

# Purrsonal Mewsings #87



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#87

July 2022

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## \* Editorial / Introduction

As the figure skating season approached its end in March, there were only the World Figure Skating Championships to watch. Russia and Belarus were barred from the competition, and Ukraine was represented in a token way. With the ongoing Russian attacks, skaters still in Ukraine had little to no time to practice; and they had to take circuitous routes to get to the competition, which was held in France.

We got a tiny bit of rain at the end of March but nothing since. March marked the end of winter and time to turn the irrigation system back on. In late March our AC started intermittently going into cooling mode until it stayed that way in May. By mid-June high temperatures went into the 90s F. Time to maximize irrigation of the fruit trees.

In late April we got our second COVID boosters, Moderna this time. I attended my first in-person play in a long time. The theatre required masks. We also had problems with smoke blowing in from fires in other states and even Mexico.

At a dinner with friends from California at an Indian restaurant, I confirmed my coconut allergy. Some, but not all, Indian cuisine uses a lot of coconut.

In April there was a fire in a home across the street from a K-8 school. All we knew of it at first was that there seemed to be a fire nearby. Then our power went out as a result of the fire burning a nearby power pole.

The orioles returned in April. This is when I start putting out oranges in the feeders.

May was a challenging month. I suffered from an inner ear infection. Since it was caused by a virus, the doctor prescribed medication for symptomatic relief of vertigo and nausea that I had to take for a week before I started feeling better. After that it took more than a week for me to recover my stamina and appetite.

We started suffering from deterioration of Internet speeds. Mike tried to find a workaround by creating a script to reboot the Internet router every day.

In late May we had problems with one of our AC units. We had to call the installers for repairs. Fortunately the repair was completed before the weather turned hot.

\* \* \*

## \* Kitter Korner

Below are some animals that were photographed by the trail camera since last issue.

			
Black-throated Sparrow	Blackheaded Grosbeak	Cardinal & Pyrrhuloxia	Desert cottontail & Gambel's quail



I also photographed a bobcat walking by our living room window.



\* \* \*

## \* **Astronomy**

Most you probably heard about the recent lunar eclipse; here's a composite photo of



it.

Mike took other photos as well, and here's a sample:



M104 (Sombrero Galaxy)



M51 (Whirlpool Galaxy)

The ISS makes frequently passes over our sky, and sometimes we can get a good view:



\* \* \*

## \* Notable Books Read and Play and Movie Seen

***Mrs. Dalloway***, based on a book by Virginia Woolfe and performed by the Rogue Theatre in Tucson.

I've never read anything by Virginia Woolfe that I can recall, so I didn't know exactly what to expect. I ordered tickets on the basis that I should be more knowledgeable about her work.

The story is told mostly from the point of view of the title character with the exception of a few scenes written from the point of view of a different character. I understand the book is written in diary format. Mrs. Dalloway is an upper middle class woman married to a Member of Parliament. The other point of view character is an ex WWI soldier suffering from shell shock (PTSD).

As Mrs. Dalloway goes through the day of a party that she has invited her friends and her husband's associates to, she reminisces about the past. As the day progresses, the audience is shown scenes from her past involving the people she interacts with or will see at the party.

Meanwhile the ex-soldier is suffering from dissociation brought on by shell shock. The professionals of the day are not at all equipped to handle a case of his kind.

The play is about relationships and social status. I won't say more for fear of giving



too much away.

#

***Top Gun: Maverick***, in a half empty cinema.

You don't necessarily need to have seen the original *Top Gun* movie to appreciate this one. Mike likes this movie because of the flying. I've seen the original but not recently and had forgot most of it. However I enjoyed this film.

Basically this takes place three decades after the first one. Captain Pete "Maverick" Mitchell is serving as a Navy test pilot. (Mike reminded me that captain is the Navy equivalent of colonel in the Air Force.)

He is assigned to train an elite group of F/A-18E/F Super Hornet aviators to perform an urgent mission. He gets the assignment on the say-so of Admiral Tom "Iceman" Kazansky (the Val Kilmer character), who was his friend. When the Admiral dies before the mission, Maverick is taken off the assignment. However, he ends up (I won't say why to avoid spoiling the story) not only being back on assignment but also being put in leadership role for the mission. At that point the movie becomes an almost purely action flick.

I was dubious about the capabilities of the F/A-18 and the realistic nature of the mission, but Mike (a former USAF fighter pilot) tells me the story is realistic.

In any case it was very entertaining, and the funeral scene was very touching.

#

***Future Shock Books: Future Shock, Future Threat, Future Lost***, by Elizabeth Briggs.

Back in the days when our science fiction book club was still in operation, we read *Future Shock*. I liked it well enough to put the sequels on my reading list. I recently read the two subsequent books. There was enough of a synopsis in the second book that I didn't have to reread the original book.

This is a series written for teens or young adults. The protagonists are mostly young people in their teens or early twenties. The premise is that time travel is too much of a shock to a mature adult, so scientists hire young people for their experiments. Of course, it turns out that some of the scientists have their own hidden agendas.

Each book deals with a separate series of time travel jumps. Unfortunately each trip seems to make the future worse for some reason. The protagonists eventually discover the causes of all the problems.

I found the characters easy to identify with, and the books were enjoyable for me.

#

***Project Hail Mary: a Novel***, by Andy Weir.

The Hugo nominees were announced, and I looked over the novel list. I chose to read Weir's book first, based on my enjoyment of his *The Martian*. I was not disappointed. This is a different sort of book with many more characters. Scientists discover a kind of life form that seems to be sucking the energy out of our Sun. If left unchecked conditions on Earth would soon become uninhabitable for humans.



It was observed that many other stars nearby were similarly affected, but one star didn't seem to be negatively affected by the strange life form. A project is fast tracked to send a team to this other star to discover why and see if there is a secret that can help Earth.

