

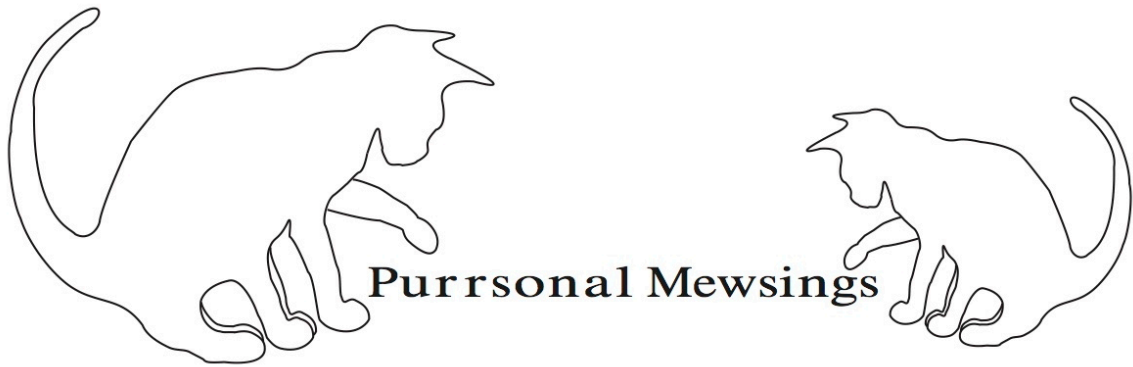
Purrsonal Mewsings #60



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#60

July 2017

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*** Editorial / Introduction**

I skipped publishing in July due to attending Westercon, which was in Tempe (suburb of Phoenix) this year. Connie Willis was one of the guests of honour. She's interesting to talk to as well as interesting to read. The report of the convention is included in this issue.

* * *

*** Local Outings**

Dunkirk: This movie tells the story of the rescue operation during World War II that was necessitated when the British and French armies were trapped on the beach at Dunkirk by the Germans. The Germans shot up most of the Naval ships sent to rescue the British soldiers. Civilian small craft were recruited to rescue the soldiers and managed to save most of the soldiers.

I enjoyed the movie a great deal; but I was already familiar with the events, having seen historical coverage on PBS. Director Christopher Nolan played with timing and interleaved incidents that were not necessarily in temporal order to maximize emotional impact. This worked for me. After the quiet beginning of the movie, I was on tenterhooks for the rest of the movie.

Unfortunately people not familiar with the basic story may have found the film somewhat confusing. Mike was one of these due to the temporal jump cuts in the movie.

* * *

*** Westercon Report (1-4 July 2017)**

This year's Westercon took place in Tempe, AZ, essentially part of Phoenix, and had the following guest lineup: Julie Dillon-Artist Guest of Honour, Tom Deadstuff-Local Artist Guest of Honour, Connie Willis-Author Guest of Honour, Gini Koch-Local Author Guest of Honour, Val & Ron Ontell-Fan Guests of Honour, Tim Griffin-Filk Guest of Honour, Henry Vanderbilt-Science Guests of Honour, Larry Elmore-Special Artist Guest of Honour, Bjo & John Trimble-Special Media Guests of Honour, and Weston Ochse-Toastmaster.

We left home on Friday, 30 June, about 12:15. We had to run a few errands locally and in Tucson before we headed toward Phoenix, but we reached the Tempe Mission Palms hotel about 16:30. We got checked into room 3030. The room keys worked by proximity; this was our second experience with this type of system.

After Mike finished watching his news show, we went down to the lobby. Con registration was in full swing, so we joined the slow-moving line. We talked to people in line and also Leigh Strother-Vien and Francis Hamit, who were sitting in the area. It turned out Mike was registered only as my guest, so a badge was made for him; as the badge maker ran out of material, Mike just used his first name; it worked. Then we walked around the block to the Rula Bula Irish pub, which we later discovered was directly accessible from the rear entrance from just outside the rear of the hotel. There was a fan gathering outside, but there was too much tobacco smoke, so we went back in and got dinner. The smoke may have been from passersby walking past. There was a

gluten free menu, but I discovered that it was woefully outdated. Regardless there were gluten free entrees.

Afterward I went back to the registration area to see if a pocket programme was in the offing; I was assured it would be delivered the next day; I'd have to see how it looks; what we had at that point was pretty dreadful. Mike saved the next day's programme from the Internet as a PDF, so we used that to decide what to do then. Lisa Hayes came by, and we chatted. She and Kevin Standlee had just arrived. Back in the room I organised myself for the next day and caught up with e-mail. I got to bed about 23:00.

I slept somewhat fitfully, something that frequently happens on the first night at a hotel. I got up to my alarm at 07:30 on Saturday, 1 July. I discovered that I was overmedicated for allergies so was dehydrated and suffering from a sinus headache. I had to forego alcoholic beverages until the medications worked themselves out of my system. My allergies had been really bad at home, probably because of smoke from neighbouring wild fires. There was no smoke in Phoenix, and it was hotter.

I went down to breakfast alone but was seated at a table next to the one where the Standlees were seated, so I enjoyed a stimulating conversation. They left before I was done. As I was finishing up, Woody Bernardi arrived for breakfast, and I invited him to join me, so we talked while he was eating.

Afterward I picked up the pocket programme. I've seen better, but it was serviceable. It listed all the programme items but did not have any participant names.

When we left the restaurant, it was almost time for "Digital Art Using DAZ Studio", software that is a free download. Unfortunately there was no tech support to help the presenter, Julie K. Verley, to make the connection to her computer work with the provided projector. There were few enough of us there that I suggested we all gather around her laptop, and that worked. Although I learned a lot about how the program worked, the speaker didn't really seem very well prepared. Mostly I learned that the programme is too complicated for me to want to spend time trying to use it.

