

Feline Mewsings #40



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#40

May 2010

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* Editorial / Introduction

I am introducing a new columnist this issue. He is Jonathan Vos Post, and he will be writing about science and science-related topics.

House issues continue. Here's how things stand now. The HVAC was looked at extensively and an interim fix was put in place. Basically they disabled one of the condensers on the problem unit. So far it seems to be working fine, but it would be nice to have it completely fixed.

I still have a leak in the ceiling of my workroom. Replacement skylights were to have been ordered, and we've been promised installation very soon.

I've made a start on gardening. I started composting, a process that was helped along when we had some grading work done to prevent the kind of erosion we experienced during the past winter's rains. The first thing the workers did was to pull a lot of wildflowers from the area they would grade, and I had a lot of that added to the compost. I hope to get the fruit trees in soon. We're also still waiting for the pumps for one of the rainwater tanks and the grey water tank. It would be really helpful to have those in place before I get my trees.

The current theatrical season is over. We saw a musical called *[Title of Show]*, the Tennessee Williams play *The Glass Menagerie*, and *Second City Does Arizona*. I have sent in an upgrade request with our renewal for next year; the balcony seats were not at all good for someone as short as I. The opera season is winding up. We saw *La Bohème* and an evening of arias. The last opera of the season is *The Barber of Seville*. My renewal for next year was submitted some time ago, and we're upgrading the seats for that as well.

I finally have a mobile. We bought a new iPhone in February, which Mike took. He gave me his old one, which is good enough for what I do. Mostly I keep my diary on it, play a few games, and read; occasionally I use it as a phone. It replaces my old Palm PDA and my watch.

We've been engaging in more extracurricular activities, and I find that six APA e seem to be too much for me now. I may be dropping a couple, but FAPA will be one I keep.

My most recent activity is reading and viewing various Hugo nominees.

We have a bird nesting on the same light fixture that was used last year for that purposes. I've identified the bird as a Say's Phoebe.



* * *

* Local Outings

[Title of Show]: The fourth offering of the Arizona Theatre Company's season has a strange title. I'm sure we weren't the only ones to wonder what it could be. The show started out as an entry for the New York Musical Theatre Festival in 2004. It's a musical about two writers writing a musical to enter into the New York Musical Theatre Festival. After the competition, the production went on to other venues. At each step along the way, new material was added to reflect what was happening. This continued until it went on Broadway. It's quirky but very entertaining.

#

La Bohème: This popular opera by Giacomo Puccini was done in February. Great music, great performance. Marcello was played by Timothy Mix, Rodolfo by John Bellemer, Mimi by Janinah Burnett, and Musetta by Rhoslyn Jones.

#

A Concert of Signature Arias: The fourth offering of the Arizona Opera was not an opera but a

selection of arias from several operas sung by four singers: baritone Gordon Hawkins, soprano Christine Brewer, tenor Richard Margison, and mezzo soprano Daveda Karanas. Selections were sung from Beethoven's *Fidelio*; Verdi's *Masked Ball*, *Macbeth*, and *Don Carlo*; Puccini's *Turandot* and *Girl of the Golden West*; Bellini's *Norma*; and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Tristan und Isolde*. In addition, the orchestra played selections from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. Each of the arias was introduced by a narrator, who gave the background story of the opera. The introductions added greatly to our enjoyment, as most of us don't know the story of every opera.

#

The Glass Menagerie: One of my favourite plays, this offering by Tennessee Williams was presented in March. This semi-autobiographical play was presented in a very interesting manner. This play is a story told by one of the characters as he remembers back to the time before he left St. Louis. As Tom Wingfield, played by Noel Joseph Allain, narrates, the stage becomes populated by the characters and the stage is changed gradually into the apartment occupied by Tom, his sister (played by Barbra Wengerd), and his mother (played by Catalina Maynard). The fourth character is Jim O'Connor, played by Brian Ibsen. There is also a violinist (Jay Golden) playing mood music. As the play winds down at the end, the stage slowly reverts back to a bare backdrop. It was very effective.



#

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum: This wonderful place is located southwest of Tucson. Mike heard that there were special tours of the hummingbird exhibit given early in the morning before the place opens, so we signed up for one of them. This is the season when hummingbirds reproduce. We saw two hummingbird chicks and two nests with eggs.

After the park opened, we saw most of the other exhibits, which include mountain lions, bears, javalinas, coyotes, and bobcats as well as an aviary full of many different types of birds and a mineral exhibit. We also saw a demonstration of raptors and other carnivorous birds. The park has two restaurants, one cafeteria style and the other a sit-down place. The cafeteria has a very extensive selection, and we ate there. There's also a fairly extensive gift shop and a smaller gift shop near the restaurants. We bought a couple of books. Before we left, we signed up to become members.

#

Tucson Botanical Gardens: On the same day as we went to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, we stopped by the botanical gardens to see a butterfly exhibit. From fall through spring, there are butterfly exhibits featuring butterflies from different areas of the world. During March and April, there were butterflies from around the world. We'll have to check out the other butterfly exhibits next season, assuming they do this again.

As at the desert museum, we looked at the rest of the gardens as well; but by this time we were pretty tired, so we didn't spend that much time there. Again we became members.

#

Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve: In late March we joined the Nature Conservancy for a hike at this preserve, which is south southeast of Tucson and about a two-hour drive for us to reach. According to their brochure, 300 different species of birds have been observed there. We saw quite a few but not nearly that many. The visitor centre has some bird feeders, and we saw many different birds there as well.

#

Finding Early Oracle: This is a non-credit history course offered through the local community college and given by one of our neighbours. I like to learn the history of the places where I live, so I signed up for it. After one classroom session, we subsequently met on field trips. As I write, we have had two of four field trips. It's a pretty small class with only seven students, but that works very well for the format.

Oracle was settled starting in the late nineteenth century. The first settlers were miners and prospectors. Metals mined here were gold, silver, and copper. Only copper mining is done in this area now, and no mining is currently done in Oracle. The second wave of settlers were ranchers who raised cattle or sheep. Next were many who came here for their health. Many TB sufferers came here. Some stayed on after their health improved.

There are several historical buildings in Oracle. The Oracle Union Church was built in the early

twentieth century. It was designated a non-denominational church, and no church may buy it. The place is not very large and is beginning to be too small for the numbers of people who want to attend services. They are contemplating having two services every Sunday.

Another church is St. Helen's Mission, a Catholic church. This is also fairly small, and the Catholic Church is planning to build a larger one right next to it. The present church will continue to be used as a chapel.

Another historical building is the old Mountain View Hotel, which is now owned by the Baptist Church. The place has been modified and is currently in not very good condition. One of the more famous long-term occupants of the hotel was Buffalo Bill Cody. The museum in Cody, WY, has a special "Oracle Room" that highlights the time he spent here.

There are also a few early homes, some of which are still private dwellings. Others have been transformed for other uses. One house is in the Oracle State Park, now closed due to state budget problems. The park still opens occasionally for special concerts and other events.

