

# Purrsonal Mewsings #52







#52

December 2015

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## \* Editorial / Introduction

After my experiment in splitting my zine into two different publications, I have decided to take a step back sort of sideways. I've decided to keep the *Purrsonal Mewsings* title, mostly because two friends have taken the time and trouble to come up with nice title graphics for me. I'm also making a few changes in the contents. I've decided not to continue with the one-author columns. I will include Amy's last review among the other reviews. I'm hoping to bring the zine to print quarterly, but I haven't been doing too well on that front, so we shall see.

\* \* \*

## \* Local Outings

**Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike:** This play was inspired by the works of Anton Chekhov. The playwright, Christopher Durang, created this Chekhovian play using bits and pieces from Chekhov's works; but the play is not based on Chekhov's work. The characters in the play relate to each other in ways that are reminiscent of the characters in the works of Chekhov. It's about relationships, and there are subtle changes that happen in some of those relationships in the course of the play.

#

**Wait until Dark:** This is a new version of the play that takes place shortly after WWII. This lends it some aspects of the noir genre. I need to see the movie version again to make a comparison, but I haven't had time to watch it again.

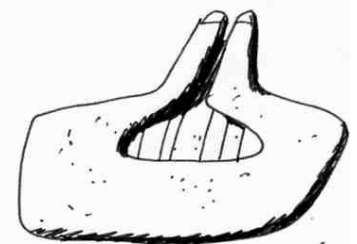
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**The Man from U. N. C. L. E.:** We saw this at the cinema in early September. We had both enjoyed the old TV series. I found the movie entertaining enough, but Mike was disappointed at the updating of the plot. He would have preferred a period piece. In either case I don't expect sequels.

#

**Hershey Felder As Irving Berlin:** This one man show is probably the best thing we've seen at the Arizona Theatre Company. Felder apparently travels the country with this show. It's similar to shows I've seen where John Astin plays Edgar Allan Poe or Hal Holbrook plays Mark Twain. With Irving Berlin there's the addition of music, lots of it. Felder plays the piano and sings many of Berlin's songs. We were invited to sing along eventually. The audience must have been made up of Berlin aficionados with good voices. It was amazing. I hadn't realized I knew and liked so much of Berlin's output. As a result I now own two music books of his songs. If this show comes anywhere near you and you like Irving Berlin, I recommend you get tickets.

#



**Steve Jobs:** We saw this at the cinema in mid-October when it opened. We've been Apple users for years. Mike has never owned any other kind of computer, and I switched shortly after we met. I really liked the old dot prompt PCs. However if GUI is the going thing, I prefer to use the original and not the copy. Yes, I know Xerox was the real original; but they didn't know what to do with it. We both enjoyed the movie. Mike has read all the books about him and has friends who worked for him, so he could tell me what was made up for the movie. I figured the movie might not stick around very long, being somewhat of a special interest thing; and I was right.

#

**The Martian:** We both read Andy Weir's book and love it. I heard about the movie about the time I read the book and was eager to see it. We weren't disappointed. Aside from the fact that they left out a

few scenes, there was at least one continuity error, and they ignored Martian gravity, it was a great movie; and I plan to nominate it for the Hugo.

#

**Disgraced:** This is a play by Ayad Akhtar, who is an American born to Pakistani immigrants. It all takes place in one room in a New York City apartment. It's about a mixed couple, a white American and an American born to Pakistani immigrants. They interact with a nephew and another mixed couple, white and black. Everything seems to be going great for everyone, but then differences start rearing their ugly heads. At the end the first couple has separated. It was very well acted, but this play is not for anyone put off by psychological studies.

#

**Who Dunit or They Haven't a Clue:** This melodrama was performed at the Great American Playhouse in Oro Valley, which unfortunately closed down shortly after this performance due to a disagreement with the property owners. The property recently underwent a change in ownership. The play is loosely based on the game of Clue. It's a comedy, but we didn't think it was as good as the play we saw there last year.

#

**Spectre:** This is the latest James Bond outing with Daniel Craig in the lead role. He's still good. The movie suffered from too much similarity to the plot of the latest *Mission: Impossible* film and the previous Bond film, *Skyfall*. Otherwise it was fairly entertaining.

#

**Ancient Landscapes of the American Southwest:** This was a very interesting talk given at the Oro Valley Public Library by geologist Wayne Ranney, who co-authored a book on the same subject. Through his lecture, we travel back in time to the formation of the first continents on Earth and see how things changed over the millennia. He used drawings created by another researcher. To make things interesting, all the maps had Oro Valley marked. Sometimes it was under water. Other times, it was at a higher elevation than today. Although focussed on this area of the Earth, many of the illustrations covered the entire planet.

#

**Snapshots:** This is a musical about a married couple. It starts with the wife planning to leave the husband, but he returns home early and catches her in the act of preparing to walk out on him. She pretends she was looking through old photos. As they both start looking through them, we see them portrayed by younger versions of themselves. It was a fun show.

#

**Star Wars: the Force Awakens: \* Spoiler Alert\*** This is like a revamping of the original Star Wars movie with the characters changed out. The main points in the plot mirror the original. On the other hand, time has progressed; and most of the characters are different or have changed. It seemed much more emotional than the original movie, but this might just be me. Some of the original characters returned with their baggage. I remember the original as just a fun movie. I don't remember becoming emotional until the third film. IIRC. It didn't have the same impact on me as the original, but this could be because I'm older now. It's still a great movie. Although I've only seen it once, I feel ready to watch it again.

\* \* \*

## \* Bubonicon Trip (28 July-4 August 2014)

We left for Albuquerque not long after 08:00 on 28 July and reached the Albuquerque Marriott about 16:00. The first thing I realized after getting to our room



was that my red carryon with all my toiletries and vitamin pills was missing; it had been left at home. There was a Target nearby, visible from our room, that we went to for basic supplies such as a toothbrush.

Shortly after our shopping trip, we ate in the hotel restaurant. It's serviced from the bar; and our server, Benny, was very nice and friendly. We had a fairly expensive dinner, especially since I had two martinis.

I got up to my alarm on Tuesday and went down to breakfast on my own.

After breakfast we left the hotel for the Sandia Peak Tramway. As we approached the mountain, we could see it was hidden in clouds; so we decided to go to the zoo instead. The admission to the zoo included a train ride to the aquarium. There was about an hour before the first train, so we slowly made our way through the exhibits and caught the train. It takes a half hour to ride to the aquarium, partly because it has to stop halfway through to let the other train through. The aquarium is relatively small but interesting.

There was a restaurant right next to it with aquarium exhibits to look at while we ate. We decided to have lunch even though I wasn't really hungry yet. After we ordered, I started feeling hungry.

After lunch we took the train back to the zoo. We spent a couple more hours at the zoo. We both made purchases, I at the gift shop by the aquarium and Mike at the zoo. We started heading toward Sandia Peak, but it looked to be still in the clouds, so we returned to the hotel again. Minutes after returning to our room, there was a thunder shower.



Mike refused to go down for dinner, so I went on my own.

Wednesday I got up to my alarm set for 06:30. What a difference a day makes. The sky was mostly clear this morning.

I went down to breakfast on my own again.

After breakfast we headed to the Sandia Peak Tramway. We caught a tram that left about 09:45. The ride takes about fifteen minutes. We stayed up at the top about an hour (see photo on previous page of tram with Albuquerque in the background). It was still early, so we went to the botanical gardens afterward. We were there for a couple of hours.

Before leaving the Biopark, we had a bite to eat, a sort of mini lunch. Mostly I was just thirsty and managed to drink a whole small bottle of water.

When we returned to the hotel, our room hadn't been cleaned. The maid came after I'd lain down for nap, and we had her clean the bathroom. I slept almost two hours.

After Mike watched his news, we went down to dinner. Ivan was our waiter tonight. I had chicken fajita. The lemon drop martini I had was okay.

I let myself sleep in on Thursday and woke up at about 07:15. As usual I went down to breakfast on my own. I had omelette again.

After breakfast we left for Santa Fe. Our first stop was the Botanical Gardens of Santa Fe at Museum Hill. It's only a couple of acres. Their specialty is origami sculpture. Then we drove into town and parked. We walked to the Plaza to look for the walking tour people and only chanced to find them.

First we ate a small lunch at the French Pastry Shop.

After lunch we took a walking tour of the city that covered much of the history of the city and environs. The tour took about two and a half hours and included admission to the Loretto Chapel, which was where the tour ended. Then we went back to see the interior of the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. I barely had time to photograph the interior before evening services began. We went back to the Palace of the Governor where native Americans sold jewellery. I bought a nice bracelet for my sister. We headed back to where we'd parked our car and drove north from Santa Fe to our meeting point with one of Mike's astronomy contacts. As we neared the place where we were to meet, the skies opened up with heavy rain, small hail, lots of lightning, and wind. A trickle of a river turned into a churning flood. Mike's friends met us in pouring down rain, and we followed their car to the restaurant.

Dinner was at Rancho de Comache. Clay and Sam Davis treated us. I had a shrimp enchilada dish and a Midori margarita. We were at the restaurant for a couple of hours having a wonderful conversation.

It was still raining lightly when we left. It took us about ninety minutes to get back to Albuquerque. I was dead tired and slept a little in the car.

I awoke on my own about 07:15 on Friday. The day before I discovered three bug bites, probably acquired at the botanical gardens. This morning I discovered I actually had five. The two on my hand looked like typical mosquito bites, but the three on my arms were much larger.

I had the usual solo breakfast.

I had a snack lunch spread out over the afternoon.

About 15:15 we descended to the convention on the first floor. We quickly got registered. We had to wait a few minutes before the "flea market" opened. Then we made a circuit around the room. David Lee Summers was the only person we know that we saw. We returned to the room to regroup. I left the room about 17:30 and checked out the con suite. Then I went to the convention floor and went to Opening Ceremonies. Mike joined me and brought down my jacket as I'd requested by iMessage. We stayed in the room for Dr. Courtney Willis's lecture on "Calculating in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century", which was basically a talk about slide rules (see photo right).



We returned to the room briefly to drop stuff off. Then we went back down for dinner. The Willises were at a table nearby. When Courtney joined the table, I went to tell him how much I'd enjoyed his talk. I had a peach cocktail and salmon.

Afterward I felt too tired to go looking for parties, so we both stayed in our room.

I used my alarm on Saturday to get up at 08:00.

This morning there was actually a line for breakfast. I was running late and sat down with a woman from a Washington, DC, area tour group.

I attended a talk by Connie Willis about her writing process. We walked into the room at the same time. Afterward I toured the art show. Then I returned to our room for a bit.

After a short rest in the room during which I touched base with Facebook and read e-mail, I went down to lunch. I had the Asian chicken salad.

I had some time in the room before I left. In fact I left the room too early, so I dropped into the flea market and talked to David and his wife, Kumie. Then I went to a reading by Walter Jon Williams; he read a new Wild Card story but unfortunately did not have time to finish. After that I went to a panel moderated by Connie Willis about sf worlds we might want to visit; Mike was also there. This was followed by a reading by John Hemry/Jack Campbell.

I returned to the room to fetch Mike for dinner. I had a cheese enchilada dish and a strawberry flavoured mojito.