I had time after that, so I looked around the dealer room area. First I picked up a second site selection ballot for the Westercon in 2019 from Ben Yalow, who later had to leave the convention for personal reasons. There was also a table with a Lego scene display. Mike found me while I was attempting and failing to take a panorama photo of the display and showed me how to do it. During my subsequent circuit around the dealer room, I ran into and conversed with Laura Freas and Steve Beraha and Seth Breitbart and Felicia Herman. I also chatted with some of the dealers. Afterward I made a circuit of the tables in the corridor outside the dealer room. There were tables representing future Westercons, the Phoenix Astronomical Society, and others. I spoke at length with some of the people manning the tables. In particular I told Paul Facuna of the Phoenix Astronomical Society about Mike's work with the dark sky project for Oracle State Park; they later met during the stargazing that was set up at night.

In the meantime Mike attended the panel "What Made the Golden Age Golden?" with panellists Connie Cookrell, H. Paul Honsinger, Syd Logsdon, Connie Willis. Two other people participated as moderators (see photo following page). The Golden Age was golden, because it was the first time various ideas were used. Asimov and Heinlein ploughed new ground with their stories. The era was a positive/upbeat time. Short stories were major players. Initially the stories were kid-oriented "gadget" stories. But good writers eventually wrote good adult stories. Editors, such as Campbell and Merrill,

were a major influence on stories. The publishing industry has changed drastically since then, but online publishing seems to be helping now (i.e. Tor.com). Big publishing houses often are a problem and get in the way of writers and readers. Recommended reading: Judith Merrill's "Year's Best" series and William Tenn collection from NESFA Press.



Mike also attended "Year of the Dwarf Planet" about the Dawn Mission to Ceres and New Horizons Mission to Pluto presented by astronomer Dave Williams.

I had insufficient time for a proper lunch, so I grabbed a couple of taffy candies from one of the tables to accompany my lunch vitamins.

Then I attended "The Making of Christopher Marlowe" presented by Francis Hamit about his ongoing project to make a film based on his play about Christopher Marlowe. It was quite fascinating. At this point he has lined up half of his funding. It's a long and complicated process. Gary Kurtz is slated to be producer, and there are about a half



dozen executive producers, including LASFS member Mike Donohue.

After that I joined Mike at opening ceremonies. They had started late, so I hadn't missed much of it. All the guests were introduced (see photo above). We returned briefly to our room after that to regroup. Then we went to the con suite for an ice cream social. Before we entered the room, we stopped to talk to Linda Deneroff and someone else. There were three flavours; I had chocolate, and I think Mike had vanilla; the third choice was orange sherbet. Bjo and John Trimble were there, and I spent some time in conversation with them and a local fan named Dr. Kim. When the Trimbles started to leave for dinner, we decided to have dinner at Harry's Bar in the hotel. After we were seated, Bjo's group entered and took a large table. Laura and her husband sat down at the table next to ours, and we talked to them quite a bit. After we finished eating, I

stayed to continue the conversation while Mike left to return to our room.

Afterward I checked out the party posters and then returned to our room briefly to regroup. Mike, who had returned to our room earlier, announced that there was stargazing near the pool and left. I took a bit of time to plan out the rest of my convention. Then I decided to check out the stargazing. I had some problems finding the pool area. When I eventually found it, Mike was still there. There were three

telescopes aimed at the Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn (see photo at right). Mike had to help aim the third one, but I eventually managed to look through each one. While I was looking at Saturn, Linda Deneroff showed up. I left with her to check out the parties. I managed to find three of them. One was hosted by the Utah group bidding for Westercon and Nasfic in 2019. Another party featured Connie Willis, who was talking about World



War II, which she had researched extensively for her writing. I sat down next to two cat-owners and ended up exchanging cat stories. After Connie left, I checked out a third party with a Men in Black theme. I ran into Kaires there who told me about the Sime~Gen party planned for the next day. We left the party together and had a fairly extensive conversation about printers, bras, and hormones. I then returned to our room, updated my diary, and got to sleep about 00:45.

I got up shortly before 07:30 on Sunday, 2 July.

I was down to breakfast about 09:00. Lisa Hayes came over from across the room to talk to me, because Kevin had his nose buried in a paper. Kevin joined her after he'd finished his breakfast. We had a very interesting conversation about a variety of topics.

Meanwhile Mike attended "Ringworld Revealed: Discoveries from NASA's Cassini Mission to Saturn" presented by Bridget Landry and Dave Williams. Mission funding was cut 50% in order to extend it to 2017. Many seasons on Saturn were studied--northern hemisphere winter in 2004 to summer in 2016. The north pole hexagon, first seen by Voyager, is still not understood. Ring particles vary in size from that of smoke particles to apartment building size. The ring is tens of metres thick. The shadow of the ring affects Saturn's atmosphere. The plan is to crash Cassini into the planet on 15 September 2017.

As I walked through the courtyard toward the dealer room area, I saw Jacqueline Lichtenberg and talked with her about many things. I learned something new about orange trees; the small green ones on my tree now will mature next year. At the entry to the dealer room, I snapped photos of the new Lego display. Then I made a circuit of the art show that included several tempting pieces. Bjo had several cute sketches on display. I talked with her and author Michael D'Ambrusio after I exited the art show

area. I had about an hour before the first programme I was interested in, so I sat down in the lobby area to eat a couple of pieces of chocolate, take my lunch pills, and catch up with my diary. A bit later I got up to check whether there was a gift shop when I ran into Kaires; we talked for a while, and I promised to e-mail her my zine. There is a gift shop of sorts adequate to any needs I might develop.

Then I attended "Spotlight on Connie Willis", the room for which had been changed. I saved a seat for Mike, who managed to make it in plenty of time. Connie told some interesting stories related to her anniversary travels and research for books and read a short story about a total solar eclipse trip, in honour of the upcoming eclipse.

Mike wanted to get lunch, so we went to Harry's in the hotel. Shortly after we got there, Laura and Steve arrived for drinks; so we moved to a larger table and talked. We were slowed down by my being initially served a salad that was obviously not gluten free.

We returned to our room afterward, but Mike left shortly to attend another panel. I plugged a used camera battery into the recharger. I went back down to turn in our site selection ballots. I took more photos of the Lego sculpture, because it had been changed. Then I joined Mike at a panel about Roswell that included Connie in the panel. Then I walked over to the lobby area and bumped into Lee Whiteside and his wife, Nadine; and we talked for a while.