#

Second City Does Arizona or Close but No Saguaro: This was the Arizona Theatre Company's last offering for the season. Much of the show was geared for an Arizona audience. I thought those parts were the most successful, though there were a couple of the general audience skits that were also very good.

Though the first act was hilarious throughout, I felt somewhat let down by the second act. I felt that a couple of the skits in the second half were totally in bad taste and not funny at all. Overall though it was a very enjoyable evening.

* * *

* Miscellaneous

I read an interesting item regarding bed bugs in *Science News* for 16 January. Bed bugs came up recently for two of my friends. The report was about a low-cost, homemade bed bug detector. You put dry ice in an insulated, one-third-gallon jug. Add a little more than a kilogram of dry ice pellets. Leave the pour hole open just a tad, so that the carbon dioxide leaks out slowly for a period of eleven or so hours. You stand the jug in a small dish with a piece of paper taped on the outside of the dish as a ramp. Dust the slippery inside of the dish with talcum powder. This will trap the bugs. Carbon dioxide attracts the bugs. A travel mug may also be used for the dry ice.

* * *



Amy's Motley Media Musings

Reviews by Amy Harlib



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.

***Austin Powers in Goldmember* (New Line Cinema, 2002). Directed by Jay Roach. Written by Mike Myers and Michael McCullers, based on characters created by Mr. Myers. Music by George Clinton. Choreography by Marguerite Derricks. Running time: 90 minutes. Rated PG-13. (available on video/DVD) <http://www.austinpowers.com/>**

After the huge successes of bawdy spy spoofs *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997) and

Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (1999), Mike Myers, mastermind behind these parodies, returns in the role of the erotically-charged, swinging titular Brit with his key compatriots (in front of and behind the camera), in a third instalment: *Austin Powers in Goldmember*. Like the genre it's lampooning, *Goldmember's* plot contains science-fictional elements, the real raison d'être of the proceedings being the near non-stop barrage of shtick and jokes and the antics of the performers that this film definitely delivers.

The movie begins with a prologue filled with major stars in hilarious cameos, many involving surprising impersonations and one bit with Steven Spielberg as himself. Once the story, such as it is, gets going, it concerns Austin (Mike Myers) yet again confronting his familiar foe, Dr. Evil (also Myers) who, to help him in his latest plan to take over the world, has used the time machine from the previous films to transport from 1975 a criminal mastermind. This malefactor, the very eccentric, skin-flake eating Dutchman Johann van der Smut AKA Goldmember (Myers again), gets his moniker from "an unfortunate smelting accident" that forced him to replace his private parts with the eponymous, er - thing!

Goldmember and Dr. Evil jointly conspire to lure our hero into their clutches by kidnapping Austin's father, Nigel Powers (Michael Caine), a famous super-secret agent in his own right. Also part of their nefarious notions, the duo of maldoers have conceived of "Preparation H", a plot to build a tractor beam that will propel a meteor into the polar ice caps, inundating the world unless the leading industrial powers pay them a huge sum of money. Helping accomplish all this, familiar minions from the first two productions make welcome returns: Dr. Evil's diminutive clone Mini-Me (Verne Troyer); Number Two (Robert Wagner), Frau Farbissina (Mindy Sterling) and a newcomer called Number Three (Fred Savage), actually a mole with a mole - an excuse for more humour.

Before the dastardly deed can be implemented, Dr. Evil gets caught and sent to a maximum-security prison where Austin confronts him in a scene ribbing *Silence of the Lambs*. Here Dr. Evil, in exchange for transfer to a minimum-security facility, informs our hero that back in 1975, his father is being held captive by Goldmember. While in jail, Dr. Evil, reunited with his beloved Mini-Me, performs a brilliantly funny parody of hip-hop music videos and an equally comic escape routine.

On the rescue mission, added to the stop-the-bad-guys bit, we get treated to Austin dealing with the emotional turmoil he feels after years of neglect from his absentee father, feelings he must put aside in order to be able to save his parent from Goldmember's captivity. This adds some interesting dimensions to the protagonist who then, using a time-travelling pimpmobile devised under the supervision of his ever-trustworthy spymaster, Basil Exposition (Michael York), flashes back to 1975. There he enlists the aid of an old flame, a top-notch undercover detective named Foxy Cleopatra (Beyonce Knowles of the Destiny's Child pop group), her performance an homage perfectly embodying Blaxploitation heroine Pam Grier. Gorgeous, feisty, and radiant, Beyonce impresses with her moxie that can measure up to Myers's mojo anytime!

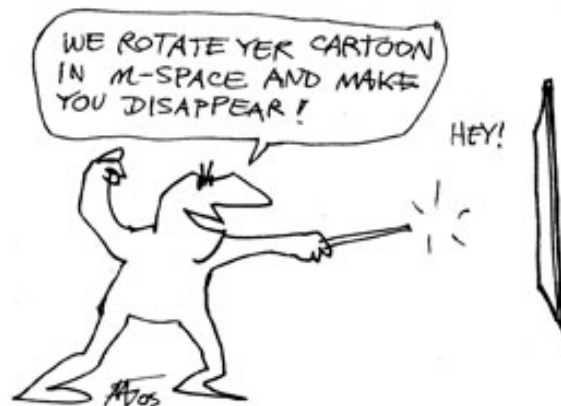
Austin and Foxy, completing this part of their job, return to 2002 to deal with the villains now holed up in Japan where they also encounter Dr. Evil's henchman, the obese and grotesque Scotsman, Fat Bastard (Myers yet again), this time working as a Sumo wrestler in a very effective and apt use of the character.

The big showdown occurs in Dr. Evil's latest lair, a snazzy submarine built in his own giant image where, to his delight, he finds his son Scott (Seth Green) at long last genuinely taking after his father in the family bad-guy business. Adding more spice to the mix, a rivalry between Scott and Mini-Me could affect the balance between good and evil. This and revelations about the secret pasts of Dr. Evil and Nigel Powers have life-changing consequences for the major characters and could lead to further adventures for all of them.

Austin Powers in Goldmember, like its predecessors, abounds in sight gags, innuendoes, groaner puns, slapstick humour, gross bodily function jokes, and abundant references to a wide variety of pop cultural phenomena. All this gets punctuated with enough clever pop song and dance numbers with witty choreography to qualify the movie as a borderline musical. Self-referential bits add to the fun along with outrageous variations on recurring routines: once again a sequence of what only appears to be bizarre autoerotic rituals pantomimed in silhouette behind a screen and a series of quick cutaways wherein a sentence started in one scene gets completed in the next with a loaded double entendre.

More great moments include a scene with seemingly profane subtitles partially illegible against strategically placed white objects in the background; another use of subtitles to translate Austin and Nigel's rhyming Cockney slang dialog; a very peculiar ornamental fountain relating to pissing humour; the names of flirtatious, nubile Japanese female twins; and countless more. All this wackiness succeeds because of Mike Myers's comic genius (aided by Jay Roach's deft direction), his unbounded energy in the service of expressing his sense of fun, and his affection for everything he parodies - Myers's humour deriving from this fondness for his material and the absence of malice.

