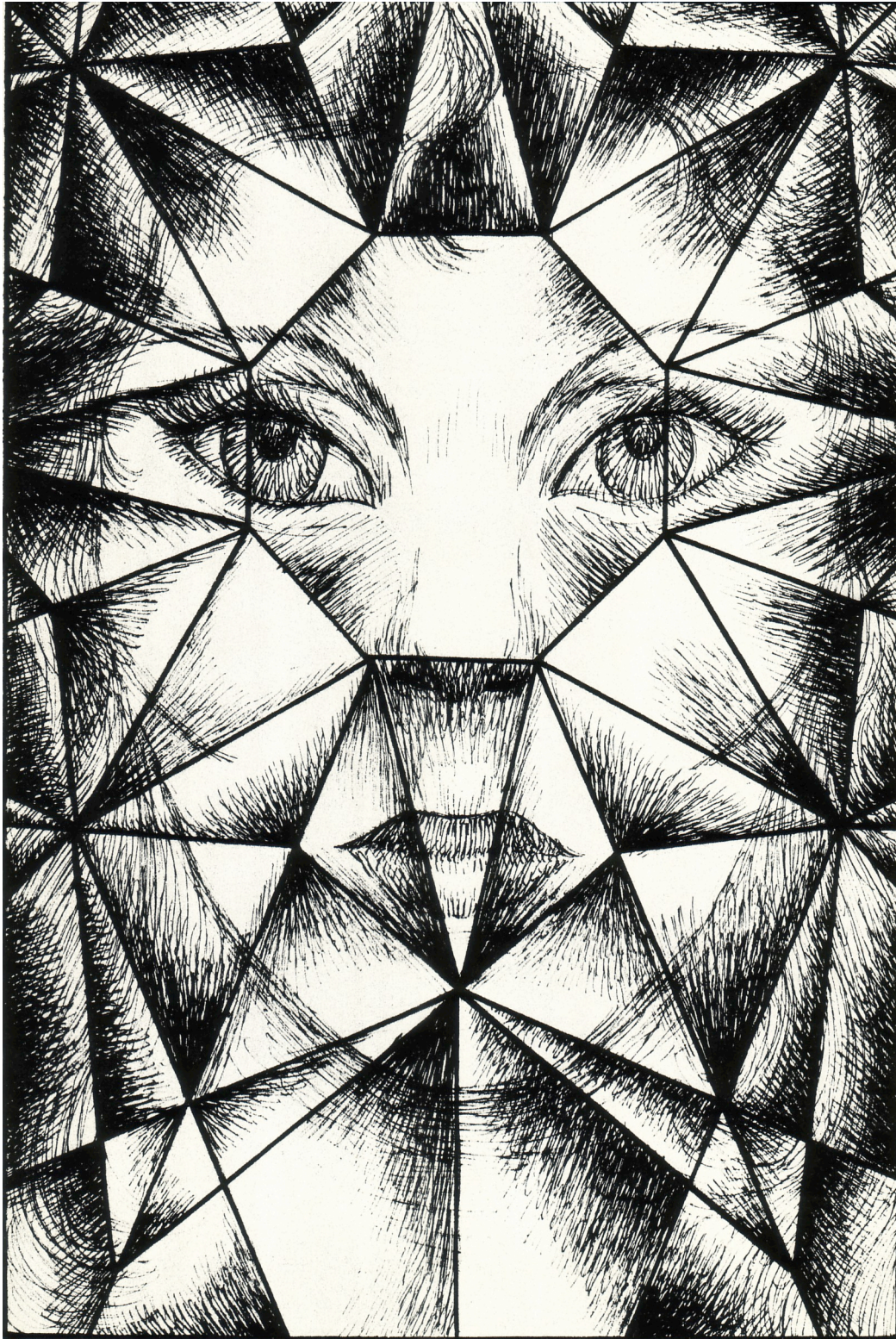


# Feline Mewsings #38



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# Feline ~~Mews~~ings

#38

November 2009

## \* Editorial / Introduction

Fluffy's urinalysis in June showed continuing problems, so the vet changed his diet again. I had to adjust his medication quite a bit, but he seems to be doing okay, aside from some misbehaviour that seems to have been instigated by an accident Mercury had. Mercury experienced some urinary difficulties in October and had an accident on one of the bench cushions in the foyer. Fluffy seems to have taken that as permission to misbehave. As we were still busy getting the house in order, I didn't get around to washing the cushion covers for a while. We put the cushions back after spraying with Feliway, but the Feliway turned out to be too old to be effective. Also the Scotchgard came off in the laundry, and I had to buy some to apply. Before we could do this, Fluffy misbehaved again on one of the cushions. Before he could do it again, we removed both cushions and stored them in the guest room. We put the one he hadn't used a second time back after spraying with Scotchgard and a new container of Feliway. I'm still trying to air out the other cushion enough to get the smell out with some help from vinegar.

Mercury's urinary problem was treated with penicillin and amoxicillin. Unfortunately he reacted badly to the amoxicillin, first losing his appetite and eventually vomiting a lot and developing diarrhoea. The vet finally took him off the amoxicillin, and he recovered after a few days. I'd had to get different food for him when his appetite went away just to get him to eat a bit.

On other fronts, our unpacking wasn't finished until well into September. Then we spent more time getting the house in order. Finally all our knick-knacks and pictures are on shelves or hanging on walls.