While we were talking, a costumer friend of theirs, Randall, came around and mentioned getting dinner. I'd been thinking of doing that myself, so I suggested doing that together, and he was amenable. He turned out to be a very interesting dinner companion. He is a geologist, and his hobbies include SCUBA diving and kayaking.

The panel Mike rushed off to attend was "Happy 70th Anniversary, Roswell!" with panellists Gini Koch, Henry Vanderbilt, and Connie Willis. Roswell was described as a glorified truck stop in the desert and the dairy center of the southwest. I joined Mike for the end of the panel.

Another panel Mike attended was "Star Trek: the Original Series: a 50th Anniversary Retrospective" with the Trimbles and Dave Williams (see photo at right). Various anecdotes about the show were shared. Mike won a poster in a trivia contest.



After dinner I returned to our room to change from my fanny pack to my regular cross body bag. The fanny pack was aggravating a pain in my back that I woke up with. Then I accompanied Mike to a Star Trek party that started at 19:00. I left there about a half hour later to attend the masquerade, which was small and lightly attended. I sat next to Victoria Smith who once lived at Cameo Woods, a condo development where I had my first condo, and now lives in Culver City. There were very few masquerade entries, though those few were all good. The half time show was a young man who does card tricks. From the audience he looked impressive. After

the masquerade I rejoined Mike at the Star Trek party. When he left, I also did; I took care of some personal business in our room and then resumed partying. I first went to the Sime~Gen party; the spread included fruit, which I munched on. Then I went to two other parties. The Westercon 71 party offered gluten free sandwiches, including cucumber--yum! I returned to the room about 23:00 and caught up with my diary. I got to bed about 23:30.

Monday, 3 July, I got up to my alarm at 06:00. I got down to breakfast about 08:00.

Mike attended a 9:00 presentation, "Exoplanets: Discovering Planets outside the Solar System", given by astronomer David Lee Summers. He discussed the Kepler mission, which was developed specifically to look for exoplanets and other Earth-based methods used to detect them. A side effect of the search for exoplanets was the discovery of rogue stars that are not part of any galaxies.

At 09:30 I attended a reading that included Jacqueline. There were supposed to be three readers, but the third one never showed up. The other reader was Suzanne Lazear. The reading became a fairly intimate affair with only three and a half in the audience. I had a half hour break before I went to an interview of Val and Ron Ontell, who were the fan guests of honour. Following that I attended "Digital Painting with Julie Dillon"--mostly Photoshop.

Mike attended the 10:30 presentation "Psyche: Journey to a Metal World" given by Dave Williams. Psyche is an asteroid that NASA plans to send a probe to. Psyche was the 16th asteroid to be discovered. Williams discussed the design of the spacecraft.

Mike also attended the 12:30 panel "Roddenberry vs. Abrams: Two Timeslines, Two Visions of Trek" with the Trimbles and Dave Williams. Many people don't consider the alternate universe Trek to be Trek at all.

I had lunch about 13:30 at the Mesquite Grill where breakfast is served, which has a much better salad menu than Harry's. I sat at a table next to Laura and Steve. They stayed for a while after they finished eating to talk to me.

Then I went to a Connie Willis Meet and Greet, where mostly she held court. It was quite enjoyable and fun. Afterward I returned to our room to find Mike already there.

We went down to Harry's for dinner, Mike's only meal that day. We sat next to the Julie Dillon. She was with another artist I had talked to on the first day just outside the art show. So we conversed a bit. It turned out Julie was the person with whom I'd had a conversation while waiting for David Gerrold to show up for a programme item at the worldcon in Spokane in 2015. She frequently puts cats into her art. She mentioned working with horses, because she would be tempted to take cats home if she worked with cats. Dinner went well except for my having to send back an overcooked steak. After the artists left, Leigh and Francis arrived. We talked a bit until I left.

After dinner I returned to our room to get my video camera and attended a concert by the Bohnhoffs. Afterward I dropped the camera off at our room and proceeded to parties, of which there were three. At the Star Trek party, I spoke briefly with Kaires. Then I went to the Westercon 72 (2019) party where I upgraded us to attending memberships and conversed with Connie Willis, Linda Deneroff, John Hertz, and others. At the last party, I chatted with someone whose last name was Manning. I didn't get to bed until about 00:30. I had some sinus problems, so I had to prop myself up in order to be able to get to sleep.

I got up to my alarm at 06:30 on Tuesday, 4 July, and got down to breakfast shortly after 08:00, so had plenty of wiggle room before the first panel I was interested in. I caught up with e-mail. Jacqueline found me and gave me the sad news that she was leaving because of a death in the family. I later walked over to the corridor outside the dealer room and bought memberships in next year's Westercon, which will be in Denver. I also photographed that day's Lego creation.

Mike went to a 9:30 presentation, "Picking Up the Spare: New Horizons at Pluto", given by Bridget Landry. The talk included videos taken of Pluto by New Horizons. It's theorized that Pluto may have an ocean under its crust.

At 11:00 I attended a John Hertz discussion of *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells, which was fairly well attended. One interesting point he brought up is that the problems Wells was concerned about when he wrote the book may still exist today, so in that sense the book is still of current interest.

Meanwhile Mike attended a second talk by Bridget Landry--"Eye in the Martian Sky: Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter". This is a project that she has worked on. The probe was launched back in 2005. It has collected data for over five Martian years. It also functions as data relay for landers and rovers. The orbiter is currently funded through October 2018.

I went to lunch after that, and Woody Bernardi kept me company. Unfortunately I realised too late that I should have stayed in the book discussion room for the next programme item, which was devoted to Gini Koch, whom I have read.

Mike attended a 13:30 panel, "A New World: Creating Star Trek Fandom" with the Trimbles and Dave Williams. They discussed the creation and growth of Trek fandom. Panellists and audience members told stories about their experiences in fandom and encounters with Trek actors.

The same panellists plus Diane Shreve also presented "Still Boldly Going: Star Trek's Continuing Legacy". Discussion was about the upcoming CBS All Access series *Star Trek: Discovery*. The storyline takes place ten years before the original series.