The genuine love underneath the zaniness gives the Austin Powers phenomenon its free-wheeling zest, an infectious exuberance that energizes the very talented performers that work with Myers and the brilliant back-stage crew that produces the dazzling visuals, the witty sets, costumes (check out Beyonce's lovely fox-motif jewellery), SPFX, and music. For an unabashedly, good-natured raunchy good time, *Austin Powers in Goldmember* gives the finger to *Goldfinger* by being a heck of whole lot more FUN and whole lot lewder!



#

***Avalon* (Miramax Films, 2001). Directed by Mamoru Ishii. Written by Kazunori Ito. Cinematography by Grzegorz Kedzierski. Music by Kenji Kawai. Running time: 106 minutes. Rated: R. (In Polish with English subtitles.) Available on video and DVD. (<http://www.avalon-movie.com/index.asp>)**

An unusual Asian treat screened at the Walter Reade Theater in New York City's "Not of This Earth: Sci-Fi Unbound" Film Festival through Jan. 11, 2004. *Avalon* (2001), a live-action feature from Japanese director Mamoru Oshii (famed for the full-length anime classic *Ghost in the Shell*, 1985), though picked up by USA distributor Miramax and easily obtainable on video and DVD, never got the theatrical release it deserved; and it is terrific on the large screen.

The title *Avalon*, borrowed from Arthurian myths about a legendary island resting place for the souls of deceased heroes, in the film refers to an illegal and habit-forming multi-player, online, role-playing game engrossing thousands of mostly young adults in a dystopian near-future Middle Europa (actually metropolitan Polish locations). Thrilling, high-tech, guerrilla warfare scenarios comprise the setting of this virtual reality game that connects players who select a class they wish to role play with goals to gather equipment, earn experience points, and advance to higher levels.

Participants can adventure in teams or as solos while coping with commonplace effects like time lag that can "kill" (force one out), and reset, which can be used to save oneself. When inside the VR dimension, the players appear wearing snazzy, mechanistically accessorized combat suits and wielding equally cool-looking gadgetized weaponry. The game's greatest and real challenging danger comes from potentially losing one's mind in the flood of data and becoming one of the "unreturned", forever cut off from the physical body, leaving it in a vegetative state.

Avalon's photography uses unique sepia-tones to heighten the sense of blurred boundaries between mundane reality and the alluring VR gaming world where cyberspace effects get shown with digital image manipulation comprised of glowing, pastel spectra of colours. This against the monochromatic, earth-coloured backgrounds produces dazzling visuals not quite like any seen before, rendering more compelling the story focusing on a top-notch, warrior-class, soloist celebrity of the Avalon game. Elegant-looking, intelligent, obsessed young woman, Ash (Malgorzata Foremniak), named so for the white streak in her dark, shoulder length hair, earns what few others can achieve - enough to make a living from playing Avalon. Ash, living alone with only her pet basset hound companion in an apartment amidst post-industrial decay and indifferent pedestrians, centres her life on Avalon and social contact related to same.

Ash's routine gets jolted encountering Stunner (Bartek Swiderski), a creep from her past when she belonged to a team. Stunner entices Ash with insinuations concerning a clandestine, ultra-high level within Avalon, reachable only by a team including a prestigious bishop-class character capable of tracking down and surviving to confront the innocuous-seeming, moppet-like, elusive and enigmatic Ghost (Zuzanna Kasz). She functions to embody the Gate to the hazardous, hidden plane permitting no use of resets to escape yet possibly offering substantial remunerations, the purpose if this level remaining unknown – a potential rogue program?

Avalon's risks become emphasized when Ash, after unsuccessful efforts by herself to find the secret zone, learns that her old group leader, Murphy (Jerzy Gudijka), became one of the "unreturned" after he failed to attain same. Ash then allies with Stunner and a Bishop (Dariusz Biskupski); and together they elude the wary, paternal Game Master (Wladyslaw Kowalski) and with guile and struggle to access the sought-after level, resulting in a startling, revelatory climax enhanced by photography in full-colour, contrasting with everything seen before.

The film *Avalon* will please fans of director Oshii's earlier work and aficionados of *The Matrix*, *Dark City*, and the cyber-punk science-fiction sub-genre in particular. It will engross as well lovers of thoughtful, speculative entertainment in general. This picture dazzles with its exceptional cinematography combined with judiciously spare, seminal SPFX to depict a fascinating near-future metropolitan milieu of disaffected yet intriguing characters played by a cast of unknown talented actors. The star portraying Ash especially stands out, projecting a smouldering, intense intelligence within her lovely, expressive body.

She makes the viewer want to follow her navigations of Avalon's world, a setting designed to provoke questions about the nature of reality, about the power of imagination, and about the eternal human need to escape the narrow confines of daily life for something more fulfilling. Kenji Kawai's haunting score, punctuated by an original choral refrain and blending the synthesizer with a full orchestra, perfectly accompanies everything. At times *Avalon's* narrative becomes slow-paced, opaque, and enigmatic, the ambiguous ending being particularly strange. These qualities, potentially exasperating for those insistent on slam-bang, mindless Hollywood action make *Avalon* rewarding for audiences willing to appreciate this film's challenges and its share of visceral thrills amidst its mostly surreal, even dreamlike ambiance. For distinguished, different, provocative cinematic entertainment, the viewer would do well to seek out and explore *Avalon*.

-- Amy Harlib

* * *





Jonathan's Science Corner

by Jonathan Vos Post



Alicia Boole Stott, A Wrinkle in Time, Mimsey were the Borogoves, and Four-dimensional Polytopes in Wonderland

Adapted from <http://dissertations.ub.rug.nl/FILES/faculties/science/2007/i.polo.blanco/c5.pdf> [I strongly recommend your seeing that PDF to see its text, which I have only moderately adapted, and its illustrations, including colour photographs—JVP], http://www.montessori-holyrosary.org/maria_montessori.htm, and miscellaneous science fiction references. [Illustrations used are clip art and were not published with the original article. — Ed.]

PART 1

Introduction

Alicia Boole Stott (1860-1940) was an Irishwoman whose unusual childhood and vision allowed her to make considerable contributions to four-dimensional geometry. She had a rather special education, initially under the tutelage of her mother (her father George Boole, famous today for the Boolean logic in your computers, having died when she was only four).



Though she never studied mathematics, she taught herself, and through the use of mind-expanding toys from a family friend to “see” the fourth dimension. Using the almost magical powers of her mind, she created a new way to visualize four-dimensional powers of her mind, she created a new way to visualize four-dimensional polytopes (a word she coined). In particular, she built, both abstractly and as physical shadows of higher space, the three-dimensional sections of these four-dimensional objects, as a series of three-dimensional polyhedra, which she illustrated both by making drawings and cutting and gluing together three-dimensional models.

By the time that H. G. Wells wrote *The Time Machine* and had a discussion in the story of time as the fourth dimension, this idea was already old hat to the reading public. How did that happen?

This fanzine 2-part article is restricted to Euclidean, 4-dimensional geometry; Minkowskian 4-D geometry, as used by Einstein to describe space-time, is outside the scope of our discussion.