The book is mostly about one man, Ryland Grace, who had been working as a teacher. Various unforeseen circumstances lead him to become one of the astronauts sent to Tau Ceti.

The book is written from Grace's viewpoint. When the book opens, he is suffering from amnesia as he emerges from the coma he was placed in to survive the long voyage. As he gradually remembers things, we learn how everything led to that point. Weir uses flashbacks alternating with things that are happening in the "present" as Grace recovers from his amnesia. The technique worked well to move the action along without getting bogged down in explanatory text. I found the book fascinating and entertaining.

#

***A Desolation Called Peace***, by Arkady Martine.

This is another Hugo nominee. I found the book unreadable. It is written with very little dialogue and too much internal thought. I couldn't get past the second chapter.

\* \* \*

## \* Trip to the Yucatan

Monday, 29 November 2021, Mike drove me to the Phoenix airport by 07:50. Check-in at the airport went quickly. Security took longer than usual. On my first flight to Houston, first class served us with a beverage and a choice of snack boxes; I ate one snack and saved the rest for later.

In Houston I met a couple in the Carleton group and chatted with them to fill the wait time. The trip was arranged by my alma mater, Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. As much as possible, we were booked on the same flight out of Houston. The flight to Mérida, Mexico, was relatively short. We had beverage service and snacks of questionable gluten content; I was glad I had the leftover snacks from the first flight.

We landed after dark. It was drizzling. After going through immigration and customs, we found our group. We were loaded onto a bus. When plans were discussed by Alfonso, our group leader, there was no mention of dinner that night. Fortunately the situation was worked out fairly quickly, and we had dinner at the hotel. The hour by then was fairly late.

By the time I returned to my room after dinner, it was after 22:00. It was nearly midnight by the time I got everything organized in my room.

I slept fitfully and got up to my alarm at 06:00 on Tuesday, 30 November 2021.

I got down to breakfast about 07:00 and joined three classmates, one of whom may have been in choir with me at some point.

After breakfast we returned to our rooms to prepare for the day. Our bus left about 08:30. We were taken to the site of Aztec ruins in Dzibilchaltun, a 2,000-year-old area with a famous astronomical alignment. The museum was unfortunately closed, but we

looked thoroughly at the outside exhibits. One area marked the vernal and autumnal equinox (photo at right shows part of this). Highlights include a cenote (see NO tay), a sinkhole with groundwater.

We had lunch at the Crabster, a seafood restaurant on the Gulf of Mexico. I had grilled shrimp. The restaurant seating area was open to the ocean breezes.

After lunch there was a bit more sightseeing in Mérida. We returned to the hotel about 16:45. I showered, changed, and rested. At 18:30 Al Montero, the political science prof, gave a fascinating talk about Mexican history. It seems Mexico is barely a democracy.

Dinner was served about 19:30. We started with soup. I had beef for the main course. For dessert I had fruit (strawberries and raspberries). It occurred to me as I took the anti-malaria drug prescribed by my doctor that my headache that started at the beginning of the trip might be related to it. I found reference to headache as a possible side effect. I decided not to take it the next day to see what happens.

At night I packed most of my stuff and laid out clothes for the next day.

On Wednesday, 1 December 2021, I got up to my alarm at 06:00.

Breakfast was a little after 07:00. After that I returned to my room to finish packing. We left the hotel about 08:30. We drove a little over an hour to Izamal where we visited a small museum, saw a mission built atop a sacred Mayan site, and climbed a Mayan pyramid. From there we drove to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Chichén Itzá.

We had a cafeteria style lunch near a cenote.

After lunch we looked at the cenote then drove around to the other side of the park to see the main attractions of Chichén Itzá—the pyramids. Photo at right shows the big pyramid there. I think the pyramids there are the ones shown frequently on TV. When we finished there we drove to and checked into a local hotel, Villas Arqueologicas. I showered and changed. I found wi-fi at one point, but it disappeared. I was also unsuccessful in finding the group that went stargazing. Instead I

turned my attention to e-mail after a great deal of time finding the disappearing wi-fi.



Dinner in the hotel was at 19:30. The staff seemed very disorganized. The conversation, some of which was reminiscing about our time at Carleton, was quite the opposite and was fascinating.

At night I wrote in my diary and prepared things for tomorrow. My room, off the centre court of the hotel, had two beds, a double and a single, both recessed into the wall. I had planned to sleep in the double bed, but it was too uncomfortable with the AC blowing at me, so I moved to the twin bed. I got to sleep about 23:00. Even with the wall AC unit, the room was pretty humid.

Breakfast on Thursday, 2 December 2021, was a little after 07:00. We heard all sorts of birds, mostly parrots, in the trees as we ate.

After breakfast the plan had been to walk to the back entrance of Chichén Itzá, but that entrance was closed, so we took the bus back to the entrance we had used the previous afternoon. However we mostly saw different areas of the Mayan city. There were a number of smaller pyramids and other structures. We also saw yet another cenote.

For lunch we went to the hotel next to ours, which was originally supposed to have been our hotel except that they had demanded an unreasonable deposit. Lunch was good. I had pork done in a Yucatec fashion and flan for dessert. While we ate, it rained heavily outside.

After lunch we saw a planetarium show that was in the same hotel. The show depicted the origin of life Mayan style. It rained again on the way back to our hotel. After returning to our hotel, I took care of some personal business. My headache disappeared about mid-afternoon, so I decided I was right about the malaria preventive and never took it again; the chances of getting malaria there were minimal. About 18:30 we had a talk by Valerie Fox, visiting prof at Carleton 2020-21, about astronomy.