There was time to return to the room before the masquerade, which started late, in any case. There were only thirteen entries. At half time the Green Slime Awards were given out for the worst TV and movie sf and a special award for a really bad book. This



was followed by the masquerade awards. I returned to the room after that to shed my video camera and its bag. I decided to check out the parties. I was told the party floor was the third floor, but I only found two parties there. I returned to the con suite and had some good conversations with Walter Jon Williams, S. M. and Jan Stirling, Victor Milán, and some fans. I also verified my earlier sighting of another member of the Oro Valley sf book club. I returned to the room a little after 23:00.

Sunday morning I got up to my alarm.

I was down for breakfast a bit earlier than the previous day, and things were less hectic. There were a couple of small mishaps however. The Tabasco sauce bottle lacked the plastic under cap, and I ended up with way too much in my tomato juice. And I believe the waitress brought me regular coffee instead of decaf; there's a distinct difference in taste. Decaf tastes pretty dreadful compared to real coffee. So why do I drink it? Caffeine tends to make me sleepy, so I don't like to drink it in the morning.

Mike met me in the room scheduled for a reading by David Lee Summers. David impressed me with readings from and descriptions of two of his series, so I had Mike pick up the books. Then we attended an interview of Cherie Priest and John Hemry/Jack Campbell that was fashioned after "Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me". After that we attended a Connie Willis reading that morphed into a Q and A. Mike went back up to the room. I went to a Victor Milán reading. He was late but read a selection from a short story that takes place in Mexico.

I ran up to the room afterward to regroup and put on additional clothes, since I'd been cold all morning. I also had a bit of a snack lunch.

Then I went to a panel about personifying objects. Mike joined me for the closing ceremonies.

We had a final dinner in the hotel. I had a citrus flavoured margarita and baby back ribs. I was really full at the end.

I had to digest for a while before heading up to the Dead Dog party. I spoke to a few fans. The big names didn't appear until it was nearly time for me to head back to my room; they'd been out to dinner. Mike was still up, so I read a bit before going to sleep.

I got up early on Monday at 05:00 using my alarm. I got down too early for breakfast. I thought they began at 06:00, but it turned to be 06:30. They were also late opening, so I waited over ten minutes. There's an Air National Guard conference that's starting. I chatted briefly with a soldier at the table next to mine.

We were on the road by 8:00. We stopped for gas before we left Albuquerque.

Lunch was snack food on hand.

A bit further on, we stopped at a Shell station near Wilcox. We arrived early at Royale Kennel and waited until they opened and then picked up the cats. The cats did not look very happy at all. We'd had to leave them there, because our vet wasn't going to be around the whole time we were away.

\* \* \*

## **\* Loscon Trip (24 Nov-1 Dec 2014)**

I wanted to attend the 2014 Loscon, because the guest of honour was J. Michael Straczynski, whom I've liked since *Babylon 5*. Our trip started on Monday, 24

November. We left home about 08:45 and reached the LAX Marriott about 16:00.

We had dinner in the hotel.

At night I touched base with Facebook and read e-mail. I also finished reading the last book of three for Loscon. John Hertz frequently presents discussions on three classics.

I used my alarm to get up at 05:30 on Tuesday to get to an early breakfast meeting in Torrance. We met Melba Kuge, with whom I used to work at the Polk Company in Long Beach, and her husband at Mimi's Cafe.

Then we had a meeting with our financial advisor at 09:30. I learned a lot. He talked to us about donating stock to charities and getting an annuity; I never really understood that before. We had some time to kill before our lunch appointment, so we did some shopping. First I picked up snack bars for the trip and wine for our dinner with a friend later that day. Then we went to the Honda dealership and Mike test drove a Honda Civic Hybrid. We were both pretty pleased with the experience.

We met the Blatts and Lucile Beachler, who used to be our neighbours in Rolling Hills Estates, at the Red Onion in Rolling Hills at 13:30. We were there so long that we didn't really have time to return to the hotel before dinner with another friend.

We drove directly to Jill Kossow's in West LA afterwards. Mike had a business relationship with her when he worked at TRW and she worked for Apple. We arrived over an hour early, but Jill was okay with that. She offered us champagne to drink while she finished cooking. Don Carlile arrived on time of course; Mike met Don at TRW.

Dinner was very nice with turkey and apple pie. We had the Riesling I had bought with the dinner. It was quite good. I managed fine even though I'd had two glasses of champagne already.

I got up about 08:30 on Wednesday and had breakfast in the hotel.

Afterwards we drove to Marina del Rey to meet Rita Prince Winston and Tim Merrigan, both science fiction friends, at the Cheesecake Factory. We had an enjoyable lunch and talked for a long time afterward.

We met Mary Kato, with whom I used to work at Hughes Aircraft, for dinner at the Houston's in Manhattan Beach. We were having such a good time that we were there until closing time.

I woke up Thursday morning about 06:30 and had the hotel breakfast buffet.

We left for Thanksgiving dinner at the Stern house about 12:45. I've known Tom and Marina longer than I can remember. Tom hadn't got the word about people arriving early, so he wasn't yet dressed. We talked with Marina for a while until Alan Frisbie and Sharon Johnson (more friends) arrived. Marina and Tom's new dog is a dachshund mix and very jumpy. I got a lot of dog saliva all over my jeans.

Thanksgiving dinner was all you could ask for. Afterward we adjourned to the living room and chatted until I decided we'd better leave. Mike had caught a chill, and I was driving that day.

I got up with my alarm at 07:00 on Friday and had breakfast in the hotel. I saw Larry and Fuzzy Niven as I was finishing up and talked with them for a while before returning to my room until con registration was expected to open.

I went down to the con floor about 10:00 and got registered. The pocket programmes were not ready, and the programme book didn't have much information. I had a look at the dealers room and the art show before they were officially open; I never did get back to the art show. At 11:00 we both went to the Opening Ceremonies, which turned out to be just the chair of the convention, Scott Beckstead, talking. I stayed in the room for "Media SF: The Post-Plot Era Begins" with panellists J. Michael Straczynski, Craig Miller, Carol Ann Alvez, Genevieve Dazzo, Bill Warren, and Jeremy Bloom. Lately a lot of movies seem to be nothing but special effects and explosions. On the other hand, there seems to be a rebirth of real story telling on TV.

In the meantime Mike attended two panels. One was "Has NASA Outlived Its Usefulness?" with panellists Arthur Bozlee, Bridget Landry, Gregory Benford, Suzi Casement, and Will Morton. The panellists talked about NASA, Congress, and private sector work. Risks and costs were taken into consideration. Successful missions were noted, and XCOR activities were also discussed.

Then he attended "Private Spaceflight: Is It Safe?" with Arthur Bozlee, Julie Sczesny, David Rosing, and Chris Butler. Mostly it was a discussion of XCOR activities. Risks and costs and available technologies were taken into consideration.

I had time for lunch.

At 14:30 Mike and I went to the first of three book discussions by John Hertz. This one was about Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*. He brought out a lot of things that hadn't occurred to me during my recent re-reading. It was a re-reading, but so much time had passed between it and the first that it was like a first reading. As John mentioned the book bears many repeated readings in order to get all the meaning out. He was late getting to the discussion, and a few people started to leave. Milt Stevens stepped in to stem the flow and did a creditable job until John's arrival (see photo right).



This was followed by Regency dancing at 16:00. I was there for an hour without a chance to dance. This is typical. It got started late, and John spent a lengthy time teaching. The teaching time was necessary, as most of the people there had no previous experience.

In the meantime Mike attended "Why No Dramatic Nebula Since 2009?" with panellists J. Michael Straczynski, John DeChancie, David Gerrold, Gary Westfahl, and Larry Niven. It was noted that Harlan Ellison did not want the award. Writing, audiences, and markets were discussed.

I left the dance to go to "Writing Enduring Science Fiction: Then and Now". The panel included Craig Miller and Joe Straczynski.

I met up with Mike for dinner at the hotel.

Afterwards we caught the tail end of the ice cream social. Then we proceeded to find seats for the Lux Reunion Theater. This featured selections from past presentations some times recreated by the actors and sometimes shown on video. It was quite late by the time this ended. I went up to the party floor for a time. I managed to hit Elst Weinstein's wine and cheese party and also found the Sime~Gen party just as I was ready to give up for the night.

I used my alarm to get up at 07:00 on Saturday and had breakfast in the hotel. I saw Michael Siladi and Alison Stern there as I was leaving and spoke with them for a while.

My first programme item of the day was an interview of the Crosbys, who were the fan guests of honour. It was very interesting, and I learned a lot about them. Then I went to "*Babylon 5 Twenty Years Later*" with panellists J. Michael Straczynski, Daryl Frazetti, Father John R. Blaker, Phil Osborn, and E. J. De La Pena. There was a lot of discussion about the hint of a return of good story-telling to TV.

Meanwhile Mike attended a discussion of Smith's *Skylark Three*. Similarities and differences to the other books in the series and to other books by the same author were noted.

At 13:00 I went to the Krypton Radio presentation; they rehearsed and taped a portion of a radio show. I videotaped the final round.

At the same time, Mike attended "How the Soviets Lost the Moon Race" with speaker Arthur Bozlee. He showed slides of Soviet space projects, including successes and failures.

At 14:30 J. Michael Straczynski took questions from the audience.

We had an early dinner at Champions, as Latitude 33 was closed.

I returned to the room for a while to catch up with things. My diary seemed to have reverted to a version from over a week ago! There was nothing different on my computer at home, so all the entries starting with the end of the day 23 November have been reconstructed from memory using my Dailylog Excel spreadsheet to help. I went down to wait for the masquerade about the time the doors were scheduled to open. They opened quite late, and Mike found me in line.

Mike went to "XCOR: Countdown to First Flight", another talk given by Arthur Bozlee. He updated the audience on XCOR's activities and vehicle.

The masquerade started over a half hour late and was very short. The half time show was a great radio drama done by the Crosbys and company. Afterward I partied and hit all but one before retiring. I had substantial conversations with Jace Foss and Mike Wilmoth.

Sunday I got up to my alarm at 07:00 and went down for a hotel breakfast about 08:30.

Our first panel today was a discussion of *Moonraker* by Ian Fleming led by John Hertz. While not as interesting as the one for *The Stars My Destination*, it went well.

Then I attended a panel titled "Sex, Politics, and Religion in Science Fiction, or, Whatever Happened to New Wave SF?" with JMS and three others.

At the same time, Mike attended "Tale of Two Moons—Titan and Enceladus", given by Trina Ray. She updated the audience on the Cassini Saturn mission, concentrating on the two moons.

I had time for lunch and ate at Champions, which seemed to be quite crowded. I

offered to share a table with another woman who was alone, and we had a very interesting conversation. Her name is Maria Alexander, and she is an author mainly of dark fantasy. We had a lot in common, such as our love of cats. We've since become friends on Facebook.

Then it was time (14:30) for JMS's presentation about a Netflix series called *Sense8*. It was due out in spring 2015. The DVD version won't come out for another year or two after that. We don't have Netflix; it wouldn't make sense with our limited Internet service. However, I did get to see it, thanks to the generosity of a friend in the Oro Valley Science Fiction Book Club. It's a great series, and I recommend it to all but the very squeamish. It has been renewed for a second season.

In the meantime Mike went to "Celebrating 10 Years at Saturn" with panellists Will Morton, Trina L. Ray, N. Talbot Brady, Bridget M. Landry, and Scott Eddington. It was another update on the Cassini Saturn mission.