Childhood and Collaboration

Alicia Boole was born in Castle Road, near Cork (Ireland), on 8 June 1860. She was the third daughter of the today famous logician George Boole (1815-1864) and Mary Everest (1832-1916). George Boole died from something that caused a high fever at the age of 49. George's widow, Mary, and their five little girls were left with almost no money; so poor Mrs. Boole was forced to move to London, taking Alicia's four sisters with her. Alicia stayed at Cork with her grandmother Everest and an uncle of her mother. Cork was originally a monastic settlement founded by Saint Finbarr in the sixth century and obtained an urban character between 915 and 922 when Viking settlers founded a trading port. The word “Cork” derives from corcach, meaning “swamp”, and is the second largest city in the Republic of Ireland and the island of Ireland's third most populous city. At the age of eleven, Alicia Boole moved to London to live with her mother and sisters for seven years. Her stay in London was only interrupted by one visit in 1876 to Cork, where she worked in a children's hospital for a short time.

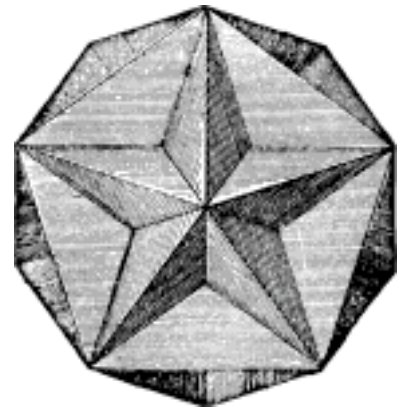
An extensive collection in the University of Groningen (The Netherlands) reveals to us, in a glimpse across years and dimensions, a collaboration between Boole Stott and the Groningen professor of geometry P. H.

Schoute that lasted more than twenty years and combined Schoute's analytical methods with Boole Stott's super-human ability to visualize the fourth dimension. The year after Schoute died in 1913, the University of Groningen awarded an honorary doctorate to Alicia Boole Stott. She led a life of domestic drudgery, isolated from the mathematical community, until about 1930, when she met the H. S. M. Coxeter, King of Geometers, with whom she collaborated until she died in 1940.

How 4-D Took over the World

Geometry as understood until the mid-19th century only dealt with structures of dimensions no greater than three. Mathematicians' obsession with the fourth dimension seems to have been triggered by the Habilitation lecture of Riemann, given on 10 June 1854. In this lecture, passed on by word of mouth because it was not published until later by Richard Dedekind after Riemann's death, Riemann dazzled the experts with his notion of an "n-dimensional manifold". The lecture had very few mathematical details but was presented with many ideas about what geometry *should* be. Given increasing use of analytical and algebraic methods, the step to a higher number of dimensions became necessary.

Various mathematicians generalized their pet theories to n dimensions. It was a kind of cultural singularity. Interest in higher dimensional spaces boomed. By 1885 several articles on the topic had appeared by mathematicians such as William Clifford and Arthur Cayley. The excitement spread from the ivory tower to the English-speaking mainstream after the popularizations of Howard Hinton, a high school math teacher in England. In his book *The Fourth Dimension*, Hinton introduced the term tesseract for an unfolded hypercube. As used today in imaginative literature such as *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, intelligent, prickly, cynical social misfit, Meg Murry searches for her scientist father. Meanwhile her little five-year-old brother, Charles Wallace, even more of a genius, befriends three old ladies who moved into the nearby "haunted house" – Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, and Mrs. Which, who turn out to have travelled from beyond our galaxy to confirm Mr. Murry's work on tesseracts, described metaphorically as folds in the space-time continuum. Meg and Charles Wallace "tesser" to the "dark planet" Camazotz to save Mr. Murry. The novel actually begins with the line "It was a dark and stormy night" (famously opening Edward George Bulwer-Lytton's 1830 novel *Paul Clifford*).



Yet truth was stranger than fiction. In the spring 2001, a barely faded paper roll containing drawings of polyhedra was found in the basement of the Mathematics, Astronomy, and Physics building at the Zernike Campus of the University of Groningen. The drawings, carefully made and beautifully coloured, at first were assumed to be merely a series of related Archimedean solids, first increasing and then decreasing in size. The roll was unsigned, but the drawings were then—Eureka!—recognized to be representations of three-dimensional models held at the Groningen University Museum and known to be the work of Alicia Boole Stott (1860-1940), daughter of the great logician George Boole (1815-1864).

As in an episode of *CSI-Hyperspace*, further investigation revealed that "Boole Stott had enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with the Groningen Professor of Geometry, Pieter Hendrik Schoute (1846-1913), for over twenty years and had been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Groningen in 1914. After Schoute's death in 1913, Boole Stott's drawings and models remained in the Groningen University Mathematics Department. The drawings appear to display three-dimensional sections of regular four-dimensional polytopes, obtained by intersecting the four-dimensional polytopes with a three-dimensional space. Looking at the complete set of drawings it is possible to see that one section develops into another by a further shift of the three-dimensional space".

Historical Fantasy Trilogy: George Washington, Washington Irving, and Washington Irving Stringham

We set Boole Stott's work into its historical context with an account of the early history of four-dimensional geometry, followed by a discussion of the work of Boole Stott's predecessors, notably Ludwig Schläfli (1814-1895) and Washington Irving Stringham (1847-1900), not to be confused with the

American author Washington Irving (1783-1859), best known for the time travel-like fantasy pretending to be a folk tale: “Rip Van Winkle”.

Here we have three successive names spread over time—George Washington, Washington Irving, and Washington Irving Stringham.



Washington Irving, youngest of eleven children, was born into a wealthy New York family in Tarrytown on 3 April 1709. He was named after American president George Washington. Young Washington Irving’s early education was sporadic, yet he developed an early love for reading and writing. Family money from an import company meant that—like Larry Niven (scion of the Doheny family who struck oil in Los Angeles) or Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron of Dunsany (24 July 1878-25 October 1957), the Anglo-Irish writer and dramatist, notable for his work, mostly fantasy, who published under the name Lord Dunsany eighty books and hundreds of published short stories, as well as successful plays, novels, and essays—Washington Irving at first needed never to worry about earning a living. After practicing law for a few years, he began to write for newspapers and magazines. This was enabled by his embarkation on a 17-year expedition through Europe in 1815. Through these journeys, he met the English writers who would have most influence on his literary output, especially Joseph Addison, Oliver Goldsmith, and Sir Walter Scott (the Big Name author in my wife’s family).

Washington Irving’s first book, *Knickerbocker’s History of New York* (1809), was arguably the first American humorous book also to qualify as literature. Though a great success, Irving continued as merely a part-time writer. In 1815 he moved to London to manage the British end of the family business and stayed for seventeen years. When the family business collapsed in 1817, he, for the first time, had to make a living. The immediate result was *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*, which contained his two most famous fantasy stories, “Rip van Winkle” and the tale (also pretending to be mere rural anecdotes) about Ichabod Crane encountering the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow. Along with Poe, whom he’d met, this establishes a line of American Gothic that continues to today’s Stephen King.

Washington Irving, who became friends with Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Charles Dickens, describes nature by personification to amplify the magic and mystery of the Catskill Mountains in a way more literary than folksy.

