

Feline Mewsings #16



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Illo on p. 14 by William Rotsler.

Feline ~~M~~ewsings

#16

May 2004

* Editorial / Introduction

The past three months have been fairly busy. First we went down to San Diego for ConDor, which we found enjoyable. The report is below. The weekend after that, we went on a private tour of the San Diego Zoo. The weekend after that, I attended Corflu, whose report is also below.

We have had a less hectic schedule since then.

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* Hugos

It's once again time to vote on the Hugos. This year, the Retro Hugos for 1953 are also up. I haven't read any of the 2003 novel nominees, so I have ordered them from amazon.com. I'm surprised that the latest Harry Potter book isn't on the list. I had a copy of Jeffrey Ford's "Empire of Ice Cream". This is the first ever nominee I remember that was published on the web. I read it and found it deeply touching – gave it an A++. Of the long dramatic presentations, I had only seen *The Lord of the Rings: the Return of the King*, which I thought very highly of – A+. So far, I have rented and viewed *28 Days Later* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. The former is a post holocaust story that takes place in England. The holocaust in this story is a virus that disinhibits rage. It's excellently done but not to my taste – too grim. I gave it an A. The latter is a rousing adventure story, but the story is rather shallow. The special effects, though, are spectacular; and the acting is excellent. The only one of the short dramatic presentations that I've seen is the *Smallville* episode. I'm unlikely to be able to view any of the other ones.

Of the Retro Hugo novel nominees, I remember three of them well enough that I've already rated them – I gave an A- to Asimov's *The Caves of Steel*, an A to Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and an A+ to Clarke's *Childhood End*, which is on my list of all-time favourite books. After reading Clement's *Mission of Gravity*, I think it rates a B+. It is well crafted but lacks a certain *je ne sais quois*. I just finished reading Sturgeon's *More Than Human*; I have given it a B. While it is good, the idea doesn't seem to have been thoroughly thought through. I have undoubtedly read some of the shorter nominated works, but the only one I remember well enough to rate without rereading is Clarke's "Nine Billion Names of God", which I will give an A. These assessments may change. The dramatic presentation nominees I either remembered or have had the time to re-view; I gave a B+ to *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, an A to "Duck Dodgers in the 24-1/2th Century", a B- to *Invaders from Mars*, a B to *It Came from Outer Space*, and an A- to *The War of the Worlds*. We own copies of all of them.

* * *

* Garden Report

I decided I should report on the various things happening in my garden, as it's become a somewhat important piece of my life. Winter, of course, is a quiet time. Growth is slow, and most of the work in the garden consists of picking up dead leaves and weeding.

The camellias started blooming in December, and the late blooming ones started to bloom in February. The early azaleas started blooming in February. The jade plants also were in bloom through most of winter. The bird of paradise bloom year round. The primroses started blooming in January. The daffodils, irises, and poppies all started to grow leaves in January. By March and April, the daffodils, primroses, and irises bloomed. The lilacs are also in full bloom now. In addition, I have been kept busy lately picking ripe bananas and loquats.



Daffodils and primroses



Lithops



Camellia

Last year I did a great deal of planting in the garden, much of it because of mistakes in the past. I don't expect that much planting activity from this point on. A few plants put in last year have died, so they will be replaced, with a couple of exceptions. All but two of the kangaroo paw plants that I put in look like they are gone, so I will buy more from the botanical garden when they are available this spring. A couple of hibiscuses have died, but I'm not planning to replace them. I thought I'd put in another gardenia in place of one. I'm thinking of putting in some perennials in place of the other. A couple of the primroses did not survive, and I have already planted three new ones. One red hot poker plant did not survive, so I will get one to replace that. This summer I will move the daffodils to better positions while the leaves are still there and allow me to find the bulbs. Four of the rhododendrons also seem to have died. One I won't replace, as I've decided there really isn't enough space there; but the others I will.

I contacted a landscaper to terrace the back slope for me; after looking the area over, he suggested that the back wall, which is a retaining wall, should be replaced. While I was researching how to go about this, it was decided that all of the homeowners along that wall should try to replace the wall at the same time so that it would all look the same. The wall is about thirty-five years old and in need of replacing. The president of the homeowners association is going to send a letter to this purpose to all the homeowners involved. After the terracing is done, I will prepare it for planting, mostly fruit trees. If the area is ready in summer, I will put in a new fruiting loquat. On the top terrace, I'm planning to place a composter. I'm hoping that will help me prepare the terraces for planting.

In February there were a couple of events at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino that interested me. One was a camellia show. Camellias are shown as single flowers. There were hundreds of different ones in vials spread out over about twenty or thirty tables. Plus there were some that were in arrangements. Camellias typically don't have much of a scent, but new varieties have been developed that smell like perfume. The camellias in the gardens outside were also still in bloom. There was also a bonsai sale, but this turned out to be a rather small affair. However, it took place inside a new Botanical Center, which was only partially completed. It will be quite impressive when it's finished.

Locally I attended a plant sale and came home with a whole slew of succulents, some of which are currently blooming. Also a friend gave me an agave. It is in a pot now, but I will probably put it in the ground next year.

* * *

* ConDor XI

Friday, 27 February 2004, we left the house about 09h30. We'd had the plumber treat our drains to prevent root growth, and we couldn't run any water after that for several hours; it would be okay by the time the pet sitter arrived. We stopped at Cocoa's on PCH for breakfast. I had the senior's breakfast, and Mike ate the toast from the order and also got an OJ.

We arrived at the Hilton San Diego in Del Mar about 12h30. I think I might have slept for a very short period of time in the car. We were able to get a room, but the con wasn't ready to register people yet. So we drove down to La Jolla to check out the tide pool beaches. Although the tide was too high, we did find the beaches and marked them for future reference. It was mid-afternoon by then and I was hungry, so we

stopped at an IHOP for lunch. I had salad, and Mike had some kind of sandwich.

We ran into bad rush hour traffic on the drive back to the hotel and missed the first few panels, including a reading by Deborah Ross. It had been scheduled late, and she said no one showed up. We had time to go through the dealers' room, which was open until 20h00. I bought two pairs of earrings, and Mike got a CD and a pendant representing the zodiac.

A bit later, we had dinner in the hotel. The prices were on the high side and the menu rather limited, but the food was good. Mike didn't eat anything, though. I had a filet mignon.

Later, we attended the "Meet and Greet" in the con suite. Mike took a picture of me with Robert Silverberg, who was a guest of honour. We had cake and ice cream. Then we went to the Regency dancing, where we did several dances. After a while, we adjourned to the LACon party. Mike only stayed for a short while. I talked with a number of people, including William Wu, who arrived rather late.



Saturday morning we went down to the con suite, where they were serving hardboiled eggs and other things for breakfast. There was time before the first panel of interest to me, so I went through the art show. It was somewhat disappointing, since most of the artwork were prints of one kind or other.

The first panel I attended was titled "The Mars Rover Slide Show", but it was really about exploring Mars in general. Very little was devoted to the Mars rovers. It was very interesting, though. It included a retrospective of Mars exploration and some information about plans for future exploration. It was presented by Geoffrey Landis.

