

# Feline Mewsings #22



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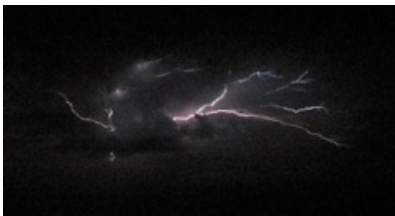
# Feline ~~Mewsings~~ Mewsings

#22

November 2005

## \* Editorial / Introduction

The past three months have been more eventful and stressful than I had expected. Of course, as I believe I said last time, we had some travelling planned. Those trips are reported on below. Mike also had a rather disappointing trip to Oracle in August, where he ended up photographing lightning rather than stars. His September trip to Oracle was more successful.



On a more cheerful note, my plumeria bloomed for the first time

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ed.

I have mixed news on our cats. We took Mercury to the neurologist about his seizures. Nothing definitive showed up on his MRI and spinal tap, so the diagnosis is currently epilepsy. As far as we know, he has not had any seizures since my last report.

Unfortunately the outlook for Shadow is not so good. In August an ultrasound showed the return of his cancer. We tried a different type of chemotherapy, but it did not work. His days are numbered. A few days ago, he seemed to lose his ability to process solid food. I bought some baby food, and he seems to be okay with that. We've also been tweaking his thyroid medication for what it's worth. He is seeing a homeopathic vet, who, we hope, will make his last days more pleasant.



Getting back to Mercury, he chewed through the cord on the charger for my cordless hedge pruner. After quite a bit of research, I managed to get a replacement charger. The charger is now kept in the garage, where Mercury will not be able to chew through anything. Unfortunately because of the wet weather we've been having lately and health problems on my part, I have not done any pruning yet.

Our local Pavilion's supermarket has been undergoing a makeover, which has made it tricky to find things. The remodelling is still not finished.

I started having problems with my left shoulder at the end of July. At first I thought it was just one of those repetitive motion things. I switched my mouse back to the right side, but that didn't seem to help much. Eventually the problem started to crop up even when I wasn't sitting at my desk, such as when I was washing dishes. A doctor friend suggested I try a cervical collar, but that did not help. At Coppercon,

which we attended at the beginning of September, a committee member gave me a massage. He said he detected a knot under my shoulder blade that he couldn't work out. He or someone else said I probably needed something called "deep tissue massage". I just saw my rheumatologist and made arrangements for physical therapy.

In September our VCR/DVD combo unit, which we had purchased about eighteen months ago, went on the blink. Of course it was no longer covered by the warranty. It turns out that a new unit of that type would cost us about half the amount we had paid for it. We've had so many veterinary expenses lately that we really didn't want to replace the unit with a similar one. Repairs also sounded pretty expensive, so we bought an inexpensive VCR. We may look into repairs later.

As mentioned in my Coppercon report, we had our hot water heater replaced. When that was done, we also discovered that our water pressure regulator had developed a leak. We had that replaced as well eventually. Mike had also been complaining about a drip in the master shower, and that was also rebuilt.

I got my five-tooth bridge to fill the gap created by one of the extracted teeth. The other gap will have to wait, as it is not covered by insurance.

We both got our flu shots at the end of September.

The cold I caught at Conjecture didn't become full-blown until we got home. The worst symptoms only lasted about three days. Unfortunately it then moved to my lungs, where it still sits.

Our rainy season has started early this year. In fact we have already set a new record for October.

With my gardener back, the pathways are being lined with a fabric that stops weeds from growing. He has done the front yard and the north side of the house. When he did the north side, we had him remove the dying peach tree. He has one more side to do, since the patio covers the area behind the house.

I've had a third credit card compromised. This is becoming very tiresome. In all cases I suspect break-ins at the banks involved. This is because one of the cards that were affected was a card I hadn't used in years.

My external hard drive died. It took much of a week to fully diagnose it. Of course this meant I couldn't use my computer for anything else until we had it all figured out, so I managed to do quite a bit of sewing. The sewing I refer to is just repairs and shortening things I had bought that are too long. Almost anything I buy is too long. Fortunately the drive turned out to still be under warranty. It has been returned, and we are awaiting the replacement.

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## \* Mike

Mike spent two Saturdays in August down in Oceanside at an astronomy seminar. Later the same month, he had a four-day business trip to Virginia.

On the first weekend in October, Mike hosted the Mighty ETX Star Party at Nightfall: Escape to the Stars 2005. This event was held in Borrego Springs, which is in the middle of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. We got there Friday afternoon. The Palm Canyon Resort hotel had recently undergone a change in management, so the services were rather less than we had enjoyed the last time we were there back in 2001. They sold box suppers that evening and provided buffet breakfasts Saturday and Sunday, but we had to go elsewhere for other meals. Friday evening, Mike held a welcome session, which was attended by twenty-five or so people. Viewing was scheduled, but the skies did not cooperate. Most people gave up about 22h00.

Saturday was much more successful. Nothing was scheduled for the morning, so I went to the visitors centre for the state park. It had been largely remodelled, so I spent quite a bit of time there and also walked around a bit outside. I got back to the resort in time for Mike's solar viewing at noon. The sun is not very active now, so the viewing was not as exciting as it might have been. We are at minimum for sunspots. But the session was quite popular despite the heat. Viewing was held in a parking lot, so the pavement made the temperature even higher. The temperature was over 100 F.

About 14h00 Mike moved everyone inside for a question and answer session and door prizes. He had a number of prizes to give away all donated by Meade, Oceanside Photo and Telescope shop, and other companies. This session went very well and was attended by fifty or more people.

The evening's viewing was very successful, as the skies stayed clear. The ETX people had their own viewing area. There were two other areas for others. Mike and most people stayed up until 02h00.

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## \* Local Activities

### Theatre

**Indoor/Outdoor:** This was the Colony Theatre's second play for the 2005-6 season. The story by Kenny Finkle is ostensibly about a cat, but the underlying message is about all interpersonal relationships. The tale is told from the viewpoint of a cat named Samantha, played by Tessa Thompson. The cats in the play are played by humans. Samantha is sent to a shelter shortly after birth. After several failed attempts, she is adopted by a nerd, played by Jeff Marlow. He names her Samantha. For a while, Shuman's house is Samantha's world. Then she sees an alley cat through the window and becomes stir crazy. She leaves to see the world. The man who played the alley cat (Louis Lotorto) also did many minor roles. The first act was outrageously funny and nearly had me in stitches. The second act was much more serious and emotionally touching. The actors were fabulous, and everyone enjoyed the play.

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## \* Books Etc.

**Guest Review by Amy Harlib:** Moscow Cats Theatre (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St., NYC, 9/17-10/30 extended to Nov. 30, 2005. [www.moscowcatstheatre.com](http://www.moscowcatstheatre.com)).