“When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapours about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.” Here he uses an imagistic trick to suggest that the Catskills (or “Kaatskills”) had mystical powers themselves of altering their forms. Allusions to “crown” and “majestic course” imply a supernatural or otherworldly quality to the peaks, as with the King and Queens of Faerie. Again showing that he was not merely transcribing folk tales, one can read this as a tongue-in-cheek battle between Enlightenment and Romantic ideals, and thus an early example of metafiction. Similarly his deal-with-Satan story, “The Devil and Tom Walker”, was a parody of that theological conceit.

Toys Stretch the Mind

But back to Alicia Boole Stott, who developed a mental capacity to understand the fourth dimension in a way that differed considerably from the analytic means of other geometers of the time, particularly Schoute. How did she come to develop such an understanding of four-dimensional geometry? Did her isolation from the mathematical community and her special education play a role in her discoveries? The record is quite clear and quite science fictional when we examine these questions and discuss the origins of Boole Stott’s interest in polytopes.

Boole Stott’s collaboration with Schoute raises several questions concerning their actual working practice. How often, when, and where did they meet? Why did her models and drawings end up in Groningen? With Schoute’s death, Boole Stott’s mathematical activity seems to have drawn to a halt; and it was only several years later that Boole Stott’s interest in polytopes was revived. In 1930 Boole Stott’s nephew, Geoffrey Ingham Taylor (1886-1975), introduced her to the young H.S.M. Coxeter (1907-2003), the two

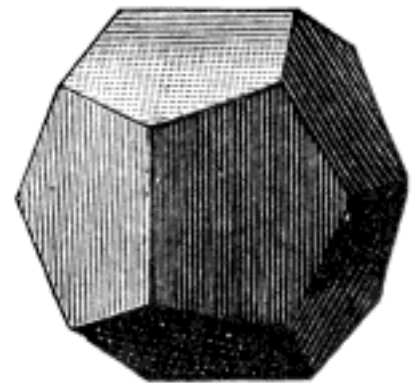
became friends, and Coxeter later made several references to her in his works. Harold Scott MacDonald Coxeter's great book, *Regular Polytopes* (1963), Macmillan Company, now in 3rd edition, 1973, Dover edition, ISBN 0-486-61480-8, by the way, was one of the masterpieces that I was given as child, and which led to me being both a science fiction author and a published expert in four dimensional geometry.

Boole Stott published her main results on polytopes in two papers of 1900 and 1910. These publications studied the three-dimensional sections of the regular polytopes, which are series of three-dimensional polyhedra. In order to illustrate these sections, Boole Stott made drawings and cardboard models of the sections of the two most complicated polytopes. Boole Stott's work was appreciated by some of her contemporaries but was almost forgotten later on.

Her predecessor Ludwig Schläfli was not just a visionary mathematician but also an expert linguist speaking many languages, including Sanskrit, and a fan of the Rigveda. His complete treatise—rejected by the Imperial Academy of Science—“is an attempt to found and to develop a new branch of analysis that would, as it were, be a geometry of n dimensions, containing the geometry of the plane and space as special cases for $n = 2, 3$. I call this the ‘theory of multiple continuity’ in the same sense in which one can call the geometry of space that of three-fold continuity” and was published posthumously in 1901; and only then did its importance become fully appreciated.

Hang on --what are polytopes?

The word polyhedron has slightly different meanings in geometry and algebraic geometry. In geometry, a polyhedron is simply a three-dimensional solid that consists of a collection of polygons, usually joined at their edges. The word derives from the Greek poly (many) plus the Indo-European hedron (seat). A polyhedron is the three-dimensional version of the more general polytope (in the geometric sense), which can be defined in arbitrary dimension. The plural of polyhedron is “polyhedra” (or sometimes “polyhedrons”).



Four-dimensional polytopes are the four-dimensional analogue of what in two dimensions are polygons, and in three dimensions are polyhedra. The 4-D structures were discovered by the Swiss mathematician L. Schläfli, who, between 1850 and 1852, had developed a theory of geometry in n -dimensions. His work, *Theorie der vielfachen Kontinuität*, contained the definition of the n -dimensional sphere and the introduction of the concept of four-dimensional polytopes, which he called polyschemes. He proved that there are exactly six regular polytopes in four dimensions and only three in any Euclidean dimensions higher than four. Unfortunately, because of its size, his work was not accepted for publication. When an editor is buying short stories, don't send in a trilogy. Some fragments of the magnum opus were sent by Schläfli to Cayley, who acted as an intermediary and published them in the *Quarterly Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*. The full manuscript was not published in full until after his death. Therefore mathematicians writing about the subject during the second half of the century were partly unaware of Schläfli's discoveries. This is similar to Gregor Mendel publishing his breakthrough work in genetics in an obscure Czech agricultural journal, unread until decades later, when its importance was recognized.

The first person to rediscover Schläfli's polytopes was W. I. Stringham. His paper much referred to became important since it provides an intuitive proof of the existence of the six regular polytopes and gives explicit constructions for each of them. It also includes one of the earliest known illustrations of four-dimensional figures. You may find illustrations in the Coxeter book and more easily in Mathworld.com, where you can rotate them with your mouse.

A Woman's Place is in 4-D

Since Alicia was a woman born around the middle of the nineteenth century, she had hardly any educational opportunity. In England at that time, colleges did not offer degrees to women; and women could only aspire to study some classical literature and other arts and hardly any science. Alicia's book knowledge of science came only from the first two books of Euclid. Having received so little formal knowledge of science, how is it remotely possible that Alicia developed such an understanding of four-

dimensional geometry? Did her special environment stimulate her? Yes! The family situation certainly gave her a unique education. She was only four years old when her father died; hence she could not have received much direct mathematical influence from him. But she certainly received a good tuition from her mother. Mary Everest Boole had informally studied with her husband, George Boole. When Boole died, Everest Boole moved to England and was offered a job at Queen's College in London as a librarian. Her passion however was teaching, and she was said to have greatly liked giving advice to the students.

Mary Everest Boole had innovative ideas about education, believing for instance that children should manipulate things in order to make the unconscious understanding of mathematical ideas grow, anticipating Maria Montessori (Born in Ancona, Italy, in 1870), who became the first woman medical doctor in Italy and who subsequently worked with children in psychiatric hospitals and with "mentally deficient" children in the State Orthophrenic Hospital. In 1906 she accepted the challenge to work with a group of sixty children of working parents from the San Lorenzo district of Rome and there founded her famous Casa dei Bambini (House of the Children). As with Mary Everest Boole, Dr. Montessori's life was "a beautiful balance of the spiritual and the scientific". And hers was a life of great achievement, the first woman in Italy to become a physician.



