thought it best to revisit that particular point on another occasion. Sparks seemed to be shooting from her eyes just then.

Uncle Buddy - ever the southern gentleman - didn't want to argue with my Mom, but then he *did* feel the need to correct her mistake. “Well actually, Hazel, it isn't a hand grenade *as such*. It's just a grenade *simulator*. You see, it lacks the iron jacket that turns into shrapnel when...” But Mom wasn't listening. Dad had come onto the porch and suddenly found himself being consulted on a parenting matter.

“Look at what your brother just gave your son! A hand grenade! A hand grenade!” Mom simply ran out of words at this point and so she stopped, took a deep breath, and waited for a reaction. Dad looked over and examined the gift, still in my hand. “Well actually, that isn't a hand grenade,” he began. “It's a grenade simulator. You see, it lacks the metal jacket that would...” But he didn't get as far as Uncle Buddy had. Dad stopped and studied the look on Mom's face, then turned to me and said, “Best give it back, son.” Well, there was no arguing with that, and so I handed the gift back to Buddy, and Mom retired from the field, victorious.

There followed an awkward few moments as my dad, uncle and I stood there on the porch watching the light

snow falling through the trees all around Grandma's house and thinking about trucks and dogs and hand grenades.

“I guess these simulators *are* a little dangerous to have around at that”, ventured Uncle Buddy.

“Yep,” said Dad. “I'll bet that thing could blow a man's arm clean off”. I couldn't help but feel that these comments were being aimed rather directly at me even though I hadn't commented on the matter at all up to that point. My mind had been following a different track.

“So Uncle Buddy”, I asked in a reasonable and inquiring voice. “What do you reckon you'll do with that simulator now?”

“Oh, I guess I'll have to get rid of it somehow before some of the little kids get to prowling around and run across it.” I had a large pack of wild cousins in those days. They ranged from toddlers to first graders and seemed to always be darting around Grandma's house so fast that I never actually got an accurate count of them before they all grew up and started having kids of their own, but there was constantly a handful of them underfoot and rummaging around in closets and cabinets just to see what they could get into. Earlier that day I'd opened a dresser drawer in one of Grandma's guest rooms and found one of them packed in there like a Charlie McCarthy dummy packed in Edgar Bergen's suitcase. My shriek was exactly the reaction the little monster had been hoping for and he leaped out of the drawer and shot off through the house to brag to the others about nearly scaring me to death. I wondered for a moment exactly who it was who'd taught them all such irritating habits. Then I remembered, and hastily turned my attention back to the matter at hand.

“Get rid of it? Good idea. I suppose you could burn it”, I mused.

“Better not,” said Dad. “Might make an awful mess as it burns. Toxic fumes; and that might well set it off anyway.”

“Could bury it.” Uncle Buddy remarked.

“You could,” I agreed. “Of course, the ground’s apt to be frozen right solid in this weather.”

“True, true,” Dad and Uncle Buddy answered, together.

“Well then,” I said, clapping my hands together briskly, “we might as well set it off.”

“Set it off?” said Buddy.

“Why sure!” I replied as if the matter were settled. “You don’t want to keep it around for too long, and it’d just be wrong to waste it...” (I was appealing to their higher instincts, here). “I mean,” I asked, “you have set one of these things off before haven’t you? You do know how, don’t you?” But I was wasting the arm-twisting. The idea had caught fire in both Dad’s and Uncle Buddy’s minds and had taken on a life of its own.

“Curt”, said Uncle Buddy. “You run into the house and warn everyone that we’re going to be setting off a firecracker out here and not to worry when they hear a loud noise.” I did just that, and of course the only thing I could possibly have said that would have gotten all my cousins out of doors any faster would have been if I’d told them that I’d just dropped a bag of candy out on the porch. They came boiling out of the house like hornets out of a hive that you’d accidentally hit with a stick, and were closely followed by all my aunts and uncles and grandparents and assorted friends of the family plus a Baptist preacher who’d been making the rounds on the mountain that afternoon. They were causing quite a stir out there but Uncle Buddy, of course, was fresh out of the Marines and soon had most of them standing still and away from

where he planned to throw the grenade.

Now, my grandfather’s home was on Holston Mountain in East Tennessee, and consisted of his large, solidly built house in the middle of a heavily wooded area alongside the Cherokee National Forest with a barn and a few outbuildings and not much else for a mile or two around us except trees so we figured that there wasn’t very much we could hurt by setting off this simulator out back. Uncle Buddy took up the classic Marine Corps pose (which I recognized from an old episode of GOMER PYLE), pulled the pin and heaved that simulator high over Grandfather’s shed and back into the woods behind it. It was a beautiful throw and I heard it thunk onto the ground behind the shed. “BLAM!” said the grenade. It had detonated about 10 yards from the other side of the shed and though it lacked the shrapnel, it nonetheless packed as much of a blast as a quarter stick of dynamite. All the windows in the shed shattered. The windows in my grandmother’s kitchen shook and rattled. There was a creaking sound and we watched as a 30 foot tall pine tree alongside the shed fell over and crashed to the ground. Two birds fell dead out of another tree in the backyard. A dog that I didn’t recognize shot out of the shed caromed off my Aunt Flo’s leg and knocked her to the ground as it passed her and disappeared through the woods on the other side of the house. Nobody ever saw that dog again.

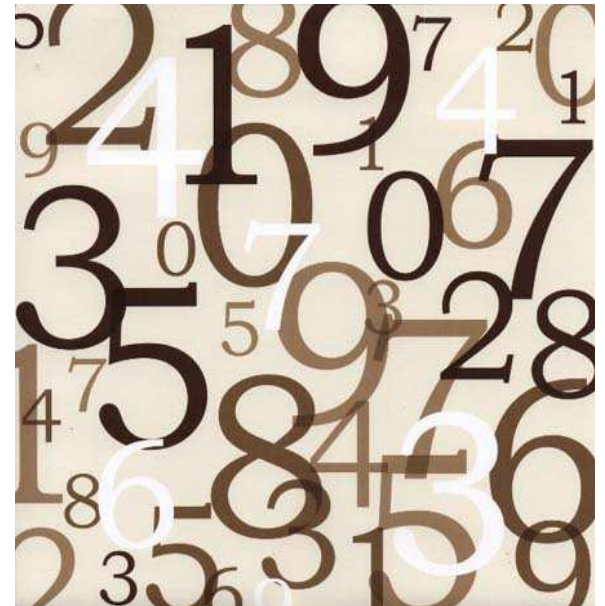
As we listened to the dog’s yelping rapidly growing fainter while it descended Holston Mountain, Uncle Buddy turned to my mother and said, “There, you see Hazel? It was just a toy.” As we rode home that night I remember thinking that all in all, it had been a very successful Christmas visit and I was well satisfied.

By The Numbers

BY THE NUMBERS

John Purcell

JOHN PURCELL



*No, you can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
And if you try sometime you just might find
You get what you need*

*Mick Jagger, Keith Richards ("You Can't
Always Get What You Want", 1968)*

Released on album Let It Bleed (1969)

While I definitely agree with the existentialist sentiment of this lyric, I had to get what I really needed - and wanted - in late May of 1999. Simply put, I needed blood. Literally. Want to know why? Well, since you're all gathered here, let me explain.

There is one rather important event in my life that I have not discussed in my recent incarnation in fandom. In

short, in 1999, a year my wife and I were glad to see go bye-bye, I almost went bye-bye myself. The next time you see me at Corflu - or maybe FenCon this coming October up in Dallas - ask to see my surgery scar. It's a beautiful reminder of my near death that May.

That should get y'all interested. A bit of warning: some of the descriptions to follow are a bit blunt and graphic, so don't eat anything while you're reading this.

Essentially, on Sunday, May 23rd that year, after a lovely barbecued dinner of lemon chicken (one of my grilling specialties) at our Marshalltown, Iowa home, I felt a bit queasy in the stomach, went to the bathroom, and had one of those liquid diarrhea blowouts that lasted all of five seconds. It left me feeling very light-headed, so I figured, "Sheesh, maybe I ate too much or the chicken wasn't cooked enough." Asking around, nobody else felt that way,

so I told my wife that I was going to lie down and let this pass. Within the next half hour, I staggered back into the bathroom for yet another liquid magma explosion.

“Man,” I thought. “This has *got* to be the flu.” The rest of that night and next day were spent in bed; Valerie called in sick for me Monday morning before she left for work herself after dropping our 3-year old son Daniel off at the daycare.

Needless to say, even though I need to say it, I didn’t have any more of those nasty blow-outs, but the queasiness and light-headedness didn’t get any better. Early Monday, I got up to let the dogs outside to do their doggie duties, staggering to the backdoor the whole way. In the kitchen I nearly passed out, so I sat down, leaning against the wall while waiting for the dogs to finish and come back inside. Then I crawled back to bed. Seriously. I really *crawled* on all fours all the way from the back door to the bedroom, with Timmy and Pulcinella escorting me like a pair of canine dolphins. Tuesday was more of the same, so Valerie took me to the doctor to figure out what was going on. After describing my symptoms, our lady doctor asked, “What did your diarrhea look like? Was it brown, black, or what?”

“Black,” I answered from the supine position on the examination table, then a moment later added, “Kind of a blackish brown, actually.”