The con suite served chili for lunch, so Mike and I both ate there.

In the afternoon, we both went to hear Robert Silverberg speak. We all learned that he had been chosen as Grand Master by SFWA a few days earlier.

Then I went to a presentation by the Mars Society. They are an amateur group that tries to influence the direction of Mars exploration and colonization by doing research.

Mike went to a showing of an episode of *Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda* that began on the half hour. I joined him after the Mars Society panel ended. The episode being shown – "Double or Nothingness" wasn't among my favourites. The show was hosted by director David Winning, who did questions and answers afterward. That part was interesting. He's mostly worked on TV shows but has also done some movies. He said directors have to audition just like actors.

After that I went to a panel titled "Aliens As Gods: Judgement on Humanity" with panellists David Brin, Robert Silverberg, John DeChancie, and Howard Hendrix, who moderated. With Brin there, it was obviously lively, and Hendrix successfully kept him from doing all the talking. The panel started out discussing godlike aliens in sf but ended up just talking about the existence of God. Mike went back to the room, and I fetched him later for dinner, which we ate at the hotel again. We were informed today about the specials; and we both had duck, which was quite good and very filling.

We returned to our room for a brief rest before going back down again for the masquerade, which turned out to be interesting but short. There was some time before the parties began, so I went to the con suite. Mike went back to our room.

The Loscon party was next to the con suite. All the other parties were in a big room near the function space. The room was so big that it seemed nearly empty even when there were people there. The room would have worked with a larger con but seemed rather unfriendly with such a small con. I spent most of my time in the Loscon room until I decided to retire for the night.

I set my alarm for Sunday since we had to check out of the hotel in the morning, but I woke up before it went off.

I went down to the con suite by myself for breakfast. I talked with a few people until I felt I should go back up to finish packing. We vacated the room and stashed our stuff in the car before the first panel I was interested in. Mike worked on his computer in the lobby while I went to programming.

The slide show, entitled "Exploring Venus", was presented by Geoffrey Landis. I learned a lot about

Venus that I hadn't known before. For instance, although the surface of Venus is very inhospitable to human life, there is a zone in the atmosphere above the toxic sulphuric acid that is quite comfortable. He said he thought Venus should be colonized before Mars – with floating colonies. I agree with him if we can solve some engineering challenges.

Like the previous day, I had lunch in the con suite. Mike joined me there. He said the lobby was too cold, probably because people kept going in and out.

In the afternoon, we went to “Early SF TV”, which was presented by Jeff Berkwits, who had also been on the Mars Society panel. He only covered the fifties, though. I was able to help out an audience member who was trying to identify a show; it was an episode from *The Outer Limits*. I told him about the guide that's available.

We also went to “Back to the Moon!”, a panel that discussed whether we should go back there or skip it in favour of other destinations. The panellists were Greg Benford, Christine Carmichael, Geoffrey Landis, John Vos Post, and Vernor Vinge. Landis moderated, fairly ably. Opinions were varied.

As we were preparing to leave, Ed Green snagged us and told us that Mike had won the Wonder Woman Barbie doll for buying a Loscon membership. Mike picked that up while I made a pit stop. I also grabbed some snack food from the con suite for the drive home.

I did quite a bit of videotaping of the con, more, I think, than I've done at previous cons. I figured out a good way to use a monopod with my camera.

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* Corflu 21

I left for Corflu on Thursday, 18 March, with Eric Lindsay and Jean Weber, who had arrived the day before in LA. The Supershuttle came about 08h00. The day was overcast, especially when we got down the hill. Besides us, there was one more pickup – at the condo where Mike and I used to live.

Our plane left on time. The flight was short, and beverage service never managed to serve everyone. The weather in the Las Vegas area was great, and I got some great shots out the plane window. In Las Vegas, we waited forever for a cab; because there was a very long line of people waiting in line. Still, we managed to get to the Plaza Hotel in downtown Las Vegas about 13h00. Our rooms were not yet ready, so we checked our bags with the concierge and got lunch and walked around the neighbourhood. While we were in the lobby area, we ran into a couple of Britfen. The downtown area of Las Vegas has really been built up; Fremont Street, which starts at the hotel is now a pedestrian only area, at least for a couple of blocks.

After we got our rooms, I downloaded and read my e-mail; I was never able to send any e-mail out and don't know why. Joyce and Arnie Katz were a little late getting to the hotel. Then they had problems getting the room promised to them. They finally got in, I think, about 17h00. A bit after that, I went down to dinner with Jean and Eric. We ate at a diner-style restaurant on the hotel's ground floor.

The Katzes' room party started at 19h00. I went up a bit after that, and there were already plenty of people in the room. I tried to meet as many of the people I didn't know as possible. I took some pictures around the room with my video camera. I spent a lot of time talking to a bunch of people, including David Bratman, Hope Leibowitz, Art Widner, Jim Caughran, Ian Sorenson, Tony Parker, Judy Bemis, Ken Forman, and others. The party was quite lively. We had a good turnout.

I woke up relatively early the next morning a few minutes before my alarm. I went downstairs to the programming area on the third floor. Registration hadn't been set up yet. Murray Moore and David Bratman were sitting around waiting. David and I decided to get breakfast. We went down to the diner-style restaurant. I had an omelette, which was okay. David wasn't very happy with his breakfast.

When we went back up after eating, registration was open. We received our badges and packets, which included a programme book and some fanzines. After chatting with people for a while, I went back up to my room to drop stuff off before going on the nature hike to the wetlands. This walk started off late, which seems to be a given at cons.

The hike participants piled onto three rented SUVs. I got on one driven by Ken Forman. There was a bit of a mix-up, as he drove to the wrong place; but that was straightened out after a short time. When we were all at the proper location, Ken started our walk with an introductory talk about the wetlands of Las Vegas. The wetlands used to be seasonal but are now fed by runoff from irrigation and other manmade sources. There was a variety of vegetation, including some invasive species, and a variety of birdlife and

rabbits. We saw a number of different kinds of waterfowl. We had a group picture taken by a flowering tree. The walk lasted about as long as we did. That is, just about the time that some of us were beginning to think we couldn't walk any further, the walk ended.

We returned to the hotel about a quarter after three. I took a shower before returning to the third floor for a game programme, which did not go over very well. No one wanted to play. In the same room as the programmes, tables of fanzines for sale were set up. Richard Brandt was selling off his collection. Other people sold fanzines for the benefit of various fan funds.

After this, I went down to dinner in the hotel with Marty Cantor. We ate at the same diner-style restaurant I had eaten at before. I recall that Marty had spaghetti, but I don't recall what I had.

Opening ceremonies were at six. The guest of honour was chosen by drawing from a hat. The first name drawn was for a fan who was not in attendance. The second name was Ted White. Then cocktails were available for purchase. There were also little sandwiches, veggies, coffee, and cake.

Leftover cake was taken up to the con suite on the twenty-fourth floor. I spent the rest of the evening there, staying up fairly late, at least past midnight. After I returned to my room, I puttered around for a while and didn't get to sleep until about two.

