

Feline Mewsings #26



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Feline ~~Mews~~ings

#26

November 2006

* Editorial / Introduction

This issue is a lot longer than usual due to a long trip report and the worldcon report.

As I recall I wrapped up the previous issue just before we left on our trip, though I didn't send it in until we got back home. We had more than two weeks between our trip and the worldcon, and that looked like a good gap on the calendar. In real life, I felt rushed. There was all the mail to catch up on, and I had recorded a lot of TV shows while we were away. During this time I also started using the nighttime contact lenses that reshape the corneas; I have my distance vision back and only need reading glasses.

On a weekend between our two trips, we went on a hike to Long Point Shoreline. This is the area where Marineland used to be. The park closed sometime around 1990 before I ever got to visit; Mike had been there and recognized a few remnants of the buildings. The land has lain unused since then with various interests trying to build on it. Finally it seems that a plan has been accepted for a resort. It will include public hiking trails, some of which may be along the path we took that day. We hiked to a sea cave that's been apparently used as a backdrop for a number of movies and TV shows. For instance it was used as the Bat Cave. Below are two photos of it – one from a distance and the other from closer up.



My father contracted an infection of *Clostridium difficile*. As the name implies, it is extremely difficult to get rid of. To date he's on his third antibiotic to try to get rid of it. It affects the gastrointestinal system. This has made it impossible for him to make any progress in his recovery. However my sister did manage to move him to a nursing home closer to her new house. She bought a bigger house for her and my parents to live in. The main floor is at ground level. My parents' old house is in escrow and expected to close in mid-November. My sister and mother just moved into the new house after fixing up a few things, such as replacing wallpaper and carpeting.

The cats had their share of health problems. Fluffy was finally definitively diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Syndrome, and we have started treatment. As this consists mainly of lots of

medication, he is not happy. We'll see how things go. Mercury gave me a fright by catching cold and then something like stomach flu. He had me taking him to the vet's about every other day for about a week. Fortunately he got all better. But for a while I was really stressed out. Fluffy's endoscopy was also problematical, because it couldn't be done the first time it was attempted. He was totally constipated; this makes the procedure really risky. I had to give him laxative to make sure the second attempt would be successful.

The Griffith Observatory, located in Griffith Park in Los Angeles, is finally reopening after being closed for renovations for about four years. They've done a really great job; we went to see it at a member's preview shortly before the reopening. The place looks not too different from aboveground. Most of the renovation was done below the ground. Because it's situated on a hilltop, part of the lower floors opens out on the hillside. The planetarium itself has been totally renovated with new equipment and new seats. There is now also a separate auditorium. A cafeteria and a larger souvenir shop were also added. They have some really neat things in the souvenir shop now. You will probably recognize the place from a lot of movies. It's a popular spot for filming and has been used in such shows as the movie *Rebel without a Cause*, the TV series *Logan's Run*, the serial *Flash Gordon*, and others too numerous to recount.



I've seen an oral surgeon about the possibility of getting dental implants. I had to get a cat scan, and that was just done. Now I need to call the oral surgeon again.

* * *

* Mike

Mike's trip to Oracle in August was not entirely successful due to poor weather, and he cut the trip short.

His September trip there was only successful in terms of wildlife. It was too windy to do any astrophotography. Clouds kept coming and going. At one point, he called to say he thought he'd seen a bobcat walk behind his tent.

As I write this, Mike is in Oracle again. This time it sounded like the weather was ideal – no clouds or wind.

* * *

* Local Activities

Theatre

I Have before Me a Remarkable Document Given to Me by a Young Lady from Rwanda:

It's a mouthful for a title, and I'm sure a shorter title could work just as well. This was the Colony's second selection for the 2006-7 season. The play is written by Sonja Linden and was directed by David Rose. There was no intermission, probably because it would have interrupted the emotional content, which is very important in this play. In short the story is about a young woman, played by Erica Tazel (new to the Colony), who had escaped the genocides in Rwanda and is now in Britain. The other character, played by Louis Lotorto (a Colony veteran), is a frustrated poet with writer's block who has taken on a job to help refugees interested in writing. The refugee comes to him with a manuscript for a book that is nothing but a very dry history of the genocides. He persuades her to make it a personal history. During the course of

the play, we learn about her family and the horrific things that happened to them. The play is emotionally very powerful. I used a lot of tissues while I was watching. The audience gave the play a standing ovation. This was the play's Los Angeles premiere.

* * *

* Coastal Vacation Trip

After too little sleep, we left home early the morning of Monday, 27 July. We listened to the landing of the shuttle *Discovery* on the radio about 06h13.

While we were still in Torrance, there was a bit of rain – monsoon season.

We stopped at a McDonald's in Bishop for an early lunch.

As we approached Mono Lake, we stopped at a couple of vista points and took pictures.

After we reached Lee Vining, Mike filled up his gas tank. Gas was \$4 and up there!

Lee Vining is a tiny town (2000 census, population 488) nestled between Mono Lake and Yosemite at an elevation of 6781 ft. The place was named after a man named Leroy Vining, who founded the town in 1852 as a mining camp.

Even though we were early, our motel room was ready. After we'd schlepped everything up to our room with a view, we checked out the town. There are two restaurants just north of the motel and a couple of gift shops. We also visited the Chamber of Commerce, which is also the headquarters for the Mono Lake Committee. I ended up buying two skunk stuffies; I must make a list of the ones I already have to avoid duplicate purchases. I also got three postcards. The Mono Lake Committee people gave us some good tips on sightseeing.

The Mono Lake Committee was founded in 1978 to save the lake. When Los Angeles started siphoning water from the Sierras in 1941, the lake lost its source of water. The level of the lake fell and fell until in 1978 it had lost forty feet. The Committee started a campaign to restore some of the water to the lake. After sixteen years of legal battling, the State Water Resources Control Board finally issued an order protecting the lake. The target is to raise the water seventeen feet from its level in 1994. Quite a bit has been done so far, but the target has not yet been reached.

Then we returned to our room and took a nap. I took a nap, anyway, to make up for the previous night's lack of sleep. Mike managed to do some e-mail using the AOL 800 number. Just after 17h00, we had dinner at Nicely's. The dinner was pretty decent, and I brought back leftovers to eat as the next day's breakfast.

The next day I woke up before my alarm went off. The day started out cloudy. The sun came out a bit about mid-day. Then the clouds came back and it rained. There was some lightning in the mountains.

After breakfast we went to the National Forest Service's visitor centre and took the Water and Geology Walk. It was just the two of us in the group. Despite the fact that we'd been assured that there were no biting insects, I found I had at least a couple of bug bites.



The first photo above shows one of the streams that feed Mono Lake. The second shows some examples of tufa.

After lunch at Nicely's, we went to the tufa site and went on the walk there. It started out quite sunny and bright; but eventually it clouded over and started raining, shortening our walk. Still I think we got to see just about everything, including some nesting ospreys through the ranger's telescope.

Because Mono Lake is a landlocked lake, it has a unique ecology. The lake's water is briny and alkaline. It's a favourite stopping place for seagulls and migrating birds. Two unique creatures inhabit the lake – brine shrimp and alkali flies. The alkali flies are very interesting. They swarm on the shores of the lake. If you walk among them, they swarm up into the air. They do not bite.

The tufa formations grew under the water when the lake was at its original level. When the lake level dropped, they were exposed. Today some of the tufa formations are again back in the water, but many are still above it. Tufa is formed when salty water meets fresh water. Tufa formations are somewhat akin to cave formations, such as stalactites and stalagmites.

After that we drove up one of the several canyons and saw Lundy Lake, which appears to be a man-made lake. We saw a couple of the falls feeding the lake.

That evening we had dinner at Nicely's again.

The dial-up Internet connection there was too slow for me to use. Mike struggled with it but didn't get a lot done.

I breakfasted on leftovers again on Wednesday.

We left Lee Vining about 08h00. The day was nice and sunny. We saw a dead cow just before we entered Nevada, where we made a rest stop.

There was a lot of roadwork on the drive, but they didn't seem to slow us down too much. Still I didn't feel we could take the time for a lunch stop. We drove past Lassen and Mount Shasta, arriving in Ashland, Oregon, a little after 16h00.

We had a decent dinner at a restaurant around the corner called Beasy's on the Creek.

The Internet connectivity at the Plaza Inn & Suites was incompatible with Cox, so I could only send mail out using mac.com, though I could receive all my e-mail.

Thursday morning we got up early, had a hearty breakfast at Brothers', and left for Crater Lake National Park. It took about two hours to drive there. Crater Lake was formed about 7,700 years ago when Mt. Mazama erupted and collapsed to form a caldera. In the five hundred years following, it filled up with water. It is one of the world's deepest and purest lakes. After stopping at the visitors' centre, we drove the Rim Drive in a clockwise direction, making many stops at the various vista points to take pictures. We had a clear day for most of it. The lake is truly a spectacle and bluer than photos can truly show (see front cover). From the mountain could also be seen many other mountains and other scenery, including Mt. Shasta. I got eaten up by bugs there, where the temperatures were pleasant.

We left the lake about 13h00.

In the evening we walked to the Ashland Springs Hotel, where the Carleton College (my alma mater) group was headquartered. It was about a third of a mile walk. Because of the heat and humidity, the walk seemed somewhat onerous, especially during mid-day.