We went to dinner at a restaurant called Hacienda across the street from our hotel. I had a soup similar to one served at our hotel and a chicken dish with cheese, rice, and plantains followed by a cappuccino.

Back in my room I prepared clothes for the next day and got to bed about 23:00.

Breakfast on Friday, 3 December 2021, was at 07:00.

After breakfast I briefly returned to my room to regroup. We left for the day's sightseeing about 08:30. We went to Ek Balam where we saw more Mayan ruins, including one where we had to climb some narrow, steep steps to see some carvings about half way up a pyramid. In the photo at the top of the next page, the area we climbed to is covered with a thatched roof and has columns; you can see a few people there. In the process of climbing, our astronomer, Valerie, noticed fossils in some of the stones. After that we kept our eyes open and saw many more. The stones are mainly limestone that at one time lay under the ocean.

The second photo on the next page shows a view of some of the carvings and a view from there looking down to show the steepness of the pyramid is on the page following.







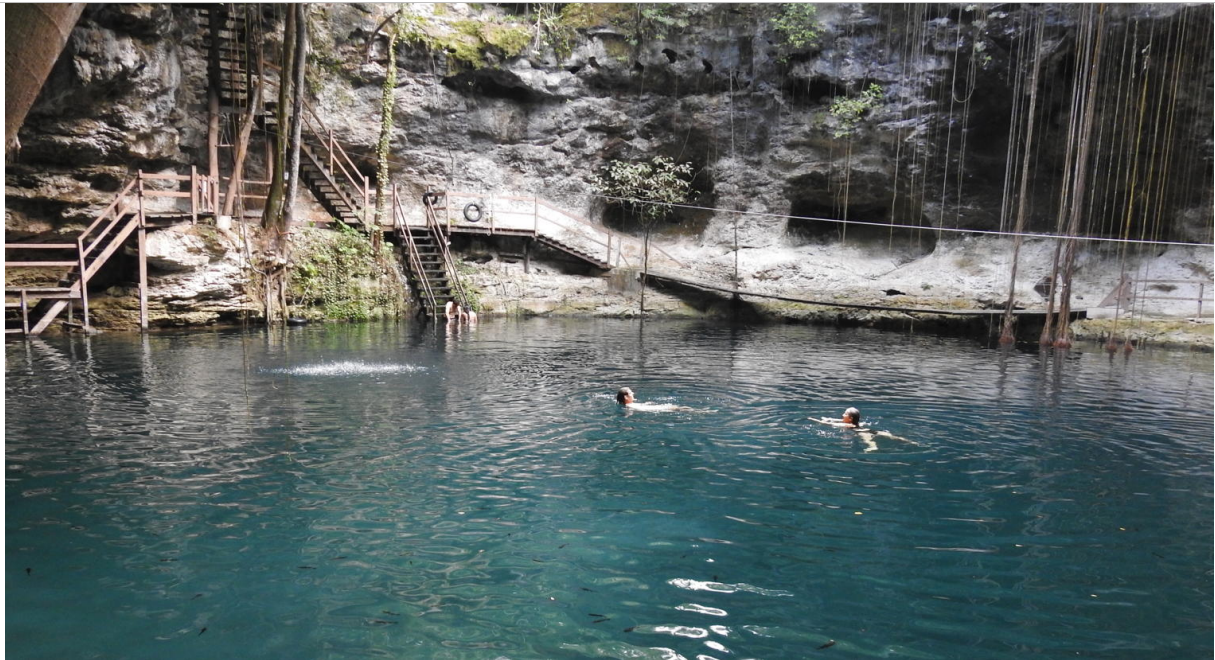


After that we went to a cenote nearby. Unfortunately the rickshaws were not available due to COVID, so we were given permission to drive the bus in. About half of our group went for a swim. I took photos. There were small catfish in the water (see right). One side had a shallow cave where swallows congregated.

The first photo on the next page gives you a feel for the depth and size of the cenote.







The photo below shows some swallow nests in the shallow cave beside the cenote.



Lunch was latish in a nearby restaurant.

After lunch we went to a city that was originally Mayan and looked around. Then we returned to our hotel. Al Montero did the second half of his Mexican history talk about 18:45.

Dinner was about 20:30 at the Hacienda across the street. I had a shrimp dish and cappuccino.

After dinner I did as much packing as I could and got to bed about 23:00.

I sat down to breakfast about 07:00 on Saturday, 4 December 2021.



After breakfast I finished packing and applied bug repellent before leaving the hotel room and heading to the bus. I turned my room key in at the front desk. The day was cool and sunny but would become hot later. We drove a fair distance to Mayapán known for a blue dye called Maya blue; the site is known for the murals. The site dates back to the thirteenth century, when the Aztecs were ascendant.

We drove to a nearby town (Maní) for lunch. I had queso relleno, a cheese and ground beef dish.

Afterward we walked to a church, but it was closed. Most of the group also walked to a place that had Mexican stingless honey bees. I stayed in the bus to rest. On the way to the hotel in Uxmal, the bus went through some streets not much wider than an alley and got hung up on a utility wire that was very low. I had been dozing, and that woke me up. We arrived at our hotel, Hacienda Uxmal Plantation and Museum about 17:30.

We met for dinner about 19:00 and walked to a nearby restaurant.

After dinner we had a stargazing session. I tried to take a shower but it took too long to get hot water, and it didn't help that it also took too long for me to figure out which knob controlled the hot water. I ended up taking a sponge bath with cold water. I got to bed about 23:15.

On Sunday, 5 December 2021, I got up to my alarm at 06:00. Breakfast was about 07:00.

After breakfast I returned briefly to my room to finish getting ready. We left by bus about 08:30 to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Uxmal, where we saw more pyramids and other Mayan ruins.