I woke up even earlier Saturday morning and went down to breakfast by myself. I didn't expect anyone else to be up. I had bacon and eggs like I do at home. It was okay. After I finished breakfast, I went out to do a little shopping at the Hawaiian store I had discovered when I was walking Thursday with Eric and Jean. I bought a pair of earrings, because one of a pair I had brought with me had fallen apart; the glue had dried out. I also bought a bag of flavoured Kona coffee to take home and a bag of macadamia nuts to munch on.

There were fans up and about by the time I finished shopping and taken stuff back up to my room. The first programme item was a trivia quiz about fan history. There were four contestants. The audience participated by trying to guess which ones would know the answers. The questions were mostly very obscure.

For lunch, there was a crock-pot meal in the con suite at noon. There was a lot of good food.

Late in the afternoon, I went down to hear "What Fans Need To Know about Fan History". I missed the beginning of it, having whiled away my time in the con suite.

I joined Janice Morningstar and David Bratman for dinner at the Indonesian Restaurant that David drove us to. The meal was quite good.

The partying in the con suite in the evening included a beer tasting and storytelling by Art Widner. He was supposed to have done a reading but wasn't able to find his zine. I tasted a couple of the beers, which were all from microbreweries. I must say that neither of the ones I tasted had that awful beer aftertaste, though I wouldn't choose to drink them unless nothing else was available. I stayed up even later that night.

I woke up relatively late on Sunday, so I didn't get breakfast. I just munched a few macadamia nuts, so I could take my morning vitamins.

I went downstairs in time for the convention banquet. It was still being set up when I got there but got started shortly. I sat at a table close to the front with Marty Cantor, Alan and Dee Dee White, Milt Stevens, Jack Calvert, and Jack and Ruth Speer. Photos from this event and others at Corflu are posted at <http://efanzines.com/Corflu21/index.htm>. After we finished eating, Ken Forman presided over the giving of the Faan Awards and other items of business. Then Ted White gave his guest of honour speech.

Most of us adjourned to the con suite afterwards where we sat around talking for a good long time. About five, people began disappearing in small groups for dinner. Billy Pettit was kind enough to drive a few of us to the far end of the Strip. Janice Morningstar and I started scouting around for a suitable place to eat dinner, starting at the Excalibur and Luxor. We found a satisfactory Chinese venue inside Mandalay Bay. It wasn't great, but it was acceptable. Then we took the tram back to the Excalibur and started walking down the Strip to the Bellagio. The battery in Janice's camera died about the time we got there. There is a large fountain in front of the Bellagio. About every fifteen minutes or so, it turns on and plays with music; the fountain plays with the music. I managed to get two of these water shows on video. We were around for three of the shows, and each one had different music. There was also a very nice garden inside in the lobby area that included an enclosure containing butterflies. Then we caught a bus across the street back to the downtown area. We got there with minutes to spare before the last showing of the Fremont Street Experience, which is a light show with music that plays once every hour between dark and midnight.

I spent way too much time in the con suite afterwards at the Dead Dog party. A number of people left at various times during the day. I had some very interesting conversations with a number of fans, including Woody Bernardi and Eric Lindsay.

Back in the room, I did most of my packing in preparation for checking out the next day; so it was about three when I got to sleep.

I woke up in plenty of time Monday to check out of the hotel. Since I had the bag of macadamia nuts, I had those instead of going down for breakfast. I checked out a little eleven. Bill Burns was the last fan I spoke to before leaving. He was waiting for an airport shuttle, but he had reserved a space on a specific one. I was just waiting for any one that showed up. The shuttle I boarded circled around for a while before we actually headed toward the airport.

The airport was almost as bad as Vancouver after our Alaska cruise. There was a very long line for the security check. Fortunately, it moved pretty quickly. After I got to the gate area, I sat down for a while. Then I decided to get a bite of lunch. There was a sit-down restaurant near the gate, and I had a pizza there. It was very good, and I would have brought home the two pieces I couldn't finish if I'd had room in my luggage. The flight home was short. The weather was hazy, so the view out the window was not too good. In any case, I ended up talking to a young businessman from Hong Kong who was sitting next to me. The flight didn't try to do a full beverage service. Most of us did get a chance to have water or juice, though.

At the luggage area in LA, Jerry Maren, who played the Lollipop Guild representative in *The Wizard of Oz*, was there with his wife. They were talking to a British couple from London, whom I got to talk to a bit as we were waiting for the shuttles. They were still waiting when our shuttle left the airport. They weren't prepared for the rather cool weather in LA. It was overcast and foggy.

Corflu was a great con, really more like a big family reunion or party. I did have a problem with the smoke levels in Las Vegas, but I didn't realize this until I got home. Smoke tends to build up on your body and clothing over time. By the time the levels were high enough in my hair, which I'm not in the habit of washing every day, and my clothing (I wore the same jacket every day), it was the end of the con. I had to use my inhaler for my asthma; I had brought the inhaler just in case. I normally use one so rarely that the one I had was nearly two years out of date; I was fortunate that it still worked. Until I got home, I didn't realize what had happened. It took a week for the worst effects to wear off. In Vegas, I had used an ionizer that hangs from my neck. That helps with air I'm breathing in as long as the smoke levels are relatively low. I hadn't been prepared for the smoke level build-up in my hair and clothing.

Don't get me wrong; I had a great time at Corflu. I would do it again, but I hope I'm better prepared next time.

* * *

* Local Activities

Live Theatre

Drunk and in Charge of a Bicycle: Theatre West ran a couple of Ray Bradbury's one-act plays back to back recently. We went to an early (in its run) performance. As Ray Bradbury was there, I had Mike take a picture of me with Bradbury. He seemed to be enjoying himself. He came with a large group of friends. The two plays were written shortly after Bradbury's stay in Ireland, when he was writing the screenplay for *Moby Dick*.

To tell you the truth, I didn't completely understand the first (title) play. It took place in an Irish pub. George Bernard Shaw's car breaks down just outside the pub. While his chauffeur is fixing the car, he walks into the pub and upsets all the patrons by introducing new ideas to them. Then the parish priest walks in, and he and Shaw have it out. It was rather esoteric and philosophical. I guess I



should have asked Bradbury to explain it, but it didn't occur to me to ask.

The second play was much simpler to understand. Titled "The Great Conflagration", it is about a group of Irish patriots who arrive at the Lord's manor to burn it down. The Lord listens to them and talks them into saving all the great works of art he has in the castle. It was a very humorous piece.