On Fri. Oct. 7, 2005, I had the pleasure of attending a performance of the Moscow Cats Theatre at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center in NYC. According to their promotional material, the theatre's founder, Yuri Kuklachev, began his career clowning in the Moscow Circus, where he first conceived the idea of using a particularly amenable adopted stray cat in his act. This proved such a success that Mr. Kuklachev went independent and formed his own troupe in 1990 and has been wowing audiences and winning awards in his Russian home and around the world ever since. He works with his wife, Yelena; his son Dmitri; and colleagues Marina and four other clowns plus twenty cats (long and short haired) and two small dogs

(not to mention numerous support and tech crew and a full-time vet).

The show I saw ran approximately ninety minutes with no intermission; it was graced with dazzling and colourful costumes, props, and expert lighting and set décor, including beautiful and witty artistic drawings by Mr. Kuklachev, who is also a highly talented fine artist. His renderings adorn the programme book, and prints can be purchased in the lobby. The entire show is accompanied by a solo synthesizer player who performs a sprightly rock-beat medley of well-known contemporary and adapted classical tunes and a Foley artist whose clever noises enhance the comedic action.

Technical background aside, the on-stage antics are a pure delight. The animals are trained with infinite love and patience to accentuate what cats do naturally, the felines getting petted and coaxed and rewarded with strokes and gentle sounds constantly; kindness and care for the furry frolickers are firmly emphasized by Yuri and Dmitiri Kuklachev in all their interviews and publicity. And this can clearly be seen by the spectators who react by gasping in awe and laughing and clapping non-stop throughout.

The cats, mostly moggies with a few pure-breeds amongst them, and two small mongrel dogs – all critters utterly adorable, well-groomed and healthy – work a few at a time and never all at once, totally harmoniously with each other and the humans. The set-pieces flow smoothly, years of showmanship obvious, one routine cleverly transitioning into the next and featuring feline feats of balancing on small platforms atop tall poles and across thin, tightrope-like horizontal poles, locomoting on top and, startlingly from underneath, upside down.

Acts also included the famous "Cat in the Pot" in which Mr. Kuklachev, in chef's attire, enters with a cooking vessel and, surprised to discover a cat inside, he removes her; but each time she immediately jumps right back in again. More treats involved various combinations of the cats and the dogs pulling and/or pushing each other across the stage in various styles of little carts, a cat on a rocking horse, cats emerging out of or disappearing into all manner of boxes and containers, kitties perching on or leaping off or onto the shoulders of the humans during their antics, and a bit where a cat and Mr. Kuklachev were switching on and off a tricky light bulb on a low table; you have to see it to believe it. One of the best feats

gets performed by Mr. Kuklachev's favourite cat, Marusa, a gorgeous fluffy tortie and white, who does a "paw stand" on his hand, an amazing stunt depicted in all the promo photos but truly astounding seen with one's own eyes.

Lots of audience participation happens throughout, involving beach ball tossing, plentiful balloons, getting a chance to be the subject of Mr. Kuklachev's quick sketches, and including some volunteers being asked to come onstage to assist. The show climaxes with the story of "Queen of the Cats", a sort of allegory in which Mr. Kuklachev portrays a painter who, when he goes to sleep, dreams about elephant-like aliens (actually performers in amusing costumes) arriving in a UFO from outer space. They attempt to steal his cats; and the mysterious, lovely Queen of the Cats arrives to save the day with her mirrored discotheque-type ball that emits "rays of goodness" spreading love and kindness throughout the world. Here we see the royal cat balancing on the ball, which slowly spins, lit to fill the entire auditorium with sparkly light effects. This got a very favourable response from the onlookers.

I adored the show, presented and staged with consummate skill, full of laughter and thrills and fun and fabulous felines. The human performers certainly love what they do, and their fondness for their furry compatriots shines through in every gesture and stroke and murmur as they work together in a team effort. Mr. Kuklachev, still in costume, meets and greets the audience and signs autographs while they exit through the lobby. An assistant holds one of the troupe - Banana, a beautiful, seal point fluffy Himalayan cat, which calmly and docilely permits scores of happy folks of all ages to pet him. Mr. Kuklachev asserts that all the cats in the Moscow Cats Theatre are artists and he treats them as such, and that is clearly evident. Only the most hardened PETA fanatic could resist the charms of the Moscow Cats Theatre. This ailurophile was in ecstasy and wanted to run away and join this unique entourage! Should Mr. Kuklachev's spectacle arrive in your neck of the woods - DON'T MISS IT!

\* \* \*

## \* CopperCon

Just as we were about to leave home Thursday, 8 September, Mike started to panic about our leaky hot water heater. I left a message for our plumber to call Mike's cell phone.

We finally left about 09h30. Our plumber called about an hour after we left. He checked it out and then called us back about an hour after that. He said he could replace it the next day.

We stopped for lunch at a McDonald's in Blythe.

We also stopped in Goodyear to gas up at a Mobil station.

We arrived at the Embassy Suites North about 16h30 after a small detour because the exit we wanted to use was closed.

After checking in we wandered around the hotel for a while. Nothing was set up yet, and everything ended up opening late. We ran into Alice and Marty Massoglia starting to set up in the dealers room. Marty told me that Barry Bard was dying of pancreatic cancer. I saw him later, and he was really thin. We later ran into Catherine Book, Terry Barry (previously Gish), and Ben Massoglia.

We had dinner in the hotel restaurant, which was quite good. Mike didn't eat. I had a lo carb salad. Mike returned to the room to watch football. I manage to get both our badges and pocket programmes. I recall talking with other fans and getting a gin and tonic at the free happy hour. Mike returned to the programming area for "The Last Days of Enterprise" panel, which was mostly a slide show. I stuck around for a later panel on "Accurate Prehistory" with guest of honour Robert Sawyer and author Rick Cook.

Afterward I had a small adventure trying to get bottled water, which I sought after smelling the tap water (stank of chlorine). The machine was all out, and I was unable to find another one before I got to the front desk. They very helpfully had room service send me a bottle gratis.

Early Friday morning, we were awakened by really loud thunder. We had a short shower, most of which had evaporated by the time we headed to the hotel restaurant for a late breakfast.

We went back to the room after we ate, since nothing much seemed to be happening.

We headed back to the programming area at noon, when the dealers room was scheduled to open up. Only a few dealers had arrived. I was hungry, so we got lunch. Mike returned to the room for a nap. I looked over the art show. Then I went to the green room to pick up my ribbon and notes for programming. I picked up a flyer for next year's Coppercon and noticed that it was for Labor Day weekend. I checked with Marty Massoglia, and he said the WorldCon would be the previous weekend. He

also gave me information about Leprecon, which made it sound much more attractive than I had thought from looking at the flyer.