For lunch we went to a restaurant on a nearby highway that specialized in an underground cooking method. We all got the same food, which had both chicken and pork with vegetables and rice, with fruit for dessert.

Then we visited a Mayan who makes sisal, which used to be the major industry of the area. He gave us a demonstration. We also finally had the chance to go into a church. This one had an attached museum. Then we returned to the hotel. At 18:00 Valerie gave a talk about Chicxulub, Mars, and the evolution of life.

About 19:00 we went to the same restaurant as the night before.

At night I did some packing, put out clothes for the next day, and got to bed about 23:15.

Breakfast was at 07:00 on Monday, 6 December 2021.

After breakfast I finished packing. We departed the hotel about 09:30. On the way back to Mérida, we stopped at an artist's studio; she does impressive work in the style of the Mayans (see photo right). We continued to the city, where we had some time to shop. The side chapel of the



cathedral was open but wasn't very interesting.

We had lunch about 13:00 at La Pigua.

We arrived at our hotel about 14:30. We had time to settle into our rooms before returning downstairs for a rapid COVID test. Then I returned to my room, took care of some personal things, and took a short nap. We met downstairs shortly before 17:30 and got the results of the COVID test. I believe we all had negative results.

Then we walked a couple of blocks to have dinner at a nice restaurant.

At night I prepared clothing for the next day, showered, and checked in online to the next day's flights. I got to bed about 23:15.

On Tuesday, 7 December 2021, we left the hotel about 05:30 for the airport. After checking in, Alfonso treated us to a mini-breakfast since there wasn't time for more; I wasn't hungry and just had orange juice. Most of our Carleton group were on the same United flight along with four dogs and two cats. Only beverages were served on the flight. Some gummi candy I had took the place of breakfast.

In Houston we had to go through immigration, had to retrieve our luggage, and go through security again before finding our departure gate. The incoming flight that would become my outgoing flight had an emergency medical case, so there was a slight delay in boarding. The flight to Phoenix had one dog that I knew of.

I had a snack bar on the flight to Phoenix that served as my lunch.

I tried to read on the flight but was too sleepy. We arrived almost an hour late in Phoenix because of that little delay in Houston. Mike waited even longer, because he got the time mixed up.

\* \* \*

## \* **StippleAPA**

StippleAPA is an amateur press association. An APA is like a group pen pal publication. 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. Note to non-members: these are my comments to the other APA members.

### **MAILING COMMENTS ON STIPPLE-APA #349**

#### **Justin E. A. Busch (Stipple-Ations):**

We used to hear sonic booms while living in the Los Angeles area when the space shuttle came down to land at Edwards Air Force Base not too far away.

#### **Amy R. Clark (Hello and Enjoy the**

**Ride #6):** I hated the ending of the book *The Shining*, because it felt like King had misled us; it was like an O. Henry ending, but I don't expect that of Stephen King. I threw the book toward the opposite wall and ended up giving it away to a friend. I liked the movie better, but I wouldn't class it

among my favourites.

**Garth Spencer (Mission Creep #24):** You may be optimistic in thinking that the ordinary citizen knows sixty percent of “common knowledge”. So much of what might be considered “common knowledge” varies according to one’s socioeconomic level and upbringing.

Your smoking housemate suddenly dying sounds like a rather drastic way to deal with the situation, but it happens sometimes. I once had a supervisor at work who smoked like a chimney, and he died one night in his sleep; his heart just stopped. Other than his smoking, he was a nice guy.

**Kathy Sidles (Looking Around):**

When I went back to figure skating in my forties, my doctor was concerned. However I never suffered any serious injuries.

Bravo on trying to do your own plumbing fixes. I did quite a bit of that when I lived on my own in my first condo. Fortunately I lived fairly close to a hardware store.

**Marge Sehnert (Mamma’s Mutterings):** I hope you’re feeling better.

**Bill Thomasson (Musings from the Gathering Dusk #47):** I just tried gambling (slots) just to try it. Starting with just one dollar, I won over five dollars following advice from a friend but never felt any urge to continue.

Hawaii also does not use daylight savings time.

I’m still leery about going around unmasked, but COVID didn’t keep me from travelling. However I still won’t participate in singing activities.



**Joyce Maetta Odum (Smattering Cacophony):**

I hated the ending of the book *The Shining*, because it felt like King had misled us; it was like an O. Henry ending, but I don’t expect that of Stephen King. I threw the book toward the opposite wall and ended up giving it away to a friend. I liked the movie better, but I wouldn’t class it among my favourites.

**Cy Chauvin (Amazons & Swallows Forever! #86):**

The ship accommodations were preferable to land accommodations, because we had the same cabin throughout the trip.

The weather in Iceland was mostly grey and sometimes rainy, that’s what gave the photos their diffuse quality. I



think we had one really sunny day.

**Jeanne Mealy (Quirky Bits):** Love the “Non Sequitur” cartoon about the Adult rehabilitation Center.

Sorry to hear about your mother’s unfortunate accident. I hope she is fully recovered now.

So sorry to hear of David Cummer’s ill-timed demise.

I hope Nixie is doing okay.

Ah! the Midwest—ever the flyover country, even in *Around the World in 80 Days*.

I also spent much of my first few conventions soaking up movies I hadn’t seen before. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *The Phantom of the Paradise*, and others.

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## MAILING COMMENTS ON STIPPLE-APA #350

**Cy Chauvin (Amazons & Swallows Forever! #87):**

I’ve only stayed in two bed and breakfast places, mostly because there wasn’t much else in the area. One was in Utah near the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The other was in Marblehead, MA.

**Erik Biever (Hail! Hail!):** That hail is an impressive size.

I will put the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum on my list of possible places to go.

**Garth Spencer (Mission Creep 25):**

I don’t approve of cat doors. Pets should be kept indoors unless accompanied by a human. Outdoor cats can do a lot of damage to the environment.