#

Clutter: The Colony Theatre Company presented the world premiere of *Clutter: The True Story of the Collyer Brothers Who Never Threw Anything Out* by Mark Saltzman. One reviewer called it a pseudo-documentary murder mystery. It's pseudo-documentary, as the details of the brothers' lives is not really known. They were recluses to a great degree. Their lives became opened to the public after they died and the public discovered how much junk the brothers had amassed in their Manhattan mansion. The lives of these two enigmatic brothers also inspired a novel by Marcia Davenport titled *My Brother's Keeper* and a play by Richard Greenberg titled *The Dazzle*. *Clutter* is told from the viewpoint of two policemen who work in the neighbourhood and with flashbacks portraying the Collyer brothers' lives. The play is very entertaining and the acting excellent. At least one reviewer thinks it's the best production the Colony has ever done. I might agree with one exception, *The Laramie Project*, with the understanding that I have only been attending their performances since around 1990. The theatre company was started in 1975. As usual, the Colony has proved to be very resourceful in constructing a stage that serves the entire play and represents various settings. It certainly is a play that leaves one thinking. It brought to my mind a story Harry Warner told about a neighbour who was apparently a packrat. It also made me think of a friend who might be a packrat, or at least a developing into one. How do people get to be that way?

#

Murder by Poe: This is a play written by Jeffrey Hatcher and acted by the Acting Company, which tours annually to various venues around the country. This is our first experience with their productions. I'm impressed enough by them that we might consider going to see them again if they come back. This play consists of five Poe stories: "Murders in the Rue Morgue", "The Black Cat", "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Purloined Letter", and "The Mystery of Marie Roget" woven into an interesting tapestry within a frame story, the nature of which is not revealed until the end. A cast nine of actors played all the characters splendidly. We were particularly impressed by Bryan Cogman, who played the cat. There was just enough humour injected to keep the play from becoming too grim. The set was very clever and consisted of a series of variously shaped cabinets that opened up to reveal things or people inside. Sometimes the cabinet doors represented windows. Afterward, the company did a question and answer session.

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Other

San Diego Zoo: In early March, I arranged a behind the scenes tour of the zoo and invited a few friends. There were supposed to have been eight of us. Unfortunately, two of the group got hung up in traffic and failed to arrive on time. The six of us who arrived on time gathered in front of the flamingo exhibit to meet our tour guide. The tour was conducted on an open bus that had enough seats for fourteen people each to get a window seat. As we drove from stop to stop, our guide told anecdotes and other interesting things about the zoo and sometimes just chatted. Our first stop was the hippos. We saw four in total, including a mother and baby. We didn't get to touch or feed them, but we did get within ten feet of them and took lots of photos. Our guide fed them Romaine lettuce to the hippos. Our second stop was the giraffes. We got to feed them and take pictures. Then we stopped at the pandas and got to get in line ahead of most of the crowd. Unfortunately, the pandas were sleeping; so it was not terribly interesting. Our last stop was the koalas. We got to see some that were in back, including a surprise viewing of a baby, who was clinging to a keeper. Afterwards, the guide kindly drove us to the polar bear plunge, which was on her way to returning the bus for storage. The bear was unfortunately fairly inactive. We stuck around long enough to see it move from one napping spot to another. Then the group split up. Mike and I took the zoo's Express Bus to the front area near the gate. We looked in on the kangaroos, but only the red tree kangaroo was visible. Though our group was small, it was a very enjoyable afternoon.

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SEKIII Memorial: Many of my readers knew Samuel Edward Konkin, III. Many among you know that he died suddenly at the end of February of natural causes. His family is Canadian and the official funeral was there. However, he had so many friends and acquaintances in Southern California that a memorial was held for him at a restaurant in Torrance at the end of March. If SEKIII was watching from another dimension, he knows that something over a hundred people showed up for this memorial. We had a champagne brunch followed by people speaking about the effect Sam had on their lives and the things they remembered about him. The speakers included my Congressman, Dana Rohrabacher; authors Brad Linaweaver, Victor Koman, and J. Kent Hastings; and

Sam's brother. Other attendees also spoke. The event went on a half hour over the allotted time until we were forced to vacate the rented room for another event. A video of the speakers is available for a nominal fee in either DVD or VHS format. If you are interested in a copy, contact Tony Bernot at arbernot@mac.com or 661-943-3908.

#

Champions on Ice: We saw their show at Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, where the Mighty Ducks play. This year's show seemed better than before and outshone the earlier show by Stars on Ice. I think the audience for this was better. There were twenty-four different performers or pairs. The routines varied from sublime classical numbers to totally hilarious, with most of them falling somewhere in between. The funniest was Dan Hollander, who came out dressed as a nun. About a third of the way through his performance, he threw off part of his costume and transformed himself into a bosomy woman. Another funny routine was done by Besedin and Polishchuk, a couple of guys who always do a humorous number. This time one of them came out wearing a Mighty Ducks shirt. The best performances were by Johnny Weir, the up and coming new American male singles skater; Shen and Zhao, the pairs skaters from China; Fumie Suguri of Japan; Sasha Cohen; and Michelle Kwan. Michelle always receives the biggest applause from the audience, probably because she is from this area. The show ended with a very nice ensemble number skated to "Rhapsody in Blue" and featuring everyone dressed in a shade of blue.

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*** Mailing Comments on FAPA #266:** Note to non-FAPA members: FAPA is an APA of people in science fiction and fantasy fandom. It has a large membership, currently about fifty. There are openings right now. If you are interested in joining, let me know and I can send you the relevant information.

Mark Manning (Jupiter Jump #52): John Hertz writes for APA-L, not LASFAPA. APA-L is weekly; LASFAPA is monthly.

Jack Calvert (Exclam #1): Media, gaming, filk, and Trek aren't limited just to large cons. I just went to ConDor, which is a small San Diego con that started eleven years ago (or so). Their programming has always included all of the foregoing. One nice thing about ConDor is that they always also have quite a bit of science programming. Large cons have so much going on that there's probably something for everyone. Smaller cons cannot always guarantee that. If the small con is attended by a lot of people you know and like, then that might not be important.

I don't own a cell phone, either. I'm holding out for the time when one will work everywhere on the world. In the meantime, my husband has one if I really think I need it for any reason.

Phys Ed in my experience included the President's fitness programme, which was started by JFK, if my memory is correct, and games, dance, and sports in high school. At college, the options were things such as skiing, swimming, camp craft, figure skating, volleyball, fencing, folk dancing, etc. In both institutions, we had to pass a swimming test in order to graduate.

I'm pretty sure that installing the Wacom tablet software only coincided with my computer crash and probably had nothing to do with causing it. Anyway I have finally managed to install new Wacom software that has been updated to Mac OS X. However, I haven't really had a chance to try it out yet; time management is always a problem. I won't be using the Wacom mouse. I use an Orbit trackball 2-button mouse. I also have one of those split keyboards. I hate the stupid keyboard and touch pad on the Titanium and only use it if I unplug the computer and take it to another room or when I'm travelling with it.

Steven T. Ogden (Edgar's Journal #1): I'm sorry to hear that people are dumping their computers into the trash. Computers are considered to be hazardous waste. In our area, there are special collection points for such trash. About once or twice a year, extra collection points are set up for one day to make recycling easier for people who can't or don't want to drive long distances to get to the permanent collection points. I'm glad you rescued the computer from your apartment dumpster.

I'm familiar with one fantasy based on music. Actually they were two short novels, *The Infinity Concerto* and *The Serpent Mage*, later published together as *Songs of Earth and Power* by Greg Bear.