“Ah-hah,” she ah-hahed. “Pull down your pants and roll over.” Since I was in no condition to argue - this was a phrase that Val hadn’t even said to me in almost a year, if ever - I did so, and felt the doctor’s gloved fingers probing my anus for only a few seconds.

Straightening up, she then asked me to stand up. So I did. Rather I “tried” to stand up. The doctor attempted

to take a standing BP (blood pressure) on me, but the light-headedness immediately returned as my heartbeat starting racing. My face felt clammy, and I sat right back down. The doctor sighed, and pronounced, “I believe you have had a discharge of an internal bleeding. A lot, too. I can’t get a standing BP on you, and that’s not good. We’re going to get you to the hospital.”

My wife and I looked at each other. Valerie said, “Okay. I’ll drive him over.”

“No way,” the doctor emphatically said. “He needs an ambulance.”

“Oh, shit!” I swore dejectedly, thinking of the insurance copayment we’d have to shell out for that. All of our attempts to dissuade our doctor from this need were in vain, so about ten minutes later I was loaded onto a gurney and wheeled out the clinic’s back door - going out through the lobby probably would have freaked out the waiting clientele - into an ambulance waiting to whisk me off to Marshalltown Medical and Surgical Center.

Now, it really must be understood at this time that MMSC is not where any sane human being would want to have life-saving surgery performed. An equestrian veterinarian would probably do a better job. No matter. I was admitted to Intensive Care, promptly hooked up to an IV, and a unit of blood was started to replenish my blood supply and bring my BP back up. After two and a half days in ICU there, during which I received 3 units of blood, the doctors couldn’t quite figure out what in the heck was going on. (Like I said, a horse doctor would have known better.) I did, however, get scoped, but the surgeon couldn’t see anything and didn’t impress us anyway, so we opted to get another and more learned opinion. Eventually it would turn out that the MMSC surgeon would have operated *in*

the wrong spot! Thank Great Ghu my wife Valerie stepped in and said “NO!” to the idjits at MMSC.

See, Valerie used to worked for a specialist clinic called DGA in Des Moines, Iowa in the early 90s as their receptionist - “Diagnostic Gastroenterology Associates, can I help you?” - so she called them, and the head honcho, Dr. James Callahan, said “bring John to Mercy here in Des Moines.” So on Thursday morning, May 27th, I was transported by a 45-minute ambulance ride from Marshalltown to Mercy Hospital in Des Moines. They had me laying on my back and facing out the rear of the van so I could see only the overcast sky, and felt every bump and hill on that stretch of Highway 330. If I hadn’t been so sick from loss of blood I would have been sick from losing my lunch or breakfast during that trip - that is, if I had eaten anything, which I hadn’t since Sunday evening except for a couple bowls of chicken noodle soup on Monday and Tuesday.

Once ensconced in the intensive care unit at Mercy Hospital, I had the distinct pleasure of having every orifice in my body entubed in some way. I had tubes going in and out of my body in various locations. They were in the back of both hands, a vein in my left arm, up my nose, down the throat, plus I was catheterized (thank Ghu I was unconscious when *that* was inserted!) and butt-bagged - well, actually a colostomy bag was installed. Lordy, but I must have been a sight. I had no clue what was happening except that I needed surgery. Throughout all of this, I was fairly whacked out on pain meds, so I had no idea what the heck was going on except the basic knowledge that Something Was Seriously Wrong.

At Mercy, two more gastroscopings were performed, on Thursday and Friday, looking for that elusive spot of leakage; nothing definitive was revealed. The X-rays weren’t

very helpful either, so the only way the doctors could really find the spot - the surgeon had a pretty good idea (in the lower stomach area where it connected to the upper colon), but had to know for sure - was to open me up and poke around. So while all of these diagnostic procedures were being done, more blood was being pumped into my body.

Factoid: The hemoglobin count of an adult 45 year old male should be around 19; mine was a mere 3.4. If you do the math, this meant I had lost an estimated 80% of my total blood volume. Technically, I should have been dead. Most people don’t survive that kind of blood loss. Needless to say, everybody was puzzled as hell as to why there wasn’t a white sheet covering my face. (Valerie still threatens to do this, but those are other stories to tell some year.)

And so during the day, my blood pressure and hemoglobin count would go up because I was receiving fresh blood, but then both would gradually go down at night when the transfusion drip was stopped. This meant that there was a leak inside me *somewhere* and they couldn’t pin the location down. This puzzled the doctors. This worried my wife. This didn’t register on me at all since morphine and assorted other goodies, like anticoagulants and whatever, make for a *wonderful* drug cocktail. I wasn’t feeling or caring about anything.

My surgeon was Dr. Thomas Condoleon, and he looked like a young Andre Agassi (the former tennis star) complete with the shaved head and perpetual 4-day growth of dark beard. Condoleon had been recommended by Dr. James Callahan, who was now the senior surgeon at DGA, describing the Agassi look-alike as an “excellent diagnostician with steady hands.” Well, that would help.

Doctors Condoleon and Callahan - an Italian and an Irishman; there's a great medical combination: "would you like either wine or whiskey in your IV drip?" - took Valerie aside before the surgery on Saturday morning and told her that things weren't looking good. In fact, Val told me a few days later that they had warned her that I "might not make it." Another fact I haven't mentioned yet and should have is that I had been listed as in critical condition since first being admitted to the hospital up in Marshalltown. The doctors were thus a bit doubtful of my survival by this point.

That pretty much said it all about my condition. It was a very sobering thought, even for someone in my drug-hazy mind.

Even so, that day an answer was finally discovered. Naturally, I really don't remember anything about the actual surgery, either before or after, except that marvelous head-separating effect when the anesthesiologist injected the anesthetic agent into my IV. A moment later all was black, and the next thing I do remember is waking up in post-op with even *more* tubes in me - as if I needed them - and electrodes attached to various points of interest on my body. My entire abdomen felt numb, almost as if it wasn't there. I could barely move my head to even try to see what they had done to me. What I could see was a mite disconcerting.

It was a zipper. Well, that's what it looked like. From just below the sternum and extending in a line that finished on the top lip of my belly button was a series of large metal surgical staples covered with steri-strip tape. My counting skills weren't operational yet, so when my wife came into the recovery room I pointed at them and somehow croaked out, "How many?"

"Nineteen," Valerie answered. "You look like they could unzip your belly and dive right back in if you start leaking again."

"Nnnrrff" That was me trying to laugh. "Ouch!" That was me after trying to laugh.

Valerie held my hand. "You were in surgery for almost three hours," she informed me. "Dr. Condoleon told me that you did very well, but he said that he had to look around for awhile to find the bleeder, but he finally found it. He said it was hiding behind an ulcer."

Doctors Condoleon and Callahan then joined us. They both looked relieved, and even though they explained the whole procedure to us, I can't remember much else since my brain was still non-functional from the after-effects of full anesthesia. Over the next few days, I was able to cobble together the following tale of the surgery.

Once Condoleon and crew opened me up, he literally felt his way through my abdomen, moving my innards around, trying to find that bleeder. Once he did, it was a simple matter of sewing the hole, which was in an artery hiding behind a self-healed ulcer in my duodenum. I never knew I had this ulcer, but they said that this sort of thing is quite common; small ulcers occur frequently, sometimes closing themselves. In my case, a modest-sized ulcer self-healed, but the built up scar tissue had scraped a hole in this adjacent artery. Thus, apparently what had been happening inside me was every time my heart beat, blood was pumped out this hole and into my abdominal cavity. It wasn't a very big hole, but over time, that's all it needed to cause a major league problem. Eventually this blood built up to the point where it had to go *somewhere* like a clogged sink drain, so out it came at high speed on that just-passed Sunday afternoon. During my recovery is when

Val and Dr. Condoleon informed me of just how much blood they figured I had lost, and why they were still continuing transfusions to rebuild the supply. The best analogy I can think of is having a car's radiator completely flushed and refilled. In fact, they couldn't operate until my hemoglobin count, blood pressure and other vitals had reached a certain level so that my body could tolerate the surgery with a reasonable chance of survival.

My recovery from surgery took awhile, but considering that I had lost so much blood it really didn't surprise me. The fact that I was alive at *all* was the surprise. I remember walking the ICU hallway twice each day for therapy - must exercise those muscles, legs and all - chatting with my wife, nurses, and other patients. The following Tuesday broke drab and gray and, during my mid-morning walk, we were sitting on a bench in Mercy ICU's third floor outdoor garden and looking at the flowers and potted trees and listening to the birds singing, then suddenly I started to cry.

"I can't believe this," I sobbed into my hands. "I almost died. I nearly left you and the kids."

Holding me, Valerie said, "You didn't know. There was really nothing you could have done about it. Nobody knew."

Hanging my head in wonderment, I tried wiping tears away. "You would have been alone. Our kids wouldn't have had a father anymore. I'd never see them grow up." The thoughts were almost as numbing as the pain medication, and the tears kept coming. It was difficult to talk while crying, so I just sat there and let them abate on their own.

"But you're still here," my wife quietly said. "That didn't happen."

"It sure makes me wonder why I'm still here, then."

"There must be a reason." Valerie then added, "'To every season...'"

"'Turn, turn, turn,'" I finished the quote, winced at the pain of laughter. "Don't get ecclesiastical on me."