While waiting for the next programme item I wanted to go to, I caught up with e-mail, Google Plus, and Facebook. The programme item was a reading that included David Lee Summers. Due to various circumstances, he was the only scheduled reader there. He invited two of the audience members to participate. One read a couple of short poems, and the other read the beginning of a short story. David read an entire short story and showed a video ad being made for his latest novel.

We went to dinner at Rula Bula, and it was the best dinner of our trip.

After dinner we returned to our room. We both did as much packing as we were able to. Mike went down to the pool deck almost immediately after that to set up his camera for the fireworks. I spent a bit of time reading e-mail first. The pool deck was oppressively hot because of the humidity coming off the pool and jacuzzi. While we were waiting for the fireworks to start, we had conversations with various people. The fireworks, which started about 21:15 were quite impressive and lasted about forty minutes (see photo to



right above).

We returned to the room. I left again to attend the dead dog party for a while. I stayed longer than I had intended but still managed to get to bed before midnight.

I got up to my alarm at 05:00 on Wednesday, 5 July. There were clouds in the sky this morning. I made it down to breakfast a bit after 06:30.

After that we took our possessions to the Lexus. While Mike was putting everything in the car, I checked out of the Tempe Mission Palms. I slept more or less during most of the drive down to Tucson. Almost as soon as we entered Tucson, my allergies manifested. So I was awake during the drive from the freeway to PetSmart, where we picked up our cats. They were quiet during the drive home until we pulled in to our garage. I took them inside before I brought anything else in.

* * *

*** Kritter Korner**

I share a few wildlife photos. The first is a family of quail:



The weather got so hot in July that animals started lying down in the shade. Mike caught this rabbit resting:





Another time Mike caught an antelope squirrel munching on the hibiscus leaves: July was when I started having problems with bees at the hummingbird feeder. Mike



managed to get a photo:

I eventually took down the feeder. Bees also liked the fruit I set out for birds, and I stopped putting them out as well. I read that the yellow in the feeder tended to attract bees. Also a different style of feeder was recommended. I found some craft paint that I'm going to try using to paint the yellow parts of the feeder. It's possible that the hot monsoon weather has something to do with the bees' behaviour, since I didn't have any problems previously. Regardless I have to find some time to try out the changes.

* * *

* **Astronomy**

July was very poor for astronomy. It began with nearby fires putting so much smoke

into the sky that it got in the way of seeing very much. Then the monsoon rains started, and most nights were too cloudy. The humidity also negatively affected seeing. Mike managed to take some good photos in June. Here are photos of Jupiter and Saturn:



He also managed this beautiful photo of the Milky Way:



Mike spent much time testing out equipment he plans to use to photograph the upcoming solar eclipse.

* * *

*** Reviews:** reviews without attribution are by the editor

The Dark Forest, by Cixin Liu

This is the second novel in the author's "Remembrance of Earth's Past" Trilogy. The first volume was *The Three-Body Problem*, which I read and enjoyed greatly.

I always intended to follow up on the trilogy. This year the third novel has been nominated for the Hugo Award. I wanted to read the second volume before I read the Hugo nominee.

In *The Dark Forest*, Earth is reacting to the revelations of the first novel. Reactions were variations on despair. Some people wanted to live it up before everything ended. Others became despondent. The United Nations started a project to try to repel the coming invasion. Four people were picked to be Wallfacers. Each Wallfacer was given free rein to come up with ideas.

This novel is easier to read, especially for readers not able to follow the scientific thought that was a main character in the first novel. Although there are ideas presented in this current book, the characters play a stronger role. One character is a man introduced in the first book and provides a modicum of continuity. I found it easier to identify with the characters this time.

The second novel of a trilogy is often not strong, but I found this one excellent.

#

A Dog's Purpose, by W. Bruce Cameron

Seeing the movie made me want to read the original book. I'm glad I did. Although the movie was essentially the same as the book, there were things in the book that didn't make it into the movie. Also a couple of scenes in the movie were made more sensational. For the most part, they were identical. In case you missed my review of the film, this is the story of a dog that reincarnates. According to the author, he made up the story while driving with a friend who was grieving the loss of a dog. I'm glad he wrote it down for the rest of us. I recommend it for all animal lovers.

#

A Closed and Common Orbit, by Becky Chambers

This book was nominated for the Hugo. Chambers is an excellent writer, and this book is very enjoyable to read. It takes place in the far future when humans live side by side with other species. There are also AIs being used inside space ships and other mechanisms. There are two protagonists. One is an AI inhabiting a body that looks human. She used to inhabit a space ship and is experiencing problems adjusting to living in a body. The other is a woman who used to be a "mere" clone who used to be not much more than a slave in a facility where many children laboured. Any misbehaviour was punished, probably with death; this is only hinted at, as this portion of the story is told from the viewpoint of the girl who escaped. The character development is excellent. The story is convoluted enough to keep the reader's interest.

Although I enjoyed the book, I don't see that it has the outstanding quality that I think is necessary to deserve a Hugo.

#

2001: a Space Odyssey, by Arthur C. Clarke

I reread this for the sf book club I belong to. The last time I read it was so long ago that it was almost like reading the book for the first time. My memory of the book was overshadowed by the movie version, which is also excellent. There are many details that I'd forgot. In case anyone has not read this or seen the movie, it takes place in an imaginary 2001 in which mankind has already settled the Moon. No one imagined back when it was written back in the 1960s that Man would pull its horns back in and retreat from space exploration and settlement. In the novel an anomalous structure is discovered on the Moon. The structure sends a message in the direction of Saturn, so a space ship is sent in that direction. There are two astronauts on the ship as well as three other crew members who are in hibernation pods. The ship is run mostly by an AI grade computer.

All does not go smoothly, and the people back on Earth are too far away to be very helpful. Stuff happens. I don't want to say more in case you haven't read the book or seen the movie. This is one of Clarke's works in which he presages the transformation of mankind.

I always found the book in combination with the movie to be extremely thought-provoking. When I first saw the movie, it compelled me to reread the book and read two other books about the making of the movie. Unlike Clarke's other novels, the story was developed in cooperation with Stanley Kubrick.