I enjoyed the fiction you published and would have enjoyed them better had it not been for the many typos.

Eric Lindsay (Gegenschein #95): Are all DVD movies sold in Australia done in wide-screen format? Only about half of the ones sold in the US are that way. Some movies are sold in two different formats. We

always get the wide-screen, because you lose parts of the picture in pan and scan. Older movies tend not to come in wide-screen. The wide-screen format is a separate consideration from high definition. As far as I know, no DVDs are offered in real high definition. Our DVD player is hooked up to the high definition ports on our TV, though, so we get very high quality on some DVDs, such as the ones for *The Lord of the Rings*. Even when I had only my eleven-inch Sony to watch TV with, I preferred the wide-screen format. The wide-screen format, though, does offer the ability, if you have a high definition TV, to fill the screen with the picture.

I guess no one *needs* high definition. The first great push toward high definition started in Japan, I believe; Japan is a country where most people are obsessed with "keeping up with the Joneses". I think they are all high definition now; our high definition stations carry a lot of programming that seems to be imported from Japan. The picture quality does excel in comparison to regular TV here, but I'm not familiar with the quality of PAL. Our Federal Communication Commission mandated that the US would be fully converted by 2006. I was told by a salesman at Good Guys that California is supposed to be converted even before then, possibly 2005. We replaced our large living room TV with high definition when the old one started to act up. I figured we might as well, as long as we were buying a new TV. It took us several months to figure out that we could receive high definition signals from some local stations with our rooftop antenna. This year, our cable company added high definition. The number of HD channels is still limited, but new ones are added periodically.

At least in the US, I understand that Dell, who, I think, is the top PC-seller here, offers computers running LINUX. I don't know how that affects price, though.

David Burton (Catchpenny Gazette #1): Welcome to FAPA and welcome back to fandom.

Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning, Winter 2004): Not all religions proselytize, so I don't think the lack of missionary zeal makes fandom less like a religion. Many religions, in fact, do not accept converts. On the other hand, I think it might benefit fandom if we had more missionary zeal.

I don't find it strange that Andy got to college without learning how to study. I graduated from college and graduate school without ever learning how to study. I probably would have done a lot better if I had known. I still don't know how to study, at least not well.

One reason I subscribed to the digital movie package from our cable operator was the independent film channels. We get both Sundance and the Independent Film Channel. Along with those, the package includes all of the various flavours of Encore, which also doesn't have commercials. Starz movies usually move on to Encore when they have finished their initial stint on Starz, which we don't get.

Speaking of remakes, I saw *Mary Reilly* on cable. I didn't realize that it was based on a remade novel. Remakes of movies frequently inspire me to catch the older versions. After seeing the latest remake of *Little Women*, I made some effort to see the older versions. I prefer the newest. I have also seen many versions of movies based on the Jane Austen books, but that is because I really love the Austen novels. My recent viewing of the latest version of *The Forsyte Saga* has made me want to see the older version, but I don't want to spend money on buying it.

My self-identity has never been tied to work. Work was something I did to enable me to live my life. I always chose work that was interesting to me, but I never identified myself as a librarian or a computer programmer. I've always considered myself a dilettante.

Teen Titans is a fun show, but it's not for you if you don't like campy stuff. I never read the comics, though I've read the adventures of the superheroes when they were adults. The closest I came to reading *Teen Titans* is that I have always liked the Legion of Super-heroes and in fact have bought all the archive books. One of the writers for *Teen Titans* is Marv Wolfman, who is a Los Angeles fan.

I tuned into *Stargate SG-1* because I had enjoyed the movie, which I had gone to see because of Kurt Russell. I wasn't sure if I'd like the TV show, but I found that the actors and the characters they played had a good chemistry among them. To me, this is always necessary for an ensemble show to work. That's one of the weaknesses of *Enterprise*. The crew never really clicked, with the weakest link being Scott Bakula/Captain Archer. I find the show concentrates too much on conspiracy theory, but that seems to be popular with other viewers (witness the popularity of *X-files*, which I never watched).

Most shows I like don't last. The most recent example of this is *Century City*. I think it must have been too cerebral. It is a law show that takes place in 2030. It reminded me a great deal of *The Defenders*, which I used to watch when I was much younger. *The Defenders* starred E. G. Marshall, a graduate of my alma mater, and Robert Reed. *Century City* features a law firm with several attorneys. They tackle cases involving today's cutting edge technology, such as cloning, nanotechnology, and biotech. They showed only a few episodes before cancelling it and pulling it off the air. The future of another new series that I like - *Whoopi* - is up in the air. Well, it leaves me with more time to do other things. Much of my recent TV viewing has been movies.

Howard Devore (Grandfather Stories): I'm impressed with your daughter's bravery.

Marty Cantor (Fish Wrap Stories): Our Epson printer comes with a utility that tells us how much ink is left in each cartridge. I believe each cartridge has a sensor. We have four ink cartridges - black, magenta, cyan, and yellow. The usage varies from colour to colour.

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu): I'm so sorry to hear about your medical problems. I hope they have been cleared up by now, and that they haven't interfered with your job search.

Mike McInerney (Number One #6): I once attended a Trekcon in New York City that, according to figures I heard, had an attendance of something over twenty thousand. It was badly managed. The memberships/tickets were sold by Ticketron. All the programming was on the second floor. There was one large room where the lead actors appeared, whether one at a time or as a group, I don't know. I stayed in an auxiliary programming room devoted to real science fiction and science panels. I made the mistake of going down to lunch the first day. When I finished eating, I found that I'd been locked out of the second floor by the fire marshals. I must have got back eventually, but I never made the mistake of leaving the second floor in the middle of the day again. If I hadn't been with a bunch of friends, the con would have been a disaster for me.

My fanzine goes out to a few relatives and non-fan friends, so I do feel obligated to explain things such as letters of comment. Before I added this explanation, one person thought that the things written in by a LoCcer were things I said. I'd rather over-explain and not have any confusion than not explain and have something like that happen again.

Dick Eney (It's Eney's Fault): Thanks for the lesson in Japanese history.

Moi (Feline Mewsings #15): The grocery workers strike finally ended after several months. They ended up not really benefiting from all the missed time. I think the rank and file were fairly unhappy with the union leadership.

Shadow's thyroid medication was reduced yet again. Fluffy was diagnosed with arthritis in the hips as a result of a congenital condition. I have been giving him Cosequin, which has helped considerably. I also started giving Cosequin to Shadow, because I noticed that he was suffering from some stiffness when he first got up after he'd been lying down for any period of time.

Janice Morningstar (As Cold As a politician's Heart): I had poor night vision most of my life. However, I didn't realize this and just thought everyone saw the way I did. I never had it tested. A couple of weeks after I started taking a new multi-vitamin/mineral supplement, I found that I suddenly saw things at night that I never could before. I thought maybe the moon was extraordinarily bright. But the improved vision has stayed with me since. I have continued to take the supplement. I've tried to persuade my father to take it, since I found out his night vision is also as bad as mine used to be; but I have been unsuccessful. He doesn't drive much any more, though, so I'm not overly concerned.