"I always did like that song."

"Electrified folk, circa 1968, or something like that," I said, glanced at Val's wristwatch, then stood up. "Well, let's keep walking. Let's get back to my room for *The Price Is Right*. I'm feeling lucky today." Just before we stepped back into the ICU hallway, the sun briefly came out. I took that as a very good sign.

On Wednesday, June 2nd, my condition was upgraded to fair. I was finally off the critical list. All of my vital signs were improving, although the dipstick showed I still needed a couple more quarts to reach the full mark. That milestone was finally reached on Friday. The IV that had been keeping me alive was removed on Wednesday night, but they left the connection tube in the back of my left hand "just in case." Well, I could understand that even though I didn't want to think about it. This meant that I could finally eat *real food*. Unbelievably, even the thought of hospital food sounded appetizing.

One of the most memorable moments of this entire experience was having that first taste. I had not eaten anything for over ten days, and my initial "meal" consisted of a liquid diet, which was to be the deal for the next two days. I could not be discharged until I had eaten - and kept down - solid food. So my first dinner was chicken broth, lemon-lime Jello, and room temperature 7-Up.

I have to admit that first sip of chicken broth tasted like manna from heaven. Waves of gastronomic euphoria washed over me, my mouth rejoicing in the abundance of

FLAVOR long absent. If taste buds could talk, mine would have probably screamed “Yummy!” over and over. The coolness of the Jello was delightful, so I let it lie on my tongue, letting it swish all over the insides of my mouth before swallowing. Unbelievable how good a little meal like that could be such a feast. As the old saying goes, “You don’t know what you’ve got until it’s gone.” While enjoying my first meal, an old Rolling Stones song played in my head. Dinner music is always a good idea.

Friday evening Dr. Condoleon figured it was time to remove the abdominal drainage tube he had installed; like its name implies, this “short” 6-inch nylon tube was suctioning out excess blood not only still left from the initial leak, but also sucking out blood caused by the surgery. So when Condoleon saw that hardly anything was draining, he decided to take it out.

But this really meant “pulling” it out.

“Will it hurt?” I asked.

“Not really,” he said. “It’s more like a burn since the tube will be rubbing against the sides of the incision.”

“Do I get a local anesthetic?” I asked.

“Naw. Just breath rapidly when I say so. You’ll be fine.”

Oh, great, I thought. *This ain’t gonna be fun...*

Condoleon leaned over me from the right side of my bed, Valerie held my left hand, a nurse stood by with a surgical tray, and then the doctor spoke that dreaded word: “Ready?”

Fuck me, Hannah, this is gonna hurt real bad, I just know it... I exhaled, said, “Yeah.”

“Good,” he said, “start breathing rapidly NOW!” and started tugging on the tube.

Sweet Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! but it *burned*, made me yelp while gasping for breath. It felt like he was pulling for

minutes, even though I know it was only a few seconds. That six-inch tube felt like it was more like six-*feet* long. But it was soon over; the burn flamed out, and a quick suturing of the hole fixed it up nice and neat, like patching a flat tire. The scar from this drainage spot is still visible, in case you’re interested.

Things would eventually turn out just fine. Both doctors Condoleon and Callahan came in to visit each day over that final weekend, checking on my progress, and remarking on my remarkable recovery. To this day I am positive that there’s an article about me in some AMA journal discussing the life-saving surgery of this patient who should not have survived his initial blood loss.

I was finally discharged on late Sunday morning, June 6, 1999. My entire hospital stay had been nearly two weeks long, and when I consider the cold, hard data, it is all really amazing.

- 1 Estimated blood loss: 80% of total volume.
- 2 Total number of units of blood received: 13.
- 3 Number of tubes in my body: 7.
- 4 Number of new holes created in my body: 4.
- 5 Number of days on critical list: 9
- 6 Length of surgery: three hours
- 7 No. of surgical staples shot into my abdomen: 19
- 8 First sight of wife and family in recovery room: priceless

Okay, so that last bit references a bit of crass commercialism, but it is so very true. It really was a delight to see them, even through the haze of post-anesthesia. I really must get a supply of that stuff someday...

The bottom line is that if you went by the numbers, I really should have died on the kitchen floor on Monday morning, May 24, 1999, in Marshalltown, Iowa, while wait-

ing for our dogs to finish their first pee and poop of the day. Why I didn't is anybody's guess.

What caused all this to happen? Well, thinking back about it from the vantage point of time, this becomes very obvious. It was a cumulative effect thing. I had just completed my first year of study for my Masters Degree in Applied Linguistics at Iowa State University in Ames, which was a 42-mile drive each way from Marshalltown. Besides pursuing that degree full-time, I was working full-time at Swift & Company, the pig packing plant in town, which meant 6 or 7 days a week, 10 hours or more each day, since I was in Maintenance Management Support. Meanwhile my home life entailed the care and feeding of my family: we had pets and three children; when all this went down, Penny was 14, Josie, 8, and Daniel was 3.

In other words, for nearly a year I lived a hectic schedule, averaging only 3 hours of sleep each night. I basically wore my body out, which created that ulcer, which self-healed, and the resultant scar tissue tore that hole in that artery. Not only that, but the physical nature of my job - lots of heavy lifting, running around the plant and all - aided my survival. How ironic. I was in pretty good shape thanks to working there, built up great endurance, and didn't smoke or drink, even ate healthily, too. We had a huge vegetable garden in our backyard, and tending that also contributed to my overall well-being.

Thus it was great to finally get back home and begin my convalescence. The following week I had an appointment to see Dr. Condoleon again down in Des Moines, but he noted emphatically that I could not return to work at the packing plant until my health was back to 100%. Technically, I was on short-term disability until after the 4th of July.

But all was not completely over and done with quite yet that Sunday.

This time it was nice to be able to sit up in the car while Valerie drove, and I enjoying watching the rolling fields of Iowa, ripe with growing stalks of corn and wheat, instead of only sky. The sun was out, and all seemed right in the world.

Once home, Val and the kids helped me up the stairs and into the bedroom, where Valerie propped me up with pillows, a couple books, television remote, with a TV tray at bedside. To quote an old John Denver song, "Gee, it's good to be back home again."

Apparently, the pets thought so, too, especially fat cat Marmalade, who at that time wasn't quite two years old but was already packing on the pounds. Once he saw the bed being set up with me in it, he happily thought, "Naptime!" and leaped up, landing squarely on my belly zipper.

"AAAUUUUGGGHHH!!!!!!!!!"

That was me screaming, as Valerie yelled, "MARMALADE!" grabbing for the cat. She missed, but I didn't.

"MMRRROOOooooowrrrrr.....!"

That was Marmalade, as I catapulted him across the room. He landed heavily on all fours, then skedaddled from the room to hide in a distant basement corner.

"I didn't know that cats could fly," Valerie commented.

"Neither did Marmalade," I said, picking up the remote. "Dumb cat!"

She smiled, said, "Welcome home to your madhouse."

I grinned. "Ain't that the truth," I agreed. "One man's family. Long may it wave."



by Lee Lavell



Indiana has been hit by extreme weather this spring, as I guess has much of the nation. In general this is not too unusual. This time we went directly from early spring to mid summer with almost nothing in between: from "*when are the leaves going to appear on the trees?*" to "*my ghod, it's ninety.*"

With this came tornado season. And rain. And more rain. And more and more rain. Indiana is used to a certain amount of this and rain was welcome because we had a fairly bad drought last summer. However this was too much of a good thing. As I am writing this the corn crop in Indiana is probably kaput since the fields are all underwater, twenty-nine counties are federal disaster areas because of flooding and there is more rain on the way in a couple of days. In Indianapolis it all started a couple of weeks ago with torrential rains. One area, near where I used to teach, was hit by an EF2 tornado which was embedded in seventy mile per hour straight line winds and blinding rain so that no one knew the tornado was even there until it hit. It wiped out, among other things, a

large apartment complex. It's just not there any more. Amazingly, no one was killed or even badly hurt but hundreds are now homeless.

I have had my own experiences with tornados. Before I was married I was living in an apartment in a four-family building. This was a part of a series of buildings similarly built. Every two building shared a set comprised of eight carports. One evening as I was returning from the hospital where I had been visiting my mother who had broken her hip, I encounter a hail storm. When I got home I called a girlfriend to tell her about this. While I was on the phone the weather-stripping on the windows began to buzz so loudly it was deafening. The building (and it was brick) began to shake. Then all got quiet, except for *crash crash crash*. I had apparently scared my girlfriend half to death because, without realizing it I had been screaming. The upshot of all this was that a tornado had passed through, destroying houses several blocks away to the west and east of me. It had picked up the carport roof for the apartments next to me and smashed it down on the cars inside.

From my carport group it picked up the roof, moved it over two or three inches, and set it gently back down. The crashes I had heard were all the metal trash cans coming back to earth. After that the tornado sirens went off. Thanks a lot.

Once I was out driving on the Interstate with my husband, Jim, and Jerry Hunter when I noticed that the sky was turning a very ominous color. I immediately decided that an Interstate was not a very safe place to be and took the next exit off. When I turned on the radio I heard that a funnel cloud had been sighted above the interstate near the exit where we had gotten off. Apparently it had been directly overhead so we just hadn't seen it. In fact, I have never actually seen a tornado (and like the purple cow, I hope I never do) although I have been unhappily close to several.