I don’t think Neal Stephenson’s characters can be compared to those of Kim Stanley Robinson’s, whose characters are little more than mannikins.

**Kathy Sidles (Looking Around):**

Robinson’s Mars trilogy was one I was able to read, probably because the subject matter was of great interest to me. However, without that interest, it would have been a complete flop, as have all his other books that I tried to read.

**Lucy Schmeidler (Don’t Ask #40):**

I read in a science magazine that cats do know their names, but they don’t always choose to respond.

**Justin E. A. Busch (Stipple-Ations: STFan Views and Reviews):**

According to IMDB, *Knives Out 2* is in post. There’s also a *Knives Out 3* planned. My understanding is that the detective played by Daniel Craig will be in all three.

**Jeanne Mealy (Quirky Bits):** My best wishes for your mother’s health.

I watch as many figure skating

competitions as are covered on TV that's accessible to me. Depending on the season, there are usually one or more skaters I favour more than the others. Johnny Weir was one of my favourites, and I still enjoy the work he does as a commentator. I loved Yuzuru Hanyu, but I think his skating career is on the wane.

The amount of snow we get each winter varies from nothing to as much as a foot, based on our thirteen years of experience living here.

I saw *Knives Out* on a station not

\*\*\*\*\*

Netflix, which we do not subscribe to. I'm fine with watching movies on TV, though I'm beginning to feel that 50 inches is too small a screen. Our second set is less than thirty inches. Mike always wants to see his movies at the cinema, and I usually go with him.

Coco's is a chain of informal restaurants in the West.

Thanks for explaining outdoor saunas. I have actually used one of those. Bruce Pelz, well known fan who is no longer with us, had one.

I hope to read all your zines again in six weeks.

\*\*\*

## \* 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. I use Oxford standards of spelling and punctuation.

**Taral, taral at bell dot net**

**17 April 2022**

Actually, I should mention something I saw on Facebook that might astonish you. It was a video of a hawk swooping down to snatch a rabbit. But then a full grown deer charged in and attacked the hawk! The rabbit ran off, and the deer just stomped that hawk into the ground, like three-day old road kill. It was brutal, and even after the bird was a shapeless bundle of feathers, the deer would turn around to go back and pummel the carcass again. It did this three or four times before another deer arrived, almost as though it was trying to lure the enraged one away! This was filmed by some guy on a hike, or something!

#

**Amy Harlib, amyharlib at e-activism dot com**

**17 April 2022**

Been out of it for a while due to extreme depression.

((My sympathies.))

As an entertainer, I have been devastated and practically destroyed by the closure of all performance venues and then when they reopened, because MY BODY, MY CHOICE - being made a total *untermenschen* pariah outcast in NAZI NIGHTMARE LAWLESS 'SHOW ME YOUR PAPERS' JAB CROW APARTHEID/DISCRIMINATION/SEGREGATION HELL NYC WHERE THE MAD/DRUNK WITH POWER TYRANT POLS DOUBLE DOWN ON THEIR ILLEGAL MANDATES. I am trapped here with zero financial resources to leave or do anything else about this "wish I were dead" endless misery life has become. The tragic irony is that my SPREAD THE YOGA LOVE performances are all about health, miraculously overcoming age (67) and injury to achieve feats of flexibility few can attain at any age. So BIG PHARMA who wants to addict every person on the planet to their toxic products hate people like me who prove that we do not need them if we eat healthy organic food and exercise daily!

I love the photo of Cato and all the other photos of your local wildlife and astronomical images. And I always enjoy your travel reports.

((I hope that the gradual easing of COVID rules has helped.))

#

**Tom Feller, PO Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214**

**27 April 2022**

Anita fell in love with the picture of Cato on the cover. She keeps it so close that I had to borrow the zine in order to write this letter and promise to bring it back.

I remember staying at the Munich YMCA when I was in college. The room furnishings were very basic but also very clean.

My first personal computer was the original IBM PC with Lotus 1-2-3 that I used at work. My current machine is a Windows laptop with Microsoft Office.

Years ago Anita and I took an astronomy course for seniors in which the professor felt that it was only a matter of when, not if, life would be discovered on exoplanets. They are looking for methane emissions.

The Southern Fandom Press Alliance is still doing well, although there are openings on the roster. As David Schlosser mentions, we are discussing going all electronic. The Fantasy Amateur Press Alliance, on the other hand, is really struggling.

We are not wearing our masks as much, but we always carry them with us for whenever we feel crowded.

During our cruise to the Greek islands in 2006, we visited Santorini, an island which is really the caldera of an ACTIVE volcano. They test the water temperature every day; and the law there says that if it every reaches a certain level, there will be a mandatory evacuation.



I saw the Northern Lights once when I was in college in Wisconsin.

In response to Rich Dengrove, I think that one time I was eliminated from a jury because I knew TOO MUCH about payroll law. The case was a civil suit alleging an unlawful termination.

((I was once eliminated from a jury because I knew too much about chromatography.))

#

**Skel, paulskelton2 at gmail dot com**

**7 May 2022**

At least your goldfinches are golden. To the best of my knowledge we have four finches here in the UK. Greenfinches (at least the males) are green, but the rest are just a jumble of colours. Chaffinches and Bullfinches obviously, but even UK Goldfinches, as seen below, are not particularly gold even with a splash of yellow on the wing.



((The bird might not have much yellow, but it's still a very beautiful bird.))

No birds in our garden at the moment. There was a magpie in the birdbath, but by the time I'd got the camera out of the drawer it had flown away. So I took a photo of the lilac in the bottom corner. Lilacs at least don't fly away.

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This responds to *Purrsonal Mewsings* 86.