I didn't notice Marty Cantor's mention of www.onelook.com last time, so thanks for mentioning it. It looks very handy for looking up words without necessarily knowing the exact spelling.

The noises that bother me are the ones with a regular rhythm, such as crickets chirping, clocks ticking, and heavy breathing. I can't get to sleep with any of those and always have earplugs handy just in case.

I did poorly in gym in high school, like you; fortunately, as long as I learned to swim this did not interfere with my graduating. I also didn't do well in home-ec; I had arguments all the time in sewing class, because the teacher didn't do things the way my mother did. I don't think my other grades were as uniformly as high as yours were, since I didn't really care about marks after fourth grade.

Apparently we went to Alaska sufficiently late in the season that we had no problems at all with mosquitoes. I don't remember seeing a single one.

Timothy C. Marion (Terminal Eyes 11): I don't know about anyone else, but Mike and I watched the original *Battlestar Galactica* series. I think he liked it better than I did. I always considered it to be a very poor cousin to *Star Trek*. Mike liked it well enough to buy the DVD set, which we are watching now. I much preferred the new mini-series that the Sci-Fi Channel produced, and I look forward to the upcoming series. I don't know if Mike will watch it. I have heard of conventions centred around *Battlestar Galactica*.

I, too, have noticed that CDs are often sold at cons for the same price or higher than at stores. On the other hand, I have also noticed that many titles sold at cons are unavailable generally. Many are private pressings.

Anyone with lower than average blood pressure will experience light-headedness or dizziness when getting up

suddenly. It happens to me all the time. Just be careful not to get up too quickly. It's not a problem unless you actually pass out.

Yes, John Landis is a movie director. Brad Linaweaver is a science fiction author. Ann Robinson was one of the stars of the 50s movie version of *The War of the Worlds*.

Genetic engineering has nothing to do with injecting chemicals. You are confusing the practices used by many farmers and livestock producers today with genetic engineering.

Fred Lerner (Lofgeornost #74): You really shouldn't have to have studied astronomy to figure out that the full moon always rises at sunset. Think about it. It's elementary geometry. The moon appears full to us because the moon is one hundred-eighty degrees away from the sun with regard to our point of view.

I became upset at Tom Tryon when I read his book *Lady*, because he mentioned Orion being high in the summer sky viewed from Connecticut. This would require some astronomical knowledge. Orion is a winter constellation.

Colin Hinz (Triquetrum): I use Word to compose my zine. I'm using a Mac, a titanium Powerbook, running OS X Version 10.3.3. We are running Microsoft Office for OS X, Version 1. I stopped trying to do fancy layouts, since I also put this out in a PDF version. Of course, I could do a fancy layout in print and then change it for PDF; but I'm essentially lazy.

Jack Speer (Synapse): DVDs are manufactured encoded for different regions. The world is divided into six regions. I imagine they probably represent the six inhabited continents, but I'm not entirely certain about that. Most DVD players are restricted to one region only except that you can change three times before it locks in. The US is region 1; I suppose this probably includes all of North America, but I'm not certain of that. If you play a DVD encoded for a different region on your player, you will be able to go back to region 1 subsequently. However, if you play another DVD from a different region, your DVD player will be stuck in that region; and you won't be able to go back to region 1. This is my best understanding, so I may be wrong. The dealer can reset the region encoding for you. You can also have this region thing disabled on your player. Then you should be able to play any DVD from any region. Of course, it won't make any sense in this country to play DVDs from regions that use PAL formatting unless you have a TV that can use that format. Not all DVDs are encoded to region. Some are designated as "all regions". The DVDs we make on our computer are Region 1 and are formatted in NTSC.

Kiln People does touch on the question of whether copies have rights. The point is moot for most copies, since they have lifetimes of only a day or two. However, the book does feature a "rights" group for copies, which are called dittoes in the book. The book reads as though Brin put quite a bit of thought into the subject.

My zine cover was of a kangaroo rat.

You can edit a videotape on your computer, but you must copy the contents onto your computer first. This requires a lot of memory. This is how we edit the videos I take. My camera uses a minicassette. After we edit, we have been putting the edited product onto a DVD.

Watching the taping of a radio drama is very interesting. Of course, it is done with an audience in mind. The audience reactions are part of the show. Some of the actors dress up for the event as though they were dressing for a real play. Even though it is a radio play, some actors engage in quite a bit of physical acting. The radio plays feature many popular actors, such as Ed Asner and Amy Irving, so draw quite a sizable audience. The plays used to be recorded in a function room at a hotel. It started out just one session per play. They were so popular that more days were added. Now each play gets five performances, and they are being taped in a real auditorium.

American Gods is about materialism vs. Old World values. It is allegorical.

I meant to put the opening parentheses at the beginning of each paragraph in my comments to letters but may have forgot. Sorry.

You can qualify for Mensa by taking their intelligence test or by using scores from various standardized tests whose scores they accept. Among the ones accepted are the SATs and the GREs.

I have been in Albuquerque and don't recall it being humid. On the other hand, it was cool; so I wouldn't necessary have noticed. If it is indeed not humid, this may be because of its altitude. There may also be seasonal differences. For instance, it is very, very dry in winter in Minnesota; but I understand it's very humid in summer.

The spam I receive from China (I'm guessing that's where it comes from) is in Chinese characters. That's how I know it's Chinese. I probably wouldn't know if it was Romanized, since I don't have any knowledge of Chinese pronunciations.

I have noticed traffic signal sound effects in San Jose. I've been told it is for the blind. I don't recall hearing that anyplace else.

Wales is not part of England; if you are ever in Wales and value your life, don't go around saying that it is. However, they are both part of Great Britain.

I don't recall ever saying that I use Airborne Express. In fact, I send my zine in to the OE using the good old USPS. I would not use Airborne because of past bad experiences with them. If I need to express ship anything, I would use Fed Ex.

You misspelled the name of my zine. It is *Feline Mewsings* with a feline "mew".

There is nothing wrong with digging a hole and filling it with mulch to plant new plants. In fact, that is exactly what I do with azaleas. Other plants use a mixture of soil and mulch, the ratios varying according to the type of plant. Of course, if you are lucky enough to live where the soil is loam, you may not need much mulch. Around our area, we either have sand or clay. The mulch, or soil amendment, will differ according to the type of plant.

* * *

*** Letters of Comment (For the uninitiated, these are letters commenting on previous issues of my fanzine [newsletter])**

My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and so forth.

Lloyd Penney

11 February 2004

Thank you for a paper copy of issue 14 of *Feline Mewsings*. In my loc in this issue, I mention that I was still job hunting; and I have found something, even if it's only a temp position. If you've been in a Wal-Mart or a gift store and you've seen a large display of CDs titled *Solitudes* or *Avalon*, I am temping as a proof-reader at the company that makes those CDs. Head office is in Toronto, and it's a good office to work in. I'll be here until the beginning of March, so I might see how much of an impact I've made...I'd like to stay here. I'm even writing some of the liner notes for the CDs! So, that's what I've been busy with...now for some comments on the issue.