But tornados are not the only examples of extreme natural disasters that Indiana experiences. We have had both blizzards and very bad snowstorms. Once, when Jim and I were living on the west side of town, we had an ice storm hit just as I was returning home from work on the east side of town. I was promptly smashed by a teen-ager who didn't have the experience to know that you don't brake on sheer ice. This ice storm was followed by an eleven inch snow, then a few days later by a ten-incher. We were trapped in our house for several days with no access out of the streets where we lived because of the drifts. While watching television one afternoon we saw pictures of the snow-covered streets and neighborhoods. Jim remarked that one of them looked like our neighborhood. Then we saw a shot of a door, blocked by snow, with nothing but the top of a snow shovel handle leaning forlornly against it. It was our door. I guess there was a

photographer in the area who had been able to get out by a local airport's helicopter or something.

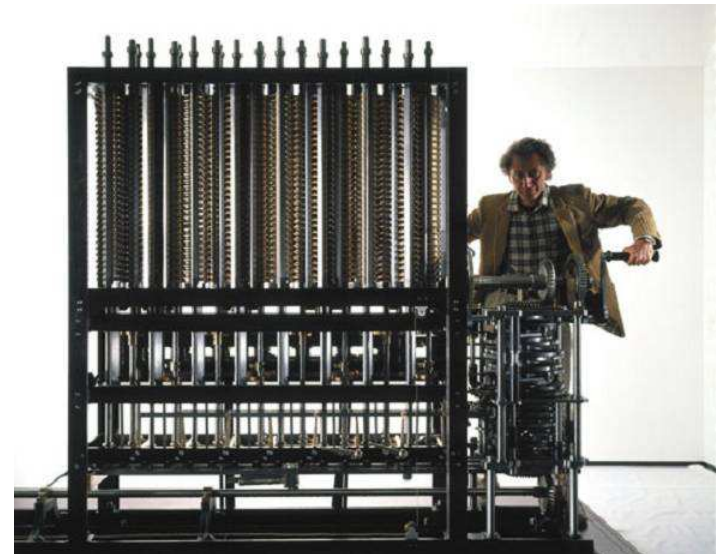
So, tornadoes, ice, snow, floods, what else is left for the Midwest. After all, we are a little far inland for hurricanes and tsunamis. Ah, but there is fog. How awful can fog be, you may ask. Imagine this. You are driving along a fairly narrow road in mild fog when it suddenly becomes so thick you can't see the road ahead of you. In fact, you can't see the front of your hood. You know the road is straight so you just keep going hoping it will let up soon. You can't stop. Any car behind you would never see you in time. There is no place to pull over. Then you notice something strange. Your windshield is dry, but you can feel your tires going through water, even though you are still on the road. Apparently I was driving through a rain cloud and it was raining about two feet off the ground.

Now let's go to one more disaster. This is not strictly weather but sort of fits into that category in a warped sort of way. What I am speaking of is earthquakes. One does not think of earthquakes in the Midwest but they do happen. In fact, we had one just a few months ago. It wasn't a bad one. Shook up a few people but no real damage. I vividly remember one earthquake we had here. It happened around thirty years ago, not too long after Jim and I had moved to this house. There had been a series of tornadoes that had gone through earlier and then the earthquake. We went to one of our rear windows to look out over the woods at the back of our house. There, roosting in the trees, were at least a dozen turkey vultures. We just hoped they weren't trying to tell us something.

There isn't much left that we can experience here. There are no volcanoes to erupt, at least not yet. I wonder if I should worry about meteors...

Found in Collection: The Next Generation

Chris Garcia



When last we heard from me, I was working at the Computer History Museum as the Assistant Curator, spending my day in the collection and working on very strange goals. Today, I'm the Assistant Curator at the Computer History Museum, spending my day in the collection and working on very strange goals. And this is a story of another thing we've recently received that's very fannish. OK, maybe not totally fannish, but mostly.

In the 1820s, there was this guy named Charles Bab-

bage. No one called him Charlie, but they should have really. He was a genius. He designed stuff, not only mechanical designs, but also systems like the British Mail Service. Well, not the total British Mail Service, but he did come up with several improvements. The dude was really smart and really hated street musicians. I mean he REALLY hated street musicians. He wrote long tirades against them and the story goes that he once chased one down the street. He was eventually awarded the Lucasian Chair,

which Newton had once held and today is the chair held by Stephen Hawking.

In the 1820s, Babbage was really unhappy with the state of the tables being used for British science. Back in the day, to do hard processes you had to use books full of numbers. The books were compiled by hand and would often have mistakes. I mean, if you might have a half-million numbers that are done by hand, a few are going to be wrong, but the thing is that if the first number is wrong, all the ones behind it are also wrong. That's a bad thing. Babbage decided that making a machine to create the tables. He designed a machine that would deal with the numbers and called it a Difference Engine.

Difference Engines compiled the numbers and did the math required to create the tables and would print them. Well, they would have if they'd ever been built. Babbage's designs were expensive, far more complicated than almost any other project that had been attempted, and Babbage had to stand as the symbol of the kind of genius that could design the magnificent machine. Sadly, he was bitter, argumentative and just plain foul. He didn't win any popularity contests and even though he made some portions of the engines, he never completed any. He also designed the Analytical Engine, which was much like a modern computer, only made out of gears and such.

In 1991, Doron Swade was the head curator at the Science Museum in London. He led a team to build the Difference Engine from Babbage's original plans using the kinds of systems that Babbage would have had available to him. The process went really well, but it took a bunch of years to complete the printer that Babbage had envisioned. So, it was completed in 2004, though the unfinished piece had been on display for more than a decade. The team that

put it together included a guy named Reg Crick, and he was the first guy to regularly turn the handle. And so, the newest standard unit recognised by the British Ministry of Standards is the Crick: the amount of energy needed to complete one cycle of the engine. The engine was seen by a lot of folks, one of whom was Bill Gates and another of whom was Nathan Myrsvold. He's a really rich guy who works for Microsoft I believe. Nathan decided he wanted an Engine too, and Doron put together another team.

This is where my museum comes in. We asked Doron to help us bring the Engine to the museum before it went to Nathan's living room. After a couple of years, we finally managed to get it to come.

Though not without problems. The thing was built in England and then sent over to the US from the Science Museum (where I saw it while on my TAFF trip) and the shipping caused some damage, though it was able to be fixed over time.

Now, there's an entire subgenre of science fiction called SteamPunk. You've heard of it, a style that was named by KW Jeter (whose book *Infernal Devices* is an excellent example) and early practitioners included Tim Powers, one of my heroes, and Mr. James Blaylock. It has continued and in literature it probably peaked in the mid-1990s. There are still books that can be called SteamPunk, including stuff from Jay Lake like *Mainspring*. The funny thing is that fandom has clomped on to SteamPunk deeply of late, especially the costumers. At CostumeCon this year, there were dozens of SteamPunk-inspired costumes, including some really cool ones. The best one in my eyes was Shawn Crosby's with a nifty tank and everything. There was a SteamPunk Ghostbuster at Wondercon that was really cool. Espana Sheriff and my Buddies Ace and

Lazer have SteamPunky outfits too. There's even a Steam-Punk convention here in Sunnyvale, the city in which I live.

The Babbage Engine didn't spark all of the love of SteamPunk, but it came at the exact right moment. We had an introduction for the public the weekend after CostumeCon. I sent around a hundred or so postcards about the convention. I told the folks at work that about 150 of my friends were coming, and they were expecting about 600 people to show up. No one expected my friends to come at all.

They were wrong.

The day turned out to be huge and about 300 of my friends showed. Even people who said they wouldn't be coming for sure showed up. There was SuRa, the artist for much of *Guidolon*, the Frank Wu cartoon where I am the voice of the title character. The museum had contacted *PEERS*, a local recreationist group, and they had a bunch of people. And then there were about twice as many folks who showed up in costume, many of whom were friends of my darling Linda. There was Lynn, the lovely lass who did an awesome SteamPunk outfit for both her and her son which included an awesome pair of rayguys. She's a really good costume girl as she's done some amazing things and always goes that extra step. She did Natasha Fatale from the *Bullwinkle* show and she even went so far as to have Natasha Fatale business cards printed up! I've even got one in my wallet to this day! *The Gusts*, master costumers and also volunteers for the Museum, came in fantastic costumes. They're good folks.

The day ended up with about 1800 people cycling in and out. It was the largest event we'd ever put on. The Engine was a huge hit, and still hundreds of people come every

week to see the thing running. We've only got it for a year, so people are coming from all over the place, and when it's gone, that's the last the public will see of it.

And fandom has responded. They stop by every week. A couple of Baycon regulars have been back three or four times. That makes me happy because it proves my favorite truth: that Fans are awesome!



Kings of Terror by Eric Mayer

What's the scariest thing you can imagine? That's the question Fitz-James O'Brien examined in his short story, *What Was It? A Mystery*.

I read the story when I was a child and I've recalled it ever since with a shudder of fondness. It was included in a collection of ghost stories I found on the bottom shelf of a bookcase in an obscure corner of the local library. I retain a lingering impression of an unnaturally thick, worn volume, a dark cover of some sort, but the title will not come into focus. Venturing into those pages, I encountered such classics as *Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad* by M. R. James and *The Beckoning Fair One* by Oliver Onions.