Marty and I got to talking about many things, including reviewing, Oracle (Arizona), and books. As I headed back to our room, I ran into Greg Brown and also Jacqueline Lichtenberg.

I went back to the room to drop off stuff and rest up a little before the evening's panels.

The first panel we attended, at 16h00, was "NASA Space Science Update" presented by David Williams from ASU. He talked about current projects and upcoming ones. Then we went to a panel on "Living and Working on Mars" presented by Veronica Ann Zabata-Alberto. She talked about her experiences working at the Mars Society's experimental station in Utah. We left a bit early. I wanted to get a free drink – a whisky sour.

Then I had my first panel, which was "Should Critics Be Allowed To Live?" The other panellists were Jack Mangan, Chris Swanson, and Mike D'Ambrosio, who moderated. The panel went very smoothly, but we outnumbered the audience by two to one. If Mike hadn't been there to tape us, there would only have been one audience member.

"Meet the Pros" was scheduled to take advantage of the end of happy hour. I joined a group of fans and pros with a strawberry daiquiri. Mike returned to the room after a short while. I recall Jacqueline Lichtenberg and her husband among the group for a while. I sat next to Marty Massoglia for most of the hour or so that I was there. Greg Brown was also there, and I think I talked to him for a while. I grabbed some meatballs, which was my dinner.

At 21h00 I went to a talk about "Regression Therapy and Pre-existence" presented by Mary Erickson. Mike joined me. After the talk, Mike returned to our room.

I went to join the "Sci-Fi Jeopardy" game in progress. They were just winding up the first round. I joined in for the second one. There were three teams, and ours ended in the middle.

There were no parties that night, so I retired early.

On Saturday I managed to get up in time to get breakfast.

Just out of curiosity, we went to see the World Premiere of "Second Chances", a short film made by amateurs. I didn't film any of this, and I wish I had. What the crew said about making the film was very interesting. It was made for a competition. There was a time limit of three minutes. It was made within two weeks of the deadline. Everything was shot in one weekend. We were shown a seven-minute version. The original version is on the web at <http://www.basslinedigital.com/secondchances/>.

Then I went to a Robert Sawyer reading. Robert Sawyer read part of a new upcoming novel titled *Mindscan* and a short story. Then we just chatted. He's a very friendly and interesting person, as well as being an entertaining writer.

I joined Mike for "Star Trek: Behind the Scenes with Larry and Janet Nemecek", mostly consisting of a slide show.

Then I went to "Arizona Ghost Hauntings", presented by Debe Branning. She showed videos of some interviews she had done for news shows. They showed some sites in the state that are purportedly haunted. There was another presenter with her who showed videos of supposed ghost sightings. These looked like nothing more than light specks and fog; and I was rather disappointed, especially as not all of his videos were done in Arizona.

There was about an hour before my panel on Batman, so I took the opportunity to go around the rather small dealers room and the art show. The latter was quite nice, especially the slide show set up to show the work of the artist guest of honour, Mark Greenawalt, who works mostly doing body painting.

The Batman panel was much better attended than my previous one. I moderated, with Pat Connors, Jerome Lamberth, Alice Massoglia, Ken St. Andre, and Michael Stackpole participating. I followed the questions presented in the description given in the programme book. It went quite well, I thought. Most of the discussion was about the major Batman movies, but we also touched on the comics, the TV shows, and some minor movies.

Since we hadn't had lunch, we decided to have an early dinner. On the way to the hotel restaurant, Jacqueline Lichtenberg managed to snag us and introduce me to someone she hopes will do some reviewing for Sime~Gen.

We had a large dinner, and I had to take some of it back to the room. Actually Mike took it back to the room for me. I sat in the bar for the next hour or so with the usual suspects and had another strawberry daiquiri. Mike came by the bar to fetch me in time for the masquerade.

It turned out I could have stayed in the bar for another half hour, as the masquerade did not start until then. It was small but well presented. The half time entertainment was done by a folk singer.

After the masquerade we went back to our room. I changed for Regency dancing. There was still some time before it started, as it was to be in the same room as the masquerade; so I dropped in on a few parties. I recharged on some meatballs at one party.

I met Mike at 22h00 for the Regency dance. For a few minutes, it looked as though no one would show up. However, we eventually had a healthy number of dancers. Marty Massoglia did the honours and taught and led. It went quite well, and we did several dances. Mike left about midnight, and I stayed on. Marty and I showed a few stragglers what waltzing looked like. Marty and I chatted while he bundled up his stereo equipment. Then we continued to talk for quite a while in the hallway until another fan came along and reminded us of the time.

Mike and I had breakfast in the hotel Sunday.

At noon I attended "Feathered Dinosaurs to the Hobbit Hominid" presented by Robert Sawyer, the other panellist being AWOL. It was a relaxed session about the state of palaeontology today with a lot of questions and contributions from the audience. Mike went to "The Future of Star Trek" with David Williams, Larry Nemecek, and Lee Whiteside.

Then we had lunch.

My third and final panel, "This Ain't Your Daddy's Battlestar", was at 15h00. The panel was well attended. I moderated again; with me were Dave Williams, Pat Connors, Michael Mennenga, and Edouard Mesert. This went fairly well except that one of the other panellists kept trying to take over, which I didn't appreciate at all.

After that I went to the session on "Compliments and Complaints", which was the last official convention item.

Then I went back to our room and gathered Mike up for dinner.

After we ate, I looked in on Marty Massoglia taking down his table in the dealers room. He was worried that he didn't have enough room in his van for some extra books he was taking back with him, so I offered to take a couple in our car. I got Mike to come back from our room and left him with Marty to work out the details.

Then I joined some stragglers in the lobby and talked to them for a while. I found out there was a dead dog party in the con suite, so I went there to investigate after getting a free drink. There were only a few people there, mostly those who had worked on the con. But I was there for a couple of hours talking with them. The convention chair, I found out, is good with massage; and he was good enough to give me one. He couldn't work out a knot in my left shoulder and also said my back felt out of kilter. A couple of other people gave me some tips on exercises for the back.

On my way back to the room, I found Robert Sawyer planning a sightseeing trip in the state. I wished him luck and said my good-byes to him and his wife.

Mike didn't join me for breakfast Monday morning. The Massoglias were eating, though; and they were kind enough to let me join them. After I finished eating, I wished them a good trip to Tucson.

It was about 10h00 when we left the hotel.

I had my leftovers from Saturday for my lunch in the car.