After that was closing ceremonies, which was really the gripe session. It went for over an hour, but I left early to get ready for dinner.

We met the Dennises, Jane and Scott, at Il Fornaio on Rosecrans. We had a very enjoyable meal with great conversation. On the way back to the hotel, we topped off the gas tank.

After we returned to our room, I went up to the dead dog and stayed far too long in conversations that included topics ranging from the 2017 worldcon bids to baseball.

I got up with my alarm Monday at 05:00 and got to breakfast just as the restaurant was opening. Ulla, the wonderfully friendly waitress, and I talked quite a bit since there weren't many people eating yet. She owns four cats and a horse.

Shortly after we left the hotel, I took a long nap. Then I touched base with Facebook and read a bunch of e-mail. About noon we stopped in Blythe to use the facilities. Mike met a woman with a Prius V (station wagon), so we looked at that. There were some birds in the parking lot that I identified as rusty blackbirds.

Shortly after we crossed the border, I ate a muffin (the restaurant in the LA Marriott serves gluten free toast and muffins) from yesterday as lunch.

After reading a few more e-mails and briefly touching base with Facebook, I practiced the Xmas cantata for the church choir. Then I read more on Facebook. We stopped in Gila Bend but not at the usual station, because we were running out of gas prematurely; the gas we got at the Shell station on Century Boulevard must have been bad. We got home about 17:30.

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## **\* Operacon Trip (11-16 Mar 2015)**

Operacon was organized by Leah Zeldez and Richard Smith when they found out Somtow Sucharitkul was going to premier a new opera in Milwaukee. Leah and Richard split their time between Chicago and Milwaukee. It was planned as a small relaxacon around the opening night of the opera.

Wednesday, 11 March 2015, Mike drove me to Phoenix Sky Harbor airport. We left home before 10:00 and got to the airport a couple of hours later. I had a minor problem checking in, as there had apparently been a disconnect between the travel agency and Delta. Fortunately the ticket agent was able to straighten everything out. I found out



my Dansko shoes have metal in them; I had to take them off to go through security. After I reached the waiting area, I had an interesting conversation with an Edward Jones adviser. On the plane I was next to an ASU student from Morocco. She's studying for a PhD in computer engineering, specializing in cyber security.

Lunch was just peanuts on the plane.

After landing in Minneapolis and meeting Gerri Balter, I found out that the restaurant outside the security area had closed; so I had to settle for snack food for dinner; but at last we had a nice conversation.

On the plane for Milwaukee, I sat next to a woman returning from a trip to Mexico with her husband. When I got to the airport shuttle counter, they didn't have my reservation; but I was able to get on the next available shuttle going to the downtown area. The driver, Jeff, was talkative and also gave us a little history talk. I got to the Hilton City Centre minutes before room service shut down at midnight. I was starving. Rusty at check-in let me call from the desk to order a steak meal that arrived about half an hour later after I had unpacked. The room (1137) is spacious with two double beds and a large bathroom suite. After eating my midnight snack, I read e-mail until about 02:00.

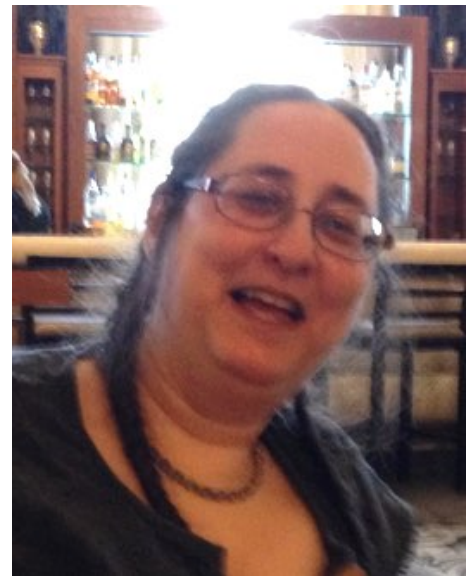
Thursday, I got up about 07:45 about fifteen minutes before my alarm. The window curtains don't close all the way, and I think the light woke me. I slept somewhat fitfully.

I breakfasted on leftover steak dinner. The steak was very good even cold. The coffee was still lukewarm.

After breakfast I spent the morning touching base with Google Plus and Facebook and trying to catch up with e-mail.

I had a leisurely lunch at the Pub restaurant in the lower level of the hotel.

Shortly after I returned to my room after lunch, Trinlay Khadro, whom I was meeting for the first time in person (see photo right), posted on Facebook that she was in the lobby and wanted someone to find her. I responded that I was coming down and that my hair was blue. We connected fairly easily. I sat down with her and another fan. Soon after we were joined by Joey Shoji from the Bayarea. The fan who found Trinlay before me eventually found out that the con suite, room 658, was open; and we all headed up there. Eventually others showed up.



I ended up going to dinner with Neil Rest, Tom Veal, and the Cohans of Chicago to a Middle Eastern restaurant that we had some problems finding. But the food turned out to be quite good; I had a mixed kebab selection, which I was unable to finish.

After we returned from there, I went down to the con suite intending only to stay for a short while but ended up staying far longer. Sam Long's wife is a trained opera singer, and I had a long conversation with her. As I was about to leave, I discovered Sam Long standing next to me; so I didn't get back to my room until after midnight. Other people I talked to included Martin Morse Wooster and, of course, Somtow.

I slept somewhat better Friday night other than waking up to cough. I got up again at about 07:45. My throat felt raw last night, and I started taking zinc. It felt better this morning. I have vague memories of dreaming about attending tonight's opera.

When I sat down to eat leftovers from last night, I found I was not very hungry.

I stayed in my room for a while to catch up with e-mail and Facebook. Then I went down to the con suite.

Eventually I got hungry and made a lunch of sausage and cheese provided in the con suite.

I chatted with various people until I returned to my room to change for dinner and opera. I unfortunately I had to call the con suite to summon help to zip up my dress. Trinlay Khadro came to the rescue. We went by bus to the Ale House for dinner.

I had a mango tango martini and baked cod.

Afterward we started to walk to the Skylight Theatre, but the bus driver picked us up part way. We enjoyed the world premiere of Somtow's opera *The Snow Dragon*. The opera is based on a short story that Somtow wrote a number of years ago. It has a very relevant plot revolving around child abuse and is fairly short, so much easier for the first-timer. I sat next to Tom Veal and had an interesting conversation; he is also an opera aficionado. I returned to the hotel on the bus a few minutes after 22:00 along with Cy Chauvin, Jeanne Bowman, and a few others. For Cy Chauvin this was his first opera. He unzipped my dress part way, so I wouldn't be stuck in it.

I managed to sleep an extra hour Saturday morning by turning over on my side facing away from the window and got up about 08:45.

I made it down for breakfast in the Cafe restaurant. After I finished eating, I talked with Carla and Sam Long, who were finishing up breakfast.

Then I went back to my room for my earrings. A short while later we boarded a bus back to the theatre for a Q and A with Somtow and a close look at the dragon prop (see photo below). During Somtow's talk, I learned a lot about him that I hadn't known before. He trained in music, but his first attempt was not successful. That's when he moved to the US. He was living in California when I met him sometime in the 1980s.



Before then I had read some fantasy and science fiction he'd written. So I really only knew him as a writer. The previous time I saw him was at a world science fiction convention in the LA area in 2006. We moved to Arizona at the end of 2007. Sometime after that I rediscovered Somtow on Facebook, and he was living in Thailand and working with music.

Back in the con suite afterwards, I made a lunch of cheese, sausage, and nori.

I spent the rest of the afternoon in the con suite talking with various people.

About 18:00 I went to dinner across the street at the Doubletree with Trinlay and Leah Fisher. After we got there, we were joined by Rich Rostrom.

I returned to my room for about ninety minutes and caught up with e-mail and Facebook. I went back to the con suite shortly before Leah and Dick's wedding anniversary party celebrated with champagne, of which I actually had two glasses after having had a small fuzzy navel at dinner. I briefly checked out Greg Ketter's "dealers room (his hotel room)" and actually ended up buying a recording of Somtow's *Dan no Ura*, another opera. Then Greg and I talked for a while until Lisa Freitag made it clear that she wanted to retire. I went back to the con suite intending to stay for a short while. As I was leaving, I was waylaid by Sam Long. Then there was to be a showing of *Sita Sings the Blues*. We only got two-thirds of the way into it when Somtow returned from a performance and we switched to watching his *The Laughing Dead*. It was actually better than I remembered. By then it was really, really late. Back in my room I caught up with e-mail and Facebook again. I plugged in the iPad to recharge before finally going to sleep.

Sunday morning I got up about 08:30.

I had breakfast at the hotel Cafe again. There was a bit of a wait. Leah Fisher joined me shortly after I ordered.

I went to the con suite after a short stop in my room and socialized for the afternoon and evening.

I had a makeshift lunch of nori, cheese, and sausage late in the afternoon.

Somtow dropped in a few times. I got more photos.

Eventually Leah Zeldes, Dick Smith, Trinlay Khadro, Leah Fisher, and I went for a late dinner at Build Your Own Burger about a half block away. They offered burgers with gluten free buns, but the buns fell apart if you tried to hold them.

Afterward we finished watching *Sita Sings the Blues*. I bid goodnight and goodbye after that. There were hugs all around. Back in my room, I did most of my packing.

I didn't sleep very well. I think it was largely anticipatory nerves about flying home.

I was down to breakfast as soon as they began serving. Some men had been waiting longer; but they let me go in first, not that it made much difference.

I was able to get in a short nap before I checked out. The airport shuttle arrived early, and I reached the airport in a timely manner. There was one other passenger on the shuttle; he was an actor going to Philadelphia to perform in a play. On the plane, which was very small, I sat next to a mechanical engineer flying to Canada.

In Minneapolis Gerri Balter met me in the baggage claim area, and we went to the Mall of America for lunch. We had a very nice lunch at a restaurant with a gluten free menu. I had French dip; the gluten free bread fell apart, so I ate it with a knife and fork.

I flew out of Minneapolis about 17:45 and reached Phoenix a little under two hours later. I checked my carry on since the service was offered for free. Mike picked me up. I managed a short nap on the plane and a longer one in the car.

\* \* \*

## \* Sasquan Trip (11-28 Aug 2015)

We left on our Sasquan trip on Tuesday, 11 August 2015. For those who don't recognize the name Sasquan, it is the nickname of the 2015 World Science Fiction Convention in Spokane, Washington. We had off and on rain until we left Arizona.

On this first leg of our drive, we went as far as North Las Vegas. It's about 108° in Las Vegas. We reached our hotel about 16:00, which was the time I was planning for.

We went to dinner at Viva Zapata, a nearby Mexican restaurant; both food and service were excellent, and there was live music.

I slept somewhat fitfully that night as often happens on the first night of a trip.

Before I knew it, it was 05:15 and my alarm was going off.

I went down for the free hotel breakfast about an hour later.

We got checked out and were on our way about an hour after that.

When Mike stopped at a Shell station in Tonopah, it's a cool and windy 79° at an elevation of over 6000 ft.

We drove on to Redding about 18:30 and checked in at La Quinta. This was our third time there. I chose the motel, because it's next to a Cattlemens restaurant, which is a great place for steak lovers.

I got up with my alarm at 06:00 on Thursday.