It was the Fitz-James O'Brien tale that made the biggest impression on me thanks to the question which was posed to the protagonist by a friend: "What do you consider to be the greatest element of Terror?"

There seems to be no easy answer:

"The question, I own, puzzled me. That many things were terrible, I knew. Stumbling over a corpse in the dark; beholding, as I once did, a woman floating down a deep and rapid river, with wildly lifted arms, and awful, up-turned face, uttering, as she sank, shrieks that rent one's heart, while we, the spectators, stood frozen at a window which overhung the river at a height of sixty feet, unable to make the slightest effort to save her, but dumbly watching her last supreme agony and her disappearance. A shattered wreck, with no life visible, encountered floating listlessly on the ocean, is a terrible object, for it suggests a huge terror, the proportions of which are veiled. But it now struck me for the first time that there must be one great and ruling embodiment of fear, a King of Terrors to which all others must succumb. What might it be? To what train of circumstances would it owe its existence?"

Although the conversation offers several other possibilities, such as disembodied voices, subsequent events reveal a better (or should I say "worse") answer, albeit not perhaps satisfactory. At least not to me.

The most interesting questions are the unanswerable ones. My friends and I participated in any number of debates about the King of Terrors, usually in dark places as night fell. We hunkered down by the bushes at the end of the lawn just out of reach of the porch light or huddled with a feeble flashlight in a tent as far from a house as possible. There was the summer we built a lean-to out of some discarded doors and boards we found at the edge of

the patch of woods by the field beyond our backyards. That was the best place to discuss terror.

From the lean-to we could see the bent and gnarled birch we liked to pretend was haunted. There was a mossy mound at the base of the tree. A grave obviously. As twilight deepened the white birch seemed to grow brighter as the surrounding vegetation faded into blackness, until finally it swam in our vision, an indistinct, luminous shape. If you squinted and blinked, the apparition moved, appeared almost to be drifting forward, no longer a tree but a cold exhalation from beyond.

Some nights our discussions of fear did not last very long and by the time we had reached the safety of a back porch we were too winded to talk any more.

When we were not interrupted by the malevolent spirit of an Indian, entombed for some reason beneath the roots of a birch tree in the suburbs, we couldn't reach any consensus on the nature of terror. No doubt because terror is mostly in the mind of the beholder.

My friend Jack reckoned that it would be especially terrible to be chopped to pieces by a maniac or skinned alive. I countered that physical torment, bad as it was, could not compete with the horror of a phantom -- something that chopped to pieces and skinned alive our very concept of reality. What scared me most was the sort of "wrongness" H.P. Lovecraft was always going on about. "Well," Jack riposted, "how about being chewed up, alive, in the mandibles of a giant ant. That would be painful and horribly, horribly wrong too."

He was partly right. My heart starts racing when I see a stinging insect. I keep a can of bug spray on the shelf in the office, just in case. But it is not the physical stinging that scares me. I'm not allergic, and having stepped on

honey bees in the grass and brushed against yellow jackets at the picnic table I know the pain is minor. What horrifies me is the insect itself. The appearance, and sound, and even the movement of a wasp is disturbingly inhuman. It is less the sting that frightens me than the contact with that dreadful "otherness."

The "other" is unknown, and unknowable to us, trapped as we are in our own perceptions of the world. My worst nightmares usually involved the unknown. I vividly recall the dream in which I climbed the precipitous, worn stairs to the second floor of the barn behind the house. Sitting in the lean-to, gazing into the weird shadows created by the flashlight and the irregular corners, I told Jack about the dream for probably the twentieth time.

"It was dim up there. I could hardly see. The floorboard creaked under my feet as I walked toward a big pile of boxes near the back of the barn. Suddenly I sensed... something. Somehow I knew there was something behind those boxes. Something....waiting for me....something... horrible...!" Now that was real terror. To emphasize my intellectual point I made a scary face and held the flashlight under my chin.

It isn't that physical trauma is not horrifying in its own way. I don't even like the sight of needles. But existential terrors are, to my mind, more fundamental. As I become older I tend to believe that terror, related to the supernatural, is nothing more than a metaphysical draught from the abyss of oblivion which surrounds our brief lives.

Jack refused to see my side of horror though. He allowed that something could be pretty spooky. "But I'll bet if you could see a ghost or have your head chopped off you'd pick the ghost."

I reckoned that might be so, but only because I'd be

afraid of having to join the ghost in the great unknown, after my head came off.

We never came to an agreement and unlike the characters in the Fitz-James O'Brien story, we never had any revelations. At some point the discussion always got around to whether ghosts could bite and how hard, if you'd get infected with ectoplasm and whether ghosts with razor teeth would be more or less frightening than less substantial phantoms that might tap you on the shoulder when you least expected it.

At the appropriate moment, when we had been scaring each other for long enough, someone would, without warning, turn off the flashlight. That wasn't the King of Terrors, but something like it.



PURE QUILL ^{bwf}



"As one who has used many word processors for many years on multiple platforms, MS Word is the single worst piece of crap ever foisted on a gullible public. It's not just clumsy and badly designed, but it is so actively inimical to all other software and operating systems that I suspect it was introduced by the KGB as a last gasp effort at guerilla warfare, just before the Soviet Union fell." -- Steve Brown, 1/31/01

Send those *Pure Quill Pixelated* black comments to <time3again at gmail dot com>. The editor will press a button and respond in blue. What could be fairer? LoCs should be in either email or RTF, which everyone has regardless of their computer's operating system. Please, no MSWord "DOC" LoCs.

"Word represents the ultimate victory of the C students from state colleges. It is ugly, difficult to use efficiently and effectively, prone to eating its own product, and produces visually unappealing results. But because you can take a monkey fresh out of the tree with feces still on his hands and teach him to write a memo in about 20 seconds, it is entrenched." -- Jim Hill, 3/17/02

To those who were at least mentioned in the last issue I sent an email which noted, in part: *"David Burton has ceased publication of the fanzine Pixel. And I've picked it up. In an old Astounding/Analog manner, the title is phasing over to Time And Again. Your name is in the issue. I figure you'd want to at least see that..."*

In the *What They've Been Saying Through The Years* section of my editorial I quoted June Moffatt as saying: "That's Dave Locke for you: Genius upon request." After 3+ decades comes this confirmation.

June Moffatt [ljmoffatt at verizon dot net](mailto:ljmoffatt@verizon.net) 5/28/08

Thank you! It has taken me several days to persuade our computer to display your zine. I've printed it out for ease of reading. I don't remember the quote, but it's quite accurate...

Mike Glicksohn tells me of his phobia. Paul Skelton, with whom Mike and I share an email correspondence (together, not separately), confirms that he has the same

phobia. So this is what my friends tell me...

Mike Glicksohn mglick at interlog dot com 5/17/08

Thanks, Dave. I did check it out, saw my name, was impressed by my brief glimpse of the issue but I'm constitutionally unable to read fanzines on-line. I know there's no reason for this mild phobia but it exists nevertheless so you won't be getting an actual response from me.

Sniff. Well, okay, just so long as it's constitutional. We've been doing away with too much of that in this country.

Old buddy Earl Kemp drops me a line.

Earl Kemp earlkemp at citlink dot net 5/17/08

Dave, I'm amazed you kept all those quotes about yourself but pleased to read them. Some goodies hidden there.

When former fan Mike Shoemaker introduced me to the *What They've Been Saying* concept I liked it so much I immediately began making entries into a notebook (initially a deadtree notebook, now an electronic one), which was a Good Thing as the original sources for most of the entries gradually became unavailable.

Initially I had a little trouble getting the zine to fit on the screen readably. I didn't have that problem with Burton.

Yes, I take some adjustment... In general, though I use Adobe occasionally and have a copy of it, my default application for PDF is the wonderful FoxIt Reader <<http://www.foxitsoftware.com/>> and it doesn't present the trouble you mention. Can't beat it for just plain reading.

Also does this mean you're stuck up there with nothing to do and have reverted to your past and become fanzine active again? Does it mean that you might even consent to writing stuff for other zine editors again? I couldn't get Burton to do it. I wonder if he can do it now.

He threatens to and, as he mentioned, has a few suggested things to write about.

As for my writing again, let's see how well I sustain being able to crank out editorials.

It's not a matter of having nothing to do up here, as I'd agreed to taking on *Pixel* before I knew about moving to Vermont. However, it's true there's not a lot for me to do. I briefly considered taking up hang-gliding here in the foothills of the Green Mountain National Forest, but decided there might be a pollution problem and I might be making the slopes too slippery for mountain climbers.

Anyway, it's great to see you so active and I see lots of your input into this zine and look forward to much more from you now that you're finally awake again.

No time. I need to take a nap.

What's next, Corflu...?

Alas, I don't think that will happen no matter where I

live unless, as with Corflu #4 in Cincinnati in 1987, another one takes place in my backyard. Too many problems with travel and they appear to increase dramatically over time.

Robert Lichtman rlrufen at yahoo dot com 7/1/08

By the way, I printed the new *TIME & AGAIN* but haven't had time to do more than skim it. Still catching up with the pile of fanzines handed to me at Corflu back at the end of April! Read your comments back at my LoC, though....