When we neared home, we discovered that the exit ramp we usually use was just being closed. We detoured, but traffic was ghastly. We learned that there had been a power failure in the City of Los Angeles that morning. Although power had been restored to most of the city, refineries could not start operating again without going through some elaborate procedures. Our usual route home goes by a refinery. Apparently that road was closed. This caused all kinds of traffic tie-ups on alternate routes. We were probably delayed by about half an hour. We got home about 17h00.

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## \* Conjecture

We drove down to San Diego in late morning of Friday, 7 October. We arrived at the Doubletree Club hotel about 12h30. We checked in and took our luggage up to our room. Unfortunately the keys didn't work. I went down to the desk to have that corrected. I think the girl who checked us in forgot to encode the keys. As soon as we had everything stashed in the room, we went downstairs to register for Conjecture. Then we got lunch in the hotel restaurant.



Mike went to check out the dealers room while I went to a panel called "Everything Old Is New Again". The premise of the panel was that all the plots have been used and writers have to find ways to dress old ideas in new clothing. The panellists (Allison Lonsdale, Deborah LeBlanc, and Hilber Graf) had problems sticking to the topic, but it still managed to be fairly interesting. I noticed one audience member trying to get the panel back on track.

Mike reported that the dealers room was only partially set up when he went through. By the time I went after my panel, just about all the dealers had set up. I spoke at fair length with Hilber Graf, who had been on the panel. He usually works in the Industry but has written three books. One is non-fiction and is a sort of tongue-in-cheek treatment of haunted spots in and around LA. He is working on a similar book for San Francisco. He also has two books of fiction based on hauntings. Other work he does includes various haunted house projects at Halloween time. I also spoke at fair length with LA fan Susan Gleason (Dr. Arizona).

After that I headed across the lobby to the art show. I recognized one of the artists displaying work as the same as some we had seen at CopperCon. We noticed her work, because the cat she uses in some of her pictures looks a lot like our cat Christopher Robin, whom we lost to cancer. She apparently lives in Arizona.

Then I headed up to the con suite. It was small but seemed to be the right size for this con. I started talking to Peter Flynn. It turned out he had long ago published a Star Trek fanzine that I had submitted artwork to. As we talked about various things, I discovered that he had video of me in the masquerade at Nolacon in 1988. He offered to make a copy for me. He came through with that the very next day. So I finally have videos of all three masquerades I've participated in.

I went back up to our hotel room to fetch Mike for dinner.

At night there was a Meet the Guests. I'm not sure how successful that was, since there seemed to be no formal introduction of the guests. I spent time talking to Bay Area fan Mike Siladi. Then I went back to the con suite.

After nipping back to our room for a brief rest, I went to the Denver in 2008 Worldcon bid party and then back to the con suite again.

I eventually went back to our room to get Mike for the showing of *Frankenstein vs. Creature from Blood Cove* hosted by Jeff Berkwitz, who has a brief cameo in the movie. This is a homage to the classic Universal-style horror films and Atomic Age "creature features". The production was released directly to DVD.

After the movie I grabbed some meatballs at the Denver party and dropped into the con suite again before retiring for the night.

Saturday morning we were invited to join CatDeVille at breakfast. She remembered me from the audience at the "Everything Old Is New Again" panel. We talked about some topics related to the panel. I also introduced her to the concept of apae. Before we finished, Mike left to check out the dealers room again. Then Cat left for a panel she was interested in.

Mike and I returned to our room, where I did a bit of e-mail until it was time for the reading I wanted to attend. The Club Room, where the readings were to take place, was locked; and no one seemed to have the key. Jack McDevitt, the guest of honour, tried to read just outside the room; but it was too noisy. We ended up adjourning to the Program Ops room. Initially Jack had pulled my leg by pretending to know me. I was certain we had never met before, but these days I can't always rely on my memory. He finally confessed after the reading was over that he had been teasing me. I couldn't remember whether I had read anything by him, but I will certainly read his work in future. I'm sure, at least, that I've read at least one of his shorter works. He is a very friendly person.

Then Vernor Vinge read from a work that is a prequel to his short story "Fast Times at Fairmont High". I was interested in seeing a sequel to the story. He didn't exactly promise one, but he seemed to think there might be one forthcoming. He said his publisher also wanted one. I told him I'd bug him about it until he had one written. He's very good-natured.

Then I attended an interview of Jack McDevitt by Kathryn Daugherty. She did a very good job. Jack has had a very interesting life, and I have no doubt this contributes to his abilities as an author.

While I was at the interview, Mike attended a panel about "Thrilling Movies and Novels of the 1950s" presented by Jeff Berkwitz, Hilber Graf, and Stephen Potts.

Mike and I had dinner in the hotel. We adjourned back to our room until it was time for the masquerade. It was a small affair but well conducted, though it was late in starting. The half time entertainment was provided by James Hay, who moderated a trivia contest with chocolates for correct

answers. Mike got one of the questions right.

After the masquerade I went to the night's room parties and ended up at the Loscon party until I retired for the night.

I woke up with a splitting headache Sunday.

After we ate breakfast, we went around the dealers room for a while. Then I checked out the con suite, where I had an interesting discussion about religion. I went back to the room to take care of e-mail until it was time for "Mars in the Movies" presented by Gerry Williams. He has catalogued one hundred fifteen Mars-related films and has a web site about the topic. He showed trailers from many of those films, some of which were unfamiliar to us.

The con was effectively over, and we returned to our room. I took care of e-mail and some record keeping.

I was generally doing less well than I would have expect on the third day of a con. This may be because we had attended Nightfall just a week ago. Two weekends in a row at such things may be more than I can handle.

At night I went to the dead dog. A lot of people were gathering there for a pizza dinner, but I attended just for the company. Towards the end I ended up talking with Keith from San Diego whose last name escapes me, Jon Mann, and Mary Q. Smith.

My throat felt slightly strange during the day. By the time I was ready for bed, it was a full-blown sore throat.

My sore throat felt really raw Monday morning. Otherwise though I felt pretty good apart from being a bit tired.

We went down to breakfast by 09h00. Mike didn't eat. The Solana Room, which had been used by the dealers room for the con, was now being used by the restaurant.

We went to Sea World. Neither of us had been there for something like twenty years. We spent the whole day there, including lunch, which we had at Mama Stella's Pizza restaurant.

We saw four shows: the dolphin show, the Shamu show, the otter and seal show, and R. L. Stine's Haunted Lighthouse. I think we saw all the exhibits. The highlights were the penguins and shark. We also went on one ride called Arctic Wildlife. It's a motion-based simulator ride similar to Star Tours at Disneyland. The day was just warm enough to be pleasant until evening when the skies clouded up.

For dinner we went to the Lotus Thai restaurant. Wine and a curry dinner soothed my throat. By the time we returned to the hotel, I was quite tired.