We both went down to partake of the free breakfast. There were a bunch of Army Reserve and Cal Fire people eating there as well. They're participating in the fire fighting in Northern California. There were thirty-three fires up there. There were fire fighters from Oracle helping against the largest of the fires in this area.

About an hour later at approximately 08:30, we left the hotel to drive to Lassen and arrived there about 09:30. We had to drive to a different entrance to exit and get to yet another entrance to get to the trailhead for Boiling Spring Lake.



The entire drive took about two hours. We managed to hike to our chosen destination but had no energy for continuing on to another optional destination that was twice again as far. Boiling Spring Lake was a pale green colour like a grasshopper cocktail (see photo above); we saw a fairly large mammal there that we later determined from studying our photos was a huge squirrel. We took a different route back to our hotel, and we could see Mount Shasta and evidence of a large wildfire in the mountains

to the west. After we were back in Redding, we bought gas for the Lexus.

We had dinner at Cattlemens again.

Friday I got up to my alarm at 05:00. I slept pretty well.

I went down for the free hotel breakfast about 06:30.

Shortly afterward we checked out and left for Fife, Washington, where my sister had recently moved from Federal Way.

About 10:30 we stopped at a Carl's Junior to get lunch. They do lettuce wrap really well; I've compared notes with another person, and lettuce wrap seems to be a speciality of theirs.

A bit later Mike stopped for gas. About half way through Oregon, it started to rain off and on. We also hit traffic near Portland, Olympia, and Tacoma. In addition there were more than a couple of slow downs resulting from accidents, so we didn't get to Mimi's until after 19:00. Mimi had reached home by then. In fact we had been in touch telephonically for about fifteen minutes by then. The Lexus directions to the site located by Bing turned out to be slightly off, so it was a good thing I was talking with Mimi.

It was late, so I ordered a Dominos Pizza for pickup; delivery would have taken far too long because of some local sport event. I drove with Mimi to the place, which was very close to a supermarket; so I bought bacon and eggs for breakfast. I ate half the pizza after we got back.

On Saturday I got up before my alarm at about 06:15.

I had a breakfast bowl.

I left Mimi's shortly after breakfast for Prolog(ue) in Renton and reached there about 09:30. Prolog(ue) was organized by a Seattle area fan as a relaxacon a week before Sasquan. The registration desk was not yet manned, so I sat down in the Red Lion restaurant where Ulrika O'Brien, the organizer, was eating with Jane somebody and Marci Malinowitz. Marci and I clicked and ended up talking until she finished eating long after the other two had left. By that time registration was open, so I picked up my badge and programme book. Aileen Forman arrived about then, and we talked at some length. I also gave my WOOFzine to Andy Hooper; WOOF is collated annually at the Worldcon. It looked like the first panel was about to start, so I went into the programme room. It was reminiscences from past cons.

Then it was time for lunch. Marci accompanied me to the hotel restaurant, and we continued our conversation. About halfway into the meal, we were joined by Jerry Kaufman and Suzle Tompkins.

After lunch there was a quiz show. There were two teams; each team was one side of the audience. I'm afraid one of our team members left, because she didn't want to be filmed; I video events at cons. The team I was on eventually won. This was followed by readings by Charlie Stross. During that I started to feel terminal fatigue, and I decided it would be prudent to drive back to Mimi's while I still felt able to do so. Just before I left, I was introduced to Nina Horvath, the TAFF winner who hails from Austria. I texted Mike about my leaving. After I got back to Mimi's, we decided to eat at Cheesecake Factory, which was near the Apple Store from which Mimi needed to pick up her new computer.

Dinner turned out to be a bit on the late side, and I brought home part of my entree and dessert.



Sunday morning I got up about 07:30.

I made myself bacon and egg for breakfast.

After breakfast I went through music and photo albums that belonged to our parents to see what I wanted. Mike helped Mimi to set up her home alarm system software and her new computer and mobile equipment.

Then we went to visit Mother for lunch at the nursing home. I took my leftovers from last night and bought a Teavana iced tea at Starbucks, and Mimi bought her entire lunch there. Mike bought his lunch at McDonald's next door.

Back at Mimi's I went through more photo albums and helped her shelve some books. She was still in the process of unpacking from her move.

We went out to McGrath's for dinner.

At night I brought all the photo albums of interest to me down to Mimi's dining room. Then I settled down to catch up with e-mail. I found numerous things that I thought were bug bites on my left leg which I later discovered were allergic reactions to Mimi's carpet.

Monday morning I got up about 06:45. Mimi had gone to work by the time I got up. She had to examine neonates that morning.

I made bacon and egg for breakfast again.

After breakfast I touched base with Google Plus and Facebook, read some e-mail, and packed up some stuff to take with us.

We had lunch in Tacoma with sister-in-law Jan and her friend, Sharon, at Duke's Chowder House. With all the talking we did, it was after 16:00 by the time we left. It was a beautiful clear day, and the temperature rose into the eighties.

I took a nap after returning to Mimi's while we did laundry. Then I read some e-mail.

For dinner I reheated Friday's leftover pizza and had Saturday's leftover cheesecake for dessert. Mimi called to ask me to run the dishwasher, which is a bit on the noisy side.

Mimi got home as I was finishing dinner, and we talked.

I got up with my alarm Tuesday morning at 06:30.

Mimi went to work while I was in the middle of my morning ablutions.

I made bacon and egg for breakfast and cooked the remaining bacon for Mimi, who usually doesn't have bacon in the house.

We were ready early, so we decided to leave for Spokane right after the gardeners finished their work. Shortly thereafter we made a fuel stop at a nearby Chevron. About 10:30 we got stuck in a massive slowdown on the road caused by what appeared to be a head-on collision. An hour passed before we were beyond that.

We stopped at a McDonald's off the 90 in North Bend to pick up lunch.

About 11:45 I took an hour's nap. We arrived in Spokane a few minutes before 15:00 and were in our room at the Red Lion. Based on information from author Lawrence Schoen on Facebook, we walked to the convention centre and got registered for Sasquan. It wasn't too hot, but it was muggy. We found out why Gerri Balter hadn't picked up my phone call. She was working registration. We got our badges and picked up our complementary bag and booklets. When we walked over to information to pick up a restaurant guide, we ran into Jeanne Mealy and the Lynchi. Nolly from San Diego

was running Information. On the way back to our hotel, we spotted a wild fire just five miles away (see photo right). Back in our room, I went over the electronic schedule and entered items of interest on my iPhone calendar.

About 19:15 we had dinner at the Ripples restaurant in the hotel. I ate too much.

Afterward back in our room, I became really sleepy and took a nap. It was after midnight when I got up. I managed to catch up with financial records before returning to sleep.



Wednesday I got up with my alarm at 06:30.

Mike accompanied me to breakfast in the hotel.

Not too long after breakfast, we caught the shuttle to the convention centre. The convention had arranged for a system of shuttle buses from outlying hotels. We found the fanzine lounge fairly easily and sat and talked until the dealers room opened. I chatted with Carl Juarez, one of the *Chunga* triumvirate; Ulrika O'Brien; Jerry of *Little Brook*; Murray and Mary Ann Moore; Liz Schwarzin, and others. We looked over the dealer's room before going downstairs for a Ctein reading; this is his first book, co-written by another man; it sounded interesting; Mike's read it since and wants to nominate it for a Hugo. I had a bit of a break, so I made a start on looking over the art show. Then I met up with Mike to go hear the panel "Hard SF Movies", a panel moderated by Connie Willis. From there we went to Opening Ceremonies. At one point we ran into Gerri Balter and decided on dinner together the next night.

After a stop in the dealer room for Mike to get some light pollution buttons made up, we had a light dinner at a restaurant in the Doubletree, which is attached to the convention centre.

We returned to the convention centre for Phil and Kaja Foglio's "Girl Genius Radio Show", which was done with the help of volunteers from the audience. After that I went to the Davenport to party. I talked extensively with Guy and Rosy Lillian, Nicki Lynch, and a man named. I also chatted with Ruth Judkowitz, Kyla, Nina Horvath, Mike Wilmoth, Lawrence Schoen, Joni Dashoff, Liz Schwarzin, and others. Mike went to a talk by the Vatican astronomer. A scheduled star party was cancelled due to wildfire smoke covering the entire sky.

I got up to my alarm at 06:00 on Thursday. My asthma was really bad because of all the wildfire smoke in the air.

I went down to breakfast on my own.

After breakfast I did a bit on my iPad. Then I went down to catch the bus; I had to wait nearly half an hour for the apparently first bus of the day. I still managed to get to

the convention centre in plenty of time for the business meeting. I left the business meeting before it ended in order to attend part of John Hertz's discussion of R. A. Rafferty's *Past Master*. I left that early to get seated for David Gerrold's interview. The turnout was a bit disappointing, but David was very gracious and went around the room shaking hands and thanking people for showing up. To me he said, "Nice to see you again. Take good pictures". After the interview ended, I found Mike in the back of the room. We walked to another room to hear Connie Willis's reading in progress. Then we went to the dealer's room to buy David Gerrold's mega pack on a thumb drive.

We met Gerri Balter and Polly Peterson for dinner. We decided to go to Chili's, which is across the street from the convention centre. Dinner was nice except for having to tackle their new method of paying by computer at the table. The food was good, and I had Mike take the leftovers back to our hotel.

I went to the fanzine lounge and had an interesting conversation with a veterinarian. After they left for dinner, I updated my diary and looked at the exhibits. Then I walked to the Integra Ballroom to see a dramatization of Spider Robinson's *God Is an Iron*, a powerful story about direct stimulation of the pleasure centre of the brain. I met Aileen Forman in line waiting for that and we sat together. Sasa Neuman and girlfriend, Sandy, came by and chatted for a while. During the play I got a call from Jeanne Mealy. I thought I had put the phone in "Do Not Disturb" mode, but it turned out I had failed to do so. I called her back after exiting from the play.

I slept fitfully, in part because of my throat starting to hurt. It looked like a cold was trying to take hold again. I got up to my alarm Friday at 07:00.

I had a breakfast of leftovers from the previous night.

I bused over to the convention centre with Mike. After the art show opened I looked through the part I hadn't seen before. I found a pendant I thought my sister would like. It was available for quick sale, so I bought it for later pickup.

Then I headed to the Doubletree to meet Jeanne Mealy and others for lunch. When I got to the Doubletree, I saw Tom and Anita Feller and chatted with them for a while before going to Jeanne's meeting place. Stephanie and Harry Meyer were already there, and I didn't recognize them, but Jeanne arrived shortly thereafter and straightened us out. Then Jeanne called a taxi and made sure John Stanley was on his way. He arrived before the taxi. We ate at a restaurant that features many gluten free items.

After lunch I had them drop me off at our hotel, so I could put a cream puff in the fridge. Then I caught a shuttle to the convention centre. I arrived there in time to attend most of John Hertz's discussion of C. S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*. Mike



was already there. Then we went to a panel about collaboration with Larry Niven, Melinda Snodgrass, and one other. When we emerged from there, there was smoke outside so thick that it looked like fog (see photos on previous page showing same scene before and after the smoke arrived). The air outside was unbreathable. Spokane was effectively surrounded by wildfires, and smoke blew in whenever there was wind. We made our way to the Integra ballroom for the GoH speech. We waited in line for a while until the doors were opened. There was a fair turnout. David Gerrold's speech was outstanding and just the right length.