About your editorial, first, does Mike's website give time lapse of the weather at different times? Second, isn't Arizona supposed to usually be dry? Of course, not millions of years ago. In fact, during the Cretaceous period, a good deal of it was under a water way that connected the Gulf of Mexico with the Arctic Ocean.

((Yes, Mike posts them at [http://www.weasner.com/webcam/webcam\\_movie.html](http://www.weasner.com/webcam/webcam_movie.html) . He also may post links to such photos done by others.

((You're right that Arizona has an arid climate, but that doesn't mean we get no rain. Rainfall varies from year to year.))

About the Kritter Corner, wonderful pictures of animals in Arizona. On the other hand, I get the feeling we in Virginia have own cornucopia of animals. I remember seeing albino squirrels and a parade of bucks across the street from my apartment going from one small forest to another. Too bad I didn't have anything to photograph them with.

About the Astronomy Corner, the color is great in that photo of the Moon. However, I wanted to talk about how much the Moon seen with the naked eye looks like a miniature Earth. In fact, many of the Ancients believed the Moon was another earth because it looked so much like Earth to them. In fact, Aristotle wrote at least a paragraph on the beings of fire that lived on the Moon.

About movies, you review three. The first, is a Yiddish movie. As far as I know, the *Dybbuk*, which is the title, is a Jewish supernatural creature. It is the wandering soul of an evil person. As a wandering soul, the Dybbuk takes over a weaker living person. It can only be gotten rid of by the Jewish equivalent exorcism. I say this full well knowing, from your description, that the movie must be using a different definition of Dybbuk.

The second movie is *Knives Out*. I saw it a while back. From what I remember of it, it was an OK film. The big problem, for most people who saw it, was Daniel Craig's Southern accent. To them, it seemed too thick.

((When I was in grad school in North Carolina, I heard many different southern accents. I had one professor who spoke very much like Craig's character in *Knives Out*. I found the prof's accent annoying, and I found his accent in the movie just as annoying.))

I did not see *The Human Condition*. Your review inspired me to tell my father's experience with being in the military in China during World War II. As a flight surgeon. He didn't really like being in the Flying Tigers. However, he had lots of stories, and he brought back from the war ash trays with elaborate Chinese decorations.

About seeing the sights in your area, it made me want to talk about the sights in my area. It includes Washington, DC. In fact, there is an entire mall devoted to the

Smithsonian museums. It includes the Air and Space Museum with planes and rockets and the Natural History Museum with remnants of dinosaurs of every stripe. Nevertheless, a nephew of mine wanted to take his family to the private Spy Museum. Of course, who am I to doubt anyone's taste? I did a little research and know where it is and how much it costs.

((I have visited DC a couple of times and have seen many of the Smithsonian museums. They are all worth seeing.))

About your comments to Stipple-APA #347, I had several comments. Number one was inspired by what you told Eric Biever about your blood pleasure. Of course, I am going to tell about mine. I have low blood pressure. However, that never made me woozy. In addition, a drug that is supposed to lower blood pressure increased mine. ...Who knows?

Number two, you mention YMCA when you are addressing Chrystine. As a college student on travel, I often used to rent rooms at the local YMCA. Friends warned me that there were a lot of gays there and they would make passes. However, I had no problems with anyone and a night there was cheap, so I continued to patronize them.

Number three is what you say about vacations to Dale Cozort: you don't go on vacations to relax. You get sick to your stomach if you do. I relax totally on my travel, i.e., to conventions. Maybe I relax too much and have missed many great sights. On the other hand, at a convention, all of what I want to see is there.

About your comments to Stipple APA #348, I had several more comments. Having seen your response to Kathy Sidles, my fingers are crossed that there is enough food for the animals to sustain themselves. Having read your response to Christine, I gather Apple software, in the early days, was not compatible with Microsoft software. However, these days, I hear you can make it compatible. In fact, a comment of yours seems to say that.

((I don't recall saying that Apple software can run on a Windows machine. However, it's possible to run Windows software on an Apple.))

Having read your response to Bill Thomasson, I admit that we read chapters in order. Also, we expect writers to write them that way. However, that is not what a lot of authors do. In fact, I hear the best way to write mysteries is to start with the one with the whodunit. Then the author writes the chapters where he or she tries to hide whodunit.

Having seen your response to Marge Sehnert, you say that there is at least a possibility that planets of other stars are inhabited. That is the bane of a lot of people who believe there are no ifs, ands, or buts.

About your comments to the letter writers, I have a number of comments. To Linda Deneroff, I have to conclude that you are brave to travel to Iceland and others places. However, some tourists in Iceland are braver. They are into backpacking. Of course,, they have to be younger than we are.



((I think Linda meant that I was brave to travel with COVID around. Backpacking requires a lot of physical stamina, something I've never had.))

To Leah Fisher, I have this to say: I probably should retire from travel too. However, I have a tendency to isolate myself and an SF convention is a good place to meet people – if only at panels.

To Tom Feller, I have this to say: I'm farther north, in Virginia, and we had a big snow on Interstate 95 that stopped traffic between DC and Richmond. No one predicted it; and coming out of a stay in the hospital, I definitely was not ready for it.

To Murray Moore, I have this to say about his suspicion that Mike was bicycling in heavy traffic. My experience with motorists is that many have gone crazy. I don't remember hearing as many honks of the horn as I have recently.

((Mike was on a rural highway. There is occasional heavy traffic on it, but that was not true on the day of Mike's accident.))

To David Schlosser, I have this to say about APAs by email. At times, the mailing has been late and some SFPAns have decided to trade zines on the web. I didn't find any difference in convenience doing that, except that I had a head start on with my APazine.