My throat felt better on Tuesday. We drove to the Wild Animal Park and reached there about 10h00. We spent the morning tramping around the Africa and Condor Ridge areas. We skipped all the gardens, though. Then we stopped for lunch. Afterwards we rode on the Wgasa Bush Line Railway. After the one-hour tour, we spent a little more time visiting the petting zoo and Animal Care Center. It was about 16h00 when we left. We returned to the hotel, since it was too early to head toward dinner.

After a brief rest in the room, we walked about half a mile to Albee's Beef Inn at the Travelodge. It's a nice restaurant with lots of atmosphere. I had calamari, which was very good. I also had a champagne cocktail.

About 10h00 Wednesday morning, we left San Diego. We took a slight detour to check out the tidal pools in La Jolla, but it was high tide again (as it had been last year when we checked).

\* \* \*

## **\* Mailing Comments on FAPA #272:**

**Dale Speirs (Opuntia 57):** I much enjoyed your articles on offprints and seeds.

**Keith A. Walker (Picayune):** I enjoyed your essay about your experiences with the play-writing course.

**Shelby Vick (Comments Commence):** I check my regular e-mail three times a week. I check my Sime-Gen e-mail every day, since that is essentially work. I've done pretty well with spam. I did give up using AOL for e-mail when I was receiving more spam than regular mail. I get a lot of spam at my Cox address, which I don't really use for much. At the others, I probably average fewer than fifteen per day. The spam filters are pretty good at identifying spam.

The only kinds of condos I know that come with housekeeping and are fully furnished are the vacation condos, which are usually bought as timeshares, which allow each "owner" to use the unit for one or two weeks a year. I guess these units can be purchased outright. Most condos are not much different from apartments. The owner owns everything within the walls. The rest is common property that is taken care of by gardeners and such.

I admit I had to make frequent reference to the instruction manual for my watch until I got used to most of the functions. I still have to look at the manual for things I rarely do.

**Bob Silverberg (Snickersnee Ausepoc 2005):** There is a big difference, in my opinion, between northern and southern California. Southern Californians are nowhere near as laid back as you people in the Bay Area, though we may be more laid back than Easterners.

Other than that one point of clarification, I really enjoyed your essay and agree with just about all of it. Unlike you, however, I never developed any liking for New York City. You said "New York" throughout, but you really mean New York City. For a number of years, I lived in upstate New York, which, I believe, is very different.

**Dale Speirs (Opuntia 57.3):** According to statistics I have heard quoted on the radio (National Public Radio), the price of gas does seem to be making a difference among car owners. In Los Angeles ridership on public transportation is up. Sales of SUVs are down. The reports I heard did not differentiate among different types of SUVs, so you could be right that anyone wanting to buy a high-end vehicle may not be deterred by the gas prices. People in Calgary might be more justified in owning SUVs than people in LA. My sister, who lives in the Seattle area, bought one so that she would feel safer driving in snow in winter. Her latest, which she is leasing, is the new hybrid Lexus SUV. She reports getting thirty miles to the gallon, which is better than I get with my Geo Prizm.

You said that "Ed Gardner, who played Archie [on *Duffy's Tavern*] died on" 17 August 1963 and the book, John Dunning's *On the Air*, did not mention anything about blindness. I'm just repeating this for the benefit of readers of my zine who are not in FAPA.

**Dale Speirs (Opuntia 58):** Congratulations on your Aurora Award.

You criticized the way in which time is foreshortened in the CSI TV series. Foreshortening of time in fiction is nothing new. Way back in the seventeenth century, plays, at least those written in France, were required to have all the action within a short period of time. I don't recall whether it was twenty-four hours or a few days. I'm sure everyone in the audience knew that the true historical incidents took place over a span of years. Anyone viewing police shows and thinking real life mysteries get solved that quickly are just stupid.

I believe Ctein is his entire name. I believe he had it changed legally from whatever it used to be.

**Ben Indick (Ben's Beat 81):** I'm glad you have not done any more falling.

I'm happy to hear about your son's reading. I hope the play, when produced, is successful.

Thanks for telling us about Jules Verne's *Journey through the Impossible*. I went looking for it on amazon.com's French site. The French edition is called *Voyage à travers l'impossible*. While I was searching for it, I came upon a two-volume compilation of his "*romans de l'eau*" and his "*romans de l'air*". I wasn't able to find out the specific contents of this work, but I'm thinking of ordering both works when I have some spare cash.

**Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #47):** Until you linked visualization with slowness in reading, I never thought to connect the two. For me it's not so much that I enjoy visualizing as I read, it's that I naturally do it. It's very possible that this slows my reading down.

I've always liked Francis as a man's name, especially given a British pronunciation. There's something romantic about it.

**Gordon Eklund (Sweet Jane #44):** I didn't fall asleep during *Matrix 3*, but I felt afterward that I had wasted the time I'd spent watching the trio of films. The ending was a real disappointment.

**Arthur D. Hlavaty (Nice Distinctions 10):** Of the ten things on your list that you have not done, the following are things I also have not done.

1. Had my tonsils removed.

2. Watched an entire *Cheers* episode. I have watched at least some *Seinfeld* shows, and I watched one *Buffy* episode when it was nominated for the Hugo.
3. Gone out on a date while in high school.
4. Heard anything by Nirvana (that I'm aware of); but I'm sure I have heard other performers of the last thirty years, though I couldn't say which ones.
5. Bet more than \$10 on anything, if that.
6. Had to read *Silas Marner*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or *Lord of the Flies*. However, I did read the latter two of my own volition. I have seen TV versions of the first.

**Art Widner (Yhos 62):** If I recall correctly, Maureen F. McHugh has had one or two books nominated for the Hugo. One was *China Mountain Zhang*. That one took place on Earth in the future. The alien culture in that one was Chinese.

The gentleman pictured in *Feline Mewsings* #19 was Harlan Ellison. I figured everyone here knew what he looked like, which is why I didn't specifically identify him.

The panellists in the photo in the same issue were in order Steve Smyth, Chaz Baden, Karl Lembke, myself, and Marty Cantor. I originally listed them in alphabetical order, which is probably the way we were listed in the programme.

Retirement homes are starting to evolve into much more friendly places. Studies have shown the obvious, that when people are forced to lead regimented lives, they start to lose interest in life.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #103: The Passing Scene):** I didn't do well in your first line quiz. I only identified one. Of the dozen books whose first lines you printed, I have read seven and not read two. I'm not sure about three of them.