In 1907 Maria began working in a housing project in the poorest slums of Rome. Her "wild charges" were "fascinated with the puzzles and devices she developed. They spent long periods of time focused and attentive. With materials she designed, they quickly learned the concepts of math, history, and natural science. Children responded eagerly to her materials and the atmosphere of calm and order. Montessori loved telling about one morning when the teacher arrived late and the children crawled through a window to begin their work. Maria Montessori died in Noordwijk, Holland, in 1952; but her work continues. Today Dr. Montessori's methods and philosophy are implemented in some 7,000 private and approximately two hundred public Montessori schools in the United States. Montessori schools exist around the world, with the most recent developments in Russia,

Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Romania, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Tanzania."

I mention this because my mother earned a M.S. (thesis on Piaget and Montessori) at Bank Street College of Education (New York City); a New York State Teaching Certificate; and became a teacher, P.S.#29, Brooklyn, New York; active in international education through Nuffield Foundation (England), especially in innovative math and science curricula and materials. Likewise, I've taught math in middle school and high school, especially successfully with hands-on "manipulatives". I've had videos made of me getting rooms filled with children from "bad" neighbourhoods entranced by each building polyhedra from paper or cardboard, while I told them the inspirational story of Alicia Boole Stott. I've taught college and university students too and graduate art students. My son went to a Montessori preschool, loved the Cuisenaire Rods and other manipulatives, and earned his double B.S. in Math and Computer Science at age eighteen. But he's annoyed that I never taught him Alicia Boole Stott's way of seeing in 4-D when he was young enough to learn it.

Central to our story, Mary Everest Boole's belief that models should be used in order to visualize and understand geometrical objects is reflected in the following words: "There is another set of models, the use of which is to provide people who have left school with a means of learning the relation between three dimensions and four. The geometric education may begin as soon as the child's hand can grasp objects. Let him have, among his toys, the five regular solids and a cut cone."

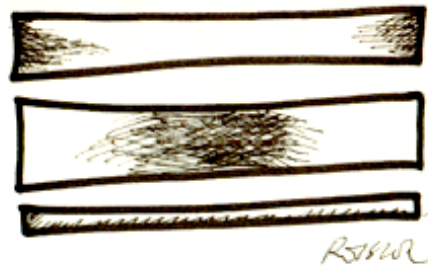
Most of Everest Boole's books were published many years after they were written. Michalowicz gives some explanation as to why Everest Boole's work remained unknown for so long. It is quite likely that Everest Boole had these ideas on the use of models by the time she educated her daughters, in particular her daughter Alicia. Apart from the education provided by her mother, Alicia was also strongly influenced by the amateur mathematician and popularizer, Howard Hinton, whom she met during her London period.

"Hinton was a school teacher and was very interested in four-dimensional geometry. Hinton was fascinated by the possibility of life in either two or four dimensions. He used hundreds of small colour cubes and assigned a Latin name to each of them. After having contemplated them for years, he claimed that he had learned to visualize the fourth dimension." We know that he stimulated Alicia's brain and those of her sisters during his visits to the family by assembling and disassembling small cubes and by trying to make them perceive the hypercube. He also made them memorize the arbitrary list of Latin names he had assigned to them. "This seems to have strongly inspired Alicia in her later work, and she soon started surprising Hinton with her ability to visualize the fourth dimension. Little more is known about their contact apart from Alicia's contribution to Hinton's book, *A New Era of Thought*. She wrote part of the preface, as well as some chapters and appendices on sections of some three-dimensional solids. Hinton is also remembered for his books *The Fourth Dimension* and *An Episode of Flatland*.

[To be continued next issue.]

-- Jonathan Vos Post

* * *



* Mailing Comments on FAPA #290

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #146): Like you, I use Facebook for communications purposes and do not play games or participate in any of the other activities they have. Most of the time, I do not confirm as friends people I do not recognize. When I don't recognize someone, I send a query. It's possible I might have forgot meeting them. Most of those I've queried reply with a good enough reason that I friend them. Sometimes it is someone who is a good friend of a friend. I have also friended friends of friends when there seems to be a good reason for doing so.

Michael W. Waite (Trial and Air, No. 19): Thank you for running photos of so many of our recently deceased friends.

I'm so sorry to hear about your health problems. I don't really understand why you and so many others are so lax about your health. When I met Mike, he hadn't seen a doctor in several years. I made sure he went in for a physical, and we discovered he had a thyroid problem. My two aunts were also neglectful of their health. One simply refused to go see a doctor even when she became obviously ill. We managed to get her to a doctor once, but eventually we tired of having to fight her to see a doctor.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #147): My first experience with a policeman was a pleasant one, fortunately. This happened in Japan. I was in kindergarten. I usually walked home with two friends. For some reason that I no longer remember, I was late going home one day. I knew the way home. But I started crying and found a policeman, who walked me all the way home. I've not had any negative experiences with policemen.

Bob Silverberg is an extremely easy person to get to know. He's very friendly and quite fannish.

Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #65): My take on *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is that it's fantasy because it's an alternate history, but not a scientificfictional one.

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu, vol. XII, No. 1): With your interest in autism, I hope you were able to catch *Temple Grandin*, which was recently aired on HBO. If not it is now out on DVD. I've been interested in autism at least since college (graduated in '71). There has not been a huge amount I've found on the subject but enough. In fact it turns out that one of the alumni from my college was autistic, and an article ran in

our alumni magazine a number of years ago. I don't recall when I heard about Temple Grandin, but I've read one of her books and have at least one other.

I hope your Antarctic trip was successful, and I look forward to your trip report. That's one place I have a lot of interest in visiting.

Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien): I'm happy to hear your hip replacement surgery went well. I hope you're totally recovered by now.

Peggy Rae Sapienza (Adventures on Earth No. 16): Though Forry didn't want a period after his middle initial, I don't think he ever gave up his middle name.

You should ask Moshe Feder about the \$3 theatre seats. I'm pretty sure he's mentioned something about this on Facebook.

I have a few kaleidoscopes, all fairly inexpensive. I have a couple of wand kaleidoscopes that were very inexpensive. I paid a bit more for a couple from Australia or New Zealand, I forget which.

Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning): I'd like to know more about the nutrition drink you mentioned.

Thank you for explicating raised ranch.

We would love to have you in eAPA. I'm rethinking my APA situation. I may whittle the numbers down to four, but I really hate to quit any of them.

Gordon Eklund (Sweet Jane #61): We have *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* as part of a fifty-film set; I have to agree it's pretty good, but I'm not sure I'd put it on a list of the hundred best. For one thing, *Our Hospitality*, IMHO, is better.

I've watched the 1932 *A Farewell to Arms* a couple of times. Here I might be inclined to agree with you on having it on a list of the best. For some reason a scene of Adolphe Menjou with the Matterhorn in the background, was etched indelibly on my mother's mind, though she couldn't remember what film the scene was from.

* * *



* 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

25 January 2010

Lloyd Penney was in deed wonderful hosting the Fanzine Lounge at Anticipation.

Your photos of a road runner reminds me of the only time I saw one alive after many cartoons; it ran along the road, but the car windows were closed and I didn't open mine in time to hear whether it called "beep beep".