To Lloyd Penney, I have two comments. First, thanks for saying I got the Coronavirus right. Second, I wondered why Moderna went bankrupt. This is what an article at the Forbes website said. The problem was that investors felt that it wasn't as wealthy as it claimed to be; and they sold their investments. Because of that, the price fell by a lot. Nonetheless, it remains in operation.

#

**Lloyd Penney, penneys at bell dot net**

**13 May 2022**

Many thanks for *Purrsonal Mewsings* 86...I will give responding another try, and see if I can come up with something of interest to give to you in exchange for all the interesting things you've got here. I think you will come out better in this bargain, but now to see what I can do.

Many years ago, during high school, I worked as a music tech at a figure skating club where I grew up, in Orillia, Ontario. The pay was small, the responsibilities large, and the abuse from entitled children and their parents was great. My complaints to club management were routinely ignored, and after being the sound manager for their annual end-of-season event, I was thanked for my work on the event, and was summarily dismissed. I guess I had my defenders, who complained about the way I was treated, and so my added benefit to assuage me and my defenders was to offer me a small box of chocolates, which I ignored.

We often have connectivity problems here...Bell Canada provides us with a hub from which to draw internet and cell service, but it also uses central nodes to provide that service. There are often node problems, or even power gaps that make it impossible to use Internet, as we lose service every ten minutes or so. Complaints to Bell are sometimes ignored, but often, it's like they turn the power back up again to make things work.

As much as I know that the Moon belongs to no one or no country, it would still be interesting to put a patch of colour on the Moon that could be viewed from here.

Mailing Comments...so many do not see the war in Ukraine as a Russian offensive, and certainly not something started by the Russian people. This is a Putin offensive, the rest of the government and military are afraid of him. The only solution I can see is for someone to put a bullet in Putin's head. Drastic, but it may stop further bloodshed, and further chance of the nuclear option, seeing that the resistance of the Ukrainian government and forces are very good at stopping Russian forces. Russia is proving they are not the superpower they've been telling the world they are for years.

We have arranged for our fourth COVID shot/second booster shot on May 20 at our regular pharmacy in neighbouring Mississauga, and we've asked for Pfizer boosters, for we've had no bad reactions to the booster we've had before, as opposed to the Moderna shot. We will then be totally vaccinated and boosted, and to be honest, seeing the pandemic is NOT over, and there are still people being rushed to hospital and dying there, if another booster was to be introduced this coming fall, I would take it in a heartbeat.

((So would we. I read recently that Moderna has a new formulation that works better on Omicron.))

The letter column...the hunt for a decent job continues, but I have been lucky in that I now have a series of gigs to keep me busy. First of all I applied for my early pension a couple of years ago, so that comes in every month. Second, I have returned to BBW International, an agency that provides workers who act as staff at trade shows and conferences. This means that many of the skills I learned while working at cons I can do, and get paid for it, too. Third, I am now contracted as the proofreader/copyeditor for a business magazine with offices in the east of Toronto. They have two magazines, and are planning a third, so work there may increase sometime in the next four months. Fourth, I am now the proofreader/editor of record for British SF writer D.J. Holmes, and have edited the 13th and 14th books in his "Empire Rising" series, available through Amazon and Goodreads. If I can't have a full-time job, all these little jobs have kept me busy and able to pay the bills. Toronto is already quite gentrified, and the average cost of a home here is close to \$1 million. Rents are ridiculous, and we know there really is no other place we could afford than the place we are in now.

My letter... We do not now have to provide proof of vaccination where we go, but in case there is any doubt, we still carry with us our vaccination records. The convoy of anti-vaxxers and anti-maskers fell apart long before it could get to Washington. I also think

they were afraid that anything they could do would get them lumped in with the January 6 investigations.

It's been a busy Friday, and we are currently helping out the local anime convention, which is looking like it may be the last fan-run convention in Toronto. The people who were running the anime con's cavernous Vendors' Hall can't do the job this year, so the committee approached us to come out of retirement and manage the sales of tables. I have the dealers' room experience I had many years ago, but Yvonne has 35 years of accounting and spreadsheet experience going for her, so she is spearheading this project, and we are going to try to have it all done before the end of May.

#



Photo above is of the blossoms on my apple tree.

**Linda Deneroff, lindad at isomedia dot com**

**20 May 2022**

I enjoyed your review of *Knives Out*, which I also enjoyed. Did you know the producers wrote to the WSFS Mark Protection Committee to ask to borrow two Hugo Awards for



the film? They wound up actually creating two of their own and then auctioned them off for charity!

#

**Ed Zdrojewski, ed at grainnet dot com**

**29 May 2022**

My late wife was a fan of figure skating and watched it every chance she got, especially the Olympics. Not my cup of tea -- How can freestyle events look like the exact same routine over and over again and still be called freestyle? If I watched the Olympics at all -- which mostly I didn't -- I prefer events where the participants looked like they are going to die any minute now, stuff like the halfpipe snowboarding. I have to admit, though, Johnny Weir is a hoot. Mostly I was grateful to the New York *Times* for publishing 10-lb. newspapers every Sunday that kept me entertained and left the TV to Penny for hours on end. She didn't take it as a personal insult when I didn't watch this stuff with her. Yet another reason to miss her.

((I can't speak for non-skaters, but as a sometime mid-level skater, I love watching others doing things I would love to have been able to do.))

Skipped the Winter Olympics entirely this year. Who wants to watch an Olympic Games held in a concentration camp?

As usual, my favourite part of the zine were the wildlife photos. I was particularly impressed with the gila woodpecker and the Gambel's quail.

I loved *Knives Out*. Maybe it's because the mysteries I write are in many ways the opposite of the traditional sort with the big scene at the end where everyone is gathered in the drawing room of the English country manor and the murderer is revealed and all is explained. (Would you believe a grain elevator in a small town in north central Iowa?) *Knives Out* did the Agatha Christie traditional but without too much cliché and a lot of entertainment value. Where did Daniel Craig's character get that awful southern accent?