Sorry to hear about your problems with Verizon. We use them for all our phone services. As far as the cell phone is concerned, that was the only company that serviced our home. At our last party, Mike asked everyone who had other service to see whether they had service. One person, who had Cingular, had service. At our land in Oracle, Mike can use his Verizon phone to call home. We haven't had the opportunity to check out Cingular. Mike may change to Cingular if he can use it in Oracle. He doesn't like the fact that Verizon won't let him use Bluetooth to back up the information in his phone to his computer.

Don't get too discouraged by the fact that Lunacon did not take up your offer to do panels. I have found that unless the convention committee knows you, it is practically impossible to get on panels. Once you get on a panel, any panel, you will probably routinely receive requests for you to do panels. I offered to do panels at several cons without hearing back. Then one year when Westercon was in LA, they were looking for volunteers to lead book discussion groups. That year the books being discussed had been chosen by a friend of mine. I don't know who chose the discussion leaders. There may have been a dearth of volunteers. I don't know. But I led a discussion of a book. Ever after, I have received invitations from Loscon, a local con, to do panels. Last year I volunteered at Westercon in Phoenix to lead a book discussion. At this year's Coppercon, I was on three panels. The person running programming was the same person who had coordinated the book discussions at Westercon. This doesn't necessarily mean I will get to do panels at any other con. We'll just have to see how things develop.

If you are really serious about writing, you don't let rejection slips discourage you. Because I have so many interests, I was never persistent about my writing. It was mostly neglected for many years. I've gone back to it partly because there are now so many things I can no longer do.

**Eric Lindsay (For FAPA):** In this country we can do electronic tax filing from a Mac.

**Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien):** I didn't realize that *Crytonomicon* is related to the Baroque Cycle. I guess I should get those books.

When we bought our house, the previous owner had just replaced all the doorknobs with levers. I didn't like it. Now, though, I have enough problems with my hands that I really appreciate having the levers instead of knobs. Knobs are really difficult to turn when your hands hurt.

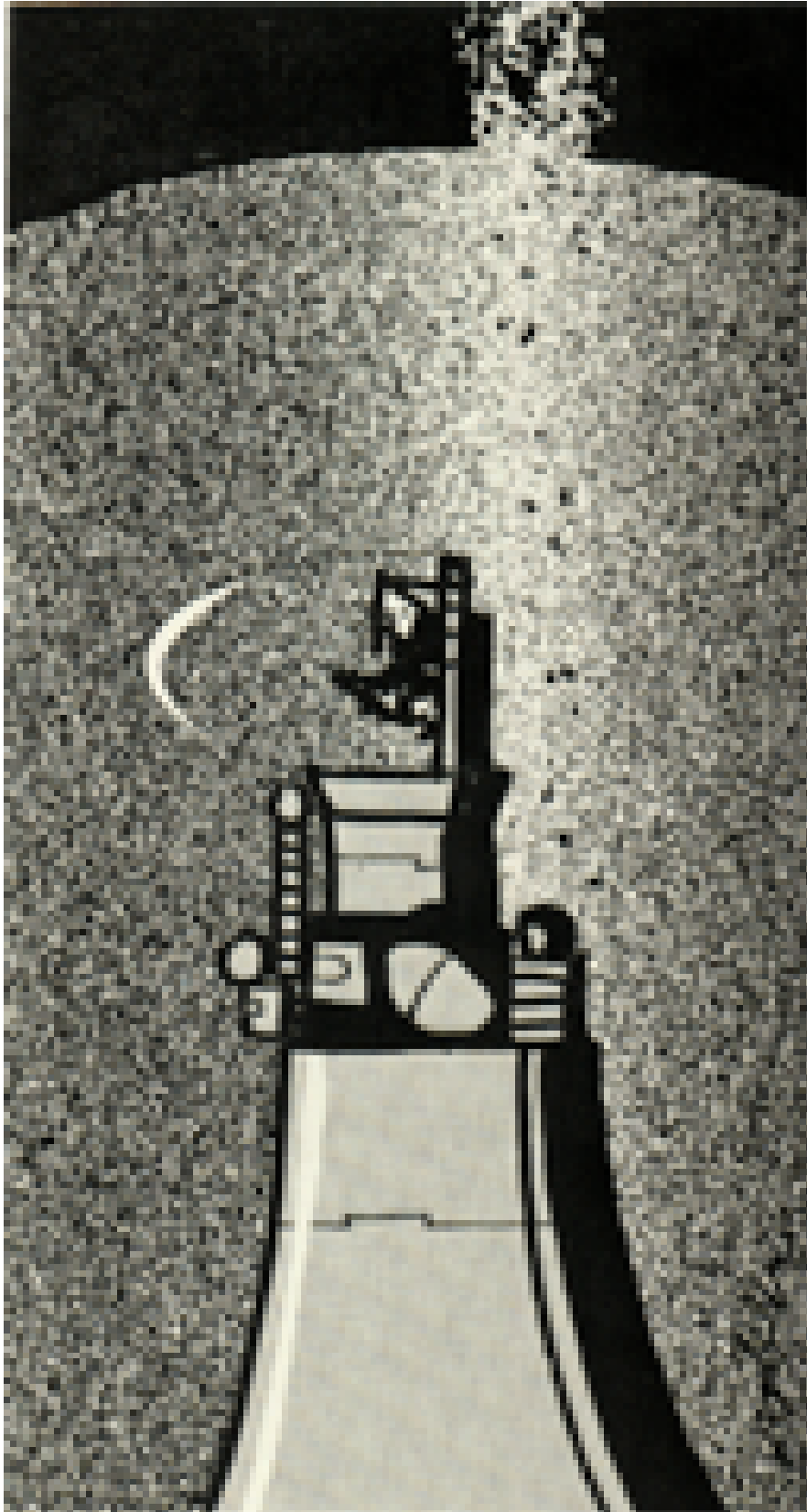
Actually, with names like Van Loon, there should be a cross-reference from one form of name to the correct one. Of course these days with computerized cataloguing, that is probably a moot point. You should be able to find it either way.

Sorry I couldn't give you more information on the apparent purse snatching we saw. We didn't see much of it and don't know the outcome. We don't even know that it was a purse snatching, but that's what it looked like to us. The apparent perpetrator ran so fast that we lost him fairly quickly in the crowd.

As for Murray's speech, you really had to be there. There is no way to really describe it, except to say that it's quirky. Victor Gonzales expressed an interest in transcribing it but has not followed up on that.

Congratulations on becoming a Prius owner. I hope by now you have been enjoying it. We had to wait two

extra months for Mike's Prius. For that period of time, he used my car for commuting.  
\* \* \*



## \* Letters to the Editor

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

**Lee Gold, Los Angeles, CA**

**21 August 2005**

First, MANY thanks for the alert to the Discovery channel shows, which are now being reshowed on the Science channel.