After we registered with the group, we looked over the brochures and other information we received. At 17h00, we joined the group for a reception. Despite the heat outside, which was close to a hundred degrees Fahrenheit, it was freezing in the hotel. We had a group dinner at 18h00. After most of the meal, we had a lecture by Terry Moore about the play we were about to see. Terry Moore is a fellow alumnus of Carleton and works as a Shakespearian actor and director in Seattle.

At 20h30, we saw our first play of the weekend – *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It was performed as a spoof of itself, and I found it the least satisfying of the four plays we saw. Despite the performance being outdoors, I don't believe I got any new bug bites.

Friday I got up at 07h15 to get to the 08h30 group breakfast. After we had eaten, we discussed the previous night's play and also received some information about the evening's play.

In the afternoon we visited Science Works Hands On, which is similar to the Exploratorium in San Francisco. Afterward we stopped briefly at a small nature centre. The place was designed to attract birds, and I saw and photographed some woodpeckers.

We had dinner at the Black Sheep Pub.

It was cloudy all day so not as hot as the day before.

At night we saw *Intimate Apparel*, a story about a black woman who was a seamstress in New York City at the turn of the last century. It was well done and probably the second best play of the weekend.

We were doing this weekend as part of an alumni group from my college. This meant that we not only saw the plays but also had the opportunity to discuss them with a knowledgeable person, Terry Moore, as well as fellow alumni. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival is probably unique in the way they do things. Each play runs a very long time. Each participant in the festival is expected to stay for the duration. Because of this the players tend to be a mixture of old-timers who have taken root in Ashland and actors just starting out. You will rarely see a well-known actor there.

Saturday I woke up before my alarm. Today's group breakfast was quite early. After we ate, we discussed the previous night's play and learned a bit about the plays for this day.

Then we went on a backstage tour.

Mike and I had lunch at Alex's. I had salad and a sundae for dessert.

In the afternoon we saw *King John*. Although the setting had been changed to World War I, that fact didn't really seem to impact the play other than the costuming.

We had a small dinner at Munchies.

At night we saw *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. It had been reinterpreted as the Amish visiting the big city, and the brigands were dressed as Punks or Goths. I found this to be the most satisfying of the four plays.

We had a group late snack afterward.

Sunday I got up at 07h30 and headed over to the Ashland Springs for a continental breakfast with the group. We discussed the previous day's plays and the four plays we'd seen in general, making comparisons. Then we said our good-byes.

Mike placed most of our belongings in our car while I was gone. After I returned, we carried the last of our belongings down, and I checked us out.

The drive to Redding, California, only took a couple of hours. We were both tired, so rest was the main thing we were interested in.

We went to dinner next door at Cattlemens, which is a superb steak restaurant. Cattlemens has other restaurants, mostly located in northern California. There is also one in Carson City, Nevada. They serve beef from the Harris Ranch, located in Coalinga. You can order beef from them at www.steaksales.com.

I finally had the opportunity to catch up with my recordkeeping. The Internet connectivity at La Quinta is wireless and is compatible with all my e-mail.

Monday morning I had the free hotel breakfast. Then we drove to Lassen, reaching there about 10h00. We did a couple of hikes around a couple of lakes and also saw the Sulphur Works, which unfortunately was only partially open. I was too tired to do more.

On our drive back to our hotel, we stopped by the Australian Hat Outlet, where Mike finally found a replacement for his old jacket, which has shrunk quite a bit, especially in the sleeves. He bought a size larger, to allow for the expected shrinkage. This is a jacket with mucho pockets. Vests like that seem very common, but jackets are much harder to find. I got a hat with a flap behind the neck to keep off sun.

We didn't get back to the hotel until about 17h30, so we straightaway went to Cattlemens for dinner. I had a margarita, which almost did me in. It was double-sized, and it was either stronger than I'm used to or I was fatigued and more susceptible.



Tuesday morning Mike decided to join me for breakfast. Then we drove to Lassen. We did the hike to Bumpass Hell, which is a hot springs and mud pots location accessible only by walking. The trail was half covered with snow, which slowed us up quite a bit (see photo above). Since the trail is all above 8,000 feet, it was also more tiring. We were probably the slowest hikers on the trail, but we made it. The walk was well worth it. I was too tired to do any more, so we returned to the hotel. Although it was a fatiguing hike, the breathing was very good. I've been bothered by asthma most of this year, but my lungs felt really clear during that hike.

Wednesday, 26 July, we left our hotel in Redding about 08h00.

We made two stops for gas over the course of the long drive from Redding to Federal Way, WA, where my sister lives. There was some slow rush hour traffic in Portland and on the approach to Tacoma. We finally reached our La Quinta hotel about 17h30. They were having problems with their computers, so it took quite a while to check in. Then we waited for a luggage cart. They'd also been having problems with their elevators, but the problem was fixed later that evening. We finally got to Mimi's about 19h00. We started our laundry and then headed for dinner at Black Angus. Afterward we returned to Mimi's to finish our laundry. I left my jeans, which I'd been wearing, to be washed when Mother did her laundry the next morning. While we waited for our laundry to finish, we played with her new kittens, Oliver and Kitsu.

I woke up too late on Thursday get any eggs for breakfast and ended up just eating an apple and drinking decaf.

We got to Mimi's at 10h30. After Mother's laundry finished, we went to lunch at Applebee's. Then we went to the hospital where Dad was. We stayed for a while, and then we left Mother there and returned to the hotel.

I took a nap in the afternoon.

At night we went to Marie Callender's for dinner. I think I made a gluten boo boo with dinner.

We lost the Internet connection at night.

I got up fairly early Friday morning and washed my hair. The shower was more mist than real shower. Mike later discovered a switch to fix that, but it was beyond my reach.

I breakfasted on leftovers from the previous day, thereby prolonging my gluten problems.

About mid-day, we went to visit Lori Jennings in Auburn. She used to work with Mike at TRW. Then she went to work with Apple until she retired. She has a very nice house. It was just an ordinary house until she completely redid most of the interior. She also has a very nice garden with bird feeders. Her lot is next to a wood with wild animals. She has four cats, of which we saw three, one close up.

In the late afternoon, we went to the nursing home that Dad was moved back to. Mimi arrived shortly after we got there, and we had dinner at the Lobster Shop.

I woke up fairly early Saturday and breakfasted on leftovers.

We stopped at the nursing home on our way to Bremerton to see our sister-in-law. Dad was sitting in his wheelchair and seemed pretty alert and talkative. We reassured him when we left that Mimi and Mother would be by soon.

We reached Jan's apartment in Bremerton about 11h30. Jeff, her son, was there. We had lunch at a seafood restaurant called Anthony's. The day was cloudy except for an hour or two while we had lunch.

Afterwards we went back to the nursing home. From there we followed Mimi to dinner at the Primo Grill.

I awoke quite early on Sunday. It was fairly chilly. It had rained overnight.

I had leftovers for breakfast again.

Then we drove to Seattle, where we went to the Science Fiction



Museum (pictured above). It was laid out quite nicely. It took us about two hours to go through it, including the gift shop, which was a bit disappointing. There was a nice restaurant at the site, where we had lunch.

Then we went to the nursing home, but Dad was asleep and we left shortly thereafter. It turned out that he woke up about ten minutes after we left, which was too bad.

After we returned to our hotel, Mike took a nap. For some reason, I could no longer send out e-mail except for mac.com. We figured this had something to do with Cox, which we subscribe to for our cable modem at home.

In the evening, Mimi picked us up and took us to her house to feed the cats. We picked up Dad's computer, which had been my old one, and my jeans. We had dinner at Salty's.

It rained later at night.

I seemed to be recovered finally from Tuesday's big hike.

I got up at 06h00 on Monday after only about five hours of sleep. I had breakfast in the hotel, and then we checked out.

During our drive, I felt sleepy but never actually fell asleep. We stopped for gas and restroom shortly before we crossed the border back to California. Because the car's GPS system seemed unsure of the actual location of our hotel in Crescent City, we followed my instincts and managed to find the place. After we checked in and rested a bit, we had dinner at the Northwoods Restaurant, which was next door to the hotel. It was not a great experience. The first dish I ordered contained flour after I was assured it did not. It's a good thing my suspicion metre has become more sensitive.

The Light House Inn has a sort of charm. The lobby is decorated with miniature houses constructed by the owner and various maritime objects. It's quite cool so close to the ocean, unlike the hot temperatures inland. It's so cool at night that I had to turn on the heat.

I woke up relatively early on Tuesday. After breakfast in the hotel, we headed south toward Prairie Creek Redwood State Park. After a long drive over an unpaved road, we reached Fern Canyon. The hike was fairly short; I was a bit disappointed. It didn't look nearly as spectacular as it had on TV. Possibly that has something to do with the season. We were treated to the sight of many elk in the park. That more than made up for any disappointment.



In the evening we walked down the highway a short distance and ate at the Harbor View Grotto. The

food wasn't terribly good there, though. We also found a gift shop, where I bought some Xmas presents. After dinner we walked to the beach and photographed some squirrels.