This book has legs. It's well on its way to becoming a classic.

#

The Zookeeper's Wife: a War Story, by Diane Ackerman

This factual account is based on a diary kept by the titular woman, Antonina Zabinski. The author pulls in facts from other sources when necessary to fill in gaps in the account. Jan Zabinski ran the zoo in Warsaw. When the Germans invaded, the zoo was shuttered. Many of the animals were killed by nervous or sadistic soldiers on both sides. Some small animals lived with the Zabinski family. Many of the more interesting animals were taken to Germany. As the war progressed, they tried farming various different animals that would be useful. Because of the many buildings of the zoo and the underground passages connecting many of them, it was an ideal place to hide Jews and other people hiding from the Nazis. The Zabinskis had a son, and it was difficult to raise him under such trying circumstances. He grew up okay, though, and provided some of the information for this book.

I previously reviewed the movie version of the book. The movie took some liberties, especially with the character of one of the Zabinskis' German friends. Otherwise it was pretty faithful to actual events.

* * *

*** StippleAPA**

StippleAPA is an amateur press association. An APA is like a group pen pal. Each distribution includes a fanzine from each member, who usually writes about his or her interests and life and makes comments on the previous issues of the other members. If you're interested in joining, please let me know and I can get you in touch with the

person who runs it.

My apologies for missing the last collation. I felt it was better not to rush trying to get an issue into the July disty. So this issue contains my Westercon report.

MAILING COMMENTS ON STIPPLE-APA #310

Stephanie Meyer (Monkey Mind): I hope you are settling into your new home.

Erik Biever (Remove Shells before Consuming): My condolences on your loss of Luci.

Bill Thomasson (Musings from the Gathering Dusk #9): You certainly seem to be keeping busy. I, myself, find that I'm busier after retirement than I ever was when I was working. I don't know how managed to find the time to work.

Ruth Odren (The Once and Future Zine): We had a lot of highs in three digits in June. Once monsoon started after the first week of July, temperatures dropped; but the higher humidity made it feel hotter much of the time.

Sparrow (Not unlike a Sparrow's Perspective): I'm unfamiliar with most of the Japanese anime works you describe. The only one I've heard of before is *Space Battleship Yamato*.

S. Rayne (Addendum to Issue 310): My condolences on your loss of Robin.

Marge Sehnert (Mamma's

Mutterings): Sunset colours are very tricky. Most of the photos I publish have been modified using software to make them look more realistic.

S. Rayne (Wight as Rayne): I do recall one time in California seeing ash dropping from the sky when there was a nearby wildfire, but I don't recall when that was. There was another time when there was a small wildfire only a mile away. Since it was in an area with homes, massive efforts were made to get the fire controlled quickly. So far in Arizona, we've only been affected by the smoke from fires. My allergies also react badly, and the smoke frequently ruins the sky for astronomy.

Because I had so much trouble with photos jumping around everywhere that I switched from Word to Pages for documents that are more complex than plain text.

Joyce Maetta Odum (Frolicking Window): Well, of course, most alcoholic beverages taste of alcohol. However, there was one vodka that I used once that was undetectable by flavour when it was mixed. It was sold by Canada Dry. I don't know if it still exists.

Cy Chauvin (Amazons & Swallows

Forever! #55): Nice writeup on the Silver Lake Trail.

Jacky Boykin (Hollywood 101: the “Talk” of the Town): Mike went back to Myrtle Beach, SC, a few years ago for a squadron reunion. The base is no longer there; but a lot of the housing was still being used, including the one he lived in.

When I lived in Marblehead, MA, as a teen, my alarm clock on summer mornings was the sound of many sea gulls on the roof of my bedroom. I didn’t really mind it.

We have many kinds of birds (that I’ve identified so far) that come to our feeders and birdbaths—three kinds of hummingbirds, many kinds of sparrows, hooded orioles, cardinals, pyrrhuloxia, cowbirds, Gila woodpeckers, quails, doves, house finches, and probably others I can’t think of at the moment.

I recently reread *2001: a Space Odyssey* for the book club I belong to. It holds up and still makes me think. This is also true for the movie, which is different in minor ways.

At a San Diego sf convention a few years ago, two of the speakers were linguists who have invented languages for some sf movies and TV shows. I had a very interesting conversation with them. One topic we discussed was the proper way to teach a language to a person who has the grammar but not the vocabulary. For instance I don’t really speak Japanese, but its grammar is imbedded in my memory from having spent the first several years of my life in Japan.

Lucy Schmeidler (Don’t Ask #2): Of course a bobcat is a small earth-moving machine. Bobcats and Canada Lynxes are very closely related. They are different species in the same genus, the *Lynx* genus. There is very little overlap in their territories.

Our antelope squirrels top out at 10 inches in length. The larger rock squirrel can grow to 28 inches.

Nicole Bourgoïn (A Fool’s Errand): Today there seem to be a lot of books that seem to be cross genre. I don’t know about traditional publishers, but there are probably publishers who would be interested in your work.

Jeanne Mealy (Quirky Bits): The things you say about the panel “How to Spot a Fan” sound more like ways to spot any undersocialized person. Not all fans fit into this category.

How a person looks at any age depends on many factors. A lot has to do with the person’s outlook on life. Grumpy people seem generally to look older than their happier counterparts, for instance.

It’s illegal to pick up lava from Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park. It may be okay to pick up lava from elsewhere. There is a legend about a curse against people who take lava home, but it’s just a legend.

Taral seems to be doing okay.

I left a message on Sheryl Birkhead’s phone about the steampunk cat thank-you cards. This comment is mainly here to remind me to pass on the answer when I get it.

I haven't finished reading #311, so I will comment on that next time. See you all in the next disty.

* * *

* 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 21 September 2017.

Amy Harlib, amyharlib at gmail dot com

6 June 2017

Enjoyed *Purrsonal Mewsings* #58. What a gorgeous lynx on the cover, all the photos were lovely.

((It's a bobcat, not a lynx. Lynxes live in more northern climes.))