We walked to the Doubletree for dinner, but it was too crowded. We walked across the street to the Grand after making a reservation. After we were seated, Mike got a call from his friend Evan; we invited him and his wife to join us. We had a delicious and leisurely dinner; they had gluten free selections clearly marked on the menu. After dinner Evan showed us to the connecting walkway to the convention centre, minimizing our time outside.

Afterward we went to the masquerade, which was in the performing arts centre. This was a very good venue with assigned seating. There were an impressive fifty entries, emceed very professionally by Kevin Roche. I missed a few entries changing the camera battery and memory card. Mike got stills of every costume. We left at half time, because the filker performing wasn't to our taste. It was late enough. The air outside seemed smokier than ever, but at least we were able to get on a bus right away.

I got up with my alarm at 07:00 Saturday morning. The wind must have shifted; the air looked clear. Still a slight odour of smoke lingered.

I had leftover cream puff for breakfast.

Mike and I took the shuttle bus to the convention centre about 9:00. I sat in the fanzine lounge until I headed off to Brad Foster's presentation. I had a fairly extensive conversation with Bryan Barrett about animals. Brad Foster's talk was interesting, because he talked about the steps he went through to produce a drawing.

I had some time before the next item I wanted to attend, so I bought an overpriced bag of potato chips and took a seat at one of the tables in the fanzine lounge to eat that and a snack bar. Randy Byers was sitting at the next seat. Mark Plummer cut up a bar of chocolate with nuts and shared it, so I took a piece.

Then I went to a Jo Walton reading. After that I went to a session for David Gerrold's Facebook friends, but we waited a long time before a couple of people left to find out what had gone wrong. He was rehearsing the Hugo ceremony, and that had gone overtime. While we waited I talked with Alyson Abramowitz and a woman who rescues horses. David arrived for the last fifteen minutes. I next went to a Vonda McIntyre interview that started with a preview of an upcoming movie based on a book that she had written based on a screen play she had written and failed to sell. The movie is titled *The Moon and the Sun* and is currently expected to be released some time in 2016. I had a little extra time, so I retreated to the fanzine lounge and texted Mike to meet me there. I saw Fran Skene, who said the National Library of Canada might be looking for a complete run of her zine; I'll contact them to see whether I can send them mine. Renee Sieber also came by; she clarified that she is Canadian and always has been, and now she is back living there. I sat down with Andy Porter and Murray Moore and across from Mary Ann Moore and Fran Skene to chat.

After Mike arrived he and I went over to the Doubletree for dinner.

After dinner we attended the Hugo awards ceremony. There were five "no awards". Up to now there had been five in the Hugo's entire history. The award ceremony lasted about two and a half hours. It was late, so we got a bus back to our hotel.

Sunday I got up to my alarm at 06:30.

I went down for the hotel breakfast. I ended up inviting a fan from Rancho Cucamonga to join my table, and we had an interesting if lengthy conversation.

I then returned to our room and prepared to leave for the convention centre. Mike decided to go with me. I headed for the Business Meeting where I stayed until the E Pluribus Hugo amendment passed. I left when Kevin Standlee announced a ten-minute recess. I went to the Leonard Nimoy Memorial.

I had time for a snack bar lunch.

After that I went to a reading by Greg Bear. Then I found Mike at the head of the line for Closing Ceremonies. He was talking with a woman who looked familiar, but it took quite a while for us to realize we'd met at Operacon. She was the distaff side of the Cohans of Chicago, but their badge names were very different. We met up again afterward just by happenstance and decided to get dinner together as long as we were already deep in conversation. Before that we talked extensively with Elise, Moshe Feder's Eternal Girlfriend. She was there alone, because Moshe decided he was too busy to attend.

The Cohans and we decided to eat at the Italian Kitchen after Larry Cohan used his handy mobile to find out that they have gluten free pasta. We had a very nice dinner, except Mike, who complained to me afterward that his lasagne was dry.

We had to kind of rush off, because I found a voicemail telling me I could still pick up my art until 19:00. That was accomplished. Then we took a shuttle bus back to our hotel. I was extremely sleepy and took a ninety minute nap. After I woke up, I did as much packing as I could, organizing things so I would only need one of my carryons for the rest of the trip, and read a day's worth of e-mail.

Monday morning the alarm went off at 05:00 to get me up.

I went down for breakfast in the hotel almost as soon as they opened.

After checking out of the Red Lion, we were on the road by 07:15. We stopped for gas just before we got on the freeway. It's fairly smoky that morning. The smoke was worse in the mountains.

I saw a magpie along the highway. I slept most of the way to our destination in southern Idaho, hearing only bits and pieces of the radio plays that we were listening to. We arrived at the Best Western Pocatello Inn shortly before 17:00 MDT. They'd also had smoke from wildfires there, though that day was quite clear.

After getting settled, we went to get dinner at the Sandpiper restaurant sort of kitty corner from the hotel. As we were finishing up, a woman at a nearby table started talking to me; I ended up joining her for conversation. Her companion ate and left.

Back at the hotel I caught up with two days worth of e-mail.

I got up with my alarm at Tuesday morning 05:00.

I went down for the free hotel breakfast.

Then we set off for Craters of the Moon National Monument after filling the gas tank at a Chevron station near the motel. It took about two hours to get there. There's a loop



road at the national monument that goes around with about seven stops with trails of varying lengths. Some of them were paved and suitable for wheelchairs. We took two short ones that were variously paved. Then we climbed a cinder cone (see photo at right). After that we took a much longer loop trail. The trail was the same length as the one we did at Lassen. Most of it was fairly easy, though some parts were quite steep. Then there was a part over smooth lava. That really did us in. Mike took pity on me and asked a park ranger who was driving by in a small two-seater to drive me the last hundred yards where the trail was paved back to our car. My



legs felt like rubber by then. I mostly slept on the drive back to Pocatello. Mike had a sneezing fit for a while that he thinks was a reaction to lava dust. When we got back to our motel and I took off my boots and socks, my feet were very dirty. For some reason this didn't happen to Mike. I had to wash my feet.

Mike was too tired to walk across the street for dinner. I didn't have a choice, since there was no gluten free food at the motel.

I got up with my alarm on Wednesday morning at 06:00.

I went down to the free hotel breakfast.

Afterward we lugged our stuff to our car, checked out, and started on our way, stopping first at the Chevron station to top off our fuel. It rained quite a bit during our drive to southern Utah. Shortly after I woke up from a nap, Mike turned onto an unpaved road that seemed to last forever. It was only about forty miles but slick with rain, so it took seemingly forever. On the other hand, we saw lots of deer and even a bunch of wild turkey. We finally managed to get to our B & B before 17:00. The proprietor was very helpful with information for the next day's sightseeing. Tom has five cats, of which I saw two plus a stray he's been feeding.

For dinner we went to the place next door, a restaurant gift shop combination called Escalante Outfitters that had gluten free pizza.

At night I caught up with e-mail and financial records and touched base with Google Plus and Facebook.

I got up to my alarm at 06:00 Thursday morning; it's still dark; this "daylight savings" makes no sense.

A hot breakfast was served.

Then we set out for a day of sightseeing. We drove to the trailhead to take us to the Lower Calf Creek Falls. We set out about 09:30 after I discovered that I'd stupidly left my hiking boots at the BNB. I wore my walking shoes instead, which served me fairly

well. Mike quit about two-thirds of the way in. I continued and was rewarded with the sight of a beautiful waterfall. It was also very cool there.

At the waterfall I had a snack bar lunch and then asked a fellow hiker to take a picture of me at the falls with my iPhone; he did an excellent job (see right).

On the way back, I saw the beaver dam that I hadn't seen on the way in. It took me about five hours to complete an estimated four-hour hike (according to the sign at the start of the trail). Then we continued driving on UT 12. We stopped at the Burr Trail Restaurant for some cool refreshment that revitalized me; we also visited the gift shop next to it, and I bought a map and trail guide for the area. We continued our drive until we came to a beautiful vista. On our way back to town, we decided to visit the Devil's Garden. It had been recommended for sunset, but the sky was cloudy with intermittent rain.

Back in town we stopped at the Philips 66 station to refuel.

Then we went to the Cowboy Blues Restaurant for dinner.

Back at the B&B, I learned that when there is little or no cell service, the battery in the iPhone dies really quickly. Southern Utah seems impoverished as far as cell service is concerned.

I got up to my alarm at 06:00 Friday morning.

I had the free B&B breakfast. Mike started packing up the car before breakfast and continued while I was eating.

Then it was only a few minutes before I took care of the last bits and we checked out and were on the road. We arrived home about 18:00.

It was overall a great trip, but I plan to shorten the legs of future trips. It's becoming harder to travel the way we used to. We must be getting old.

\* \* \*



## \* Kritter Korner

Here is a recent photo of our cats. Mercury is on the left.



\* \* \*

## \* Reviews

***Live Free or Die***, by John Ringo

This is a fun read. The author says he was inspired by the graphic series *Schlock Mercenary*. This novel is a sort of prequel to the series.

I've read bits of *Schlock Mercenary*. It's done in an extremely cartoony style that is not to my taste and seems to be very tongue-in-cheek.

This book has a lot of humour but is a fairly straightforward story of first contact and what happens after that. Specifically it's about what one man does about it. The book moves fairly quickly, but there's a fair amount of character development and techie talk. There's also quite a bit of action. It's not a literary masterpiece, but it provides entertainment.

There are two more books in the series known as "Troy Rising"--*The Citadel* and *The Hot Gate*. I didn't enjoy them as much as the first book.

#

***Chicago***, (Miramax Films. 2002). Directed and choreographed by Rob Marshall. Written by Bill Condon based in the musical play (book by Bob Fosse and Fred Ebb) and the play by Maurine Dallas Watkins. Music by John Kander. Lyrics by Mr. Ebb. Original score music by Danny Elfman. Running time: 108 minutes. Rated: PG-13. <http://www.miramax.com/chicago/>

Much to my delight, a genre I love, the live-action movie musical, a cinematic form almost completely moribund since the 1960s, seems to be undergoing a revival, albeit in a self-consciously post-modern form. By this I mean that all the singing and dancing gets rationalized by happening within the plausible context of an actual performance setting or within a dream or fantasy scenario rather than the spontaneous and unrealistic bursting out into the song and dance routine that so typified the musicals of yore. *Dancer in the Dark* did much to revive the form in its post modern style along with the subsequent *Moulin Rouge*; but the latest foray into the fray, *Chicago*, will I hope firmly re-establish the viability of the musical in the eyes of producers and audiences. The fact that *Chicago* won the Golden Globe Awards for Best Comedy/Musical, Best Director and Best Actor/Actress for its two top stars plus garnering many more nominations bodes well for the art form and attests to the fabulousness of the experience of *Chicago* itself.

Director/choreographer Rob Marshall with only theatre and TV helming experience under his belt, makes an astonishing feature film debut here. His command of the skills necessary to make a hit picture of such a maverick nature impresses as much as the result of his labours itself.