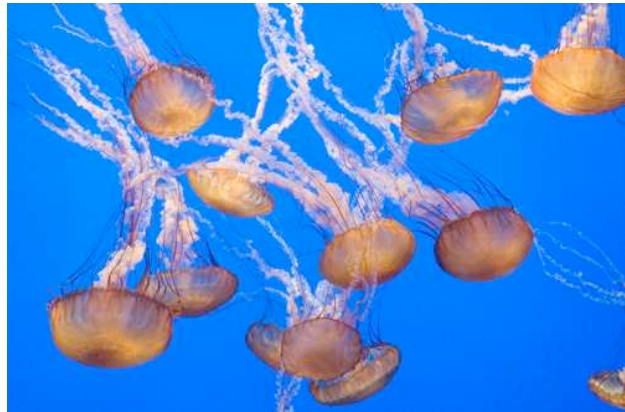
I got up at 05h00 Wednesday for an early start. I went down to breakfast shortly after they began serving at 06h00.

We had a long drive today all the way down to Monterey. We drove through San Francisco and many of the cities in the Bay Area. I recognized a few places, including Loyola Avenue in Atherton, where I lived for about eight months. We also made a rest stop at a gigantic Safeway in Menlo Park. It has parking under the store.

We reached our motel in Monterey about 17h00. The place was fully booked. Fortunately we found a great place to eat right next door.

I woke up reasonably early on Thursday and had breakfast in the hotel.

We went to the Monterey Bay Aquarium just before the ticket booths opened at 09h30. It's a huge place that probably justifies their rather high admission price. We looked at less than fifty percent of the place before I got hungry for lunch. They have a pretty decent cafeteria. We managed to look over everything else and leave by about 16h00. It was cloudy most of the day with the sun coming out for a short time around noon.



After resting a bit in our hotel room, we ate next door again. I had a very hearty appetite tonight after all the walking we did.

Friday I got up early and had breakfast in the hotel. It was overcast. We left Monterey about 07h30.

We managed to avoid most of the rush hour traffic at both ends and arrived home in mid-afternoon, much earlier than I had expected. Mercury greeted us noisily. After unloading the car, I picked up Fluffy from the vet's.

* * *

* Worldcon

Mike got home from work about 16h00 Tuesday, 22 August; and we left for Anaheim about 16h30. We stopped for gas on the way. Traffic was really bad, and we also ran into one traffic light that was not functioning. It took us well over an hour to get there.

We reached the Anaheim Marriott about 17h15. I ran into Andy Porter right after I registered with the hotel. He had arrived the previous day.

We decided to scout out the convention centre after we got our stuff into our room and got unpacked. It turned out that con registration was still open, so we picked up our badges and bags of goodies.

Then we went to dinner at Café del Sol in the hotel. Just as we were finishing up, Ken Porter joined us. We had a good conversation as he ate and as I had dessert. Afterwards we went back to my car to pick up a bag Mike hadn't been able to carry in previously.

After regrouping in the hotel room, I decided to walk across the street to the Hilton to check out the parties; but I never made it. I stopped in the lobby to talk to Ken Porter and found that David Schlosser was also there. I fell into conversation with them. We were later joined by Kay and Random. We yakked away until we decided it was time to call it a night.

After I returned to the room, I finished looking over the convention schedule and choosing the panels I was interested in.

I didn't sleep too well that night. I woke up in the middle of the night and lay awake for quite some time before I fell back asleep. Then I woke up shortly before Mike's alarm (06h00) and didn't get back to sleep again for a while. I woke up a third time shortly before my alarm and felt I was finally ready to settle in for a good night's sleep, except my alarm went off right after I fell asleep.

I had breakfast delivered to the room.

It turned out that nothing was going to be starting up until noon, so I took the opportunity to catch up with some stuff on my computer. E-mail worked fine from there.

About noon we headed to the convention centre. I picked up my scooter. While we waited for the huckster room to open, I ran into Chris Garcia, who handed me the first couple of many ribbons I'd amass during the con.

Mike and I took a stroll through the huckster room, where I talked at various lengths with Steve Carper, John Stelnicki, and Gerri Balter. Gerri and I made a date for breakfast on Friday.

Opening ceremonies were at 13h00. We both attended. Among other things, the guests of honour were introduced. The celebrations began with a cute short intro video that was shown at every major event during the con.

After that Mike and I parted ways for the rest of the afternoon. I went to Rick Sternbach's slide show. He showed slides of his artwork from books, his Star Trek days, model artwork, and work on *Solaris*. Mike went to "Star Trek: Year 41 and Counting", where panellists discussed Trek related games, Shatner's and Nimoy's various voice performances, the upcoming Trek movie, and other projects.

The "SF Spelling Bee" that I'd been interested in was cancelled. Instead of going to an alternate panel, I spent some time having a snack and catching up on my notes. Going up and down the single elevator in the convention centre that connected the first and second floors didn't encourage lots of going back and forth. Most of the programme items were on the second floor. The art show, huckster room, and fan tables were on the first floor. The elevator only held one scooter at a time because of the lack of manoeuvrability of the scooters. Basically I went down the elevator for the scheduled spelling bee. When I discovered that had been cancelled, I went back to the second floor to check out one of the programme rooms that Mike had been thinking of going to, but he wasn't there. I decided to stay on the second floor, because the next item I was interested in would be there. While I was killing time, I ran into John Stanley and spent a little time talking with him.

Mike had gone to the film programme room in the Hilton to watch a series of Tom Corbett videos.

My next programme item was titled "The Wonders of the Ackermansion". However, they showed a video that had been made about the development of stop motion animation. When it finished, I discovered that Forry was sitting in the room; so I greeted him. I saw him several times during the con.

Mike and I met up back in our hotel room and went to dinner. Dinner proved a bit problematical, as I



apparently ingested some gluten. After dinner we went to the Babel Conference Reception that was a celebration of the fortieth anniversary of Star Trek. I saw Bjo Trimble there for the only time during the con. I left Mike there, so I could do some partying. I stopped by the Fanzine Lounge to drop off some CDs that held samples of an electronic APA. I talked with many people in the fanzine lounge – Milt Stevens (who was in charge), Murray Moore, Lenny Bailes (a treasure trove of information about the early days of fandom), Rich Lynch, Greg Benford, Ed Meskys, David Bratman, Andy Porter, Alan Stewart, and Robin Johnson. I spent so much time there

that I only got to a couple of parties – the Las Vegas (Westercon) in 2008 and the con suite. I ran into Dan Lieberman at the Las Vegas party. I ran into John Stanley and Jeanne Mealy in the con suite. I also talked to Alan White about graphics software. As I was heading back to my hotel room, I met Nicki Lynch.

That night I woke up in the middle of the night with a headache. I think it might have been caused by the gluten that had been in my dinner.

But I managed to get up with my alarm at 0800. On the way to Tai Chi with Steve Barnes, I picked up a fruit salad and coffee.

After Tai Chi, I wanted to get to a Connie Willis reading; but I had a terrible time finding the room. By the time I managed to find it, the room was overfilled, with people spilling out into the corridor. People made room for me to scoot in there, but I really couldn't hear her very well. I figured trying to videotape her would be rather futile, so I ate my fruit salad breakfast. I was able to hear most of what she said. She is a working on another time travel book, but it sounds like writing it is not smooth sailing.

Mike, in the meantime, was at "The 'Look' of Star Trek", which was basically a Trek-oriented slide show by Rick Sternbach.

Then we both went to see "Marina Sirtis: TNG and Beyond". She asked us not to videotape, so that's the other event that I don't have on tape. Mike and I stayed together and also went to "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet, Remembered", which featured Anthony R. Lewis, Charles Lee Jackson II, Eric L. Hoffman, and Jeff Berkwits reminiscing about the Media Guest of Honour, who unfortunately passed away earlier this year.

I took some time off to get food, since I knew I wouldn't have time for a proper dinner. I also took the opportunity to attempt to straighten out a problem with the Westercon membership for next year. Mike did more shopping in the dealers' room.

Then I went to "Estate Planning for Collectors", which was a very informative discussion led by Andrew I. Porter, Nicki Lynch, Fred Lerner, Fred Patten, and Don Sakers. Mike went to "Space Drives: Launch Lasers to Warp Drives" with panellists Ctein, Jordin Kare, Michael S. Brotherton, James P. Hogan, and G. David Nordley.

I was planning on making a circuit of the dealers' room before heading to the Fanzine Lounge for the Fan Fund Reception. However, I ran into Norm Cooper, whom I had worked for briefly at Hughes Aircraft. We talked for quite a while. He is still with the company, but it is now Raytheon. Mike had a Pizza Hut pizza dinner by himself.

The Fan Fund Reception was very well attended. TAFF winner Bridget Bradshaw was the guest of honour for the event. I spoke to many people there, among them Tom and Anita Feller, Guy and Rosy Lillian, and Joyce Scrivner. I filled up with munchies for part of my informal dinner for the night. The time went quickly, so I didn't have a chance to take any photos.

Mike and I met at 2000 for the GoH Event and Special Awards; the two living guests of honour gave their speeches. I managed to get to a few parties after that. I started at Kyla's tea party. She had hoped we'd be able to see the fireworks at Disneyland, but they were not done that night for some reason. On my way there, I had noticed the GT party, so I also went there and had a couple of interesting conversations with people whose names I didn't note down. I also got some veggies to add to my scanty dinner fare. I also stopped by the Columbus in 2008 and Chicago in 2008 parties.