On April 7th, the MRI of my right hip showed some soft tissue damage and some healing. The good doctor told me that if I continue to perform extreme ranges of motion, my right hip replacement is in danger of dislocating again; and each time that happens, the soft tissues get further damaged. The right hip modification surgery implants a lining in the hip socket that holds the head of the femur more firmly, but limits range of motion.

I decided losing range of motion after enduring surgery was too frightening at this time and, as my right hip was recovering spectacularly with the hip brace off, I decided to risk resuming performances and hoping for the best at least until the end of the summer. I needed the income and the ecstasy of performing too much to stop. By May I had regained very advanced range of motion and exactly two months after hip brace, I have regained so much I can hardly believe it and my right hip feels strong and good and I can perform full contortion acts and I hope the damned thing stays in the hip socket despite myself!

Here is a photo taken of me in my flat on May 10th – this is why I am called Amazing Amy (see photo previous page):

Films I have loved lately:

Ghost in the Shell – not as good as the original anime, but still worthwhile.

Power Rangers – gave the teen heroes much better characterizations and the villainess one of the dumbest names ever and one of the most gorgeous costumes ever, so I never got tired of looking at her!

She's Elizabeth Banks as Rita Repulsa. She was also Effie in the *Hunger Games* movies and so different looking and acting it's hard to believe it's the same person, but that is what a great actor does!

Beauty and The Beast live action musical – follows the animated version quite closely, adds a nice new song for the Beast and a couple of good scenes that fill out Belle's back story; and I loved it just as much as I love the animation from 1991.

Boss Baby – fun CGI animation.



Cezanne et Moi with Eng. subtitles – brilliant bio pic about the friendship between the titular painter and the novelist Emile Zola in late 19th cent. France.

I Am Not Your Negro – brilliant documentary about racism in the USA narrated from the late writings of James Baldwin by Samuel L. Jackson.

The Death of Louis the XIV – historical drama about the last days of the titular ruler of 17th cent. France – a sly depiction of the absurdities of elites that cannot mask the suffering of dying that all mortal flesh is heir to.

Your Name – dazzling Japanese anime about distant high schoolers minds mysteriously switching bodies and how they come to meet directly and resolve what is happening to them.

Colossal – fun take on the kaiju genre – an American couple discover that a rampaging Godzilla-like being and a Giant Robot in Seoul, S. Korea are somehow related to what they do in a certain park near where they live and how they cope with the bizarre consequences.

Lost City of Z – Excellent historical drama about the British explorer in S. American Amazon who never returned from his third expedition along with his eldest son – also lost. Treats the Native Americans respectfully.

Kedi – marvellous documentary about cats in contemporary Istanbul – a must for all cat lovers – now out on DVD!

Baathubali 2: The Conclusion – spectacular fantasy musical adventure epic set in a magical mythical medieval India – so thrilling – like an Indian *Lord of the Rings* – but with all human being characters, some with demi-god fighting prowess. I saw Part 1 two years ago and this sequel is even better.

Guardians of the Galaxy 2 – adore this fun space opera romp with dazzling visuals – eccentric characters and lots of laughs.

A Quiet Passion – brilliant historical drama about Emily Dickinson – ought to be required viewing for all high school students!

Pirates of the Caribbean 5: Dead Men Tell No Tales – not quite as good as the first 4 but still dazzles and entertains. I am such a sucker for pirate movies that I just can't help loving them no matter what.

King Arthur: Legend of the Sword – fun, hip, irreverent take on the famous British legend – dazzled visually – liked it a lot more than some reviewers.

That's all till next time. Please let us know how your cats are! Peace!

((Our cats are fine for their age. Mercury is seventeen and feeling his age. Gateway is three years younger and doing much better.))

#

Timothy Lane, timothyane51 at gmail dot com

7 June 2017

I enjoyed the magazine. That zookeeper and wife may have lost a lot of animals to the attack on Warsaw, but I suspect many would have fallen victim to hungry citizens anyway. Rations in Germany were adequate because they looted the occupied lands -- and who cared how much Polish (and Jewish) subhumans had available to eat. Any that survived that would probably would have lost in the 1944 Warsaw uprising.

((Of course, you're correct. The *Zookeeper's Wife* wasn't so much about the animals as about the Jews and other persecuted people they were able to help, in part because of the physical layout of the zoo.

((I know in Tokyo and other parts of Japan, many of the zoo animals were slaughtered and eaten as meat. People endowed with enough money were able to buy this meat to sustain them through the war. My father was one of the lucky ones to be able to eat this meat. He was a young student at the time and protected from the military draft.))

Jo Walton's third and final book in the series was set around twenty years after the war, during a London conference to finish divvying up the world or some such (I don't remember the precise details, which are really little more than a McGuffin anyway).

#

Cathy Pamer-Lister, cathypl at sympatico dot ca

8 June 2017

I'm curious about Mike--I am myself an amateur astronomer, and that photo of the needle galaxy is quite impressive. Is he your other half? Do you know David Levy?

((Yes, he's my husband. We met David Levy briefly but can't really say we know him.))

#

Cathy Pamer-Lister, cathypl at sympatico dot ca

9 June 2017

David got his start in astronomy at the Montreal Centre of the RASC. I'm a member, and met him several times. Tell Mike his astronomy photos are great!

#

Tom Feller, PO Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214-0937

9 June 2017

Thanks you for sending the zine. I am enclosing my most recent FAPAzine in trade. It even includes my short review of *The Zookeeper's Wife*.

I envy you for "An Evening with Neil Gaiman". We saw him at the Montreal worldcon in 2009. I have read *American Gods* twice, first when it was nominated for the Hugo and

won and later for a book group. I regard Gaiman as one of the best fantasy writers working today. Consequently, I was curious about the eight-episode TV series on Starz that is currently showing. We have seen the first six episodes; but, while the critics seem to love it, I have mixed feelings, although I do like Ian McShane as Mr. Wednesday (Wotan), Ricky Whittle as Shadow Moon, Gillian Anderson as Lucy Ricardo (Media), and Orlando Jones as Mr. Nancy (Anansi). The problematic scenes for me are the ones that are trying to set a mood rather than tell a story. It is also rather slow moving compared to my experience of reading the novel, which I could hardly put down; and I have read that this year's episodes will only cover about one-third of it.