Many fixes were made to the house. The concrete in most of the doorways was fixed; many of them had had gouges in them. Shelves were also installed in the garden shed. Power was installed on our water storage tanks; one of them now has a pump, and we are waiting for pumps for the other two. Patches to the wood and linoleum floors were done, though we've recently discovered a problem with the wood under the guest room door. Mike also got the carpet on his observatory pad. We have our entire living room set now (see photo to left) and most of the guest room set; we are still

awaiting the bedside tables. We are also still waiting for the promised extra shelves for some of our bookcases. For now many books are double shelved. This makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to use the books that are behind others. We don't know what the hold-up is. The library and media room also await the ladders for the bookcases.

Recently we've discovered a problem with our solar hot water tank. The backup electric heating element is not working properly. This was not at all obvious during summer; but with cooler weather now

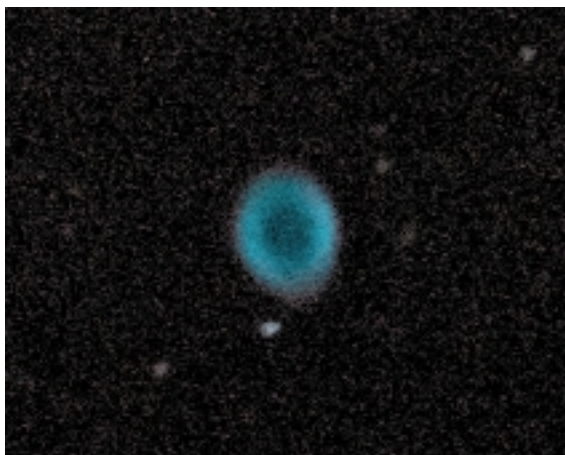
here, it became all too obvious. I won't attempt to shower or take a bath in the morning until this is cleared up.

One of our neighbours brought over some tomatoes from their garden at the end of July. They made a nice addition to the salad I usually have for lunch.



We've also made the acquaintance of more of the native fauna. Mike saw a rattlesnake near his observatory in early August. A bit later he found a tarantula right outside his workroom door. He's taken many pictures of rabbits, squirrels, roadrunners, and hawks. He recently took a photo of some kind of rodent.

Once Mike's observatory was completed, he started spending some time out there most nights that were clear. Some nights he's stayed out all night, as for the recent Perseid meteor shower. Meade sent him a telescope to check out, but it turned out to have major problems and had to be returned. We haven't received a replacement. Also Mike participated in a local art event called Glow. It takes place during full moon, so viewing is limited to bright objects, but the public seemed to enjoy looking at the moon and Jupiter, which will be in the sky for quite a while. Photo at



right is of the Ring Nebula taken from his observatory.

I recently got my library card for Oracle and Pinal County, but I don't know when I'll have time to use it.

After we were all finished with unpacking and putting stuff away, life started to become more normal. But then I had computer problems. Two of my programs stopped working. These were programs I use just about every day, so it was more than just a slight inconvenience. I spent several days fixing the problem, which in the end led to my restoring my computer to a previous state. But it was obvious that the hard drive was becoming very flaky, so we decided to replace it. With one thing and another, I ended up sans computer for ten days. I am still catching up from that.

\* \* \*

## \* Local Outings

**The Kite Runner:** This play based on a novel by Afghani writer Khaled Hosseini was the opening play of the season for the Arizona Theatre Company. Born into a diplomatic family, he was abroad when the Soviets invaded his country. He and his family were granted political asylum in the US. After practising medicine for eight years, he sold this, his first novel. The novel was turned in a play by Matthew Spangler. The play we saw was first staged at the San Jose Repertory Theatre. A lot of the actors were also in that version, though not necessarily in the same roles. The set design was essentially the same.

The action takes place between 1973 and 2002. The first part of the play is set in Kabul, where the main character grows up. We learn a lot about Afghanistan, such as that the upper class and the servant class were different ethnic groups. The family in the play flee the country to the US after the Soviet invasion. The later part of the play takes place mainly in the Bay Area.

The story is about a boy who grows up with his father and the two servants that they have—a father and son. The son is close to the age of Amir, the main character. They play together as they grow up, but the fact that they are of different classes is never forgotten. Amir's father is a successful merchant. When they become refugees, they lose everything and must scrimp and save in their new country. The father eventually dies of cancer. Then Amir learns things about his father that he'd never known. It is a gut-wrenching, heart-rending story. This performance was excellent.

The title refers to a traditional kite contest that was held annually before Afghanistan's troubles. The

contest was banned by the Taliban.

#

**Monty Python's Spamalot:** This musical came to Tucson's Broadway in Tucson series by way of the Nederlander organization, which had just performed the play in San Jose. I was a bit sceptical about how good it would be, since it was far from being the Broadway hit. That is to say, the cast was very different. There was one cast member who had been part of the final Broadway one, but I really didn't think she was that good. This was Merle Dandridge, who played the Lady of the Lake. One of her songs, "The Diva's Lament", was the basis of a song used in a masquerade skit about the *Battlestar Galactica* character Athena at a recent convention; and I thought the singing in that skit was far superior. A couple of other more minor characters were also played by people who had been part of the final Broadway cast.