I got up early Friday morning and met Gerri Balter for breakfast. We had a leisurely couple of hours for this, and I had a hearty breakfast of steak and eggs.

I returned to our hotel room to get my scooter for the day. Mike had already left by then for his "Funny Stories from Science R&D" panel (Sam Scheiner, Loretta McKibben, Jordin Kare, Steven Lopata, and Geoffrey A. Landis).

I went to a reading by Greg Bear. Now that I knew where the readings were being done, I arrived early and was able to sit in the front of the room (I parked the scooter outside the room).



After that I spent some time going around the huckster room and saw part of the art show. In the process I managed to run into Janice Morningstar, who was interested in copies of the two sets of Corflu DVDs we had made, and managed to give her the DVD sets. I also talked to Teddy Harvia, Alice Bentley, Linda Saalman, Sheila Forrest, some Arizona folk, the Australia in 2010 people, and Phil Foglio.

In the meantime, Mike went to "Women of Star Trek" (Marina Sirtis, Chase Masterson, Barbara Luna, and Suzie Plakson) and "Writing Classic Trek" (David Gerrold, D. C. Fontana, and Bob Sabaroff).



Mike and I met up at “An Hour with Walter Koenig”. He is really easy-going and nice to talk to. Then we went on to dinner in the hotel. Back in our room after dinner, I finally managed to connect with Hawaii fan Torun Almer and make arrangements to meet for dinner on Sunday.

Later we went to the masquerade. It had thirty-five entries, but I believe two of them dropped out due to costume problems. The costumes shown were all very good. The half-time show, which was done by the Lux Theatre group, was also excellent. By the time it all ended, it was so late that we just retired for the night. On our way back to our hotel, we learned that Denver had won the site selection for 2008.



I got up a little after the alarm Saturday morning. Consequently there was no way I could make it to Tai Chi. I breakfasted in the con suite; I had an unfortunate accident with my scooter backing out of the room. Someone had left a cup of coffee standing on the floor. My first programme item was a reading by Amy Thomason. I got there a little late. Amy nicely held the door open for me when we were leaving, and I unfortunately ran over her feet. She was very understanding about it. Driving the scooter in reverse is somewhat of a challenge.

Mike in the meantime was at “Classics Remembered: Space Cadet” in which Toni Weisskopf, Jean Lorrain, Jim Young, Victor Koman, and Harry Turtledove discussed Heinlein’s classic juveniles.

I headed over to the convention centre and finished looking over the art show. As I was heading out of the area, I had an interesting conversation with an artist who was working on a scratchboard picture.

Mike was at “Behind *Forbidden Planet*”, a presentation about the movie by Gene Kozicki.

Mike and I met up in early afternoon for “Harlan Ellison Tells Us”. Perhaps the word “off” should have been added at the end of the title. He started his “speech” with a harangue. However we ended up hearing about a couple of incidents in his life that I’d never heard before. One was about the dead mole that he sent to a publisher.



After that I went to a panel about “Nanotechnology” with Mark L. Van Name, David Friedman, Wil McCarthy, and Jim Young. Following that I went to a panel on “The Singularity: What Is It and Why Should you Care?” with Toni Weisskopf, Mark L. Olson, Todd McCaffrey, David F. McMahon, and Cory Doctorow; both the singularity as a fictional device and what it might be in real life were discussed.

Mike met me at the end of that panel. He had been to “The History of Star Trek” panel with John and Bjo Trimble. The next panel he’d been interested in had been cancelled. Before going back to the hotel, we upgraded our membership in the worldcon in Denver in 2008 to attending. Then we had dinner at our hotel.

In the evening we attended the Hugo Awards Ceremony.

Here are the winners of the Hugos:

Best Novel: *Spin* by Robert Charles Wilson (Tor)

Best Novella: “Inside Job” by Connie Willis (*Asimov’s* January 2005)

Best Novelette: “Two Hearts” by Peter S. Beagle (*F&SF* October/November 2005)

Best Short Story: “Tk’tk’tk” by David D. Levine (*Asimov’s* March 2005)

Best Related Book: Storyteller: *Writing Lessons and More from 27 Years of the Clarion Writers’ Workshop* by Kate Wilhelm (Small Beer Press)

Best Professional Editor: David Hartwell

Best Professional Artist: Donato Giancola

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: *Serenity*, Written & Directed by Joss Whedon. (Universal Pictures/Mutant Enemy, Inc.)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: *Doctor Who* "The Empty Child" & "The Doctor Dances" Written by Steven Moffat. Directed, James Hawes. (BBC Wales/BBC1)

Best Semiprozine: *Locus*, edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi

Best Fanzine: *Plokta* edited by Alison Scott, Steve Davies & Mike Scott

Best Fan Writer: Dave Langford

Best Fan Artist: Frank Wu

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: John Scalzi

I used my scooter that evening, because my knees were bothering me. After the awards I rode the scooter to the parties as well, though I left it parked outside each room.

I got up with my alarm Sunday morning and again had breakfast in the con suite. As I was leaving, I ran into David Singer, whom I hadn't seen in decades. His son is grown now, and he is resuming attending a few cons. He was getting ready to check out, so we didn't talk very long.



I went over to the convention centre, where Robert Picardo was making an appearance. There were not too many people in attendance. His appearance had been announced in one issue of the convention daily newsletter. One audience member went downstairs to see whether a PA announcement could be made in the dealers' room. It may have helped. After Picardo started to speak, there were a few people who wandered in. Unfortunately many people were probably checking out and leaving. Among other things, Robert Picardo read from his book and sang some filk. After he finished, I asked Mike to pick up his CDs for me. He has one CD of him reading his book and two of filk.

I went on to "Connie Willis – the Serious Side", in which Charles N. Brown interviewed her.

I met up with Mike at "Ray Bradbury Himself". He spoke briefly. Then he adjourned, so he could sign autographs.

Not being much of an autograph collector, I went downstairs to see as much of the exhibit area as I could before the area closed. When closing was announced, I got some lunch in the adjacent Space Lounge. While I was there, Delphyne Woods stopped by to say hello. We hadn't seen each other in decades, though we had stayed in touch by mail and e-mail. I also talked to Cheri Kaylor, who was helping Elayne Pelz with the financial side of con running.

Mike and I both attended the Closing Ceremonies, where the gavel was passed to the Nippon in 2007 committee. Then I turned in my scooter. We went back to our room briefly. Then we joined Torun Almer for a leisurely dinner. As we were leaving the restaurant, I saw artist Tom Kidd, who was also finishing dinner. I'd been trying to get a chance to talk to him throughout the con without any luck. We finally got in a short conversation before he had to return to his room to pack for an early morning flight home.

I went on to the Dead Pluto (in honour of Pluto losing its status as a planet) party. While there I ran into Maureen Garrett, whom I hadn't seen in decades. She said she planned to attend next year's Westercon in San Mateo, so I hope to see her there.



I got up before the alarm for a change Monday morning. I had a room service breakfast. Then we finished packing and checked out. The drive home took about an hour. Shortly after we got home, I picked Fluffy up from the vet.

* * *

* Mailing Comments on FAPA #276:

Eric Lindsay (For FAPA): My condolences to Jean on the loss of her mother.

Sorry to hear of your shingles. I hope you're all over that by now.

We've noticed that free Internet access is provided by the less expensive hotels. The expensive ones always charge, though they seem to have sweetened the deal by including free domestic phone calls.

I, too, would welcome a fully functioning PDA with MP3 player capability. A phone would be nice, too. I don't mind carrying a PDA, because it replaced a bulkier planner as well as reading material and notebook. I don't really want to add more gadgets to my purse.

Keith A. Walker (): We have a really great reality show on Animal Planet. It's called *Meerkat Manor* and is the true-life story of a group of meerkats in South Africa. One season has ended, and we are now in the middle of its second season. The only other reality shows I have watched were the one about the Amish and another about a group of people trying to live as they did during the Regency Period.

Your typeface is on the verge of being too small to read, and your margins need to be shifted.

Ben Indick (Ben's Beat #85): The R in R-Laurraine is silent.

The fact that your local production of *Indoor/Outdoor* was so bad goes to prove the importance of the director and producer. Our version did have an intermission. I don't recall any mass exodus out during the break. I recall much laughter from the audience.

I saw the recent telecast of *The Light in the Piazza*. I agree that it's not a great work, but I enjoyed it well enough.

Christopher J. Garcia (The Beering House): So sorry to hear about your father. Mine is still in the nursing home, still hooked up to a feeding tube much of the time, and was still suffering from a fever of unknown cause. See above for more recent details.

Please add me to your distribution list for *Lisp*.

I didn't find Steve Martin annoying as Clouseau.

I liked *Excalibur* quite a bit but not enough to buy a copy. I really liked their music choices, though.

Planning to work until you die is good, but unplanned things can happen. I would say you should definitely invest in long-term care insurance. If you start now, it will be much more affordable on an annual basis than if you wait until you're older.

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 61.5): I like the idea of billing for "waiting time". I wish I could bill some doctors for my "waiting time" in their waiting room.

Dale Cozort (Science Fiction Adventure Magazine, Vol. 1, Iss. 1): Welcome to FAPA. I enjoyed your zine very much. I think your fiction is quite good.

