#5 August 2001

Feline Mewsings is a personalzine / newsletter published more or less quarterly by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, 29217 Stonecrest Road, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90275-4936, 310-265-0766, ltutihasi@aol.com, http://members.aol.com/ltutihasi. It is distributed through FAPA and to other friends and family. It is available for the usual (a response of any kind, including letters, e-mail, and phone calls of comment; trade; contributions of illos, fiction, or articles; or even money: $1.50 per issue or $5 per year). A modified version will be placed on the web shortly after paper publication; please let me know if you prefer just to read the web version. Kattesminte Press #332. @2001 R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Permission is granted to reprint or forward any part or all of this newsletter provided that it carries the following statement: "Copyright 2001 by R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Originally published in *Feline Mewsings #5*, http://members.aol.com/ltutihasi."

* Editorial / Introduction

This issue, I will be catching up with things I neglected while catching up with mailing comments. There is also a report on Westercon.

* * *

* Mike

Mike's ETX web site is growing tentacles. He is organizing the first of a series of Star Parties for ETX users. It will be located in the desert northwest of San Diego in a small town called Borrego Springs. It will be the weekend of 15 September. Twenty users and their families have signed up so far to attend. We have piggybacked it on a larger astronomy conference.

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* Reviews

Colony Theatre Company

Last fall, the Colony produced *Eastern Standard* by Richard Greenberg as a Second Stage Production, free to subscribers. It's an interesting play, taking place about ten years ago in New York City. A couple of yuppies meet a homeless person in a restaurant and invite her out to their beach house. There they try to reform her. This is a humorous story. As with most of their productions, it was done very well.

In December the Colony reprised the musical based on Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine.* It started out a bit tentative but came together very well. It evoked the book perfectly. I noticed that one or two of the actors was miked. Mike said he thought some of the others were as well, but I couldn't hear it. The actors that were miked were so, I think, because of weak singing voices that were hard to hear over the music, which was live.

The Cocktail Hour by A. R. Gurney was presented as a Second Stage Production this spring. It was directed by Robert O'Reilly, who used to play the Klingon emperor on "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." It is a comedic slice of life play about the sorts of things that can happen during cocktail hour in a very traditional family in upstate New York.

The last play of the 2000-2001 season was the perennial favourite *The Man Who Came to Dinner* by George S. Kaufman and Moss hart. I first saw this as a high school play in Marblehead, MA, and have loved it ever since. I saw both performances then, as I was in the orchestra, which played music during intermission. The Colony's presentation of this play was the bawdiest I've ever seen. We were mooned by Banjo, played by Nick DeGruccio.

The first two plays of the new season were *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* by Alfred Uhry and Tom Griffin's *Einstein and the Polar Bear.* The latter was the Second Stage Production. I thought it was a weak play. The story was okay. It was about a woman who had fixated on an author. She shows up on his doorstep pretending to have had car trouble. There were some interesting character studies, and it ended happily. Ballyhoo is apparently a ball for the Jewish families of Atlanta. The play centred around one family. A newcomer to town is instrumental in demonstrating that some of the Jews of Atlanta have forgotten their traditions. The play was excellent and was

excellently done.

#

Machine Dreams, by Joshua Mertz (Bald Mountain Books, Los Angeles, 2001)

I was given a review copy of this book at Loscon last November. Due to dealing with health problems, it took me until earlier this year to read it. I was unable to fit the review into my last issue.

When I first glanced through the book, I thought I would not enjoy it. It reminded me of the books by William Gibson that take many words to get nowhere. I was wrong. The book does have superficial resemblances to Gibson in that it takes place in a world that seems to be totally wired. It is also a rather pessimistic look at a possible future. However, the book has a coherent plot and fairly solid characterization. The protagonist is a man who can hide things. People hire him for this talent. The things he hides may be illegal or stolen objects. One day he receives an unusual request to hide a person. The plot gets very complicated after that. The story is quite violent, and I would not recommend it for the weak of stomach. However, if you like the James Bond movies and similar fare, you will find it entertaining. I won't say I'm wildly enthusiastic about the book, but it is a good read.

#

The Dish

This movie tells the story of a small town outside of Sidney, Australia, that brought us pictures of the first manned moon landing. The town is home to the radio telescope that relayed the television pictures. Being part of the Apollo programme had an enormous impact on the small town. Sam Neill played the lead scientist at the radio telescope. The story is told as a reminiscence. Although it is fictionalized somewhat, it is essentially a true story. The story was told with loving humour. We found it very touching and enjoyable. I intend to nominate it for the Hugo next year.

#

QED by Peter Parnell

The Mark Taper Forum in downtown Los Angeles presented this play about Richard Feynman's last years. The entire play takes place in his office at Caltech. Except for a student who appears for a short while and a man's voice on the phone, it is a one-man play performed by Alan Alda. I have heard Richard Feynman speak on television, and Alan Alda was perfect for the part. As I understand it, this was a pet project of Alda's. It was originally announced for last year's schedule under the name *Tuva or Bust*, the title of Feynman's book on which it is based. So the play had been long awaited by many. The audience we saw it with were highly receptive and enthusiastic. Alan Alda received a standing ovation at the conclusion of the play. Because it is more-or-less a one-man play, I have no idea whether it will be performed elsewhere or whether another actor might be able to do the part justice. But the performance we saw was excellent. Feynman was a man with a delightful sense of humour. Even when he was dying of cancer, he lived life fully.