Other than that, *Spamalot* was great. Mike complained about the acoustics in the hall, the Tucson Music Hall, which doesn't bode well for the operas we'll be seeing there. I'm not sure if that's why I couldn't quite make out a few lines, but sung English is never that easy to understand. I missed one joke, because I just didn't recognize the name of the person being referred to. Except for those few things, the musical was funny and very entertaining. The music had me bouncing along with it a lot of the time. The performance we saw got a standing ovation. The tickets were a bit pricey but probably worth it.

#

**Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*:** This opera opened this season. It's not among my favourites, but it was excellently done, and the music was very enjoyable. The Arizona Opera Company performs in both Phoenix and Tucson. The hall didn't have any acoustics problems that we noticed, so the problems with *Spamalot* must have had to do with the technical aspect of using microphones. The opera was conducted by Stewart Robertson and starred Scott Ramsay, Michael Mayes, Stephen Morscheck, Caitlin Lynch, Lauren McNeese, and Maureen O'Flynn.

\* \* \*



Message from Amy: For the foreseeable future, "Amy's Motley Media Musings" will resurrect all the reviews in my files in alphabetical order, for they are not readily found anywhere else any more. I hope these will contain some interesting perspectives to amuse and enlighten on various genre and popular culture offerings in the past several years—opinions from a curious, feminist, inquiring, and, I'd like to think, culturally educated, mind. I hope *Feline Mewsings* readers find what I have to say worthwhile. Thank you very much for your attention.

***Asoka* (Arklightz and Films, 2001). Directed by Santosh Sivan. Written by Sakhet Chaudhary, Santosh Sivan. Music by Anu Malik and Sandeep Chowta (score). Running time: 173 minutes. Rated: R (In Hindi with English subtitles). <http://asoka.indiatimes.com/>**

Santosh Sivan, an Indian director with a long and successful track record with his scripting, cinematography, and directing of both independent and commercial films, uses this experience and clout to helm, co-write, and shoot the magnum opus of his career. *Asoka*, a name that one billion Indians know and honour the way Westerners revere King Arthur, was the appellation of the subcontinent's first and greatest emperor, who unified and ruled that vast region in the third century BC. Santosh Sivan's magnificent epic film tribute to this historical personage makes it clear in an opening narration not to expect a documentary recreation of archaeological data but rather to experience a dramatic expression of and a romantic journey into the formative half of this renowned ruler's life.

Opening in the ancient kingdom of Magadha in south-central India, the film briefly depicts Asoka's

boyhood, quickly proceeding to the main story, set in the time of his maturation. The robust hunk of a prince (Shah Rukh Khan), takes after his father, Bindusara (Gerson de Cunha), rather than his grandfather Chandragupta (Umesh Mehra), founder of the Maurya dynasty, who gave up his crown to take up the peaceful faith of Jainism. Asoka, coveting his eldest brother Susima's (Ajit Kumar) position to inherit the throne by retrieving Chandragupta's ritually discarded sword, stakes his claim to kingship. Younger brothers, favouring Susima, instigate intrigues so threatening to Asoka's life that his mother, Dharma (Subashini Ali), persuades him to go into exile in the neighbouring principality of Kalinga.

There, disguised in commoner's garb and borrowing the name of his beloved white steed, Pawan, Asoka befriends a doughty but lovable fighter, Veerat (Danny Denzongpa), and gets smitten with gorgeous, Amazon-like warrior, Kaurwaki (Kareena Kapoor). She, along with her pre-adolescent brother, Arya (Suraj Balaji), and their guardian, Bheema (Rahul Dev), turn out to be a princess, the royal heir, and a general of Kalinga in hiding from deadly court intrigues that killed the king and queen.

Kaurwaki and Asoka (as Pawan) take marriage vows; but before they can be consummated, the protagonist gets recalled to Magadha in order to fulfil his dying father Bindusara's wish that he quell a rebellion in Ujjain. Military prowess proven, Asoka eagerly returns to Kalinga to reunite with Kaurwaki, only to be misleadingly informed by the jealous Bheema (who also loves her) of the princess's death. On hearing this news, Asoka sickens with mourning to be nursed back to health by Devi (Hrishita Bhatt), a Buddhist whom he marries in gratitude for her kindness although he yearns for Kaurwaki. In ironic scenes, Kaurwaki searches for Pawan but fails to locate him because of not knowing his real name. When Bindusara dies, Asoka, his heart hardened by grief, becomes obsessed with power, murders his brothers, becomes emperor, and initiates a reign of such harshness that the now pregnant Devi, finding her husband's behaviour unbearable, returns to her home of Vidisha. With nothing left to lose, so he thinks, Asoka, seeking to expand his territory, invades Kalinga, causing massive devastation and death. There he discovers Kaurwaki in her true warrior role, defending her country and rightfully berating him for the destruction (which includes the tragically surprise mortal wounding of an important supporting character). This epiphany of an encounter forces Asoka to confront his evil deeds, do serious re-thinking, and embrace Buddhism.

Here the movie concludes, clearly indicating that in truth Asoka's life journey just begins at this point. Asoka spent the rest of his reign promoting non-violence, setting forth his principles of benign rule in edicts carved on rocks and pillars from South India to Afghanistan—the first significant extant texts in India's historical record. Speaking of history, *Asoka* the movie inevitably contains anachronisms and understandably alters fact in favour of spectacle and dramatic expediency, most notably by depicting Kaurwaki as Asoka's first wife when, according to historical sources, he married Devi in a prior ceremony. Also the stitched cloth garments and images of the Buddha did not exist until the 1st century AD, and one location features structures that weren't built until a thousand years after the events in the film. Nit-picking aside, Asoka, a figure out of legend and heritage, makes a wonderful subject for an epic production and *Asoka* the movie is certainly that!