*Chicago*, based on a hugely successful Bob Fosse/Fred Ebb stage production, set in that eponymous city in the 1920s, tells the story of wannabe nightclub performer Roxie Hart (Renee Zellweger), who gets into serious trouble when she fatally shoots her lying lover Fred Casely (Dominic West), who pretended he could help her get into show business in order to seduce her. When Amos (John C. Reilly), Roxie's

husband, fails to go along with his wife's awkward attempts to explain the situation to the police, prosecutor Martin Harrison (Colm Feore) uses the potential headline-making, sensationalistic nature of this case hoping to make himself look good. He sends Roxie, charged with murder, away to the Cook County prison called The Big House to await a trial that could lead to the hanging Mr. Harrison desires.

Roxie discovers among her sister inmates, her idol Velma Kelly (Catherine Zeta-Jones), a famous singer who landed in jail for killing her lover and his lover, her sister/partner. The greedy, corrupt prison matron, Mama Morton (Queen Latifah), thanks to ample bribes and currying of favours, enables Velma to employ the services of scheming but charming, glib, and suave lawyer Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). His power comes from being able to manipulate and influence an unsuspecting press and populace who crave the "old razzle dazzle" he can deliver. When it turns out that Roxie's case is garnering more gossip-mongering tabloid attention than Velma's, the opportunistic Flynn takes on a new client, making the now very unhappy Velma Yesterday's News. Roxie uses her moxie underneath a cultivated demure image, with a ruthless vigour equal to Flynn's, to keep herself in the spotlight and to survive by any means necessary, although Velma also possesses plenty of come back spunk.

*Chicago* brings to life a sordid decadent sub-culture in which everybody exploits each other and yet, the story makes its principals compelling and even sympathetic despite their unsavoury deeds. The supporting characters make vivid impressions too—Roxie's husband Amos; Mama Morton, played by one big, beautiful black lady of bountiful talent and energy to match her sizeable physical charms; ace reporter Mary Sunshine (Christine Baranski); and the witty, honey-tongued band leader/nightclub MC and erstwhile narrator Taye Diggs, another gifted African American.

What really makes these wayward folk and their sleazy world come alive are the nearly non-stop musical numbers by composer John Kander and lyricist Fred Ebb seamlessly bridged by Danny Elfman's skilful score. Rob Marshall brilliantly stages the song and dance routines, fantasies in the minds of the lead players or bonafide performances on stage, all perfectly accompanied by the bouncy, rockin', effervescent, jazzy music. Richard Gere, Renee Zellweger, Catherine Zeta-Jones, and Queen Latifah warble and hoof with impressive aplomb along with the seasoned chorus. The clever book and lyrics of *Chicago*, laying bare the cynical venality of its media-obsessed, scandal-mongering mind-set of a milieu, slyly and satirically comments on the present-day climate of celebrity-dominated news and Reality TV.

*Chicago's* thoughtful, relevant subtext never gets in the way of the production's genuine razzle dazzle in one big visual WOW of a movie with its ingenious cinematography, its lovely costumes and make-up, delightful and imaginative choreography, fabulous performances, toe-tapping tunes, and sensational set-design, where mundane spaces morph into stages for theatrical glitz effect and back again thanks to the magic of Martin Walsh's editing. *Chicago* and its on screen and behind-the-scenes talent deserve to win every possible award for delivering entertainment value of the highest order. Chicago, Chicago – a wonderful town, a wonderful film!

-- Amy Harlib

#

### ***The Crystal Desert: Summers in Antarctica*, by David G. Campbell**

The author made three trips to a research station on King George Island north of Antarctica during the 1980s, and this book describes the things he saw and learned. Even then the effects of climate change could be felt in the changes in the flora and fauna of the area around the southern continent. He reports his own observations, but he also adds those from other scientists.

I found it quite informative, but other readers may find the science too much. I read the book in preparation for my upcoming trip to Antarctica with National Geographic.

#

### ***Fraser's Penguins, a Journey to the Future in Antarctica*, by Fen Montaigne**

The author took a trip to Antarctica to study penguins. He connected up with Bill Fraser, who has devoted his life to their study. From Fraser he learns how the composition and locations of penguin colonies have changed because of climate change. The warming of the oceans has had profound effects in the nature of the mix of food fish and plankton in the ocean around Antarctica. Some penguins have a very limited diet of only a few species of prey food. When these disappear from their stomping grounds, they either have to go elsewhere or starve. Some of both has happened.

If I had made my upcoming trip a number years ago, I would have been certain of seeing a large number of Adélie penguins. Now I'm not sure what I'll see. If I see Adélies, there will probably be fewer than I might have seen. I may also see gentoo penguins, who prefer a slightly warmer climate, or even chinstraps.

#



**Penguin**, by Frans Lanting

This is a photo book about penguins in and around Antarctica. If you like penguins, you will enjoy this.

#

**Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage**, by Alfred Lansing

I have seen the movie made by Kenneth Branagh and two documentaries on the trip on PBS. This book is based on the diaries kept by the men on Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica. Their ship fell apart after being trapped in ice, and the crew were stuck on ice floes for months before they were able to reach an uninhabited island. Shackleton then left for an island where there were people, and it was more months before his men were saved. Many suffered from frostbite. This trip took place during WWI, but the conditions in the Antarctic are not all that different. The average temperatures may be higher now, but the temperature swings from day to day are still as great.

I expect that National Geographic will take care not to get their ship stuck in ice.

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#

**Time and Again**, by Jack Finney

This is a novel that seems to walk a fine line between science fiction and fantasy. The theme is time travel, but the methods are unorthodox. It's supposed to be a government-funded scientific project. However their methods are akin to hypnosis. Whether you think it's sf or fantasy, it's a pretty enjoyable novel about New York City in the late 1800s. The novel starts in the 1970s when it was written. There is a mystery about a letter missing a few key words. The protagonist travels back in time and solves the mystery. The detailed description of nineteenth century NYC is lovingly written. The book can be enjoyed as a historical novel. There is a sequel, which I've been told is not as good, and a collection of short stories that are related to this book. Neither library system I have cards for has a copy of them, but they seem to be available on the used book market for very little.

\*\*\*



## \* Letters to the Editor

The text of letters received will be in brown. My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses and will be in black. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and the like. Deadline for next issue is 15 March 2016.



**Sheryl L. Birkhead, 25509 Jonnie Ct, Gaithersburg, MD 20882**

**29 Aug 2014**

I thought I had whittled the zine list down when I found *Purrsonal Mewsings* sitting there very quietly.

Nary a note to say I actually did anything (other than read the zine!), so I will go on that presumption. I always appreciate the photos you use; thank you. Ah dental issues. My dentist believes in preventive medicine and starts lobbying to replace crowns once they have reached fifteen years in use; he starts talking about it before then but really starts agitating. I have to take a better stance on saying no. It does not help that I actually believe in preventive rather than reactive medicine. With the TMJ restrictions and knowing the tooth he is really getting on a bandwagon about cannot be anaesthetized (which I found out the hard way; it was my first crown and has been replaced twice, and he wants to go for a third; but it was not fun last time). I have a built in excuse for now; I cannot afford it and there is no discomfort at all. I had to replace the roof and it will be quite a while before that is paid of, so... Now, if I can stick to my guns. His rationale is that a crown is not a truly aseptic procedure, and by that age there is always some decay. Well, of the last groups he has replaced, one had mild issues, two seemed pretty good, and one had some serious problems; none had given me any trouble before he wanted to replace them. After each go-round I had more and more pain from the anxiety, length of time in the chair, and simple pressure on the TMJ. The routine dental appointment is coming up in mid September; we'll see. Of course each replacement takes the same time and costs as much (well, given the elapsed time more as prices have gone up) as the original, and I have a lot of crowns.

I, very sincerely, hope your dental issues are resolved.

Since pretty much all of the country had unusual weather this year, I hope yours was more of an average than the extremes. Already it is feeling like fall, and I feel as if I just can't be happy with anything in the weather category; now it is back to cold. Got the fireplace+insert cleaned and ready for use, but last season was a killer!

When I find time in a reasonable chunk, I'll think about your logo/title---the title just screams (to me at least) that Brad Foster could work up a killer one for you--seems right up his alley.

I am pretty certain you have read the Hugo results by now. I know *my* definitions are not the same as those actually stated in the WSFS Constitution, but I have trouble accepting the new fanzine "definition" and the fact that fan artists aren't (well, you know what I mean, at least not by *my* subjective definition).

I just ran across my first discussion of Valley Fever. I thought they meant any of the fevers from Africa--surprise--predominantly from Arizona! All the owner could tell me was it was something with coccus, so I jumped to some sort of bacterial, then did a quick search and found *coccidioidomycosis*--close, but fungal not bacterial. Fascinating to read about a trucker who contracted it just by driving through Arizona, and that made tracking down the aetiology much more difficult.

Lyme signs/symptoms can make diagnosis difficult. I am not sure what the physician feeling is; but in dogs, I feel it is at least worth a therapeutic trial with doxycycline to see if .....

I hope things are going better for you!

#

**Clif Flynt, CLIF at CFLYNT dot COM**

**14 Sep 2014**

Life in Michigan is about like normal. I'm still working, and have a new client (as of last summer) that's keeping me very busy. This is mostly good, particularly since one of their hot projects is running parallel to one of my personal projects, so I the work I do one one feeds into the other.

The hot news out here is that my wife finally started doing the writing she's been claiming she wanted to do. She found a few local folks to form a writer's critique group, and that's been the key that kicked her from "I ought to write!" to "I need to finish this by Saturday!"

The end result is that I got sucked into this and started writing fiction again. Her first novel is busy being ignored by Baen right now, while mine is being ignored by JABberwocky. At least Baen sends out an automated "thank you for your submission" note. The agents haven't even acknowledged that I sent it in.

Our plan is to give the agents and Baen a reasonable period of time (reasonable gets shorter many days) and self-pub if they just can't move.

One of the novels is a historical romp taking place in 850 Britain, and the other is a hard-science/computer adventure taking place in 2060. Surprisingly enough I wrote the historical, and Carol wrote the hard-science story.

((I read the historical, and it's very entertaining.))

#

**Amy Harlib, aharlib at earthlink dot net**

**18 Sep 2014**

I have serious arthritis woes of my own in my right hip and will be forced to undergo a hip replacement soon – waiting to get the date from Hospital for Special Surgery where I had my left hip done in 1998 – same Dr. too.

#

**Jeanne Mealy, jmealy73 at gmail dot com**

**18 Sep 2014**

This is a great little zine [the short form *Purrsonal Mewsings*]! It sums up many of the important events of your life. And I always like Mike's photos. They're beautiful in colour.

That said, there are a number of things you mentioned that I don't know about. Such as, what is the Boneyard? How did you feel about the health problems? What do you like about figure skating? How are the cats? With this zine title, I was surprised not to hear something about them. Did you enjoy showing Mike's niece around? You saw some very cool things and it would be great to hear what YOU thought about them.

((The Boneyard, in case there are others who don't know, is a place where planes are stored or scrapped. Some planes are used as spare parts. It is part of Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson and is near the Pima Air and Space Museum.))

I'm in another APA with someone who shares a lot of diary/journal notes. Many other members ask for fewer dry lists and more details about how he felt, what he thought. While your zines aren't dry lists, I'd encourage a little more sharing as if we were talking in person.

#

**Amy Harlib, aharlib at earthlink dot net**

**18 Oct 2014**

So glad to get *Feline Journal* #51 after a rather long pause.

I always enjoy con and travel reports.