#

Los Angeles Opera

The same weekend we saw *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, we saw Handel's *Giulio Cesare.*

The pre-opera lecture informed us of some of the reasons that Handel's operas were so long ignored. They were originally written with parts for castrati. At some point in history, castrati became extinct. Some operas from the baroque period were occasionally performed using other singers in place of castrati. Mezzo sopranos were sometimes used. Other times, the parts were re-written in a lower register and sung by baritones. The mezzos were not too bad, but the baritones really didn't have the wherewithal to sing the way the music was written. In recent years, the modern countertenors have developed. Countertenors originally had rather weak voices, but modern training has given them the use of their chests. This gives them the power to sing the arias the way they were written. The current Los Angeles Opera production featured three countertenors.

Giulio Cesare was originally written as a five-hour opera. The production we saw was only about three and a half hours long. There were three acts separated by two intermissions. That is a lot of sitting, so I appreciate the shortening of the work. However, I think I'd like a recording of the entire opera if one is ever produced. The music was very nice as was the singing. Duets featuring countertenors singing with sopranos were very pleasant to hear.

The staging was representational rather than realistic but was quite elaborate. The costumes were a weird mix of ancient and modern. The only thing I found jarring was the use of a handgun by Tolomeo. It seemed anachronistic as all the other characters used knives and swords.

Other members of the audience seemed somewhat discomfited by the use of a bath scene for Cleopatra. The water was opaqued by a milky liquid. However, those with opera glasses could apparently see quite a bit. I had forgot mine, but Mike usually has a small handheld telescope with him. A number of audience members laughed nervously as Cleopatra bathed. Together with the Kaufman-Hart play, that weekend turned out to be quite risqué.

The sets were quite lavish. The story, of course, is well known. I enjoyed the opera quite a bit, as I happen to like works from this period. This is the only full-length opera by Handel that I've seen.

#

A. I.: Artificial Intelligence

This is apparently the project that Stanley Kubrick was working on when he died. Spielberg decided he'd like to finish the project. For me the film felt more like a Kubrick production that a Spielberg. Briefly, it takes place in a future in which artificial humans, or androids, are common. The star of the movie is an android boy that is adopted by a family whose real son is in a coma. The emotional consequences of an android created to love human parents are explored. I found it to be an excellent film. The acting was great. It is also a tearjerker for those of us prone to crying at the movies. I gave it a seven-hanky rating. This is another film I plan to nominate for next year's Hugo.

* * *

* Local Activities

Loscon 27: We hadn't been planning on attending on Loscon. However, we were asked by Mike Glyer, who was in charge of doing programming, to do a couple of programme items. All the events were on the Friday after Thanksgiving, so we attended just for that day. I was on a panel in late morning titled "Your First Loscon." The person who had been assigned to moderate didn't show up, and I ended up being elected to moderate. There were a few more people in the audience than on the panel, and it seemed to go over pretty well.

Following that panel, Mike did a dog and pony show titled "Small Telescope Astrophotography." He brought a lot of equipment from home to illustrate his many points. He had a sizeable audience.

We had a break after that, during which we had lunch in the hotel coffee shop. We had time afterwards to look around the hucksters' room, where I picked up a book from Dangerous Visions, and to peak in at the art show.

Then I had a panel titled "Reviewing SF Books." The panel was made up of authors and reviewers, including one person who'd done both. One author was very antagonistic toward reviewers. I suppose he'd not been lucky enough, at that point, to have received a positive review. Not having read any of his books, I have no opinion on why this might have been. Personally, I did one review that seems to have made one author into a fan. I guess you could call it a mutual admiration society. At the end of the panel, I was given a book to review. You can see the review above.

After the panel, we sat down for a short while to decide what to do. I wanted to stay for the ice cream social, but there was quite a bit of time before that started. We decided to go to the "Hour 25" taping. Before we got up to do that, I chatted for a while with John and Judith Chapman. Then Kathy Sanders surprised me, because she was so dressed up in a costume that I hadn't recognized her at first.

We got to the taping late, but they were just getting started. Warren James interviewed most of the convention's guests. Orson Scott Card was the author guest. I later was able to let him know that I really enjoyed his Alvin Maker books. He seemed to appreciate hearing that. When Warren interviewed Genny Dazzo and Craig Miller, I learned some things about Genny that I hadn't known.