Featuring lush production values, *Asoka's* flaws can be easily forgiven; for it dazzles with its charismatic and superb performers (the leads deserve their mega-star status in India); excellent Hong Kong inspired martial arts; spine-tingling romantic, obligatory song and dance interludes (a staple convention of commercial Indian cinema) that managed not to stray too far from cultural context; exquisite sets, locations, costumes, and make-up (appropriate body-painting designs); lovely score; and sweeping Kurosawa-influenced battle scenes (gruesomely unsparing in showing the consequences of war).

*Asoka*, intended to break out into worldwide distribution beyond the usual Indian ethnic market, definitely would please fans of *Gladiator* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and their ilk. Despite its length (also standard for Indian commercial films), *Asoka's* brilliant cinematography, intricate visuals, and gorgeous production so enthrall that 173 minutes swiftly pass, leaving this viewer eager for more! Woefully under-promoted and advertised outside its target audience, deserving to be seen and appreciated by the whole wide world of moviegoers who would be expected to be captivated enough to seek out more knowledge of the immense and rich culture of India, *Asoka* provides an exemplary introduction while it entertains on every level.

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Photo of sunset recently taken by Mike.

***Asterix and the Actress*, written and illustrated by Albert Uderzo. Translated from the French by Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge. (Orion Publishing, London, April 2001, 9.99 UK, hardcover, ISBN#: 0-75284-657-4; Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., NY, August 2002, \$9.95, trade paperback, ISBN#: 0-752-84658-2). <http://www.sterlingpub.com/search/SearchBookDisplay.asp?BookKey=178957> <http://www.asterix-obelix.nl/>**

Since the first book edition appeared in its country of origin, France, in 1961, the comic (in every sense of the word) and graphic stories about Asterix the Gaul and his fellow villagers singularly and heroically resisting the Roman occupation of Gaul (in 50 B.C.), have been a hugely successful pop cultural phenomenon in Europe and the UK. In the USA, the series (of at least thirty volumes), boasts an ardent following of undeservedly lesser proportions.

Following the death of co-creator Rene Goscinny in 1977, Albert Uderzo, on his own, continued to successfully devise Asterix adventures, albeit recently at the slower pace of one every four or five years. This most recent effort, *Asterix and the Actress*, exemplifies the winning blend of comedy, satire, and accurate history that makes the series so appealing. The chuckles begin with the system of naming characters. All male Gauls' monikers define personalities by making puns that end in "ix" (inspired by the historical personage Vercingetorix), for example, the clever, brave, if rather petite, protagonist Asterix; his canine companion Dogmatix; his strong, huge, and not too bright best friend Obelix; the village chieftain Vitalstatistix; the Druid Getafix and his magic potions; the bard Cacafonix. Romans sport outrageous Latinate appellations with the exception of real historical characters such as Julius Caesar, for example, the alcoholic Tremensdelirious; the centurion Gymnasticapparatus; the Prefect Bogusgenius; and the merchant Fastandfurius.

The plot of *Asterix and the Actress* opens with the joint birthday party celebration enjoyed by Asterix and his buddy, Obelix, back in their Gaulish village with their mothers as surprise guests. The protagonists' expectations for carefree feasting soon get interrupted by the consequences of maternal matrimonial plans for their beloved offspring, who are also the recipients of gifts of glorious gold Roman armour, meant to distract them while the mothers find wives for their bachelor sons. Unbeknownst to the birthday boys, the armour was purloined from Pompey, chief conspirator against Caesar, and to retrieve it, the aggrieved intriguer has sent the famous and talented actress, Latraviata. She disguises herself as the Gaulish gal Panacea, Asterix's former flame, now married, and with her husband, Tragicomix, a friend of Asterix living in the garrison town Condatum where they sell Gaulish goods. The false Panacea's charms and close connection with the hero's pal nearly succeeds until the real Panacea shows up with her husband, Tragicomix; and then the fun begins, for all this is connected to Julius Caesar's plans to deal with his old foe, Pompey, who seeks supporters from among the legions stationed in Gaul. Beloved re-

occurring characters, a bumbling crew of comical corsairs, manage to put in an appearance too.

Asterix adventures never fail to resolve without the uniquely charming blend of absurd humour and historical accuracy featured in every volume in the canon. The lead characters, for all their zaniness, have enough depth to their motivations and desires to arouse empathy in the reader; yet their antics always amuse, for they fit into their ancient and classical time period while cleverly satirizing attitudes and trends of the present day.

The artwork in the Asterix books delights with richly detailed drawings that skilfully render the comical and cartoonish characters against meticulously researched backgrounds that depict architecture, clothing, everyday objects, and historical personages with archaeological correctness. *Asterix and the Actress* embodies these fascinating and fun qualities by successfully inserting its imaginative plot into very real historical events familiar to any student of the classical period. The visuals, equally up to par—colourful, lively, and intricate—prove perfect for the requirements of the story, even though not quite as spectacular compared to those in *Asterix and Cleopatra* or *Asterix the Legionary*. Still long time lovers of the Asterix series will welcome, and newcomers will be won over by this most recent and worthy addition to the oeuvre that offers the extraordinary offbeat version of events of 2000 years ago so compelling to its followers.