((According to the Internet, "The roadrunner makes a series of 6 to 8, low, dovelike coos dropping in pitch, as well as a clattering sound by rolling mandibles together." --
<http://www.desertusa.com/mag98/sep/papr/road.html>)

#

Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD

23 February 2010

This will probably be mercifully short. Dead computers (yes, that is multiple) and still not really quite able to use the new iMac—lovely desk ornament for the time being. The new printer provided some interesting challenges and then the little ink thing (never had one of those before and had no idea they didn't last very long) ran out, so no ink for a while even if I get the computer functional. Things have gone way downhill from there.

I just went out and looked at the roof again (with another storm in the forecast for tomorrow), and it appears there is still almost three feet up there, but at least I can now see the upper quarter of the furnace chimney. The yard is still very deep in the white stuff, so I cannot see everything else that is having trouble, other than some of the split rails of the fence that I can see are obviously broken. The evergreens are only three years old and most are really bent over—no way to know if they will be able to recover.

So in the meantime—FM 38. For what is it worth, and it may not be appropriate for Mercury's problem, ask your vet about Covenia. It is an injectable third generation cephalosporin and labelled, I think, to last for two weeks. That would mean the problem with medicating two times a day is not a concern.

((If Mercury needs to be medicated again, I will ask the vet about injectable medication.))

Ah the mention of the Asterix books brings back memories of Geneva, Switzerland—seeing the comics on sale from street vendors. I never bought any, but they were eye-catching. It took me a minute when I saw the date of 1961, and my memories are a few years before, so I hope the memories are accurate!

I really, really love my refrigerator with the freezer on the bottom.

I selected a PPO after I checked their network and saw all my current physicians were on their list.

A throat-swelling moment to see your comments to Ben...

I used to do a lot of the pointillism such as Brad uses but never learned how to do it on "real" paper. I used tracing vellum.

#

Amy Harlib, New York, NY

24 February 2010

Enjoyed #39 - cool satellite cats illo and photos. I hope your new house glitches will all soon be fixed. Has Fluffy been to the Vet about his inappropriate urinary behaviour? Have you tried Feliway?

((I've tried Feliway. In fact I have two plug-in units in the areas where he tends to misbehave. I don't know if they're doing any good. I have a couple of theories about why he misbehaves. I haven't discussed it with the vet but may do so at his next check-up. The last time I called for a refill of his prednisone, I got prednisolone instead; and he seems to do better on that.))

Outings & Activities:
Lots of performing:

Yoga Cougar pounces with the help of Harlan Muir's accordion music at The Giddy Vaudeville Multitude's The Best [of] Love Show, Thurs. Feb. 25th at 9Pm at The House of Yes, 342 Maujer St., Brooklyn, NY.
<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=295253251105>,
<http://thegiddymultitudevaudeville.wordpress.com/>

Yoga Trek can be seen in "FLY! Matchbook Productions Benefit Show" on Sat. Feb. 27 at 8PM, at Soundance, 281 N. 7th St., Brooklyn, NY.
<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e2qjqtnh9497e4b4&oseq=>

Yoga Yenta with Harlan Muir's klezmer accordion accompaniment, will celebrate Purim at the We'll Never

Have Paris Variety Show 4 on Sunday Feb. 28th at 7PM, 107 Suffolk St., NYC.
<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=20111827297&ref=ts>

Yoga Yenta and Harlan Muir continue to celebrate Purim schlepping from one show to another, on Sun. Feb. 28th at The Crazy Kinky Purim Extravaganza. This event starts at 7:30 PM but My Yiddishe Yoga won't be appearing until about 9PM at The Delancy, 168 Delancy St., NYC.
http://www.broadwayworld.com/article/The_Delancey_Presents_CRAZY_KINKY_PURIM_EXTRAVA_GANZA_228_20100211

Yoga Odyssey and a solo song rendition of Donna Donna is part of an ensemble show, Flight 18, that opens on Thurs. Mar. 4th running until April 4th with performances Thursdays-Sundays with 2 shows nightly on Fridays and Saturdays @ Seaport at 210 Front Street (@ Beekman) in a gorgeous converted storefront in the heart of the South Street Seaport. For details: <http://www.flight18.net/>

My 8th Yoga Trek opener for the Start Trekin' Comedy Improv Group is on Sat. Mar. 6th at 7:30PM at The Tank Theater, 354 West 45th St., NYC. (I'm excused from Flight 18 for this show). www.start-trekin.com, <http://www.thetanknyc.org/comedy>

I have a new video on my website of most of an Urban Yoga performance I did at an event called The Cursed Circus last Sept. www.idanz.net/aharlib

I've been so busy haven't seen that much but I did love the new historical drama film about Charles Darwin, *Creation*; and I adored Terry Gilliam's new fantasy feature, *The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus*, which definitely has its Pythonesque moments, and is a must-see for genre and Gilliam fans. I'm still trying to fit *Avatar* into my schedule!

((We haven't been to the cinema since we moved.))

#

Brad Foster, Irving, TX

4 March 2010

Striking cover this issue from Lee. Not sure it was the intent; but my first impression on seeing it was a group of cats trying to hang onto a spinning satellite, the bare antennas showing where a couple of them have already been slung off. Or maybe there is some other explanation?

Your "Local Outings" were impressive for the variety of things you've found to enjoy out there in the desert. The only slightly confusing line was with the Public Art Tour, where you said it "...may be the last one". By that did you mean it may be the last time YOU would be signing up for one, or that they were now discontinuing the program? Be a shame if it is the second just as you got there.

((We were told that the tour was not cost-effective.))

Enjoyed Amy's two musings. I liked the *Atlantis* movie as well, good old fashioned high adventure stuff. I think it might have been steam punk before steam punk was cool. (Or cog punk, or whatever they are calling it now.) Also will have to add Steve Ayletts name to the ever-growing list of authors to keep an eye out for.)

Re your response to Rodney Leighton about a garage being located at the front of the house, saying "that's where it is in most houses", I think that is a more modern development and often in neighbourhoods where there is no alleyway behind the houses. Where that is available in the design, the garages are usually placed behind the house. But for a lot of developers, putting in those alleys uses up land they could be selling as part of the homeowners' plots, so



they put the garages and driveways to the front.

Oh, and a sad update on our sweet Duffy kitty. We were able to get treatments that took care of her blood pressure problems and actually brought most of her vision back. But, that was just one of a series of bad things happening to the old gal, and we finally had to say goodbye about a month ago. I've had a lot of cats all my life and loved them all; but this gray gal was special, my little girl, and her passing hurt a bit more than any others. But, would rather have had that sadness than not, as it meant I did have her around for 18 years.

#

Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA

6 March 2010

I'm sorry to hear Mike was so sick in November and glad that he got better. I had a "flu-like" illness in October that forced me to take several days off work; I suspect it was H1N1, but it wasn't bad enough to bother seeing a doctor, although it was January by the time I completely got rid of the cough. I wondered if my previous doctor might have been right when every time I went in sick with the flu, he gave me antibiotics and I mildly protested, "Isn't flu a virus?" and he would grunt at me that it was for opportunistic bacterial infection in my lungs, so I was intimidated and obeyed. The first two times it was Amoxicillin, to which I turned out to be allergic; I knew I was allergic to penicillin but didn't know that Amoxicillin is the same thing.