Some friends of ours are installing solar cells on their roof. I enquired about the cost, and it will be fifty percent more than just putting in a regular roof, but the extra investment will be paid back within five years at current costs for electricity. California allows people with solar power to feed into the grid if you produce more than you need. When we build in Arizona, I plan to include solar cell shingles on the roof, most of which is designed to face south. Arizona currently does not have a programme to feed energy back into the grid, but who knows what will happen in future?

Mike McInerney (Number One #9): I have no memory of either of my grandfathers, though my maternal grandfather delivered both me and my sister, who is younger than I. My paternal grandfather died eleven years before I was born. My maternal grandmother died when I was a little girl. I have little memory of her but remember her funeral. My paternal grandmother lived with us for a number of years while we were still in Japan, and she lived until 1975.

There are wild parrots in Los Angeles. I didn't know they also live in San Francisco.

I'd like to see the Clifford Simak story that you have.

The R in my name used to be part of a name, but I gave up the rest of it and just kept the R.

Dick Eney (Stupefying Stories and TARGET: FAPA): I believe I was at the Star Trek convention you describe where "Ticketron went on selling tickets without regard to the capacity of the hotel". It was a minor nightmare and the last big Trekcon I attended.

A recent issue of *Scientific American* discussed alternative energy sources. I believe it was the September issue.

Our electric toothbrush has a rechargeable battery, so it is plugged in when it's not being used. Our new one came with instructions on removing the rechargeable battery for recycling before discarding the rest of the toothbrush.

You said, "Rita was wrong". Since she was quoting Tim, he was actually the one that was wrong.

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu Vol. IX, No. 3): We got to Ashland, but I guess we won't be going to Bellingham any more. My parents' house there is in the process of being sold. My father was not expected to be able to return to full functionality and, indeed, is still in a nursing home. My sister and mother have bought a new house in Federal Way that's large enough for the three of them. Sorry we did not have time to contact any fans this last trip. We were too busy. We only visited one person outside of family.

I don't recall any announcement of Seattle's running for the 2011 worldcon, but I may just not have been in the right place. I hope the venue is different from the Westercon that was downtown. I was not very happy with that one at all.

A. Langley Searles (The Annex #23): I very much enjoyed reading about Lafcadio Hearn. I was introduced to his writing in high school, and I resolved to read more but haven't got around to it.

Gordon Eklund (Sweet Jane #48): I was at a movie not too long ago where someone sitting very close to me was having a cell phone conversation during the middle of a movie. I let the person know in no uncertain terms that I did not appreciate this behaviour.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #106: the Passing Scene): A friend of mine alerted me to *For Better or for Worse*. I understand, though, that this strip will soon come to a conclusion.

Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning, Spring 2006): My eighth grade geography teacher forcefully expressed her opinion that the class was too young to read Michener's *Hawaii*. Within a short time, I believe every member of my class had read the book.

My zine is not copied. Every copy of *Feline Mewsings* is fresh off the computer printer.

You really haven't moved much, even though you have lived in several different communities. An equivalent chart for me looks like this:

1948-1956	Kyoto, Japan	
1956-1959	Rochester, NY	6648 miles east
1959-1964	Marblehead, MA	345 miles east
1965-1983	Rochester, NY	345 miles west
1983	Silicon Valley	2356 miles west
1983-present	Los Angeles	322 miles south

Note that during our first stay in Rochester, we lived in two different apartments, though they were in the same building. In Marblehead, we lived in two different houses. During our second stay in Rochester, we were actually in two different suburbs. In the Los Angeles area, I have lived at five different addresses.

Crusade was a continuation of the telling of the *Babylon 5* story. It filled in some details between the great war depicted in *Babylon 5* and the end of the series. Earth was infected by a disease that would kill all its inhabitants within five years. *Crusade* was the story of the search for the cure. We already knew that the search was successful.

Moi (Feline Mewsings #25): According to zillow.com, my parents' old house was valued at over \$600,000. My sister was only able to get a bit over \$500,000. I think she actually could have done a bit better, but there were some timing issues.

Tom Feller (The Road Warrior): I saw an interesting coffee maker at the emergency vet I go to. There are little premixed differently flavoured coffees that come in packets that look like large creamers. You drop this into the coffee maker, and you get the coffee of your choice. I've never used it myself, but I've seen it being used by others.

One of our next-door neighbours has a timeshare, and they seem to like it just fine.

Tom Feller (The Road Warrior: Special Report on Trip to Greece): You mentioned the volcanic eruption on the island of Santorini. The History Channel had an interesting programme called *Exodus Decoded*, which used the eruption to explain the biblical plagues.

Mile Stevens (Alphabet Soup #51): In the last reunion collation of LASFAPA, Charles Curley said he was a cowboy in Montana. I don't know if he's still doing that. I found it interesting that he was also figure skating.

Robert Lichtman (King Biscuit time No. 48): My mother used to bake bread, rolls anyway. It always smelled really nice.

Mike has the DMV stickers on his Prius that allow him to drive in the carpool lane even when he's alone in the car. He also gets to park in the carpool spaces at work.

Ron Parker (Revelations from the Secret Mythos, Reincarnation #2): Somewhere during our driving trip this summer, I saw some billboards reminiscent of the old Burma Shave signs.

It's interesting how the body reacts to certain types of injuries. When I had my car accident back in 1996, I noticed that I had blood on my hands from several cuts, but it was hours before I felt any pain.

You misspelled my name. The R is not an initial. The full first name is R-Laurraine with a hyphen.

* * *

* Letters to the Editor

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

John Hertz, Los Angeles, CA

17 July 2006

Amazon, I'm told, still has my 1999 review of Heyer's *Beauvallet*, written for a lark in under seventy words, marked "11 of 12 found helpful".

One writes to give a taste of the thing reviewed and also what one finds admirable (or otherwise), so readers can see whether they'll agree.

#

Kees van Toorn, SK Zwijndrecht, The Netherlands

12 August 2006

Thanks for yet another fine electronic edition of your magazine; always a joy and in issue 25 good to read the [Westercon] report and see that Bobbi Armbruster finally got the honours she deserved to be fan GoH at the convention. I am sorry to announce that the van Toorn family will not be at LACon this year; we had sort of got the hang of it again last year at Glasgow and enjoyed ourselves immensely then. But our son Lennart has graduated and moves on to a new school and line of education, which makes him happy and me poor; under the new Dutch college laws, parents now cough up most of the payment for the school and that takes away a big chunk of our savings; same with Annabel, our daughter, who is in her one but final year; and the LACon is in the same week as their school opening; so alas, I and my family will have to miss LACon.

In a brief moment of hm.... Maybe I can fly alone as Angélique, my wife, suggested; but the horrendous

cost of a last minute ticket is just frightening. Well over \$ 1,000 just for the plane ticket! In that respect, cons and especially WorldCon have become almost prohibitive due to the cost factor as a family and is one of the reasons why we sort of keep a low profile. A pity, as we really really enjoyed seeing so many people last year... Hope this find you and your husband well as health is a precious commodity.

((Now you understand where Americans are coming from as far as education expenses go. Of course, when my sister and I went to college, it was not as expensive. Plus my sister had a full scholarship. I had a grant for grad school, which helped a lot.

((Even without such expenses, we certainly understand your situation. We had a lot of very high veterinary expenses in the last couple of years, and it will take a while to recover from those. We don't expect any trips to far away places for the next couple of years. Besides, the recent security measures that airlines have had to adopt are not very conducive to flying.))

#

Tim Marion, New York, NY

16 August 2006

Thanks for *Feline Mewsings* 25. Fabulous cover! There is a reason why Brad Foster is currently my favourite fan artist. And it obviously has nothing to do with the fact that he's done a cover for everyone but me! And now, alas, I'm not even doing a fanzine... I have forgotten, or never knew, who does the title page logo. It's really very clever.

((Everything not credited is by me.))

Thanks for the Westercon report, tho' sometimes your synoptic, one-line reportage on certain events is a tiny bit frustrating. Examples: "Sometime during the day, I managed to look at the art show." [Period.] "Monday morning I attended the belly dancing session." [Period.] I would have liked to have known a little more about both.

In your comment to Bob Silverberg, you ask him about his match-lighting trick and then ask him to educate those of you who are in the dark. You could have also asked him to illuminate you... ((Groan!!!))

Leslie David is a familiar name (tho' I don't know her offhand); and Reston, Virginia, certainly isn't too awfully far from Newport News, Virginia, where I grew up. Interesting to see her lament that she is fifty years old and is only now finding a man who treats her like a queen, who just happens to be 47. I'm 47 and I think the reason I'm not with a woman now is that I tended to treat the women I have admired as tho' they're queens, and they didn't like that.

I didn't understand Rita Prince Winston's explanation of the navel orange, unless you accidentally re-typed part of what she wrote. I appreciated her origin of the word "polemic," however.

Lloyd Penney mentions Bush's presidency in the past tense, when it's still an ongoing nightmare; and just the mention of him is enough to make me start foaming at the mouth discussing politics. Lloyd concludes this topic by saying, "I hope the Democratic Party can get their act together and choose a candidate that all can support and that the world won't fear." Not very likely to happen as long as those electronic voting machines are still in place -- machines that helped sway the last election in crucial areas where the voter turnout was expected to be almost exclusively democratic (low or middle-income areas with or without people of "ethnic" origin). This last election had the most egregiously disputed results between the exit polls and the so-called official voter turnout. There was such a discrepancy, in fact, that it made so pointedly obvious the illegality of the election that now it is under consideration to make the exit polls illegal. Actually, I find Lloyd's remarks a trifle ironic, but that isn't really his fault. Someone else from his neck of the woods informed me that "everyone in Canada knows" that the last presidential election was stolen.