-- Amy Harlib

\* \* \*

## \* Mailing Comments on FAPA #287

**Fantasy Amateur:** Please update my address on the membership roster. Thanks.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #137):** Anyone who voted for Obama thinking he was a radical leftist must be sorely disappointed.

**Dale Speirs (Opuntia 67.1B):** I really enjoyed your article about *The Lost World* and its many permutations.

**Heath Row (Snow poster Township):**  
Welcome to FAPA.

**Ben Indick (Ben's Beat 96):** I'm so sorry to learn of your limited mobility. (Since I wrote this comment, I have heard that Ben Indick is no longer with us. I am saddened by his departure. I mailed a condolence card to his wife, Janet).



**Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #62):**

Attending my college reunion was bad enough as far as my experience of being housed in a college dorm. I realize I lived in a dorm when I was in college and in grad school. I guess my standards have risen since then. I skipped the Westercon in Vancouver because it was held on a college campus. Judging from the stories I heard about it afterward, I made the right decision.

**Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu):** My sister commutes from Federal Way to Tacoma, but I guess she might be driving against traffic. Also although she drives to work during rush hour, she usually doesn't leave work until most of rush hour is over.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #139):** I'm using Mike's old iPod, and it's filled with old radio shows. It doesn't have a lot of memory, so I have to rotate out shows as I finish listening to them. I have a huge number of shows.

**Mike McInerney (Number One #15):** Very sorry to hear about your layoff. Being able to collect both unemployment and Social Security is somewhat of a consolation, I guess.



Being debt-free is good. I was hoping for the same after we finished building our house. Unfortunately it ended up costing so much more that we've had to take out a small mortgage. Real estate taxes should be fairly low, since the house was appraised for less than half the cost of building it.

I hope you realize that your General Motors shares are not worth anything now. When the company goes public again, all the shares will be new ones.

Nice that you have the opportunity to hear such great readings. I doubt that we'll have anything comparable here.

**Fred Lerner (Lofgeornost #95):** Mike set up his first blog as a means of communicating to his many contacts on the subject of astronomy. Ten years ago, when he stopped keeping track, he was getting 30,000 hits a month. How that translates into the number of people is anyone's guess, but he figures the total number of hits is a lot larger than that now. He set up his "Road to Oracle" blog to track the building of our house. Some of the people who follow his astronomy blog also follow that, and there are people who don't track the astronomy blog who do follow that one. Most of the people who follow the "Road to Oracle" blog are people we know; and we have received occasional comments, mostly from people we know. It's a way of staying in touch with people. I follow the blogs of a few select people that I know and a few select people whose opinions I value.

I'm currently reading a book now that is a sort of future history, but it's written as though it were a history book written two centuries from now. It doesn't purport to be actual history, but it has the feel of it.

**Steve Green (Cyffdydd):** I was going to download *Are You Still There?* and discovered I'd already downloaded it. One of these days, I hope to have time to read it. I plan to switch from my Palm to an iPhone next year. When I do that I'll probably load a bunch of PDFzines to the iPhone. The books I'm reading on the Palm are in Palm format and not readable on the iPhone.

How is *cyffdydd* pronounced?

\*\*\* I assume the USA is metric. —Eric Lindsay \*\*\*

**Peggy Rae Sapienza (Adventures on Earth No. 15):** Was the long black snake venomous or dangerous in some other way? If not I'm wondering why you couldn't have taken care of it yourself.

**Eric Lindsay (For FAPA):** Do I understand correctly that an upside down fridge-freezer has the freezer on the bottom?

Why would you not want to tell the government you've moved? In any case, you say later in your zine that you will be giving up your Airlie Beach PO Box by the end of the year; so I presume that by then you don't mind if the government knows you've moved.

Actually the way global warming works, the Northwest might end up colder. Right now there is a clockwise current going around the Pacific that helps to moderate the climate there. Global warming may stop the current.

You say that you keep your blog mainly for yourself, but I find that much of it is very interesting for me to read. Maybe this is because we are in somewhat similar situations with moving and retiring.

**Art Widner (Yhos 65):** Some of your pages ran over the edge of the paper, so I couldn't read them.

*La Sonnambula* is also part of "Great Performances from the Met", which is broadcast over many PBS stations. We get those here. We receive Phoenix stations from DirecTV, but Tucson also shows the Met operas. *La Sonnambula* is an opera by Bellini. The subject matter is completely different from your poem. The opera is about a young woman who sleepwalks, and this leads her into a very bad situation with your fiancé. She sleepwalks into the hotel room of another man, and her fiancé thinks she is untrue to him. Everything ends up okay in the end. The libretto is by Felice Romani. If you need more information, check any large library.

I have a Thornton Burgess book titled *The Big Book of Burgess Nature Stories: at the Smiling Pool and the Dear Old Briarpatch*.

According to information I found on the web, *Between Time and Timbuktu* was apparently released on both VHS and DVD; but it appears to be unavailable at this time. I don't recall seeing this particular one.

Mike has Photoshop, but he generally edits his photos in Aperture. I sometimes further edit using GraphicConverter, but that generally consists of cropping or resizing.