((Amoxicillin isn't the same as Penicillin, but it's in the same family of drugs. You can tell by the -cillin suffix. You should always let your doctor know what you're allergic to. Drug allergies can be very serious, sometimes fatal.))

Which reminds me how annoyed I am when media reports on overuse of antibiotics say patients demand that doctors give them antibiotics for viral infections and never put *any* blame on the physicians. Which reminds me of hospital-acquired infections. I recently read that worse than MRSA are infections by gram-negative bacteria, against which there is only one antibiotic, and it causes kidney damage; and if the bacteria are resistant, then there's nothing but to keep the patient hydrated and the fever down and hope their immune system does the job.

I'm sorry to hear of leaky skylights, leaky Fluffy, and delaminating floors in your new house but was reminded by the latter that the guns that the Lensmen shot at the bad guys were Delameters; perhaps they delaminated the bad guys?

I don't regard finding a scorpion in the kitchen as *good* news. I hope the coyotes, bobcats, and owls stay out of the kitchen.

((We've since had two small scorpions in the master bathroom.))

Anyway I hope all the problems discovered on the shakedown cruise of your house are quickly fixed.

Laurraine commented to Robert Michael Sabella that "each Facebook member can decide how much of the information he posts is available to the public". I keep hearing on the news that a design flaw in Facebook is when a user uses a Facebook app, all his private information is available to that app, which can repeat it to whomever it pleases.

((When a Facebook member is about to use an app, he gets a warning to that effect.))

Rodney Leighton asked why the garage in front; and Laurraine replied, "That where it is in most houses". I add: because the front is closer to the street (and everyone can supply the premise that the car should go from street to garage back to street without going through the house). My late grandmother lived in Tottenville on Staten Island in a house that was originally built during the Civil War. When they remodelled, they found that the walls they were moving had been insulated with newspapers reporting Civil War battles. The tiny garage had originally been a tiny stable, and my father as a child found a tiny horseshoe when they were paving the driveway. My point is that the garage was in the backmost right corner of the lot, so the driveway consumed the entire length of the right edge of the lot. If the garage had

been further to the front, the space behind it could have been used for more back yard. I assume that is the reason some houses have the visually ugly feature of having their garage so far front that it opens onto the sidewalk.

Lloyd Penney asked why our cats have so many medical problems. "After a certain age, it's as if cats simply break down." The same can be said of humans. He went on to wish for a magic potion to keep them kittenish into their twenties. Of course kittens are utterly adorable and irresistibly cute, and lately I've been yearning for another kitten. But I distinctly recall how *relieved* I felt as each of my kittens grew up. All that endless energy spent turning over wastebaskets, unrolling toilet paper all over the bathroom, climbing up the curtains leaving big claw marks, playing Pussycat Cup rugby at 2 am when both I and the downstairs neighbours are trying to sleep.

There's a photo of quail. I recognize the silly plumes on their heads. I saw California golden quail in real life once on a vacant lot in the mountainous part of Pacific Palisades.

((I, too, once saw the California golden quail, actually a whole family of them—strutting across a path at Huntington Gardens.))

#

Ed Meskys, Moultonboro, NH

8 March 2010

The comments about refrigerators with the freezer compartment under the refrigerator part being "upside-down" reminds me of when we were shopping for a new refrigerator. We felt we would prefer to have the freezer on the bottom because we go to the refrigerator part far more often than to the freezer part. We found that these were far more expensive than the usual with the freezer on top. We could not



figure out why this was true we thought it would be more efficient. After all, warmer air rises above colder air. The salesman could not give any explanation.

Enjoyed the review of the Disney *Atlantis*. I had not even heard of its existence. I wonder what kind of notice the movie had received on release. I listen regularly to "Morning Edition" on NPR and they usually review movies and are usually sympathetic to SF/fantasy movies. However the reviewer really slammed the latest Disney, *Alice in Wonderland*. Apparently in this film Alice returns to Wonderland as a teenager. I have only seen one other mention of Alice

where the reviewer did like it but did not go into details. Amy said the Atlanteans were black. These were drawn characters, so I wonder...did they have other characteristics of racially black people or were they white people with black makeup?

((It might be more correct to say they were dark-complected rather than black.))

Anyway, Amy's review did make the movie sound interesting.

#

Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON

10 March 2010

You don't hear much about H1N1 any more. I don't think it was the pandemic it was advertised to be. There were many opportunities here to get my regular flu and H1N1 flu shots, but I've never needed my

flu shots, and my doctor agrees. The latest reference I saw to this flu was in the Bizarro strip in yesterday's paper...two pigs driving a car and one says to the other, "The cops don't pull me over ever since I got my vanity plates." The vanity plate says H1N1...

((I think one reason H1N1 did not turn into a pandemic was the development and use of the vaccine. There's a series of strips on Doc Rat, which originates in Australia, where I believe H1N1 occurred before it came here.))

That snowy picture of the observatory reminds me of chilly nights spent in a small observatory in a corner of a farmer's field in the Kitchener area in south-western Ontario. The views were crystal clear that night, but boy it was cold, and we were in winter wear too. Great photos all through the issue, too. The local wildlife is truly wild, in comparison to what we have in Toronto. We do have coyotes here though, and they make the news when they attack and/or carry off a household pet.

FAPA comments...You can definitely restrict the amount of information that goes out on Facebook.

Yvonne and I are still at our respective assignments, but they are both limited-term contracts, so the job hunt will resume shortly. We're both quite experienced at it by now, so we are both fairly confident that we'll find something soon. There is also the possibility that I may be able to return to the Law Society in the fall; the job I do is seasonal and annual.

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Mary Manchester, Rochester, NY

23 March 2010

All thanks for *FM* 39. The owl photo is wonderful! No photo of the *gasp* scorpion? Just as well.

Hmm. Canada Post *does* charge for forwarding mail, at least in Debbie-in-London's experience. ... Maybe C. P. policies aren't countrywide?

I hope the settling-in problems are clearing up and the cats are doing well and being good.

#

Amy Harlib, New York, NY

15 April 2010

Here is some news I forgot to add to the previous message. Please include this too.

Yoga Odyssey was part of an ensemble show, Flight 18, that opened on Thurs. Mar. 4th until April 4th with performances Thursdays-Sundays with 2 shows nightly on Fridays and Saturdays @ Seaport at 210 Front Street (@ Beekman) in a gorgeous converted storefront in the heart of the South Street Seaport. For details: <http://www.flight18.net/>. For coverage of Flight 18 in the Tribeca *Trib*: http://www.tribecatrib.com/news/2010/april/566_flight-18-lifts-off.html. For Flight 18 on NY 1: http://www.ny1.com/1-all-boroughs-news-content/ny1_living/115896/space-themed-performance-keeps-downtown-s-soul-at-zero-g?ap=1&Flash. Flight 18 was a really geeky, SFnal show, just about the best thing that ever happened to me. My life feels bereft and empty without it.

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

I hope to have a trip report in my next issue. We have a planned trip to LA for Westercon, which will be in Pasadena. We will have a few extra days there for other activities.

Laurraïne
18 April 2010