I especially appreciated Tigger's Corner – adore following her story and I cried when she died. I so adore cats and it's so sad when their too short lives end, but the love and companionship is worth it.

Also liked Jonathan's Eaton Conference Report, an event that sounds more interesting for dedicated genre nerds than most.

NYC offers screenings in movie theatres of Met Opera in HD; Royal Opera Theatre; Royal Ballet Theatre; Bolshoi Ballet; and The Globe Shakespeare Theatre. I try and attend all of these – I can afford the tickets in movie theatres as opposed to live performances!

((The Met Opera in HD are offered here. I just wait until they're shown on TV.))

Recent genre films I have enjoyed: *Gravity*, *The Box Trolls*, *Dracula Untold*, *The Young Ones*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *The Mazerunner*, *The Zero Theorem*, *The Giver*, *Rise of Planet of the Apes*, *Space Station 76*, *Only Lovers Left Alive*. Looking forward to *Interstellar*.

How are your cats? Fiona is my comfort and joy.

#

**Gerri Balter, gerribalter at gmail dot com**

**22 Oct 2014**

I really like the cover art [of *Feline Journal* #51]. Your pictures are just beautiful. After reading the con report for ConDor, it sounds like a con I would like to attend at some point.

Polly Peterson and I went to see *The Importance of Being Earnest* when we were in London. It was a very different production, but interesting. Instead of the actors being young, they were at least in their 70s. Polly and I wondered how they were going to explain the age difference. They began by being a group of actors putting on the play. The play was supposed to be a rehearsal. When one of the actors questioned the age difference, the main lead said that no one would notice. It was the play that was important. Intermission was spent changing items on the set and talking about their lives.

Keep on sending me this as an electronic version.

#

**Jason Burnett, jason at jason-burnett dot com**

**22 Oct 2014**

I was about to start reading *Feline Journal* #1 (thanks for sending that, by the way, it looks great), when I remembered I hadn't LoCced *PM*#1, so I thought I'd get that done first.

It sounds like this has been an eventful year for you health-wise. It sounds like you're starting to get a handle on things, though, so hopefully the next year will be better. The probable Lyme disease diagnosis sounds particularly worrisome, not just because of the difficulties of dealing with Lyme, but even more so for the difficulties of dealing with a condition that hasn't been accurately diagnosed.

((Chances are good that it was not Lyme but a dental abscess.))

Hopefully this letter finds you well, and I'm looking forward to having a time to reading *FJ*#1.

#

**Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd, Etobicoke, ON, Canada M9C 2B2, penneys at bell dot net**

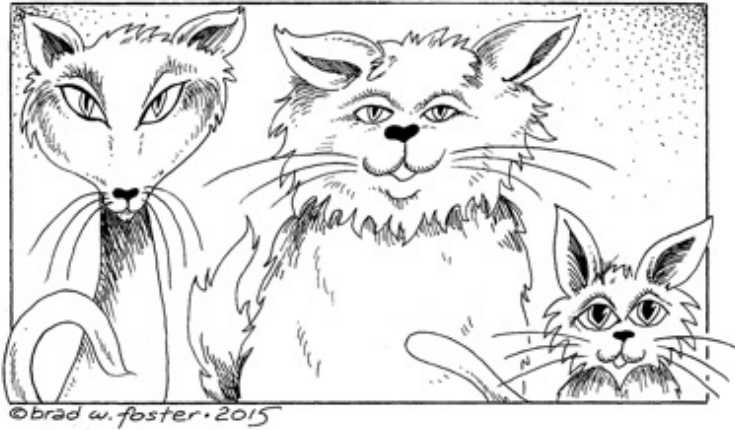
**12 Nov 2014**

Thanks muchly for *Feline Journal* 51. Something new, I see, so I will respond anyway, and see what I can say about it.

Perzines are few and far between these days, so I can see dividing up your zine into two. The best thing to do is to see how the two zines do, and see if it's worth reuniting the halves.

I've seen the *Sunshine Boys* before, but the cast I saw looked like they'd never read the script, nor had a rehearsal before going on. Mistakes, skipped lines, and a half-hearted round of applause afterwards. Three more performances after that, and they were toast. Never again!

We haven't done many cons in the last year or so, but we did go to a small convention northwest of Toronto in the small city of Guelph. Genrecon is the typical convention for the younger crowd these days... anime, gaming, comics and cosplay, with lots of Doctor Who. But, we were dealers! and we figured the con would be perfect for us. We did well, not as well as we had hoped, but we were surrounded by old



and new friends, and it was a fine weekend. Yvonne was a masquerade judge, and people are now discovering that she is a past costuming master. We are looking for more conventions and other shows for dealers' tables.

We haven't seen the Dennises in a very long time. Worldcons are officially a thing of the past for us, so we rarely travel. Please say hello to them for us.

I've only been to two Corflus, one in Toronto, and one in Las Vegas. I don't think that's a convention for me, either. I still feel on the outside looking in; I always have. I think I will leave that

convention to the close group that attends it regularly, and continue on with locs.

Used books are my SF lifeline these days! I have Pangborn's Davy on my shelf, and it's been some time since I've read it. Perhaps it is due again.

I have been in Tijuana exactly once. Yvonne had been there before, and when we were there, the bus driver said he'd grown up there, and had lots of good tips for us. We bought serapes and cheap Kahlua, and pure vanilla extract for less than \$30...this was in 1984, though. Still, the day we spent there contained lots of bargains, and somehow, the word got out about los Canadianos, and suddenly, we were surrounded by "real deals", none of which we took advantage of.

My LoC...we never did get to London and Loncon; couldn't save enough money, and both had new jobs we couldn't set aside for a trans-Atlantic trip. It's almost time for Loscon 41, and still wish we could return. The new lens is in my eye, and all is well.

I guess I am done for the moment...thanks for this, and hope there's more soon.

#

**Mary Manchester, 1297 Monroe Av #2, Rochester, NY 14620-1655**

**11 Dec 2014**

Thank you for *Feline Journal* #51. My favourite part was the photo on p. 7. The camera and the light sure got the memo about the girl with green hair.

Since last I wrote in April, not a lot has happened. I looked over the calendar; and almost all the notable happenings have been improvements to the building, most related to saving the owners money—solar panels!

Winter had come early and hard. Not like Buffalo's seven feet, but seven inches yesterday seemed plenty bad, considering our driving skills have to be relearned during each season's first storm.

Health-wise, nothing to report of consequence. It takes more effort to do less. Could that be—the years?

#

**Sheryl Birkhead, 25509 Jonnie Ct, Gaithersburg, MD 20882**

**13 Jan 2014**

Ah, watching the freezing rain fighting it out with the snow to see which stays around. Unfortunately, the thermometer tells me the snow/ice is going to win in a few more hours. I'll see if I can figure out how to import three photos from my email to explain where I am going. The MCSPCA has three kittens that have a disease cats don't get. Well, it turns out they *do* and because no one believes it, they are rarely tested or treated. Even when I was talking to some internal medicine specialists they kept asking me, "Don't you mean *hyperthyroidism*?" Uh, no, and it has been diagnostically verified. Started out with the relationship



shown in the pic of littermates. It was obvious something was very very wrong, the little guy (which is now not so little!) just sat dully, obtunded. To make a long and complicated (not to mention VERY expensive) story short, I am running over to where the foster works (at the referral veterinary practice) to get the latest blood samples to mail overnight out to MI state to see how the levels are. On top of making the diagnosis, no one was even sure of how to dose them! The dog dose is on a per pound basis; cat dosing is per cat, and these are kittens! FYI the bigger kitten in the image changed about a month after the pic and started getting fuzzy, broad and HIS blood work was unbelievably worse than the little guy. The female so far has had normal bloodwork, so she has already been spayed. BUT now she has stopped growing, so her blood sample is going in again with her littermates. I need to shut this down for now and head out onto the slick roads- oh joy!



Okay- samples sent- now back to *Feline Journal* #51.

It seems that *Gluten Free* seems to be the "in thing" right now. I started to try it out but decided that, while I am glad those who need the alternative now have products available, since I don't seem to have a sensitivity, why change? I have no idea (some of the theories of why this is becoming so prevalent seem to revolve around the fact that the gluten content is now much MUCH higher than it used to be) if vegan and organic if possible (but no idea if all wheat now has a high gluten content) makes any difference. I do stick to non-GMO as much as possible--so no idea if my diet alone helps.

Oh yeah, about the three kittens, forgot to tell you their names: Solo, Storm, and Skye- Walker. Some one had a Star Wars theme going.

I get the Meara pubs and read his Corflu ish eagerly. Granted, it took a while to figure it out; but as soon as I understood the organization, it was smooth sailing after that. So, I read your Corflu report to go along with it! From all the reports I have read it was an enjoyed con!

I am typing this on the "old" (it's all relative. Specs say late 2007, but it can run the software I need and the newer ones cannot). I need to have certain numbers of continuing education credits each yet to maintain my license. Maryland allows only a few webinar credits. I just got the "bad news" when I went to sign in on a free 1-1/2 hour webinar about diagnosing and treating the epileptic dog that this OS cannot support the system it used. Ah well the external hard drive on the desktop would probably work, but it (obviously) ties me to the desk, and I had no time to try to figure it out. So, I spent the time looking at the test from the slides and not hearing any of the audio. I have no idea if my attendance even showed up in their system; but since it was a free by invitation only session, at least I haven't lost any money. I already knew that Apple had stopped Safari security updates over a year ago on this OS, so if I do any web surfing I use a different browser, just in case it helps.

I need to take a look at Cats on Quilts the next time I go web surfing (this MacBook runs Snow Leopard 10.6.8 and the external hard drive has Mountain Lion -- I think 10.8.6). There is a huge difference in the speeds for Internet movement between the two. Unfortunately, the software that runs in both systems for some reason works differently, but that is a small sacrifice. Since all my storage media have been corrupted at one time or another, I am trying mightily to be sure I have current backups for both systems! I have both linked to Time Capsule and also have thumb-drives for various smaller bits (like LoCs) that I use more often. Ah yes now I am reading that CDs also degrade. Hmm that would have been my next move; guess I won't be doing that.

Tigger RIP. FYI there is a lot of research into stem cell therapy as a way to treat chronic renal disease. We'll see if this can, financially, become a widely used treatment. There are several places that do kidney transplants; and as far as I know, all of them require the owner of the recipient to also adopt the donor.

Ah a "Blast from the Past"-- Gary Mattingly; it has been a while since I've seen one of his LoCs (but then again, with all the stacks I have now organized on the living room floor, there may be some hiding in there---some *are* (ahem) a bit older.. ).

I just played my lottery game with the over-the-range microwave that sorta works. About once in six months, it does its thing—and hey—tonight it defrosted a muffin. The estimate about five years ago to replace it started at \$2500--no thank you. It turns out that the codes have changed and it needs to be moved up about a foot. That mandates that the custom built cabinets over the stove will have to be almost completely ripped out and the electrician said he has no idea if the wiring will reach to where the new one needs to be placed. So the estimate was based on needing a carpenter and cabinet-maker along with an electrician. I'll live without it. I can't just take it out since it is part of the stove hood; so if it comes out, something *has* to go in. Ah but for tonight, I had the luxury of almost immediate defrosted muffin instead of having to wait, as I usually have to do. How quickly we get used to immediate ...