**Katrina "Kat Templeton (The Days of Miracle and Wonder, Ep. 1):** Welcome to FAPA.

We were in Redding a few years ago. We stayed there when we visited Lassen. I was still suffering from chronic fatigue back then, so I would like to go back. There's one place we didn't visit, because I was just too tired. Cattleman's restaurant was right next to our motel, and we ate there every night. I highly recommend the place for anyone who likes steak. There are branches in several places in California and Nevada if I recall correctly.

I've read many a cereal box. Fortunately electronic books have obviated the need to read such things.

**Robert Michael Sabella (ride the Lightning, Spring 2009):** I've never stayed overnight in a hospital. I've been to them for various tests a few times. Some of my doctors had offices in hospitals.

\* \* \*



## \* Mailing Comments on FAPA #288

**Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien):** I'm so sorry to hear about your having been bitten by a dog and especially about all the grief you had to put up with afterwards. I certainly hope you are okay now.

I hope Janet's ankle is also all better.

These days I tend to wake up between six and eight in the morning. Infrequently I'll get up a bit later if I'm really tired. Mostly I tend to take naps if I'm tired.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #140):** I'm so sorry to hear about Misty's passing. She looked a lot like our Shadow.

I'm not sure how much different a PPO is from a traditional plan. To me they don't seem that different.

We're not getting enough exercise, either, being too busy unpacking and organizing the house. The exercise doing those things isn't exactly what we need.

I think Bob Silverberg has a memory like a steel trap.

**Eric Lindsay (For FAPA):** Like you I've discovered that I forgot to figure in the ceiling height in designing the library. If I'd remembered, I would have had the ceilings nine feet off the floor rather than the eight we have. The California house had cathedral ceilings in half the house, and that's where our bookcases were. It wasn't until we were shelving books here that I realized I hadn't taken that into consideration.

Your new house looks very nice in the photo.

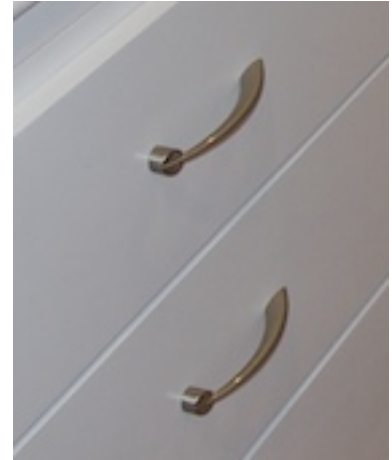
You are too modest or you underestimate yourself when you say, "...so that sort of makes it look like I know what I am doing". Compare to most people, you are a veritable expert.

Lucky you to have wallabies living in your midst.

You have counted the solar panels correctly. Each panel provides 175 watts. We do have skylights, and there are three in the photo you saw. There are more on the other side of the roof. The skylights provide light to places that have no windows, though two of them are above my front window; but that's a different sort of thing altogether. I wanted to have a bay with windows in front, side, and above. We did it the most inexpensive way we could.

I've never come across recessed handles for cabinets. That sounds like a very practical idea. Here's a photo (below) of the handles we have in the kitchen, bathroom, pet room, and anywhere else with drawers and cabinets. We have different handles for the guest bed and side tables, though; but they are essentially the same size—large enough to slip one's hand into.

Mike has a communications closet where the wiring for phones and Ethernet are. He has shelves in there where he currently keeps the router, the DSL switch, Time Capsule, and a UPS. The closet is also where the phone jacks come in from outside and then are connected to each of the jacks in the various rooms. The TV can also be set up that way if we had cable or a rooftop antenna, for whatever that may pull in.



**Ben Indick (Ben's Beat 97):** I seem to have missed the PBS airing of *The Norman Conquest*, but maybe it wasn't shown in LA. I've seen the taping of the radio version of at least two of the parts and enjoyed them. My imaginary sets always add to the enjoyment.

You accidentally inserted a period into my name, but you're excused.

I saw Matthew Broderick in *Biloxi Blues* at the Music Centre in LA many years ago. He was magnificent. I envy you're your chance to see him on stage.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #141):**

Great Franz Miklis cover.

The earliest house I remember was in the Kujoyama area on the outskirts of Kyoto. My parents were renting the place. It was an L-shaped building with the open part of the L an enclosed garden. I have some nice and not-so-nice memories of living there. My parents had a small farm plot nearby. I also remember that a neighbour committed suicide. My parents visited there many years later when they were visiting Japan.

From there we moved to an apartment in Rochester, NY, that was part of an old house. There were three apartments in the house—upstairs, downstairs, and the back unit. We started out in the upstairs one but moved to the downstairs one when it became vacant. The downstairs unit was the largest. Many years later, friends of mine lived in the same house. The back unit was gone and had been absorbed into the downstairs apartment, so it was even bigger than when I lived there. I went to see the house in the 1990s. It looked the same but a different colour.

Then we moved to Marblehead, MA, where we rented a ranch-style house for a couple of years. After that my father purchased his first house. It was new construction on a plot of about three-quarters of an acre. It was a split-level house in Old Marblehead.

We moved back to the Rochester, NY, area after that. My parents bought a house, a new construction in a relatively new development in a suburb called Pittsford. I think they chose the suburb because of the quality of the schools. This was another split-level house. In 1977, if I recall correctly, we moved to another suburb, Webster. This house was two stories this time and another new construction in another relatively new development. Both houses are still there as of the 1990s. The only things I noticed different was that the trees in the neighbourhood are now much bigger.