Well, darn, I had rotten timing for the first issue...

Wonder who's left in eAPA? I see from other chatter today that Tutihasi is trying to revive the N3F apa and she's also (as am I) in SNAPS, the Vegas-centric e-apa (and FAPA). I'm in FAPA, SAPS, SNAPS and L'Apassemblance (a merger of Lilapa and Apassemblance that took place in January 2007). That's plenty. Been FAPA SecTreas since '86.

That's a bunch! I was in eApa, Apanage, and FLAP, but dropped all three at once and, after a year, got arm-twisted into rejoining FLAP (Jackie Causgrove and I created it in 1980 and I must admit I missed being away from it). But one apa is all I can handle these days. Congrats on your stamina!

I liked *The Mind Thing*, too, but have never reread it. Like you, I have a soft spot for *Martians Go Home*, perhaps in part because it was the first FB I ever read, when I was thirteen, and all those "Fuck you, Mac"s endeared it to me

considerably. Too bad they made such a bad movie of it.

I have reread *The Mind Thing*, which was an educational experience because the first time I read it I didn't care for it. That got followed by two rereadings where I was impressed with the novel both times. Re *Martians Go Home* I was about 12 when I read the Bantam paperback edition in 1956, which I still have by the way. I was sick in bed and my mother picked it up because I was out of books to read...

Back in 1991 I wrote *Martians, Go Figure* for Roy Tackett's *Dynatron #100* (his final issue, and I wanted to be in it) reviewing both the novel and the movie. It's a glass



half full/half empty proposition. Taken together, the movie was a terrible rendition of the story. Taken separately, the movie was amusing enough on its own made-from-pocket-change level.

And I agree with you that "there are a lot more names from the past that could go up on the list." Oh yes -- that was by no means meant to be complete. Today's addition -- Jack Speer.

Definitely agreed.

I'd written to my long-time correspondent (and long time fan) Alex Yudenitsch in Sao Paulo, Brazil to say I'd finished the last issue of *Time And Again*: "I'm reasonably happy with it, though I still wish I'd persevered with more proofreading. Eyes have been acting up (ophthalmologist visit upcoming), so I gave up a bit prematurely." Alex sends a LoC and starts off with a comment on that.

Alex Yudenitsch alexyu at postpro dot net 02 Jun 08

On one hand, typos and such can be painfully glaring after something is in print; on the other, you know that this is nitpicking, because you can understand most text with some of the letters scrambled, as long as the first and last are correct -- so, I think this goes in the 'it'd be nice if...' category (and certainly won't get a zine classified as The Perfect Fanzine), but not worth worrying about. I didn't notice many things that needed correcting, anyway!

This must be the first LOC I've sent to an e-zine, and I immediately noticed an awkward problem: Since both the

zine and the LoC are on the same medium (the computer screen), switching between them to write the LoC is inconveniently tiresome. Maybe if I had a very large monitor, and placed both in side-by-side windows, it'd be easier? How do others do it? How do YOU do it?

I explained how I do it, which is switching back and forth between PDF and an open email, but he wasn't too thrilled with that method for himself. Anyone have elegant ideas on dealing with the matter?

But there are a few comments I can make on *P//I/X/E/L/#/1/7/ TIME & AGAIN #3...* And the first is a somewhat uncomfortable feeling, which should go away by next ish, due to the contents being so linked to the previous Dave (Burton); this is specially noticeable in the loccol, something akin to a woman who gets a new 'partner' and circulates among the usual places and people (some of whom don't know about the change) with no advance notice: The new guy has to 'step into the shoes' gracefully. In this case, the 'new Dave' (Locke) did fine; probably, knowing the people involved helped a lot!

If TAA was printed, it'd be a satisfying thickness, and the graphical aspect is pleasant; the 2-column layout is easy to read, too, but there is a dearth of illos, specially noticeable in Brad Foster's interview: For such a fanartist (though he's pro enough to have been selling through his Jabberwocky Press for many decades), not including a good sample of his work seems a shame! At least, it did have a Rotsler illo.

The *Dialog* with Brad had his illo and his photograph. The Rotsler illo was in my editorial. But, in saying this,

I've proved your other point, that it would have been excellent to have more Foster art than I did, especially in the *Dialog*.

A good and varied mix of columns and articles, though nothing caught my attention specially; Eric Mayer's *Notes From Byzantium* held the most interest for me.

I can imagine that something like, say, Civil or WW2 or Revolutionary War reenactment wouldn't hold a great deal of interest to someone living in Brazil. Or American B movies, or the American movie *Rambo*. Darn, I'm going to have to talk you into doing an article for me, just so you'll have something interesting to read in addition to Eric Mayer's column...

Don Anderson andermoose at frontiernet dot net
5/17/08

Great to see you back in the saddle and pubbing your ish. Instead of being limited to an occasional letter, you're now free to rant at your pleasure.

Let that New York acid rain influence your writing and the freedom of solitude give you all the time you need to hone your wit.

You remain the longest activefan that I ever met and that one visit, (along with Bruce Robbins) remains one of my favorite faanish memories. If I still rode a motorcycle, I'd be tempted to run over there to see you.

Yes, that early '60s visit is one of my favorite faanish memories, too. The third and fourth fans I met were you

and Bruce Robbins, at the same time and at your home in the Rochester, Nyok area. Probably 1961 or early '62. Then I went to Chicon III in '62 (Earl Kemp's Worldcon, I should note) and met hundreds of fans. I've got the wrap-around banquet photo from that, and of course I recognize more fans in it now than I did back then...

Something else I should note is that Bruce and I were teenagers and Don was in his mid thirties. Don was Fonzie to Bruce's and my roles as Richie and Potsie. A way cool dude...

Chris Garcia garcia at computerhistory dot org
6/2/08

I love LoLCats. When I saw *OGM Is Fulla Stars*, I nearly ripped myself open with laughter. I doubt I would have been laughing after that act, but it was still very funny.

The cover is gorgeous too. Maybe it's just me, but it felt like those covers we were getting with zines like *Holier Than Thou* in the 1980s that I love so much. I think that was a great way to start the new/old zine.

That was a 1981 pen&ink done on posterboard which hangs on one wall here in the T&A Editorial Office (and bedroom). It first saw publication in mid-2005 in the apazine I was doing at the time. Obviously a prime candidate for a genzine cover...

It's nice to have Dave around as the transition to Dave takes place, Dave. I have to say that Dave's stuff has always impressed me, and so has the stuff that Dave's been doing. Dave and Dave are both very good at the stuff they

do, and since I met Dave through eApa and then encountered Dave through Dave, I can say that it's all Dave's fault. Right Dave?

Well now, I suppose that's all my fault again. Someone has to take the blame.

That's a lot of stuff folks have said about you. I gotta say I'd be blushing if that many different and exceptional people ever decided to comment on my existence. I don't think they have, except maybe to say 'Who the hell is this Garcia kid?'

You're ubiquitous, Chris. The comment these days is "he's here, he's there, he's everywhere." I think it was at last year's Midwestcon that I heard a conversation



which went something like this: "Look, up in the sky!" "What is it, a bird, a plane?" "Chris Garcia?"

That's another great Brad Foster image. Of all the artists I'm glad to see working more and more with photoshop, Brad's gotta be number one. He's done amazing things for everybody lately. I've been lucky enough to get some art out of him and that makes me smile. Nice interview too. I recently came across some of the Jabberwocky Press stuff that Brad did. It's great fun. I love those minicomics and the larger things that Brad did too.

I should also take care to make sure that Kevin Standlee never reads this article for he'll jump right in and latch on to the discussion of Badge name vs. Con Graphic and so on. I actually don't like name badges and it's incredibly rare that I actually look at them to get a name. Of course, it also helps that I'm a big loud mouth. I gotta agree with Brad that I too like bigger cons. Different reasons, same outcome, I guess.

You can always get my attention by using the phrase B-Movie. I would have loved to have gone to that gathering, but I never seem to make it to many things about Film Fandom other than the Psychotronic Film Festival in Los Altos or the few film festivals I go to every year. I will make one point: Ray Wise may be best known for his recent works since *Twin Peaks* (usually playing some sort of heavy) but I will always have the image of Ray as Bodecker from *RoboCop*, which is arguably the most significant science fiction film of the 1980s.

I know The Queen of Trash a bit, and Mr. Lobo from *Cinema Insomnia*. Sara's an absolute Sweetheart and I've always enjoyed the times I've gotten to hang with her. I haven't heard from her in a while and I hope she and Lobo

are around for Silicon this year as they're always a blast.

To truly understand *Rambo*, you have to have been born during the Cold War, lived in America and survived on playing with GI Joes, listening to Heavy Metal and watching American cartoons. It's exactly the kind of kid who was featured in the film *Red Dawn* who would really understand why not only why Rambo did what he did, but why we all wanted to watch it. It's a terrible thing, but a true thing nonetheless.

The sad thing is, after 170-ish issues of *the drink tank*, three years in FAPA, having read and LoCed hundreds of zines, I still can't give an answer to what makes a good zine. I think it's something intangible, to me at least, where I hit a point and go OK, this is awesome. Maybe it's something deeper, but as everyone knows I am a Mobius Strip: all surface and no depth!