#

Amy Harlib, amyharlib at gmail dot com

21 June 2017

Enjoyed PM #59 – the photos and the astronomy/constellation book reviews, etc.

#

Timothy Lane, timothylane51 at gmail dot com

21 June 2017

One problem with Verne's work has been getting good translations.

((The one I read this time was published in the middle of last century. I earlier read a version published for young readers that was illustrated. Other readers in our book club read another translation. I could have read the original, which I have on one of my reader apps; but it would have taken longer. My French is not as good as my English.))

#

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

21 June 2017

Our weather has settled down a bit, but it's been wild. Lakeshore properties are still increasingly lake and less shore every time the wind blows from the northeast. Docks, lawns, decks, foundations...

And you are sweltering, right?

Thanks for *F. M.* #58. Wonderful photos, Mike!

#

John Louis Mann, net_democracy at yahoo dot com

21 June 2017

I read your review of *Arrival* in *Purrsonal Mewsings*. You might want to read *Yesterday's Kin* by Nancy Kress (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/nancy-kress/yesterdays-kin/>). Similar premise with a linguist. One of my favourites by Nancy Kress; I believe it got the Nebula and has been anthologized a lot.

((I have enjoyed works by Nancy Kress that I've read before. I've put the book on a list for borrowing from the library eventually.))

I've been hearing that smaller jets were being grounded because of the heat. I guess because hotter air is thinner, planes need more runway for more speed to take off. When I was based in PHX, I would deadhead on Sky West from LAX until ATA went under in 2008.

((Even here in Oracle, we've had a few days with highs above 110°F. This is the first year since we moved here that this has happened.))

I hope you have a backup generator for your AC, in case power goes out.

((We don't, but we'll consider getting one if there are any lengthy power outages.))

#

Jonathan Post, jvospost3 at gmail dot com

21 June 2017

As a child, I was baffled by a passage in a Jules Verne novel where folks on a desert island started a campfire with lentils. Years later I figured it to be a horrible translation from French, meaning small lenses.

#

Joy V. Smith, Pagadan at aol dot com

21 June 2017

And I now have two issues to LOC--58 and 59. (It's been a busy month as we work on projects for our new house. A new roof is the latest project, and there are still bundles of shingles sitting on the roof. The roofers have persevered through intermittent rains and thunder boomers for two days now.)

So, I love the bird, animal, and astronomy pictures in both issues. And I enjoyed the book and movie reviews. I especially love the hooded oriole. Btw, I've seen *A Dog's Purpose* now and enjoyed it. I read *Zookeeper's Wife*, but haven't seen the movie. I do want to see it. *Celestial Sleuth* sounds fascinating. And Tom Feller's mention of the course on "Astronomy Sampler" sounds like fun. Thank you!

#

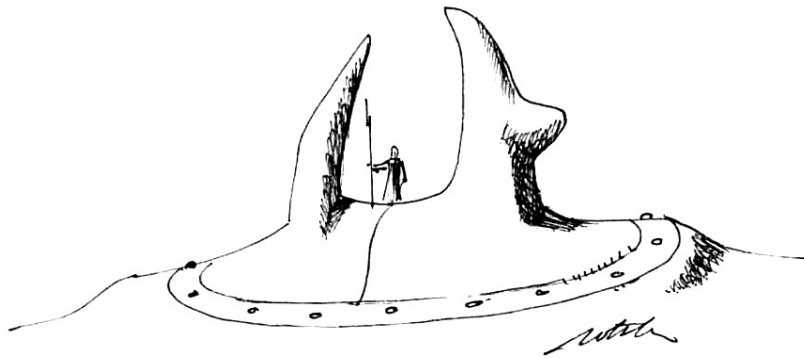
John Hertz, 236 S Coronado St, No. 409, LA, CA 90057

23 June 2017

Thanks for *Mewsings* 59 as ever.

What cantata did you sing? Anything worth a tell about rehearsals, performance, how the music seemed to you? There's lots of good Easter music.

((The cantatas we sing are ones specifically compiled and arranged for singing in church, not anything by known composers. They are more interesting than the usual church hymns but not much more.))



Mike's photos zoological and astronomical are swell. In my paper copy I can see the arms of M61 clearly and can almost make out the bars. Jupiter is clear but I can see only one moon. I love the vigilant quail.

Journey to the Center of the Earth (Verne, 1864) I've read only once and don't remember well-enough to discuss. Which edition did you use? Your "Centre" suggests the Griffin & Farran (1871). Malleson (1877) uses "Interior"; the explorers don't in fact reach the centre.

((The translation of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* is attributed to Willis T. Bradley. Don't be misled by my spelling.))

The Mote in God's Eye (Niven & Pournelle, 1974) I've read several times. I find the character development excellent, and the depiction of both human life and the alien "Moties". I've called Niven a pointillist: he paints bright dots of colour, leaving the reader to fill in the picture. Writing with Pournelle he fleshes out more, but *The Mote* is still very terse. Perhaps the book is not primarily satirical but here too it's fine. We're invited to disregard Father Hardy, and Dr. Buckman, but -- And of course the title is superb.

When *The Mote* was published we [this term needs defining] scorned it. "That's not the future, it's the past!" Sexism is an even hotter topic today -- rightly. I can't help suspecting some readers are so angered at seeing it and "the past" in this fictional future as to neglect the authors' careful indication of how forces that pushed such things into existence before might re-emerge and with what result.

Mike's detailed talk of four astronomy books is just what I hope from him, a view from his expertise. But I'm out of time and room.

#

Robert Kennedy, robertk at cipcug dot org

2 July 2017

Thank you very much for #58 and #59. It is realized that I am late in responding and for that I apologize.

Especially enjoyable are the wonderful pictures in every issue.