Now I'm going to tell you about the cats I live with. We had taken in a new cat whom a lady summoned for food outside by calling, "Meesha, Meesha," so of course we call her Meesha. She is an adorable black-and-white gigantic kitten with longish hair and a very high-pitched, excited meow. At one point we were

reluctant to let her mix with our other cats, as one blood test indicated that she had been exposed to FIP. A subsequent blood test said that she had it. As these tests for the mysterious FIP are very inconclusive, a subsequent test was run a few weeks later that said that she was clean. So eventually we were forced to let her out of the bathroom.

Then one night while I was preparing for work, I saw Casper's eye so badly infected it was dripping pus! My roommate told me that he had been all right two hours before when he had fed him. I took him to the animal hospital and they gave me some antibiotic drops to put in his eye, and that should have been it. Casper started to improve but then got substantially worse. His kidneys swelled up to five times their appropriate size and he lost a lot of appetite and, subsequently, weight. Moreover, his eye started to deteriorate...even disintegrate! It turns out that he had been infected with a form of Herpes that corrodes the cornea! I left Casper in the hospital for over a week while they gave him steroids to reduce his swelling kidneys and two different kinds of eye medicine four times a day. His eye has now healed and reconstituted itself, altho' it still looks a bit cloudy. His kidneys are back down to normal size, and he's eating voraciously again. The doctors, however, think he has kidney cancer (which would explain the swelling) and that I have bought, at the most, a few more months with him. In the meantime, I've paid them almost \$1000 and still owe them \$1200!

And Monday of last week, I had Janice put to sleep. Her body just wasn't serving her anymore. She had lost a lot of weight, and apparently her kidneys had stopped functioning. I didn't care to go the hydration route, even if she had been a younger cat. I had to take her in when I saw that she was losing physical strength --- I didn't want her to end up trapped in her own body. I think I did the right thing; and indeed, she was so reclusive during the last few months of her life that it's almost hard for me to miss her. But of course, the loss is there and real. She was my girlfren' and came to comfort me after Rikki and Tavi died.

((Rita said, "I read somewhere that navel oranges originated as a mutation of a regular orange, apparently causing one orange (the "navel") to grow inside another. So I suppose the navel orange lineage retains the other characteristics of its ancestor, such as the thin and very difficult to remove skin of a juice orange of the thick and easily removed skin of an eating orange." She was explaining the fact that the "navel" is actually another orange growing inside the first one, which is correct. There was actually one typo in there. I typed "of" instead of "or" following "juice orange".

((I'm sorry to hear about your kitty woes. If your Casper has cancer in his kidney, your vet is probably right. Even with surgery, chemo, and many thousands of dollars, our Shadow, who had cancer in his liver, only lived about a year longer than without treatment. In his case, we didn't know what was wrong until after the surgical biopsy, which turned into a full-fledged surgery after they went in and saw what was happening. As that was the most expensive part of his treatment, it seemed logical to follow up with the chemo.))

#

Leslie David, Reston, VA

21 August 2006

Thanks for *Feline Mewsings* #25.

I've seen the Capital Steps when they were performing in DC. I bought one of their CDs and sent it to my father, figuring he would get a kick out of it.

The Abalone Cove Tidal Zones hike sounds wonderful! Next time I come back to LA, I'd like to do that.

Thanks for the very thorough con report. Still doesn't make me want to go to one...

Re Lloyd Penney 1, I like English Regency—some ballroom and contra dancers do period dancing—Bob Powers used to run Flying Cloud Dance Academy out of Columbus, OH, I think. I met someone who had attended at a dance weekend I was at in Asheville, NC. Besides, it's classy, and some SF fans can use all the social graces they can get.

Ah-ha! No wonder Avery Brooks was so good in Othello! I saw the same thing—it seemed that he was so

much more at ease and enjoying himself onstage during a live performance. I know it's different when there's no one there to scream, "Cut!" or make you do the same scene over and over again. In live theatre you've got the one chance to do it right.

Er, uh, I had no idea when I wrote all that that it would end up in your fanzine. After all, my life is pretty boring, all things considered.

I am looking forward to your Shakespeare Festival report this fall.

I know about the contacts you wear at night to reshape your cornea—I asked my optometrist if I was a candidate for them; and he said no, which is why I went with the Intacs procedure; I mean, short of a corneal transplant, there's nothing they can do. Last checkup my cornea was healed, but there had been no new improvement in my vision; however it may take up to six months. I am back in my contacts; and while I can wear the piggyback, it feels weird. I have an appointment with my optometrist on the 30th to see whether I can get fitted in just a standard lens and say "buh-bye" to the piggyback. So far the only thing I've received from the insurance company is that they need more information from my ophthalmologist before they can process my claim. I can't wait...

Re Lloyd Penney 2, I certainly believe the Bush is the biggest nightmare of our time. He's fucked things up so badly for the US internationally, I'm afraid like I've never been afraid before that some yahoo somewhere is going to push the nuclear button...makes me want to hide under the desk the way we did when I was eight years old... What worries me as a "liberal" is that the Dems don't have their act sufficiently together and will piss away the advantage they currently have come November.

Nowhere is that more evident than here in the good ol' Commonwealth of Virginia, where the Senate race is turning into mudslinging on both sides. I'm sure everyone is aware of George ("little Bush") Allen's gaffe at referring to a Fairfax VA-born US citizen of Indian descent as "macaca" and then his lame attempt to weasel out of it. The other piece of legislation that is aimed at proving that Virginia is NOT for lovers is the Marshall-Newman Amendment to the state constitution. The first paragraph would make it look like another attempt to ban gay marriage. If only that were all—that law has been on the books since 2002. No, what Marshall-Newman does is go even farther—the second paragraph is the key—it forbids any union that provides benefits that approximate marriage to any unmarried couple. The complete text of the amendment is as follows:

BALLOT QUESTION NUMBER 1

Shall Article I, the Bill of Rights, of the Constitution of Virginia be amended to state:

"That only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage valid in or recognized by this Commonwealth and its political subdivisions.

"This Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall not create or recognize a legal status for relationships of unmarried individuals that intends to approximate the design, qualities, significance, or effects of marriage. Nor shall this Commonwealth or its political subdivisions create or recognize another union, partnership, or other legal status to which is assigned the rights, benefits, obligations, qualities, or effects of marriage."

What I didn't realize until recently is that until 1967 the laws against interracial marriage were on the books, but then what else can I expect from a state that was so proud of the Stars and Bars?

#

John Purcell, College Station, TX

22 August 2006

I really loved the cover art by Brad Foster! That's just danged hilarious. It looks like one of the creature warriors from my son's Yu-gi-oh! duelling deck. This Sushi Tiger's Super-Glow Box looks like it packs about 1300 attack points, with about 900 defence points. Special abilities are that it's very loud and can only be played when your opponent has placed a spirit card in defence mode, and Sushi Tiger's attack is enhanced by 700 points if played in tandem with a Mechanoguitar on the same turn.

What great art! Brad is one of my favourite fan artiste's at present.

I do hope that you and Mike will enjoy LA Con IV. I have no idea how you two are going to be involved - any panels, Laurraine? You always seem to be involved with something or other at a con on the western fringe of this great land - but I am positive you two will have a great time. Say hello to folks for me, okay? Thank you in advance. ((We just attended to enjoy the con; we didn't do any work on the con.))

Valerie and I really don't get out and go to the theatre that much, even with Texas A&M's Opas so active and bringing in such top-flight acts as the Moscow Philharmonic, Blue Man Group, Stomp, and Wayne Brady. (This last fellow is performing on campus on Sept. 8th, I think, as part of TAMU's kick-off for the college football season and Alumni Fund Raising Drive, which is an annual Big Deal around here. Personally, I could care less since I'm an Iowa State alumnus.) The last movie we went to as a family was well over a year ago, and that was for *Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith*. That should tell you how active we are in going out. Having three children tends to considerably restrict your budget.

The Abalone Cove charts were interesting. How often do you two get down there? If we had something like that nearby, Val and I would take the kids there as often as we could; we love to poke around nature sanctuaries and such.

Conzilla sounded interesting. Your mentioning that Mercury stayed with a pet sitter reminds me that my wife and older daughter started up a house and pet sitting business this summer and were almost immediately swamped with business. It has been quite successful already, and they haven't really gotten their business cards around to most of the vet clinics in town. See, with Texas A&M University and Blinn College located here, a lot of the professors take their families out of town on vacation for two to four weeks at a stretch during the summer; and so when word got around about Castle Keeps (catchy title, eh?), they were inundated with calls. In fact, it's still going on even as the school year is beginning. Val's a certified Vet Tech, and Penny's simply really good with animals, so they're doing a booming business.