*House's* last episode ("Honeymoon") is scheduled to be reshowed on September 6th, according to the show's webpage, <http://www.housemd-guide.com/>.

We watched *Young Blades* for a while (on Pax), but it's over. It had Bruce Boxleitner (of *Babylon 5*) as head of the Musketeers, with four new friends (one a woman in disguise) during the reign of a very young Louis XIV.

We're now watching *Iron Chef* (Japanese) and occasional movies.

Barry's job at Northrop Grumman evaporated, and he's now working as an independent contractor on a set of web pages (mainly for Suzuki) run by the wife of a friend of ours, learning PHP, and trying to get time to learn Hibernator. I've been busy helping Fred Patten manage his financial affairs enough to qualify for Medi-Cal after he had a stroke in March and had to give up his apartment and collection (it went to UC Riverside Special Collections) and move to a nursing home. Medi-Cal is still pending, but we have hopes it'll be approved after Fred turns 65 in December. (He didn't have any health insurance, but even regular health insurance or Medicare wouldn't help pay for him to be in a nursing home; for that you need long-term care insurance.)

We saw *March of the Penguins* last week and were very impressed.

((Thanks for your comments. Thanks especially for letting me know about the *House* repeat. I will be home then, so I shouldn't have any problems seeing it.

((I hadn't realized that Fred's Medi-Cal application was still pending. I hope he gets the coverage he needs.

((So many people don't seem to realize the importance of having insurance. Unless you know that family members are in a position to help, long-term care insurance is very important. My parents don't have it, but they have every other kind of insurance paid for through my father's retirement plan. Companies no longer offer this kind of retirement benefit, for the most part, though. Since Mike and I do not have any children and most of our close relations are older or very close to our age, we have taken out long-term care insurance. In fact, I recently obtained improved insurance. At the time we originally applied, I was still receiving disability payments from one or more insurance companies. I was only able to obtain limited long-term care insurance. However, an excellent insurance agent was able to get me full coverage with a better company. Yes, it's expensive; but the alternative is even more so.

((If you know anyone who is interested in looking into long-term care insurance, I would be glad to refer him to our agent. He is licensed in both California and Arizona.

((We haven't seen *March of the Penguins*, but I have already decided to get the DVD when it comes out. Penguins are among my favourite animals.

((I'm glad to hear that Barry has found some work. I hope the new skills he's developing will help him get other work when his current contract is up.))

#

**John Hertz, Los Angeles, CA**

**27 August 2005**

The Craft and Folk Art Museum, once called the Egg and Eye when it served omelettes upstairs, is still open, across the street and a little east of the County Art Museum. Not to be confused with the Kaye Museum, which had Thorne rooms.

#

**Eric Mayer**

**11 September 2005**

Just a note on *Feline Mewsings*, which I downloaded after seeing a familiar name mentioned on Truefan.net. Hope your cats are doing OK. We have only one, Sabrina; but she just turned sixteen. Luckily her health so far has been perfect, but she's getting on. Our last cat was on thyroid medication at sixteen. Same stuff people use. I bought it at the pharmacy and had to sign as guardian for Rachel Mayer (cat).

Sabrina's from Rochester, NY. Born in a neighbour's garage. I read on your website that you spent some time in the Rochester area. I lived there from 1980 to 1997. Mostly on the outskirts of the city but briefly in Chili and Fairport -- out by Pittsford. Used to sometimes go to see the community theatre productions at Pittsford-Mendon High School. The jobs have been bleeding away for years, thanks largely to Kodak and Xerox. I was laid off from Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, myself. I guess practically everyone who's lived in the Rochester in the past twenty-five years has got laid off.

I've never read a Regency. Not my period, although Mary and I have been writing historicals. However, some years ago I was on a panel at a mystery convention with April Kihlstrom, who writes Regency romances and mysteries. Well, the question posed was about literary influences; and I figured I had an interesting answer for a mystery writer; because in writing about past times, I've taken my cue from Robert Heinlein and tried to just immerse the reader in this alien world along with the characters. Unfortunately, April, answering first, remarked that when it came to writing her settings, her model was Robert Heinlein! So if you haven't, you might want to check her books out.

((You don't remember, I guess, but I talked you on the phone once, I believe, when I was still living in Webster. You also used to send me your fanzine for a while.

((My cat is using methimazole for hyperthyroidism. I have no idea what humans used for the condition. I'm more familiar with hypothyroidism in people. I get my cat's medication from the vet, though the latest batch was specially compounded; and the compounding pharmacy FedExed it to me.

I liked Jane Austen years before I heard the term Regency period or romance. In 1979 I was introduced to Regency dancing at the WorldCon that was in Brighton, England. Then I found out about Georgette Heyer. Hers were the only Regency romance I read for years. Only recently have I read others in my capacity as a reviewer for simegen.com, though I've actually owned a few of them for a while.))

#

**Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON**

**15 September 2005**

Yvonne and I spent a weekend with some-time friends of ours in the Windsor area, just across the border from Detroit. Yvonne and I have known Cindi for more than twenty years. Such are the friendships you can build in fandom, and I am grateful for that. Cindi and her husband, Vic, have four cats. Vic's old cat, Emmett, an extremely fluffy tabby/Maine coon mix; Chester, a female tabby; Momcat, an old tabby barn cat converted to lap cat and Emmett's mother; and Franky, a little white kitten with needle teeth and a penchant for biting feet. We have no cats of our own, but we happily share everyone else's. Momcat spent nearly the entire weekend curled up on my lap or on my bed in the middle of the night, purring like an outboard motor. Cindi keeps threatening to stuff Momcat in my luggage.

We just purchased a new television after twenty-five years of sterling service from our old one (blew a

colour gun, everything shown was in shades of green); and now the FCC may do away with the analogue channels? I haven't heard anything from the CRTC, so who knows? Maybe the northern states with analogue TV sets may have to do with Canadian channels.

The only movie on your list that I saw was the *Revenge of the Sith*. It was, IMHO, the best of the trilogy, even though seeing Anakin Skywalker with most of his limbs burned away still managing to climb up to be saved stretched credibility. I did like the scenes that logically led to the beginning of Episode IV. (Episode VI was shown recently on CBC, and Lucas changed the ending yet again. When Luke Skywalker rescues the dying Darth Vader from the second Death Star in Episode VI, Luke removes Vader's helmet to show a middle-aged Anakin inside. I didn't see that part of it; but at the end, when Luke and Leia see the spectral figures of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda, instead of the spectral middle-aged Anakin, the figure of Hayden Christiansen shows up to represent the spectral Anakin. You know, that'll be a great series of films whenever George is done tinkering with them...