I have a lot of bad ideas. I heard about WWII reenactors only a few years ago (through Curt, in fact) and have known Civil and Revolutionary reenactors for years. Plus they have ties to Renn Faires and so much more. I remember that Michael Moore did a bit about people reenacting various war moments, such as Hiroshima, the Fall of Da Nang and Boxer Rebellion. Of course, I have different ideas. I want to reenact the Cola Wars. Coke vs. Pepsi on the field of battle. Then again, I also want to host a Harlem Renaissance Faire. I totally wanna play Langston Hughes!

There's little better than to end a zine on a Mayeresque note. He just puts things so much into perspective and then twists that a bit to make it feel right. I don't know how he does it.

Lloyd Penney penneys at allstream dot net 6/3/08

I may have to learn how to use Microsoft Publisher. I have QuarkXPress v5.0 at home, and while it is enjoyable to use, it is old, and probably not usable by any other programme, not even newer versions of QXP.

I have Microsoft Publisher 98. Bill Bowers loaned me version 2000 and I was so amazed at how much they'd messed it up that I uninstalled it after less than an hour. Can't tell you anything about subsequent versions, but I'm quite happy with MSPub 98. I thought I was having trouble with it on my new XP laptop though I got around that, but I was about to try two freeware programs which looked like they might be able to do the job: Scribus and Abiword. You might want to take a look at them.

It is very seldom that any fan would take over an ongoing project. We are anarchical at heart, and why take over something old when you can start something new and get the credit for it? That's why doing what you've done, Dave, taking over from David, is good to see. It's worthwhile to do, so let's keep it going. Did someone revoke the curse for you, Dave? Seeing that Pownal, Vermont not far away from the Vermont-Québec border, think you might head up to Con*cept? That's the annual SF convention in Montréal in October. We attend it most years, and Yvonne is in charge of science programming at the convention. But, given that you are nearly at the junction of Vermont, Massachusetts and New York, there is the annual Albacon held in the nearby Albany area.

My buddy Google tells me that Montréal is "245 mi -

about 4 hours 14 mins” away, and that puts it out of my range. Albany is 40 miles away and an hour’s drive, so that might be possible (looking at the “attendees” list online, I’ve briefly met Jan Howard Finder, and I do know Debra Doyle & Jim Macdonald from tons of years in the apa Apanage. I’ve heard of some of the others but haven’t met any of them in print or in meatspace.

So, what have your friends said about you over the years? Anywhere between a beautiful persona and a jerk. I think that means that you’re normal, or as normal as anyone involved in fandom gets. Something to be proud of, or at least relieved.

I’m sure all the other fans are as insulted as I am...

What makes a good fanzine? Not only publication design, which shows that the editor at least tried to make his publication nice to look at, as well as interesting to read, but it must grab the reader in a common interest or sentiment. It’s with all this in mind that I try to review fanzines for John Purcell. As a professional proofreader, making sure that everything is spelled correctly is a given; I can’t even read for pleasure without suffering the jar from a misspelled word.

Luckily my speelchuckler doesn’t read for pleasure...

The locol...those sparkles from my loc may be coming from re-entry ashes as the IQ points burn. If we are in the latter days of fanzine fandom, as others say, then I think that any attempt at a fanzine these days is reason for a little celebration, and an effort to include that faned, new

or old, into the overall conversation. We need more people. (But not too many more, I can barely keep up with the fanzines I get as it is.)

Thanks for picking up the ball on this fine fanzine; make it your own, and we will have some fun.

Say, this zine isn’t subject to being turned back to David Burton, is it? I think he’d object.

John Purcell j_purcell54 at yahoo dot com 6/19/08

Well, Dave, I have to admit it: the initial transition zine from *Pixel* to *Time & Again* is a solid one. It was very enjoyable to read, and even has a batch of comment hooks.

First off, I really appreciate the way the name of the editor remains constant. I can handle a change from David to Dave. I mean, this is gonna be easy; if I address a loc to either "David" or "Dave", I simply cannot go wrong. So thank you very much for making the editorial transition easy to handle.

Well, not too far wrong. He’s David or Dave. I’m just plain Dave. Haven’t had the name David in over 40 years, and good riddance to it...

The interview you had with Brad Foster was wonderful! It was very helpful to learn about how and when Brad got into fandom, and how much his darling wife Cindy is into this crazy world we inhabit. The interview was also helpful to learn of Brad's influences and how long he's been doing fan art. I remember getting artwork from him for zines I pubbed back in the early 1980s, *Bangweulu* especially.

Brad came up with some wonderfully whacked-out cover art for a couple issues of that perzine, both of which I still have copies of. But I am wondering Dave - see how easy that is? - if you actually were able to sit down with Brad or conducted this interview via chatroom or e-mails. If you did it in either of these ways, you did a crackerjack editing job to create a naturally flowing conversation. A very enjoyable interview.

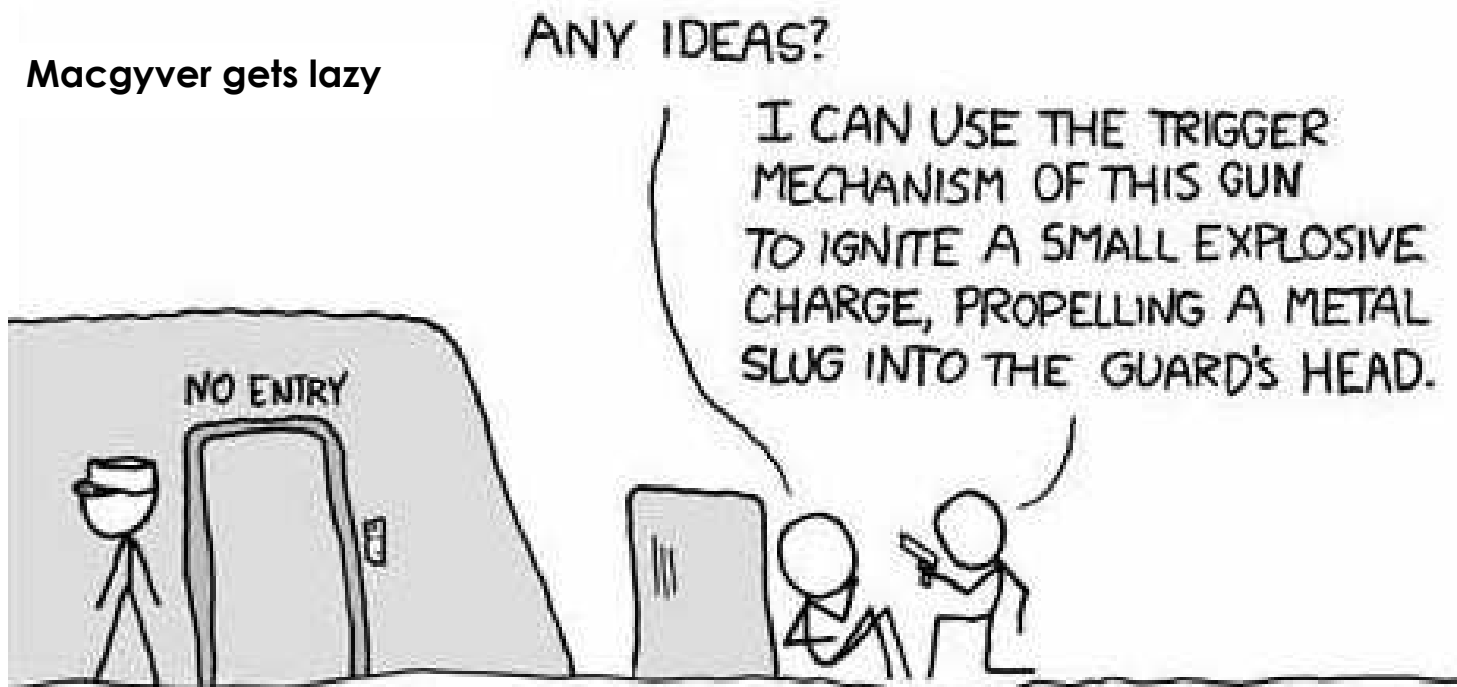
All the *Dialog* installments were done either by typed correspondence or, after the Net came along, by email with the actual *Dialog* text done as RTF attachments. They start off with a few questions, then the responses, then followup questions (if any) and more new questions. Revisions and rearrangements happen as we go along, then

there's a final edit which so far has been followed by a mutual agreement that the piece is good to go.

It is too bad Brad sees himself as being rather antisocial and a conversation-stopper in public. Well, my plan is to get my heinie up to Dallas the first weekend of October for FenCon, and hopefully Brad will likewise be in attendance. If he is, at least he and I will have a lot to talk about in terms of zines, layout, and artwork. It should be a fun time, so let's keep our fingers crossed.

Skipping ahead a couple articles - don't get me wrong; I enjoyed reading the pieces by Dave Rowe (hey! another Dave/David) and James Bacon, but simply didn't find any real comment hooks therein - Lee Lavell had me nodding *o*f*f* in agreement about the various points she makes in

What Makes a Good Fanzine? This was also the dominant topic a couple weeks ago in Arnie Katz's show The Wasted Hour on the Virtual Fan Lounge link. (For those who don't know, go to www.lasvegrants.com and click on the link on the top of the homepage, and it's easy to navigate to Arnie's show.) Besides talking with the delightful Joyce Katz



and Roxanne Mills about the things that make up a good zine, called-in guests Curt Phillips and I put in our two-cents worth on the topic. Everyone pretty much agreed that a zine must be readable, look attractive, have nice layout with artwork, be well organized, and the biggie seemed to be the personality of the fanzine and how that is a reflection of the person producing the zine. This last criterion is important to me. While it certainly helps to know the people involved, I enjoy reading zines with a definite editorial personality. I understand that I'm preaching to the choir here, so let's move on.