With the 2015 Hugo nomination season now officially open, I realize I have not seen much in the way of the long and short dramatic presentations. I did see *Gravity* from Netflix. Pretty much the SF stuff I want to see is still all sitting firmly on my Netflix list as not yet having been released. Ah but one of these days RSN... Three that I am looking forward in 2015 are *Interstellar*, *Chappie*, and *Jupiter Ascending*--those are the ones that come immediately to mind. For TV I am enjoying *Forever*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Scorpion* (as not "quite" SF), Marvel's *Person of Interest* (still!), *Grimm*, and (again, peripheral) *Elementary*. For actual books my usual reading is pretty much limited to professional journals. So every year I keep track of the books (etc>O nominated and plan (ha) to go back and read then one day! I watched the most recent season of Doctor Who but so far have not quite warmed up to Capaldi .

I have an idea for your illo but need to figure out how to make what I see inside my head appear on the page. I'll work up to it...RSN.

Well, this has already run (almost) into the 14th, so I'll quit now---

#

**Brad Foster, PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016, bwfoster at Juno dot com**

**5 Feb 2015**

Got in the second issue of *Purrsonal Mewsings* this past week. First, got to say I love the logo from Alexis. He doesn't do a lot of bigger things like this these days, nice to see him stretching his design wings again and coming up with such a cool logo!

Speaking of art, did a little drawing the other day, and first thing I thought was "I wonder if Laurraine would want to use this in *Feline Mewsings*, or her new *Purrsonal* title? I call it the "three amigos", and I'll attach a copy here for you. (I see you still have a piece, the "Octo-ballet", from back at the end of 2011, and sent again about two years ago. I'm starting to think you just don't care for it? Never a problem if I send something you don't want to use, everyone has different tastes, and I don't expect everyone to like everything I do. But, let me know if you don't care to use it, so I can send it on to someone else, okay? Thanks!

((I just haven't found the right place yet for "Octo-ballet". I like all your artwork.))

On this issue-- yeah, the best laid plans of mice and men, as they say. Getting an issue out at least annually is still good!

Sorry to hear about the tooth problems. Cindy has had to deal with similar problems for years as well, poor thing. I've been incredibly lucky not to have had much if any problems with my teeth. (Even my wisdom teeth came in and found a place to rest, so didn't have to be pulled.) Knock on wood, hope will continue to be this lucky!



Tell those friends of yours with the new house in Henderson to put those blueprints in a safe place, for later reference. I wish all houses were required to supply the blueprints of their construction when they are sold each time. Would help out so much with the inevitable repairs that will come in the future, knowing where things are buried under the foundation, and in the walls, and how it all comes together.

Looking forward to next *Purrsonal*, as well as next *Feline*, -whenever- you feel the urge to create a new ish!

#

**Nate Bucklin**

**6 Feb 2015**

Thanks (as usual) for keeping me on your mailing list. It's the same as always. I like your writing, I like your topics, I like the person you reveal yourself to be.

*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* reminds me of *Hansel and Gretel* and *Ted and Alice*. Obviously no connection but a brief snicker. From my little experience with theatre, I suspect I could be a serious theatre fan. I can't envision *Around the World in Eighty Days* as a play at all, which probably just shows my own limits.

I've been declared 100% disabled. My cane and my four-wheeled waker help. A big help is the fact that a major grocery store is 1-1/2 blocks away.

#

**Sheryl Birkhead, 25509 Jonnie Ct, Gaithersburg, MD 20882**

**14 Mar 2015**

I still have the idea inside my head for a logo, just no idea when I am going to get around to sketching and working on it. Nice to see that Alexis came through for you!

Your dental misadventures make my own misgivings seem more and more valid. The dentist is proactive and believes in replacing crowns when they hit the fifteen year mark. I finally broke down and asked for anti-anxiety meds (mild but I hate med of any kind) since going in there really scares the bejabbers out of me. There are a bunch of crowns he wants to replace, starting with my very first one; bacteria are trapped under it which is now up to the third iteration. This is the first of my teeth that we found (the hard way of course) cannot be anaesthetized. As a result I feel I am being asked to walk into a very painful buzz-saw. I understand the rationale; crowns are not installed in an aseptic environment so it seems logical that bacteria are trapped under them at the interface. So, over time... (and yes, I have had other crowns replaced without any symptoms of discomfort; underneath the decay varied from very mild to extending down into the socket). I have been putting him off (and feel guilty since I understand the reasoning, but can't bear the thought ... I feel resentful that I feel guilty for saying no to him (ignoring that crowns are now around \$2000 each)--ah well. I have toyed with postponing the upcoming six-month visit because of back pain---that chair now tilts you well below horizontal; and my usual level of chronic upper back pain ratchets up several notches for at least a week after a visit under the best of conditions...which this is not. There is a long story about the lower back pain



this go round, not interesting but that is on top of the "usual" chronic pain and the snow has not been very forgiving. Of course I keep thinking that when one of the crowns he wants to replace does start to hurt, it is going to be an emergency (from my perspective!) very rapidly. Ah well, just gotta live with it, terrified but that seems to be the way it will be.

---All set for the Spring snow--well, I think it makes it right under the wire-- and with the 60s scheduled for Saturday, it should not last long.

While I can't really afford a new car, I have gotten used to the sturdy feel and superb safety of the Subaru Forester; but I tend to follow their dabbling into the hybrid market. I am not enamoured of the twenty mpg with this car but so far have not seen that the (CrossTrek) hybrid has "up to 34 mpg" listed in its description. Agh, just took a look at the price-- no thank you. I will admit that the next time I take the car in, I will take a look at it and see how it feels compared to the Forester. Ah yes, one can dream. This crossover model is a new one; so I am not sure that, even if I were seriously interested, I would be intensively looking for one just yet.

I caved and agreed when they called to remind me to go the the dentist as planned. But if I procrastinate, things will psychologically get worse. I have to merely (yeah, right) stick to the plan and say no thank you when he asks about replacing crowns again. It is my pain, my teeth, and my wallet (ah, it reads so sure on paper, now to say it). Since none of the teeth are hurting, I don't want to...oh well, I think I can maintain my resolve. Dentistry..yeah, such fun...not.

I sincerely hope your situation has been getting better.

I need to just knuckle down and work on that logo I have inside my head for you--um...yeah...RSN!

#

**Tom Feller, TomFeller at aol dot com**

**30 Mar 2015**

Thanks for sending the zine [*Purrsonal Mewsings* #1]. I retired at the end of December, so I hope to get back in the habit of writing LoCs. Sorry to hear about your teeth problems. Anita has challenges with her teeth, too.

Glad to see you are supporting your local theatre groups. We try to support ours as well.

#

**Murray Moore, murraymoore at gmail dot com**

**27 Jul 2015**

I do not believe that I have been at 9,000 feet above sea level other than as an airplane passenger.

This spring I became a volunteer with the local Riverwood Conservancy  
<http://www.theriverwoodconservancy.org/>, specifically a N3Per (Native Plant Propagation Program).

Riverwood is a former estate on the east bank of the Credit River. Seed from native plants on the property is gathered, sown, and the resulting plants planted on the property.

So far I have been on a spring see-the-spring-plants walk; helped plant native plants; helped collect seed and sow seed. Most of the sown seeds, in cells in rectangular plastic boxes, are adopted by volunteers. The boxes are brought home by volunteers and left outdoors, year-round. The work is watering the seedlings, likely twice a week, except, of course, in winter.

Because native plants do not grow quickly, volunteers might have a box for two, and three, years. A volunteer has the option of keeping one-third of the plants.

Of the Hugo nominees I have read SKIN GAME and THE GOBLIN EMPEROR. I am defeated by THE THREE BODY PROBLEM. I got past page 200, resumed, read another 30 pages. SKIN GAME is not the

best SF novel of the year. GOBLIN EMPEROR is fantasy; the Hugo is for SF; I'm funny that way. I haven't read THE DARK BETWEEN THE STARS.

My memory is that last year I gave my first Hugo novel vote to ANCILLARY JUSTICE. I have a copy of ANCILLARY SWORD. I expect that when I read it, I will favour it.

What with the kerfuffle with nominations this year, I have decided as my measure of Hugo worthiness, would I recommend this novel as a Hugo winner ten years in the future.

Also I would like Hugo novel nominees to be true novels, not one-third of a novel. Novels serialized through three years would be nomination-ready after publication of the final section.

See you at Prolog(ue).

#

**Trinlay Khadro, 1734 S 56th, W Atlis, WI 53214**

**28 Jul 2015**

Thanks for the zine.

You've probably seen my new haircut on Facebook. Sent the cut hair off to the Pantene Great Lengths, so someone can enjoy it. It was getting too much of a bother for me, having gotten to a fifteen-inch ponytail to send off.

Megumi and Seimei [her cats] are doing fine. They enjoy having so much running room in the new house.

I'm behind on my Jim Butcher-Harry Dresden reading. I enjoy the series, but it's really not Hugo type work. *Three Body Problem* was good, though it left me hanging, though I realize it's book one of a trilogy; and I'm looking forward to where it's going to take us.

I really enjoy your wildlife photos. We don't have the horned lizards here in Wisconsin, and I've always found them fascinating.

My gram had a yucca plant in her yard here in Wisconsin. I don't think it got as tall as the one in your photo, but it was one of my favourites.

With the doll meet last month, I stayed with my sister in Madison; and we went to see *Jurassic World*. My daughter wants her own raptor, but we know we couldn't manage one. Cats are in charge of us much of the time.

#

**Amy Harlib, aharlib at earthlink dot net**

**28 Jul 2015**

Really enjoyed the zine [*Purrsonal Mewsings* #1]! All the books you commented on are on my "must read" list. Glad you reinforced my expectations that I'll like them too.

I also had a good time with *Jurassic World*. Liked it better than *Jurassic Park*. A lot of it had to do with Chris Pratt who I think is adorable. I loved him so much in *Guardians of the Galaxy* which is one of the most fun films I've ever seen.

Go see *Ex Machina* for one of the most thoughtful and intelligent SF films dealing with sentient robots ever.

#

**Amy Harlib, aharlib at earthlink dot net**

**29 Jul 2015**

Glad to get to read this [*Purrsonal Mewsings* #2]. Loved the photos.

Loved *Interstellar* too. Also recommend Pixar's latest animated feature, *Inside Out*—very original and clever.

#

**Tom Feller, TomFeller at aol dot com**

**3 Aug 2015**

Thanks for sending the zine [*Purrsonal Mewsings* #3].

I also read and enjoyed *The Dark Between the Stars*, although I made it my third choice on the Hugo ballot after the *Goblin Emperor* and the *Three-Body Problem*; and I'm not sure if I will pick up another book in the series. There is so much else to read. *The Three-Body Problem* was my first choice, and I will start looking for the second book. *The Goblin Emperor* was my second choice; it felt like the first book in a series, but the author has said that no more books are planned.

You did better than me. I never got around to reading the other two Hugo nominees, *Skin Game* and *Ancillary Sword*.

My reaction to *Jurassic World* was like yours.

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**IAHF:** Jon Louis Mann, Linda Deneroff

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## \* Closing Remarks

I hope to stay with a more regular schedule from this point on.

I will be departing for a trip to Antarctica in a few days and will have a report on that in the next issue.

I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays, and I wish everyone a Happy New Year.

*Laurraine*

2 Jan 2016