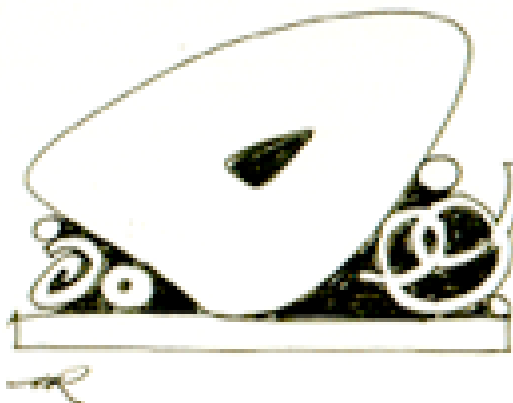
Computer problems...ugh. I'm having some minor problems with mine, but everything still works. I called my ISP and Dell, and both provided me with so-called solutions that even simplified, I didn't completely understand. Those solutions didn't work, anyway. I have a computer shop that's done us some real favours, and I expect I'll take the problems to him for a little service.

When I travel, I have learned to use my Palm as an alarm clock, rather than depend on the hotel to wake me with a wake-up call. I know of the time signal in Colorado; there's a similar one in Ottawa; but on my computer, I use an international time check system that updates the clock on my computer. I have a Palm m100 which is now obsolete according to the Palm website. I'd like to look for a replacement, but I find the current Palm models are Zires, which are inexpensive, and Tungstens, which are exorbitant. If I could find a happy medium, I'd look into buying that.

((I've never used my Palm as an alarm clock. I don't know that it is loud or persistent enough to wake me. I usually use an electronic travel alarm clock.

((You might look for used Palms being sold by people buying replacements. I think my husband sold his old Palm when he replaced it. I wonder if my m500 is also obsolete. Maybe that's why I'm having problems resolving the calendar on that with the calendar on our home computer network. I no longer try to resolve it any more and just enter everything twice.

((As I was in the middle of typing this, my husband's computer has developed some sort of problem – a disk directory problem. Fortunately, he was able to fix it himself with some troubleshooting software, DiskWarrior, he recently purchased.))



My loc... I am disappointed that the Bush regime is trying to use the idea of a return to the Moon and Mars as a carrot to get votes in the next election. I'd love to see all that happen, but not even the American federal treasury is bottomless, and the mess in Iraq has generated a huge deficit. With the US federal debt running just past \$7 trillion, I think a return to the Moon and a manned mission to Mars are out of reach, technologically and financially. I am also disappointed that this new direction in US space policy means that the Hubble Space Telescope has been cast adrift in terms of support and maintenance missions, mostly because of a similar abandonment of the shuttle programme. ((I doubt that Bush's return to the Moon and on to Mars programme is going to make any difference in the elections. It's an issue of minor importance to the majority of voters. I'm not concerned about the space programme impacting the budget in any way. Any expenditures in that direction are minute compared to everything else. I don't think we have heard the last of the discussion about the Hubble telescope. In any event, a bigger telescope is in the design stages.))

Valentine's Day is this weekend, so we plan to avoid the stampede, and go [out] the day before. The fact it will be Friday the 13th will be kept in the back of our minds... take care, and see you next issue.

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Ed Meskys, Center Harbor, NH

5 March 2004

Just finished reading #15 which I enjoyed.

My wife and I are overweight and have been slowly losing. In the past two or three years, I have lost 35 to 215 and hope to get to about two hundred eventually. We unofficially follow Weightwatchers without paying dues and cheat some, but we are progressing very slowly. ((Slowly is the way to go when it comes to losing weight.)) What are biscotti? ((Biscotti are hard cookies that are best eaten after dipping in coffee.)) We do use saccharine in coffee and tea, but Splenda in cooking. We also buy diet Quik. Twice a week we have fancy coffee in the morning. On Sunday it is one of the flavoured beans like hazelnut, which we grind. On Wednesdays we add something to the basket like cinnamon. We found if we add some Quik it makes a very nice mocha coffee. We have little spare money (wife retired early with no pension, so we only have my social security plus a bit from savings). We buy Folgers or other supermarket coffee for days other than Sunday, stocking up when it is at a very good sale price. A couple months ago, our supermarket had store brand coffee in 13-oz cans for 99¢ (Surefine), so we bought a dozen cans. We are finishing up a 39-oz can of Folgers we got for \$3.99 some time ago; and after that is gone, we will be on the Surefine.

I see you lived in Rochester, NY, off and on. My son, only child, went to RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology) for college and liked the city so much he has taken up permanent residence and bought a house. He is in computer network maintenance, and two different companies have laid him off when they decided to out-source. Last time was by Kodak, which has laid off thousands. ((In the old days, Kodak never used to lay anyone off. Times have certainly changed.)) I listen to the financial program on NPR; and just today they said more and more educated and experienced people are having trouble finding work, often having to go to entry-level positions because companies do not want to pay experienced wages.

((I don't drink much coffee, just a small cup in the morning and a mug at night. I had been drinking herbal teas for a while, but I guess I'm a coffee person at heart. I've been using Folgers crystals in the morning. I don't drink enough to make it worthwhile to drink real coffee. I use hazelnut flavouring containing Splenda and also add cream. At night, I use ground hazelnut flavoured coffee. I found out the hard way that the brand or whether or not it's decaffeinated makes a difference. I had tried Don Francisco hazelnut Hawaiian coffee and found it delectable. Then I bought some decaffeinated hazelnut coffee at Whole Foods, and it's like watered down coffee; using more just makes it bitter. It uses Arabica beans, too, but just doesn't taste good. If I had to drink that, I'd go back to tea. When I eat out, which is not often, I usually ask for tea. Restaurant coffee is usually terrible. I've thought about adding a bit of Hershey's cocoa powder, which I use for making hot chocolate, to my coffee but haven't tried it yet.

((Sorry to hear about your son's employment problems. I've been laid off twice in my career, so I know it's not a lot of fun. I don't have a job now, but that's because of health reasons. The hurdles of trying to collect disability payments was more than I could handle, so I didn't pursue it after the initial denial. My husband, fortunately, now makes as much as we used to together.

((I listen to NPR, too, and also watch the *Nightly Business Report* on PBS. The economy doesn't sound too great.))

My wife is a medical technologist and worked many years for a private lab about forty miles away. Then the lab went belly-up and she was out of work for about a year. When she finally got work it was with the state, working in the prison system doing drug tests on samples brought to the lab. The state had the supervisor full time and one technician full time and had one or two half time so they wouldn't have to pay benefits. So she had low salary and no insurance until the senior person moved and she inherited the full time job. She didn't get along with her boss who was not as smart as she and felt intimidated; and in a fit of temper at his stupidity, she quit and retired early. This was six years ago and she is still only 57, so it is five years before she can get social security and we will breath easier. Other friends of ours have hard times getting full time work. My partner on *Niekas*, Todd, was manager at a deli restaurant; but after it closed has had a devil of a time. Stores and restaurants are all hiring only part time to avoid benefits. Only department heads are full time, and all others only get 25-30 hours a week and no benefits. Looks like the supermarkets that were on strike also only hired part-time, but I gather they still gave health insurance.