After my layoff from Xerox, we moved to Atherton, CA, where we rented half of a duplex. It was a huge house and the half we were renting was bigger than any other house in which we had previously lived. It was a two-story house with a small backyard. We found an empty egg in the backyard. I still have it, and I still don't know what kind of bird laid it. I should take a photo of it and show it around.

My next move was to Downey, CA, after I finally found a job. I lived in my first apartment, an upstairs unit in a small two-story building. It was brand new, and there were some breaking in pains. The owner manager was very nice, and he was very sorry to see me go after I found a job in another part of LA. I moved to the Palms area of LA and rented one of the few AC-ed apartments in the neighbourhood. The building was slightly larger than the Downey one and had a live-in manager and security cameras and gate. Even so someone apparently tried to break into my unit once. I came home to find that the doorknob was all loose. Fortunately the manager just happened to have a spare and changed out the locks for me.

Then I bought my first home—a condo in a relatively new development just west of La Cienega, the dividing line between the good and bad parts of LA. I was living there when I met Mike. Less than a year later, I moved in with him into his condo in Torrance. It was part of a huge condo complex. Less than year after that, we bought our modest-sized house on the Palos Verdes peninsula where we lived for eleven years.

After moving to Arizona, we lived in a rental house in Oro Valley, a suburb north of Tucson. This was a two-story house that was bigger than our house in California. We lived there for nineteen months. Now we are in our last house, a bit smaller than we'd hoped but still custom-made. This is probably the nicest house either of us will ever live in.

Am I correct in assuming that a raised ranch house is the same as a split-level house?



**Bob Silverberg (Snickersnee):** Sorry to hear of your health problems earlier this year but glad to hear you are doing well.

I hope you enjoyed Montreal. We couldn't make it due to being too busy after moving and too short on cash from same.

If I ever get back to Paris, I must check out the Musee Carnavalet. It sounds very interesting.

**Dale Speirs (Opuntia 67.3):** I'm not planning to take any financial chances with our retirement money. We have a great financial advisor whom I consult regularly. We still have some expenditures to make on the house, though nothing compared to the amount already spent. I'd say our chances of getting to Australia are slim to none. It's possible we could do it, but we'd have to sacrifice all our domestic travel, and I don't want to do that.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning):** Heath Row is a real dynamo. He's a great editor, keeping on top of all the potential contributors and trying to recruit new ones. He's restarted me on book reviewing. He's also participating in the N3F APA.

1800 feet is not a bad elevation, though I would hardly consider it a mountain. We are a bit shy of a mile high in Oracle, around 4380 ft.

**Heath Row (Snow Poster Township #2):** Generally I don't read everything in a magazine, but sf zines are different. I do tend to read everything in them. Right now the only marginally sf magazine I'm getting on a regular basis is *Realms of Fantasy*, which I'm getting because I had unexpired subscriptions when Warren Lapine previously went out of business. He has done the honourable thing as he starts up a new publishing venture. I only recently had a chance to read the two issues I've received so far; it's not a great zine but not too bad. I'm still too backed up in my reading to start new subscriptions, though I am hoping to. Once our house is all organized, I expect to be able to catch up with my reading.

The only long-running sf series I'm aware of is the Perry Rhodan series, which was translated and published here for many years. I've read all the translations. My German isn't good enough to attempt to read the original. I understand it's still being published in Germany.



**Moi (Feline Mewsings #37):** I made a misstatement regarding Michael D'Ambrosio. He is a published author with several novels out. I bought one at Westercon and hope to read it soon.

So far our electric bills show our usage is roughly three-fifths to two-thirds of what we used in the previous house, which was smaller and used gas for heating and hot water. Some of the savings can be attributed to the better insulation and some of it to solar.

**Janice Morningstar (Comment-ary, Part Cinq):** Depending on when you were tested for the allergy to wasps, there may be newer allergy tests.

My six APAe: FAPA and LASFAPA you know. The other paper APA is StippleAPA, which is based in the Twin Cities. The other three are electronic: SNAPS is based in Las Vegas and is semi-invitational. eAPA has no geographical base. N'APA is the APA of the N3F. eAPA has had open mailings, and they're posted on efanazines.

The group photo I ran was taken right after the fanzine panel at Denvention, and I believe most of them attended the editors' lunch afterwards. They are certainly not members of StippleAPA for the most part.

I doubt that the psychedelic sequence in 2001 lasted more than five minutes. I'm not planning to time it any time soon though.

I tried Zyrtec once. It knocked me out but had no apparent effect on my allergic symptoms.

**Steven and Vicki Ogden (Edgar's Journal #9):** Great compilation of information about Poe.

Did you see the article in a recent *New Yorker* about him? It explained that the times he lived in were bad financially. If the times had been better, his adoptive father might have been more generous in supporting him.

\* \* \*

## \* 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.

**Amy Harlib, New York, NY**

**19 August 2009**

Love your new house! Adore Brad Foster's illo, and I'm glad you enjoyed the new Star Trek movie. I liked it so much, I saw it twice. I totally recommend Hayao Miyazaki's new animated feature, *Ponyo*, and the new Harry Potter film.

I have a new video on my website! Yoga Trek (<http://www.idanz.net/aharlib>)! Please invite everyone to enjoy.