A wild bobcat broke into the zoo? Well, that's a switch. I'm sure the zoo looks more for breakouts than break-ins.

We've just purchased our first DVD player, and we probably have about a dozen DVDs, but we also have an open invitation to borrow as many DVDs as we want from a friend who must spend thousands of dollars a year on DVDs of his favourite TV shows and movies.

There are some differences in Canadian and American English. Canadian English usually uses British spellings, like colour and valour. Geography separates the use of the terms tonic, soda, and pop describing carbonated drinks. There are more differences, like sofa, couch, and chesterfield; but I'm having trouble keeping my eyes open right now.

Hello to Gerri Balter, an old apamate in the long-gone Toronto APA, TAPA. Also, greetings to Herman. And again, Hello to Mary Manchester. Hard to be believe the Welcomittee's been gone all these years now.

I didn't go to Glasgow or Seattle; but after we'd declared that we've gone to our final Worldcon, Yvonne and I have decided to see if we can save enough to go to LA for LAconIV. We've acted as Canadian agents and would like to wind up our agency by actually attending. Maybe we'll do some panels; we definitely want to go to the fanzine lounge, and Yvonne says she'd like to see some of LA as well. Going to be tough to stuff all of that in one week, but we'll see what we can do.

Coming up, Buzz Aldrin will be appearing at a public meeting connected with the International Lunar Conference in Toronto; and we'll be going to see him. Should be interesting. With the fall come many activities, speakers, and presentations for the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, the Canadian Space Society, and the Royal Canadian Institute for Science; so that makes up for the cooling weather. Today hit ninety degrees Fahrenheit; so the summer is leaving late, which is just fine with us. Take care, and see you next issue.

((Thanks for the LoC. Re the language differences between Canadian and American English, most of the terms you mention are also used in various regions of the US. I haven't heard chesterfield used, but I may simply be ignorant on that point. I have read it in older American books.

((You may have noticed that I used British spellings.

((In sending greetings to Herman, I presume you meant Herman Schouten. If I'm right, you are several years behind with the news. He is Debbi Schouten now. Gerri and he/she split up not long after the last LACon. Debbi moved to the Bayarea, but I'm not sure where she is now.))

#



**Anton Sherwood, San Francisco, CA**

**23 September 2005**

It is true about the tires. Makes all the difference. Are you thinking of doing the "plug-in" conversion?" More batteries and a plug in the gas cap (I guess), much -- much! -- better mileage, I hear.

((No, we are not thinking of the "plug-in" conversion. We are aware of it, however.))

#

**Nate Bucklin, Minneapolis, MN**

**6 October 2005**

Hello there, Laurraine! I hope this e-mail address is still current -- I wasn't thinking ahead to the point of remembering to bring your most recent FAPazine to work with me. Not that this will be that long in any event.

You said something on the order of, "If you look at it that way, \*all\* (or was it "most"?) of us have Asperger's." I'd be really curious as to the thing you were responding to -- a "quasi-quote" is fine. You see, I'm starting to suspect that \*I\* have Asperger's -- or something pretty similar.

... When I was in college and playing in my first steadily working rock band, The Love Express, the band's co-leaders, Ken Gager and Les Hennessy, made it quite clear that they considered me a musical idiot savant; and they were pleased with my high level of musicianship but didn't feel they could discuss anything about the music business in the most business-like sense (what kind of songs we should be playing, where we should try to knock on the door in hopes of bookings, etc.) and wouldn't even consider my help in reading a map to get to road jobs, as they could tell just by talking to me that I didn't have that kind of intelligence. (I had actually been the Bucklin family navigator on a lot of road trips, so this was a bit insulting; but in retrospect I could see how they got this -- I was so obsessed with the music proper that everything else just seemed like a big distraction.)

... I had ... extremely high SAT scores (the second time I took it, 740 verbal, 779 math, and several high achievement scores); but on "practical" or "task completion" activities (perform this task, and you will get this result -- or, perform this task, it's your job), I had always done just barely better than "severely retarded."

I'm not going to try to get tested for Asperger's at this point, as it wouldn't make a difference in my life. I do quite well at my day job; Louie and I are a very happy couple; my driving the family car is going just fine as usual; and so many of the things I'm doing lately involve music that even if I \*were\* proven to be a musical savant, I'm doing more things well than badly. Even so, the idea that there are a whole lot of people in fandom who have at least the appearance of Asperger's is quite intriguing, and I'd be interested in hearing both what you first read that led you to make the comment, and other "threads" that may have developed from this interchange.

((As promised, here is the long quote from Roger Wells commenting to Janice Morningstar, who has a kid diagnosed with Asperger's.

((<<I suspect I have Asperger's, at least to some extent. As I understand, with Asperger's, the mind is optimized for spatial relationships rather than human interaction. For example, in an exercise a while back, I could glance at a simple three-dimensional puzzle and immediately put it together, when a couple other people had been struggling with it for some time. One the other hand, I cannot read body language to save my life, if it is anything less obvious than someone giving me a thumb's up or flipping the bird. While I now usually look at people when talking to them, for me, this was learned behavior. Unlike true mental or emotional disorders, Asperger's appears to optimize some skills at the expense of others. Admittedly, in a society such as ours, skills in personal interactions are usually more important than skills with spatial relationships. Nonetheless, I question that Asperger's is a disorder.>>

((I was especially referring to his saying "Asperger's appears to optimize some skills at the expense of others". Said that way, are we all on a spectrum of Asperger's? Few people are good at everything.

((Actually, from Roger's earlier definition in the above paragraph, it sounds like you have the converse of Asperger's.

I hope the quote makes things clearer.))

#

**Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD**

**8 October 2005**

Ah, lovely sun doing its thing. Colour prints DO have some claims to fame



A neighbour just got a Prius and loves it. I asked the family-run local garage if they could work on a hybrid, and they honestly said they did not feel qualified.

((When we bought our Prius, it came with free service up to something like 40,000 miles.))

The movies you list are all on my netflix list; the theatre is too expensive and the seats uncomfortable. Ah, but chronic pain is such a joy.

I'm trying to remember what comic books I actually read ... *Tarzan* ... *Superman* – I think that would make sense since I “found” sf after finishing off the *Tarzan* books and finding John Carter. The rest, as they say, is history.

Congrats to Yvonne and Lloyd on the weight loss! I lost a “bunch” years ago on Weight Watchers, but they came back and brought friends. However, I’m pursuing one possible medical loophole and seeing an endocrinologist (Uh, it took twenty years to regain the weight so, just maybe ...) So far my thyroid panel numbers look weird ...

\* \* \*

### **\* Closing Remarks**

Here we are nearing the end of another year. As usual I’m sure the holiday season will keep us busy with many social engagements. We have no travelling planned.