In response to Leslie David's loc, you mention that Sheryl Birkhead is a very shy fan artist. How well I know; and she is also a very talented artist. Many moons ago she used to send me artwork for my zines; I need to contact her again to see if she'll send some more stuff my way. * Leslie, your Date from Hell sounds like someone who needs Professor Geek's Rules of Fannish Dating Etiquette. Remind me to pub them in an issue of my zine.

Rita Prince Winston: Gotcha. NOW I understand the appeal of Regency Dancing in fandom. And here I thought it was just another excuse for fans to run about in fancy dress and act completely out of character from their real selves. Thank you for enlightening me.

Lloyd Penney: Fanzines do at times teach "patience and manners"; but more than anything, I believe that the writing process - drafting, editing, revising, etc.- slows you down enough so that the writer must think about what he or she is committing to print. Most fanzines - both paper and electronic - force their writers to do this. I am not fond of blogging, mainly because anybody can slam whatever they wish onto the Internet and call it "writing"; I don't call it that. I call it venting. And believe me, intelligent venting requires skill, which requires drafting, editing, and revising. Your "friend" who argued with you at that dead dog party doesn't really understand why some of us prefer fanzines or blogs, e-lists, and LiveJournal. Maybe if she gave a look-see at efanazines.com and poked around a bit, she might get an idea of what people like thee and me are talking about. If you're still on speaking on terms with her, prod her along in that direction.

Thank you for a fine issue, Laurraine. Have a great time this coming week.

#

Sally Syrjala, West Barnstable, MA

23 August 2006

Fandom and fanzines were once an integral part of life, and then life intervened. Now I am trying to get back into the swing of fanzines. Nothing can be as it once was, but I always enjoyed the conversations that involvement with fandom afforded. Perhaps some of that interaction can be recaptured.

The past few decades have been interesting to say the least. While the care giving isn't quite over as my father-in-law is now in a nursing home and I am the responsible party, it is not what it was during Momma's final years and all that came to be after both she and Ike [her husband] died.

Now I am trying to figure out what to do with the rest of my life and haven't quite gotten the solution yet. It seems that every time I think that one path is the right one, it turns out not to be. So I will see about reconnecting with the world of fanzines and loc'ing. It allows thought patterns to happen and for ideas to be shared. That is an important part of life for me.

Today I got the September issue of *Cape Cod View Magazine* in the mail, and it has my piece on "Community Schooling" in its Rear View section. The words are a reminiscence about the days I spent at the old West Barnstable Grammar School where six grades inhabited three rooms. The school closed in the mid fifties when the larger Barnstable West Barnstable Elementary School opened. My father went to the old West Barnstable school, and there are photos of him when he was about six years old sitting at one of the desks. This was back around 1912. Now each year at the West Barnstable Village Festival, t-shirts are sold; and one of the designs has a picture of the old school imprinted on the back. I have one of those t-shirts and wear it proudly.



I hope that your vacation went well. For now.... Sally

#

Lloyd Penny, Etobicoke, ON

2 September 2006

First of all, great to finally meet you at L.A.con IV! The convention was a great time. The fanzine lounge was a good place to be; and the Hugos were great and a little controversial, too. Harlan will be Harlan. Our vacation included the Worldcon, plus side trips to the California Science Centre and Skeletons in the Closet at the LA County Coroner's Department. All in all, worth every dime.

Second of all, on the plane to LA, I had issue 25 of *Feline Mewsings* with me, and I made some notes on the westward leg and more on the eastward. Here's some comments I thought of...

I will definitely agree with you about HP printers. They just keep going and going. I've had my OfficeJet 725 for eight years now, and it still produces great repros of whatever I design. Because my computer recently had a massive upgrade to Windows XP, I also had to download and install new XP-compatible printer drivers for the 725. I have also noticed that HPs are very fussy about inks. HP cartridges are all it will take. I tried using Staples substitute cartridges, but all I got were colourful smears. At work, the HP laser printer I use (LaserJet 4100TN) will use whatever toner is installed but will indicate on its alphanumeric display that you are not using HP toner.

John Gray, the playwright of *Bill Bishop Goes to War*, shows up from time to time on the CBC as a broadcaster. I've even seen him do the occasional newscast. This play has also been done as a TV movie, and the play has been shown on TV as well. For the longest time, Billy Bishop was played by Eric Petersen; and I'll always see him in that role.

Steve Barnes has Tai Chi lessons at Worldcon, but the room they gave him was too small for the crowds he attracted, so he held them in the hallway, not far from the fanzine lounge. I picked up one of the eAPA disks in the fanzine lounge, so I guess you did get there after all.

My first movie, the first I ever saw -- *Journey to the Far Side of the Planet*, starring Roy Thinnes, Ed Bishop, and Herbert Lom. It was at the Geneva Theatre in Orillia, and it was in 1970. I agree with you on blogs; I really think that for most people, the novelty of starting a blog is quickly replaced by the drudgery of coming up with fresh content on a regular basis.

I checked...our local library stopped lending DVDs because of high levels of theft. I find DVDs to be expensive, so I wonder if I'll even bother to rent? I rarely watch movies, anyway.

My letter...I did meet Forry at L.A.con IV, got an autograph, and shook his hand. I will probably never meet him again, but I hope I'm wrong. I also got an autograph from Ray Bradbury at the con but missed out when Ray tired of all the signing. At least I got to see him again; I last met him at L.A.con II in 1984. I met up with the Chapek-Carletons at L.A.con IV, as well. Worldcons have been family reunions at times. The best reunion of all was with an old friend from Toronto named Phil Saunders. Back in the 80s, Yvonne went to a Kinko's; and a young man served her. He saw that she was getting printed masquerade certificates for a science fiction convention, and he boldly asked if he could get information. Yvonne gave that young man her last Ad Astra flyer, and that young man was Phil Saunders. Phil got involved with local fan artists, sold his goods through the local art show, and suddenly left Toronto to take a job with Nissan in San Diego. We lost track of him after that...we ran into him as the L.A.con IV Hugos ended. He's now happily married to a Hollywood scriptwriter, and he is a conceptual artist in the movie industry. He worked on *Zathura*, *Jarhead*, *Spiderman III*, and more and is living the life of his dreams in Santa Monica. All because Yvonne took an interest in him in a Toronto print shop.

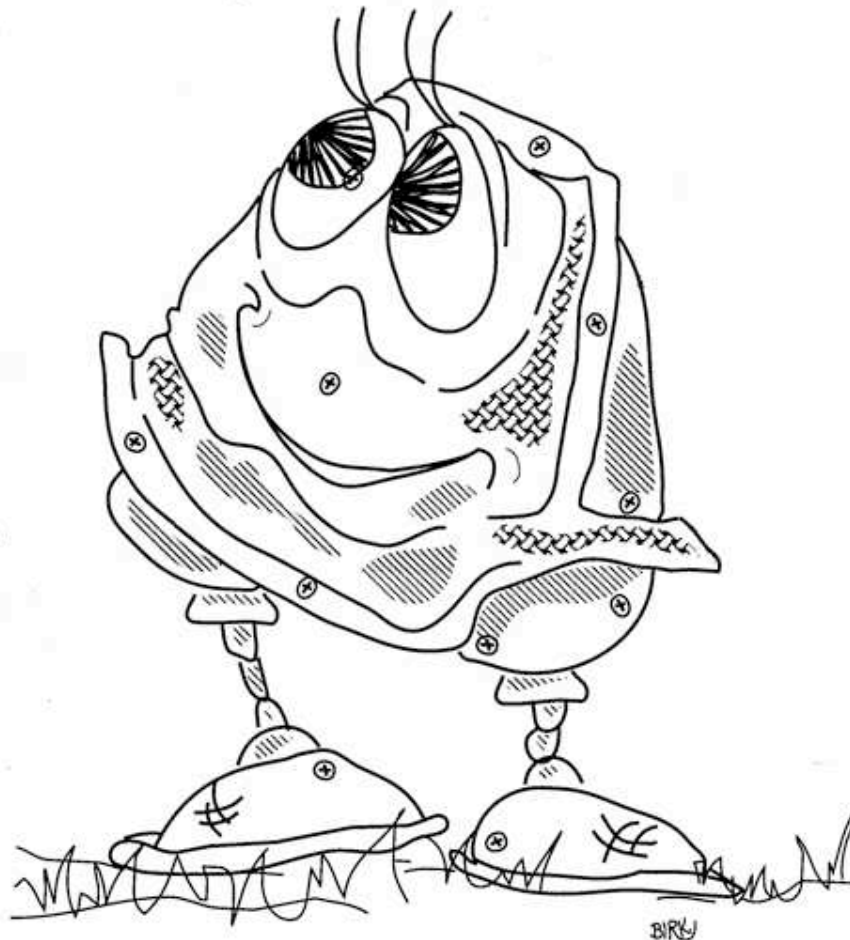
Time to go...I look forward to your Worldcon trip report. See you then.

#

Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD

7 September 2006

Ah such a nice cover by Brad Foster. The guy surely does ghodd work, and his creations can be seen in virtually every zine!