#

**Brad Foster, Irving, TX**

**21 August 2009**

Hey, that was a nice surprise to see you feature one of my metal butterflies on the cover this time. I had forgotten about that one, just remembered the couple of little fillos I sent last time. I always love that cool look you get by running the cover with all black ink for the art, but then the touch of colour in the title. Very classy design work!

I gotta tell you, the most impressive thing this issue is that picture of Mike's private backyard observatory! I didn't know such things were even available. That is SO beyond cool! (Of course, it could be made even cooler if you paint some glow-in-the-dark stars on the exterior of the dome... I trust they wouldn't interfere with the actual viewing but would be that one little "extra" that would push it that much further into ultra-neato-coolness!)

((Mike tells me there is a glow in the dark model available.))

Also slightly jealous of your getting to see some Chihuly work eye-to-glass, so to speak. I've seen it in books and in film, but have yet to be lucky enough to take in the work in full personal 3D. Some day though, some day...

We did get to see *UP!* in the theatre, and another great triumph from Pixar. When you realize you are reacting to the characters as people and not cartoons, you know the movie has gone into great territory. Also got to see *District 9*, an sf movie with a nice new idea, very impressed.

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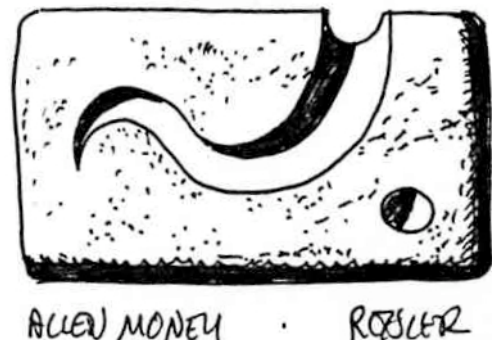
**Gerri Balter, St. Paul, MN**

**22 August 2009**

Congratulations on moving into your new home. I hope you have many years of pleasure living there.

I consider myself a die-hard Star Trek fan, and I loved the movie. I hope they do more.

I did miss you at Anticipation. Montreal is a lovely city and the convention centre was fantastic. The science track was one of the best I've seen. The bad part was that programming was run poorly. Neither



the pocket programme nor the updates were accurate. What I ended up doing is going to the rooms of the panels I planned to attend each day and see if the panel was listed. Also, there was no mention of the hours for the con suite or the dealers room in the programme book. They were published in one of the updates. The con suite was so far from the convention centre that I never bothered to visit.

Hope Australia is better.

#

**Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA**

**30 August 2009**

Congratulations on surviving your move.

Amy's Musing on *Andanggaman*—were there African all-female warrior corps?

Was the fireworks show part of Westercon or was it someone's 4th of July celebration?

((I believe the fireworks were done by the city, but they were relatively close by.))

Is the prefab observatory from Canada the one in the photo on page 4? I suppose in real life the dome fits on to the building more firmly than it looks in the picture.

((Since the dome rotates, it doesn't really fit tightly.))

Congratulations to Amy on the restarted career.

#

**Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON**

**20 September 2009**

Thank you for a paper copy of *Feline Mewsings* 37. Again, if the costs get too big, knock me down to getting a .pdf. And now for a regularly scheduled loc.

Brad Foster does some great stuff, but you have to be really dedicated to do the pointillism needed to create artwork like the one on your cover.

Moved in by now, I hope. I do hate moving; that's when you find out how much stuff you have; because you've got to pack, move, and unpack. This is where we could all use a working transporter pad and some antigravity grapples. From what company in Canada did Mike order the mini-observatory? I've been in some small observatories late at night in the summer; and you find that even in an enclosed unit, you can get cold very fast. You're probably finding that the Tucson area can get cold at night, too.

((The dome is from a company called SkyShed. They make other types of observatories too.))

A great steam punk photo on page 8. There are some great costuming possibilities in that field; we're exploring it ourselves, getting back into costuming after about 22 years or so. I'm getting to know many of the Bay Area fans through the various fanzines published there; I'd love to get to one of their conventions.

Brad, I used to watch a lot of cartoons on television, but I've cut back a lot. I used to watch Atomic Betty and other toons; I have access to several cartoon channels here. My main reason for watching them these days is to try to find a way to get onto one of them as a voice actor. Still researching this, and I hope to turn pro in a couple of years.

My loc...our computer problems seem to be solved, but now my microphone doesn't work. Workwise, we are both hunting again. The Masonite people were so incompetent as bosses, Yvonne had three of them giving her contradictory orders, and she never was able to learn the job she was hired to do, thanks to their constant barking. She left the company but has some leads for another job. I am still looking too, but I still have my Globe and Mail job, but now it's at the main building.



The Montréal Worldcon was a great time. I ran the fanzine lounge, we attended the Aurora Awards banquet (I was a nominee, but I didn't win), and we got to hand out a Hugo for Best Fan Writer to Cheryl Morgan. We had a truly unique experience and a lot of fun in a city we'd been in many times before, so we had some fun.

I'll wrap with greetings to Mary Manchester and my hope that the new house works out perfectly. See you next issue!

**I also heard from:** Henry L. Welch, and possibly others whose names I've forgotten to note down (for which I apologize).

\* \* \*

## \* Closing Remarks

I think I'm finally caught up from my recent computer woes. Of course the holiday season is starting up now, so I will still be quite busy. I'll leave you with a photo Mike took recently of a rodent; I don't know what kind it is, but it is the size of a rat.

*Laurraine*

*2 November 2009*