A friend of my son works loading trucks for UPS and only works about five hours a night until all is done, but he has health insurance and vacation time. He says they have a good union contract.

Noted your enjoyment of theatre. My wife and I enjoy theatre, especially musicals. Next town over has a good summer stock season where they do six plays, each for two weeks, with tickets at about \$18. We usually go to two, tho' last year the only ones that interested us were while we were out of town. We have seen things like *Guys and Dolls*, *Evita*, and *Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. We also go to high school student productions, some of which are almost professional quality. The Meredith HS did *South Pacific* a few years back, which was outstanding. We have three high schools (our own Moultonboro, Meredith, and Laconia) and get to about two or three plays a year. There is also a semi-professional troupe in Laconia called the Streetcar Company, which does about two plays a year. We have seen *Hello Dolly* and *Sound of Music* in recent years.

We really like G&S, but there has not been much recently. We used to see one or two a year, but the last one we saw was two years ago and 120 miles away in Massachusetts -- *The Sorcerer*.

For a Tolkien fanatic, I have not yet seen *RotK*. We were very busy and missed nearby performances and then decided to wait until November when we will buy the extended DVDs. We have the four-disk sets for the first two. I had seen them in the theatre, but it is hard for my wife to queue me into the action without disturbing other patrons.

I have seen on listservs that the third movie is excellent and am awaiting the DVD.

We skimp on many things to do what we *really* want and will go to Glasgow, and I will go to Birmingham right after that for the 50th anniversary celebration of *LotR*. ((We probably won't go to Glasgow unless we win the lottery or something. I'm much more interested in returning to Australia. Since I also want to remodel the kitchen, we will have to save.))

A highlight of Torcon for me was a discussion of the Chinese space program as the absolutely last program item Monday afternoon. I am excited that they plan to go to the moon and eventually to Mars. I doubt Shrub is serious about the US returning to the moon or going to Mars. He will start a program that (if he is [ghod forbid] re-elected) will cost only a bit while he is in office and escalate only on the watch of the next president. If it is even started, it will then be killed when it starts to really cost...like the super conducting supercollider. (What do you call the cancellation of the SCSC? The plight of the ohmless. No, I did not make that up. It came from a friend who was a blind ex-pilot for the navy.) ((If the Chinese truly

go to the Moon and Mars, I have to believe that our government won't want to be left out.))

I, too, have read the Bible three times, tho' all the same translation. It was the Jerusalem Edition, which is scholarly, literate, and in modern English. The taped version I had borrowed from a blind library was edited, leaving out repetitious parts, and with only about seventy of the psalms and without footnotes on local custom and practices. I have read Asimov's *Guide to the Bible* and a very interesting book, *A Path through Genesis* by someone named Vawter (forgot his first name). Read it while I was still sighted, so it was before 1971. He went thru Genesis line by line, explaining the three sources that were edited into it and the worldview of the time it was compiled in. The firmament was a clear dome over the flat Earth, and it rained when God opened doors in this dome. That is why Genesis speaks of dividing the waters above the firmament from those under it and mentions the floodgates opening for Noah. One of the psalms speaks of heaven as a palace on top of this dome. ((I read Asimov's *Guide to the Bible* as well. That and another book called *The Bible As History* were very interesting.))

Awaiting your next ish. I have finished *Entropy* 44, which was intended for APA-Q on Jan 31; but it has been delayed because John Boardman's copier has been in and out of the shop for two months. I will e-mail and post it once the apa comes out.

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Jason K. Burnett, Metairie, LA

5 March 2004

I just discovered *Feline Mewsings* through the link at eFanzines.com. I think you're doing a really great zine, look forward to having time to read all the back issues you have on the web and hope you'll add me to your mailing list (If you could e-mail me the PDF files, that would be great).

Also, I'd like to take you up on your offer to provide information about joining FAPA. From what I've been reading (I'm new to fanzine fandom, although I have been apahacking for several years), FAPA seems to be the big leagues of apadom; and I'd really like to step up.

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Neil Kaden, Fairview, TX

16 March 2004

Thanks for posting FM15. Glad you and Mike are doing OK. I am still looking for work, and Cris is still working but getting more and more stressed as this drags on.

Don't know if this is a shift in programming, or always been there, but find it interesting about the how packed panel rooms are for Linux -- fans have always been computer-philes; but now it is becoming part of the program -- just like other packed con standards are "why we watch and love Buffy" panels. Had one of those at a local con that is emerging as a more fannish bookish con than normal for Texas -- ConDFW <http://www.condfw.org/index.php>.

#

Jeanne Mealy, St. Paul, MN

18 March 2004

A belated thanks for *FM* #14 and #15. I enjoyed reading them. You do a fine job. Graphics, pictures -- yayyy!

Loved hearing about the Alaska trip and seeing the photos. While I don't want to add to the work involved for such trip reports, I do have a request. It'd be good to hear more of what you thought and felt. If that gets to be too much to describe for everything you do, just drop in a few reactions here and there. You could also leave out a few things (bought postcards, filled out postcards).

I've never been on a trip to Alaska and was happy to hear what you thought of the food, shopping, etc.

How is Forry?

I liked reading the list about you!

We've had a bus strike going on since March 4th. Not a good time for those of us who depend on the only mass transit system we have (the light rail is not running yet and will be limited). I haven't found a permanent job since being let go from the county last April. One job might have become permanent, but I think it's best that it didn't (based on info from a friend there, not sour grapes). I've had a little temp work but didn't enjoy it.

John is stressed at times with his software engineering job. The cats are fine. How is Shadow?

Spring is edging its way in with longer days, warmer temperatures, and snow that doesn't stay long. I'm of two minds about this because I didn't do any fun winter things AGAIN, but I do like more light and warmth.

#

Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA

29 March 2004

...

Should I confess that I don't know who Wil Wheaton is? Nor Vera Nazarian, but you explainer her (in the photo – color! – she looks like me except younger). ((In case anyone else doesn't know, too, Wil Wheaton played the part of Wesley Crusher on *Star Trek: the Next Generation*; Wesley was the son of the ship's doctor and a child prodigy. Wil has gone on since then and has revealed himself to be a geek and a talented writer.))

...

There must be plenty of scenes left over to make an extended DVD of *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* (Ian McKellen said in an interview that a "director's cut" would be twelve hours long but may be that was all three movies) because they filmed the Saruman scenes with Christopher Lee but cut all of them, causing many of the book's lovers to complain that it isn't accurate without Saruman.

Gaudi style house in LA? Consider yourself reminded to publish the photo.

...

#

John Hertz, Los Angeles, CA

12 April 2004

Thanks for *FM* #15 with Frank Miklis drawing.

...

Indeed moderating panels is an art, science, or mystery, as the old saying goes. Some concons neglect this.

* * *

* **Closing Remarks**

We have plans to attend Westercon in the Phoenix area and then to vacation in Tucson afterwards. I don't know whether I will be able to get a report into the August issue. If I don't succeed, I will put it in the next one.