LAcon IV is now history. Congrats to all who won and to Denver for the site selection – a double-edged award! You won it, now you have to deal with it! Ghodd luck all. I am a supporting member of LAcon and will be curious to see what the concom will send. Each concom sends something different [varying] from *only* the programme book to an envelope full of goodies (freebie books, canvas totes, daily newssheets from the con, and so on). For those of us who joined but could not make the con, this is the closest we will come to whatever went on. Over the past few years, I have hoped there would be some way to have a live online broadcast of the Hugos and maybe the masquerade. So far I have not heard anything about such an undertaking. Sigh. But since I am on the outer fringes, I figure I would be one of the last to know. It seems to me that with all this nice futuristic technology at our fingertips, we ought to be able to come up a way to allow members to have an up close and personal view of what went on. We'll see.

I looked at an Okidata colour laser printer and was knocked over by the quality; it is gorgeous. But since I do not do anything approaching volume output, I don't know how good a choice it would be; but the pages available to look at Staples were very impressive. My first printer, a black and white laser printer, was made by Okidata and turned out to be a workhorse – did all I needed for ten years. So I was familiar with the name. I wish I could justify the \$300-\$400 it costs, but my HP black and white laser printer is doing fine, and I just put in a new printing cartridge.

Ah thank you for reminding me; I need to check and see if both *Mission Impossible III* and *Superman Returns* are on my Netflix list. Let's face it, with a year's subscription being my Christmas present, I'll wait for Netflix; at least this makes the price right if not the venue.

I noted that the local Whole Foods (at least I think that is the current name) has both a frozen section of gluten-free (I got side-tracked looking at the small frozen pies so labelled from their bakery) and a packaged goods [section] of the same type (chocolate chip cookies, chocolate and vanilla cake, etc. all as mixes). Several of the local grocery stores have small gluten-free sections, and I keep meaning to try some of the products – RSN.

((None of the grocery stores I shop at segregate their gluten-free products.))

One of my veterinary journals proposed that, based on the paths of migratory birds, avian flu could be here as early as several months ago. Here being North America. The next step is the exchange between the wild and tame birds and then the dicey step from bird to human, which has already been documented on a small scale outside of North America. Oddly enough, I have seen peripheral mention of the last great pandemic that was overshadowed by a world war but which caused the death of more humans than the war itself – could get very exciting very rapidly.

OCD (to a veterinarian it is osteochondritis dessicans) probably stands for obsessive-compulsive disorder. That's my total shot in the dark without having read the zine!

I had a small cavity in an incisor that needed filling. I asked the dentist before we got started if the nerve that usually handled the molars also worked that far forward and cringed when he said yes. I have a history (twice) of an inability to be anaesthetized on the lower jaw – once for a crown and then for a replacement crown; it was not pleasant. So, knowing that, he went very slowly – about three or four injections. Finally has asked if it seemed numb, and I mumbled sorta-not like other areas; but he started drilling, and I hit him. I asked him if I needed to tell him that it was not numb, and he just rubbed his left shoulder. Man, he hit the nerve and I hit him. He has this habit of telling me that injection will feel like a pinch, and we both know better. This time he said he was going to try a PDL (periodontal ligament; he injects all the way around the base of the tooth). This time when I asked if it was going to hurt, he just simply said yes. He was right, but the whole procedure was much more tolerable that way.

If Leslie David attended WSFA, there would be a chance to meet the Lynches. I am certain WSFA has a web site if you want to find out about it. There is also their, WSFA that is, annual convention, Capclave, in case you are interested.

I had to call the state veterinary board to get approval to flush small amounts of out-of-date drugs down the toilet. I have a tailor-made my practice, so that I do not keep any drugs around that have any

potential for human abuse but even so have things that expire, and I needed to know what to do since it was such a small amount, and they said to flush them. I just asked what to do; they said water works.

#

Peter Sullivan, Sunderland, UK

11 September 2006

Hi R-Laurraine. I notice that in *Feline Mewsings* 25 you mention that there are four electronic APAs at the moment. I'm not sure what the 4th one is, as I'm only aware of three -

- * e-APA (probably the nearest of the three to a general fandom-wide APA)
- * SNAPS (the Las Vegas local APA, which has just voted to open itself up to non-LV people)
- * N'APA (the electronic APA of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, N3F)

Whatever the fourth one is you are thinking of, it's obviously not on my fannish radar!

I think you are right that blogs are sucking up a lot of the fannish energy that would have gone into APAs in the past. As such, an electronic APA is arguably a bit self-contradictory (a bit like an 18-wheeler truck with "Neutrogena" on the side, to borrow an image from Douglas Coupland), but I think that that extra level of formality and self-discipline over a blog still make them a worthwhile exercise. As you say, far too many blogs end up abandoned fairly quickly - no concept of "minac" there!

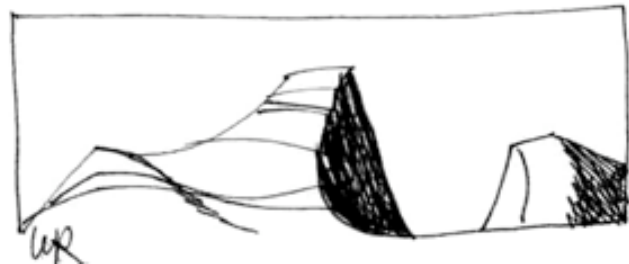
((The fourth electronic APA that I know of is APA-NYU. This is an APA that started out on paper and made the transition. I hadn't heard that SNAPS has opened up to non-LV people. Maybe I should look into that, as well N'APA, which I was a member of many years (decades) ago.))

#

Ed Meskys, Moultonboro, NH

11 September 2006

Sandy forwarded the latest ish, for which thanks. It arrived here the day we left for worldcon plus vacation, so we did not find it until we got home. I had 2,300 messages waiting, despite having shut off the three most active listservs.



The problems I used to have with my ISP have been solved and you can resume sending FM directly to me. The ISP spam filter was blocking a number of fanzines, including Fred Lerner's FAPazine. I had them shut it off, but that created the problem of more spam. I now get around seventy-five a day. It takes only a few seconds to check each for sender and subject and decide to delete, but that sure adds up.

Only saw you briefly in LACon fanzine lounge; and I either saw on an email or fanzine, or heard in person, that you only got to the lounge one time. I was there a while each day, and found good conversation each time.

You are far more interested in media than I. I find many modern movies not understandable...lots of sound effects but little dialogue. I get from my talking book library videotapes of movies, including some quite recent ones, with a voiceover describing the action. These are prepared by WGBH in Boston and are on sale by mail or on-line. These I do enjoy. We did buy the three LotR DVDs with the extra scenes. I know the story well enough not to be confused at most times.

My wife and I like music theatre and there are two good summer theatres in the tourist country where we live. However we would rather save money for travel, like the 26-day trip surrounding worldcon and have to give up other things. Thus we go to the theatre only about twice a year and eat out only about twice a month. Priorities. However the Capital Center for the Arts in Concord, NH, fifty miles away, has some very good children's theatre in the daytime for only \$6 a show. We saw musical versions of *Gold Rush*,

Lion witch & Wardrobe, Disorganized Files of Mrs.... etc. Travelling companies bring them here, and the audience is mostly busloads of kids. However they are attentive and do not disrupt the show.

I hope you will be happy in Arizona. The Trimbles had moved to Texas for similar reasons a decade ago, but John's health did not agree with the climate, and they had to return to the LA area.

Our cat, Shadow, 13.5 years old, was drastically losing weight; and the vet said it was thyroid cancer. We could medicate daily at a cost of \$40 a month or take him to a cat specialist one hundred twenty miles away just south of Worcester, MA, where he would be given a dose of radioactive iodine. We chose the latter, tho' it meant taking a motel room nearby for one night to avoid repeating the drive. The iodine has a half-life of nine days, so for a month we could not put the litter in the trash. Trash is monitored for radiation, and the vet and we would get into trouble. For a month we had to use clumping litter and scoop into the toilet. We have a rural septic system that is emptied once every three years; but even in a city sewer, it would be diluted enough not to cause trouble. The radiation level is low enough not to be dangerous, only enough to set off safety monitors.

I am off for my new dog at Seeing Eye Nov 25, returning Dec 14. We will go to Astronomicon Nov 10 in Rochester, NY; because the Trimbles are GoH and it is an excuse to visit son Stanley (age 31). We had been planning to go to Darkovercon in a suburb of Baltimore Thanksgiving weekend for the first time in three years, so that is put off for another year. Next con will be Arisia in Boston in January, which we average about once in three years. This will be the new dog's first con.

((I actually got to the fanzine lounge twice, four times if you count the times I stopped by to drop off some CDs and when I stopped by for a bottled of water. I planned to get back but never got the chance.

((I can certainly understand how many modern movies would not make much sense to a non-sighted person. They depend so much on visuals these days.

((We have travelled quite a bit this year but only to places we could drive to. Except when we travel, we rarely go out to eat.

((I had never heard of trash being monitored for radiation. So far we have not had to deal with such problems. Your cat is lucky to have you caring for him.

((I hope you find your new seeing eye dog as good a companion for you as Judge. I know how much work goes into training those dogs, and some dogs have to drop out of the programme.

((We haven't really planned out next year's cons. However, we will be attending Loscon Thanksgiving weekend. Also we plan to attend Westercon, which will be in Silicon Valley.))

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

The holiday season is upon us, and that will keep us very busy as usual. We also have a couple of short trips planned for November, as well as Loscon. My next issue, I'm certain, will be back to a more normal size.

I hope everyone has a relaxed and enjoyable holiday season and best wishes for the coming new year.

Laurraïne