<turns to the crowd> Okay, we're done here. Let's move along. </turns>

Curt Phillips' article *In the Electric Mist with Yankee Dead* was a delight to read. Besides giving me an excellent idea about what reenactors do and what it's like being involved with them, it appealed to the historian in me. My undergraduate minor was in Military History (20th century, to be precise), so it was really interesting to read that part about the WWII veteran observing the Battle of the Bulge reenactment. It reminded me a bit of the things my father told me about serving in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific: dad was a radioman on a destroyer and then a carrier at Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands, Saipan, both battles of Leyte Gulf, Okinawa, and other action less well-known. One never comes out of war unchanged. Thank you, Curt, for a thoughtful article.

When I finished reading Eric Mayer's *Notes from Byzantium* - another top-flight contribution - I made a note in all of that white space on page 34 that I prefer to write about myself in fan articles mainly because it's easier and

nobody can contradict me but myself. (This sometimes happens if I misremember something, but let's not go there right now.) It is also a lot of fun to write about relatively objective events and things, like old/current conventions, in a creative manner, trying to make them not so prosaic but much more relevant and active. Writing this way is more of a challenge, so I think it is a good way to develop one's writing skills.

That statement leads into a comment Jan Stinson made in her loc. Good fanwriting - the kind that Dave Rowe, Curt, Eric, and you produced for T&A #3 - can appeal to readers on many levels. Eric recognized the fact that with a little fine-tuning, good fan writing could be sellable to a mundane market. In our English department here at Blinn College, this is referred to as "creative nonfiction writing." I have even seen classes offered at Texas A&M University and other 4-year schools in this type of writing. It is fun to do, and gives a writer another means of expression. Also, Jan's question about Eric's loc being influenced by a column that Ted White wrote in *Pixel* is entirely possible, but it must be pointed out that all of those items were written and pubbed in zines over a four to five month period. Were they related? Maybe. There are often conversation and loc strands overlapping between various fanzines at any given time.

Finally, I have to agree with Robert Lichtman about the fine fan writers working today. Yes, indeed, I did take a romantic view of fan writers and writing, but there are a lot of good fan writers producing quality work right now. To add a few names to Robert's list, there are Chris Garcia, Peter Sullivan, Lee Anne Lavell, James Bacon, Mark Plummer, Cheryl Morgan, Randy Byers, and Claire Brialey, and that's just a brief top-of-the-head roster. Every fan-

nish generation produces writers that are a reflection of Fanzine Fandom At That Time, and that works for me. Good writing is good writing no matter when it was written or who is/was the writer.

So there.

And with that, I shall bid thee adieu, Dave. Many thanks for the fine issue, and I look forward to the next installment.

Thank you, and now that the next installment is here I want to point you to one new article in particular and ... uh, wait a minute. You wrote it. I was going to tell you that Pain Stories are a difficult sub-genre. Writing this kind of thing was what my early fanwriter rep was built on. David Burton reprinted the first one I did (no doubt the best, certainly the most notorious) in *Catchpenny Gazette* #4. If you're curious, <<http://www.efanzines.com/CPG/index.htm>>.



Your article is a bit more straightforward, and done a lot more seriously, than the stuff I used to do (used to: the one I linked in the last paragraph was done in '71; the last one I wrote was about my end-'04 heart attack, and appeared in '05 in my then multi-apa zine *Trial Balloon*).

Eric Mayer maywrite2 at epix dot net 5/17/08

Thanks for the new issue. I guess a lot of us are always happy with a little T&A. That was a bad joke when I used it (or did I resist?) more than twenty years ago, but, hey, once every twenty years. If I'm still around in another twenty years I probably won't remember what T&A is.

I can't recall if that's how you referred to it back in the paleolithic days or not. I know I frequently use it in notes and files on my own computer. I should jump right in to say that it was the Finney novel which was inspiration for the zine title, not the abbreviation...

This is going to be a pretty weedy LoC and by design. A lot of the material here is very interesting because it's about things I know nothing about and can't talk intelligently about. Also, when you have a loccol and all the loccers are contributors the zine looks more like an APA or something.

I love getting LoCs from the contributors. Can't have too much of a good thing, you know.

First a terrific cover by Jackie. I always admired her hand stencilled work but this is a fine drawing. I remem-

ber it from an issue of your eAPA zine. Never saw it when it first appeared.

That pen&ink first appeared on a wall in my Silverton home, then moved to various other walls as I moved to other places. The first published appearance was in the apazine I ran through eApa, Apanage, and FLAP (same general natter in all, to accompany the mailing comments which of course were unique to each). You never saw it when it first appeared because so far you haven't visited...

In fact the whole production looks great. You've certainly upheld David Burton's standards which is quite a feat.

Now if you and he would only write more. You both exhibit your skills in the "editorials" (Dave B is a very graceful writer) so now on to meatier topics? Not that those comments about you weren't amusing. What a task it must have been for Mike Shoemaker to put that together.

Enlightening and enjoyable interview with Brad Foster. And, hey, Brad, I can't remember people's names either and am mostly good at talking about myself so if we ever met at a convention, which we won't since I don't go to cons, if we ran into one another we could both give each other blank stares and start talking about ourselves. I guess that'd clue us in to who we were. I have gone to weekend orienteering meets and much as I enjoy seeing friends at the meet, I usually skip the dinner as being more socializing than I can stand and take some fast food up to my hotel room.

Brad mentions Edd Vick. I recall, when I was involved in small press fandom, that I actually had stuff in Edd's *Fan-*

toons along with Brad. I'll bet *Fantoons* is the only zine for which Brad and I both did bacovers.

One thing Brad says, though, that sums up my whole history with the rest of the human race: "...all my relationships with people...tend to be strongest when we are involved in some sort of creative endeavor."

That is exactly the way it is with me, although, I might eliminate "creative" because I also got along well with other folks with whom I shared an interest in running and orienteering which are maybe not creative in an artistic sense. I think this is a problem I have participating in current fandom which seems to revolve more and more around conventions and socializing, without much of the glue provided by some common endeavor. I really need that shared endeavor in order to socialize.

I agree with James Bacon about Rambo. But then, just about anyone who's on the wrong side of the authorities is OK by me.

Dave Rowe's article on B-movies was very entertaining, even though I haven't seen too many. I did once rent a video of Ed Wood's *Orgy of the Dead* which was truly unbelievable. Basically it is a procession of strippers who appear in a graveyard and do their thing. I kept waiting for the plot to start and finally I realized, this was the "plot."

Lee Lavell makes good points in her article about what makes a good fanzine. Not that I ever adhered to them. Consider "space" for example. She's right, good design usually requires leaving plenty of space. But when I was publishing *Groggy* I had to print the zine on a hand cranked ditto machine and couldn't afford to post more than six sheets which cost a single stamp. So I had lots of reasons to want to keep the number of pages down. I used an elite typewriter and ran the typing right out to the margins.

Yeah, it looked awful. Today, if you're doing an electronic zine, the number of pages isn't much of a concern. When I mokeyed around with the personalzine I was considering, I left lots of space. Unfortunately I then recalled something else Lee mentions -- that electronic personalzines these days are called blogs. So what would be the point? Especially since I already have a blog.

Curt Phillips' reenactment stories were just amazing. I wish you'd placed them last. And maybe spread them out. Every one is strong enough to stand on its own. (I just checked the FAAn award results since Arnie's zine is still in the same folder as T&A and I see Curt isn't in the top ten. Shame.) After reading them I honestly felt a little embarrassed seeing my own boring essay.

Chris Garcia agrees with me on placement of your boring essay, as you can tell by the ending comment of his LoC. But I can easily agree with you that Curt's reenactment tales were excellent stuff, and I've long felt that his writings were too frequently underappreciated. Luckily, there may well be more on the reenactment front. Back on 3/29/08 Curt wrote to me: "If the reenactment story goes over I *could* do a follow-up if you like. 2008 will be

my last year as a CW reenactor and I'm making a Big Deal of it in the hobby with "*Curt's Reenacting Farewell Tour - 2008*". I'll do an event or two with my old regiment this summer and sell/give away all my gear at our big National Reenactment this October. Playing it up for as much fun as I can. Anyway, we'll see about that later." Sounds good to me.

Which reminds me of another reason why I prefer to write fiction these days rather than personal essays -- my life is utterly uninteresting. But at least with a book I can make interesting stuff up. There is something fascinating about battles, in theory, even though the reality is sheer horror. I am practically (but not quite) a pacifist yet I have played war simulations from time to time with some enjoyment, and found it interesting to ponder strategies and tactics from a gaming point of view. Which is hypocritical I guess. Curt's reenactments sound a lot closer to reality than you'd get from a board and playing pieces or pixels on a computer monitor.

Pixel....

Cue the duck...

You said the magic word. You win \$100!