((Presumably his language coach. As I told Rich above, I had a prof in grad school that spoke like that.))

I'm very pleased to hear that Uncle Hugo's is going to be back in business. I'm heading up to the Twin Cities in June to see a girlfriend and plan a stop. It may be a bit of an exaggeration, but when I heard it burned during the George Floyd riots, it felt like Justinian burning the Library at Alexandria. OK, Uncle Hugo's doesn't contain an entire civilization in it like the Alexandrian Library, but it certainly felt that way to me.

Like most journalists, I use the Associated Press stylebook, with some modifications. (Nobody uses Calif. any more when they can use CA, and everyone knows what they mean.)

((The USPS introduced the two-letter state abbreviations.))

Until February this year, central Illinois got very little snow. Early in January, I drove to Alabama for work and was surprised to see significant snow in Tennessee.

Question to Tom Feller: Is this your 3rd or 4th shot? I'm undecided about a second booster, even though I'm 67. When it was approved, the first thing the news report said is that it's only expected to boost your immunity by a few weeks. What's the point of that? It's also supposed to prevent a mild infection from turning serious, which makes more sense. I'll probably get it, but remain undecided as of today.

My worst bicycle injury came not from riding one but being hit by one a few years ago. I was walking on campus, crossing the street with the light and in a crosswalk. This bicyclist came zooming along the bike lane and hit me head on, sending me flying half a dozen feet. The rider had come in between a parked bus with the door open and the curb, which is probably illegal by itself. The bus driver was nice enough to stick his head out the window and ask if I was ok; he waited until I was out of the way. That's the difference between Champaign-Urbana and Chicago; in Chicago, the bus driver wouldn't have waited. The bicyclist, on the other hand, was pissed off that I had bent his bicycle frame. He left it at that, so I didn't have to explain to him what happens to people who fukk with witches.

As it was, I had a sprained ankle, which could have been a lot worse, and an excellent appreciation of what it feels like to play in the NFL.

I had a business trip to the East Coast a number of years ago and can attest to what Richard Dengrove says about I-95. I had an interview with someone in the "Eye" Street lobbyist neighbourhood, then left for the next stop in North Carolina. Unfortunately, I left at 4 p.m. Five hours later, the traffic jam petered out somewhere near Fredericksburg. Will never do that again.

Notes from Lloyd Penny -- Would the general high prices in Reykjavik apply to fish, given the huge amount of it they catch locally?

As you probably already know, the alt-right truck convoy never showed up in the United States, at least not that I've heard, and the media would definitely would have covered it if they had. In the last few months, most COVID restrictions have been lifted here, even with the new Omicron variant. Politicians prefer being re-elected.

I had COVID 19 around Labor Day last year, probably Delta variant, even though I was fully vaccinated. It was a relatively mild case, no trips to the hospital. It lasted about five days, the quarantine close to 10 days more. I made sure to order in enough wine, whiskey, and food to get through it all in fine Hunter Thompson-ish style. The Champaign County Health Department sent me daily texts to respond to for weeks on end afterwards, until I finally just stopped responding to them. After a while, they stopped sending them figuring I either was no longer ill or had coughed my lungs in to a ventilator and died. (This being Illinois, if I had died, they certainly would have kept my

name on the voter rolls, giving me a certain form of immortality.) Still, all in all, worst Labor Day weekend ever.

((Happy you recovered.))

#



Photo above is of my irises that bloomed this year, unlike last year.

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

**7 June 2022**

The photo of cacti in the Tucson Botanical Garden reminds me, we here in southern Ontario have a native cactus, the Eastern Prickly-pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*). An endangered variety of *Opuntia* here, it is found in Canada in the wild still only in a couple of locations on the north shore of Lake Erie.

We have a group of this variety of *Opuntia* on the side of our driveway, the first in our group purchased by me during a past neighbourhood garden club plant sale. (The garden club, too, is past, folding before COVID.)

((We had a garden club in Oracle, but it folded a number of years ago.))



The Opuntia's barbed bristles and spines are so small that they are invisible. Handling a pad of one I almost always subsequently have several spines in fingers, penetrating gloves.

Recently I thinned our batch. I used a Dollarama store grabber, one of those long sticks with a squeeze handle at one end and a claw that closes at the opposite end when the handle is squeezed, to grab and detach my victims.

((Rolled up newsprint can also be used to handle cacti.))

Dale Speirs' long-running fanzine is titled *Opuntia*. As Dale has lived his entire life in Alberta, his Opuntia must be a different variety of Opuntia. Our Opuntia mostly is found on the east coast of your country.

Wikipedia tells me that coyotes eat this cactus. We have coyotes too in Mississauga. If ever I see one of our cactus half-eaten, I will know the cause.

((There is some kind of Opuntia growing in every state of the United States. I think it would make an effective hedge plant to keep trespassers at bay.

((I hadn't heard that coyotes eat Opuntia, but I'm not surprised. Around here I know that javelina (collared peccary) and antelope squirrels eat them and possibly rabbits. I'm sure other animals do as well. However, the ones we have here are extremely hardy and propagate easily. All I need is part of a pad stuck in the ground.))

#

**We Also Heard From: Evaline Auerbach, Andy Hooper, Trinlay Khadro, Mary Manchester, Heath Row, David Schlosser**

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## **\* Closing Remarks**

It is still just past the first third of June as I finish this zine. Temperatures have slowly rising, if unevenly, since March and are threatening to go into the three-digit range. Monsoon (when the dew point rising above 50° F) is approaching. It is days away. Forecasts call for rain in about a week; we have our fingers crossed.

*Laurraïne*

*10 June 2022*