I feel it necessary to return to the subject of what kills birds. Every time I see a wind farm, the thought that immediately come to mind is—Bird Killer. In #57 you indicate that you don't "quite understand how a solar farm would cause bird deaths". A Mojave Desert solar plant kills some 6,000 birds a year. So, wind farms, solar plants, windows and walls, and cats and other animals kill birds. A few nights ago I was sitting in my living room reading when there was a loud bang against the front of my house. I went out to see what was happening. There was a large bird hovering with a smaller bird clutched in its claws. I yelled and it flew away still clutching the smaller bird in its claws. There was blood on the front of my house and on the porch. I was not previously aware that there are raptors in my area. It looks like that to the previous list can be added that birds kill birds.

((Birds have to eat, too.))

The cover photo for #58 was great.

The bird photos, astronomy photos, and book and movie reviews in #59 were very much appreciated.

#

Mary Manchester, Rochester, NY

5 July 2017

Thank you for *F. M.* #59. Great photos, Mike!

Birds and Blooms, for one, prints photos sent in by subscribers. If I were in charge, I'd put you on the payroll. Full-time.

#

Sheryl Birkhead, 25509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD 20882

14 July 2017

I really loved the bobcat on the [cover] of #58; and, before I realized it, #59 popped in. When I sat down to start this, found #57.

I just saw *A Dog's Purpose* from my Netflix list and enjoyed it. I was well aware of the brouhaha over claims that some animals had been mistreated in the making of the film. I enjoyed it and have never heard that the claims were validated.

((I heard the allegation as well, but they didn't sound very serious even if true.))

Knowing their reputations, I don't think I'd want to run into any javelinas. The pictures you share don't make them look all that fierce, but looks may be deceiving.

Mike's montage looks professional.

In Lloyd's LoC I see the mention of Rodney Leighton--news of his death after heart surgery took me by surprise. His letters in various zines will be missed.

((I was also saddened by the news.))

I enjoyed *The Aeronaut's Windlass*, then was disappointed that the next in the series is still a way off. Seeing Lloyd's comment that he likes Stephen Hunt, I may take a look....

I agree with your comment that the Canadian ST stamps are a lot "better" than the US stamps. I still bought two of the panes, but no more.

#58: Now that's a bobcat on the cover!! Gorgeous.

Zookeeper's Wife is another movie that I was interested in, until I read a lot more about it and decided not to see it based on the comments about what happened to the animals.

On page 4, that lower left sunset pic looks like it might well be (as you suggest) a fantastic painting--lovely colours.

Lloyd, thank you for the update on Taral. I had not heard much beyond the initial hospitalization and his oneshot about it.

I have actually seen quite a few of the movies ("courtesy" of Netflix) that Amy Harlib mentions. I hope her healing continues. Grumble, grumble, not happy with my right knee and my left hip, but so far....

Moving on, yeah, I have found it has gotten much more prickly to discuss politics these days; and I usually try to refrain (but there is just so much fodder...) to stay out of arguments.

Tearing right along... #59. Ah, I would have had to guess the bird on the cover is some kind of oriole, just because that is what we have (Baltimore oriole) "around" here. The ones here seem to be more stark orange and I do not recall seeing much white--but at a distance...?

I have not heard much lately about how Steve Stiles is doing--lung mass, but his posts seemed upbeat. Hope all is going well.

(chuckle) The quail always look as if they ought to flick that topknot out of the way!

Yeah, I didn't care for the "new" *Ghostbusters*. I did like *Arrival* but thought the ending was a tad contrived rather than flowing naturally from the storyline. I do not have that many movies on dvd, but I am going to hunt for this one since it was so engrossing right up to the end that I need to re-watch it.

I believe I saw a map of the upcoming solar eclipse showing what areas across the U.S. would be able to see what. If I remember correctly, here in the D.C. "area", there will be ~75% to 90% solar obscuration. Time to make a pinhole camera to take a look!

The collared peccary features in one of the Iron Druid (Kevin Hearne) short stories, "A test of Mettle". I found the audio file on YouTube about the Druid's apprentice and her um—issues—with calling it a collared peccary and why she went with javelina!

Nice to see Taral represented this!

#

Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd, Etobicoke, ON Canada M9C 2B2, penneys at bell dot net
27 July 2017

I have fallen behind with everyone...so many projects on the go, so many fanzines to respond to, and the job hunt takes up more time than ever. All I can do is try my best, so up next are issues 58 and 59 of *Purrsonal Mewsings*.

58...An amazing kitty on the front cover. Beautiful cat, and I hope he gets to stay wild. Neil Gaiman is an amazing guy, and we got to meet him at the Montreal Worldcon years ago. I remember a couple of local Montrealers had found out that Neil Gaiman was to be at the Worldcon, and they tried to sneak in to see him...without success, I might add.

I was a member long ago, and even worked for them for a while, but many of the local members of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada have set up local observatories, and local gatherings out in the country out of the ambient light of Toronto.

My letter...this year's Asylum in Lincoln starts up in a few weeks, and I wish we could be there. Such a different event, such a good time. We did get to Romulus, Michigan, for Motor City Steam Con. It was a great time, and we want to return next year. Yvonne appeared as Queen Victoria, which really impacted the con...perhaps she might be a minor guest next year... If I were to compare The Asylum and Motor City Steam Con, I would have to say Motor City was preferable. Yvonne tires very easily, so enjoying an event like this within the confines of a hotel was fun. (At the Michigan con, a late night panel saw a bottle of Kraken rum being passed around...we were the only ones to sample it, and say, "Smoooooooooth!")

59...The bird on the cover looks very familiar...a grosbeak? We used to see those birds up here in the winter. Not sure if that's the same species. Ah, an oriole...

Congratulations to Mike on being on your local PBS station. So many stations are starved for content; but some won't jump when you offer some, mostly because they don't understand what you're about.

The John Barentine books look very good, especially for those who are interested by the history of astronomy. There are many constellations in the sky, but all are agreed-to combinations of stars. There must have been past arrangements, and the books seem to

show there are. I have read elsewhere that there should be a thirteenth sign of the Zodiac, with an accompanying constellation; perhaps that's covered in either of those books.

Thanks for these two issues, and I am off to tackle more zines. All good zines deserve response. See you with issue 60!

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

Deadline for next issue will be 21 September 2017.

Laurraine

3 August 2017