After that, there was still some time before the ice cream social. We sat down at some empty tables for a while. We were joined by Mike Glyer. I called Genny Dazzo over when she walked by and talked for a while with her about years past. Mike (my Mike) beckoned me to join the ice cream social line when time approached for the opening of the doors. We had to wait a bit longer but not too much. When the line started moving, it moved really fast. Mike sat down with all of his equipment, and I got the ice cream for both of us. Actually, mine was sorbet. The tables were covered with cardboard aeroplanes that had apparently been passed out to the people entering the room. They must have run out before we got to the doors. The table was also covered with felt tip pens in various colours. I don't know the purpose of those, but I decided to commandeer the ones at our table. We gave the aeroplanes to Connor Foss, who seemed to be have grown quite a bit since the last time I'd seen him. Sasa Neuman stopped by to chat for a while. I noticed a man wearing a badge identifying him as Lee Whiteside. I got up to talk to him. He sends out TV schedules for science fiction shows monthly, but I had always thought he was a she. He said that maybe he should put his picture up on his web site. That's probably a good idea. He was talking to Larry

DiTillio, who worked on "Babylon 5" for a while, but I didn't say anything directly to him. I also talked to Leigh Strother-Vien, in particular about Ken Porter, who is also boarding with Francis Hamit.

I left that room at 21h00 to go up to Elst Weinstein's room party. Mike stayed in the ice cream social room to hear a radio play that was scheduled for that time. They obviously were running late.

I was the first person to arrive at the Weinsteins' room. It was a wine and cheese party. They hadn't brought any non-alcoholic drinks; so I just had water along with the food, which was my dinner. I made myself comfortable to eat and talked to the various people who sat down around me. I talked to Mike and Diana Glyer, Lynn Maudlin, Leslie Fish, and others. After I got up to start leaving, I also talked with Jon Stevens and others. I guess it took me about half an hour to leave. I waved a good-bye to Carol on my way out. The radio play was still going on when I got back downstairs but ended shortly after. Mike had enjoyed the performance.

We weren't at Loscon very long, but we enjoyed the time we spent there.

#

Champions on Ice: Back in January, we had attended the Stars on Ice show. Unfortunately, we ran into terrible traffic management on the way and were a full half hour late getting in. We missed about a quarter of the show. This was Scott Hamilton's farewell appearance with the show, so it was sold out. I wrote letters to the Stars on Ice people, the management of Arrowhead Pond where the show was held, and the City of Anaheim expressing our disappointment. The Stars on Ice people sent me a small book and a T-shirt. I received a call from the traffic manager for the City of Anaheim. Arrowhead Pond offered us complementary tickets for Champions on Ice in April, so we accepted. It's amazing what can be accomplished with a sweetly written letter of complaint.

We decided to take no chances with the traffic and went by a different route. We probably wouldn't have had any problems going to same way. Call it superstition. We had received complementary parking along with the tickets, so we had no problems parking. We got to the arena in plenty of time. The show was very enjoyable. I don't think it was just because we were attending free. The Champions on Ice people seem to have improved the show. Instead of just one skater after another doing his thing, there were two ensemble pieces and two humorous routines. I really enjoyed it and may attend again next year.

#

Star Struck: 1,000 Years of the Art and Science of Astronomy, an exhibit at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens: This exhibit covered mankind's changing conceptions of the heavens over the past millennium. It showcased one hundred twenty rare books and manuscripts from the Huntington's collections. Included were works by Ptolemy, Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, Kepler, Hubble, Einstein, and others. Other items on loan from other institutions were also included, such as a moon rock from NASA, medieval manuscripts from the J. Paul Getty Museum, and vintage and state-of-the-art telescopes from Caltech and Celestron.

It was a small exhibit but quite interesting. Afterward, we walked around the garden a bit with special attention to the Japanese and cactus gardens.

#

From "The Outer Limits" to "Roswell": Writing the Fantastic for Television: This was a seminar presented at the Museum of Television and Radio. It was part of the Leonard H. Goldenson University Satellite Seminar Series, which is broadcast to college campuses. We were part of the studio audience. Featured guests were Harlan Ellison, Richard Matheson, Ronald D. Moore, Steve Roberts, D. C. Fontana, and J. Michael Straczynski. They talked about their experiences working on science fiction and fantasy shows on television. It was quite interesting. Other members of the audience included Marv Wolfman, Len Wien, and Lee Whiteside. One person, I think it was Lee, noticed Mike's Indiana University lapel pin and mistook it for a Psi Corps symbol. It is a "U" bisected by an "I" and does somewhat resemble the Psi Corps's psi symbol.

* * *

* Westercon

We flew up to Portland on the Fourth of July. After we boarded our plane and sat down, we saw Val and Ron Ontell from San Diego getting on. The flight was not full. We had an uneventful flight. I used the ginger capsules from Bronson to prevent motion sickness, and they seem to have worked. Unfortunately, I developed a very

stubborn headache during the flight.

After we reached Portland, we got on a hotel van with a bunch of other fans all going to the Doubletree Columbia River. The drive from the airport to the hotel took us into Washington State. As we walked to our room after checking in, we bumped into the LA contingency, consisting of Christian McGuire, Liz Mortenson, Ed Green, Cathy Beckstead, and one other fan I didn't recognize. After we settled into our room, we went in search of food, a combined lunch and dinner. The coffee shop at the Jantzen Beach was open, so we ate there. After we ate, we went in search of Mountain Dew and some snack food for me. We found a Safeway. Mike bought a dozen small bottles of Mountain Dew, and I got a couple of jars of macadamia nuts. Then we returned to our room to rest and catch up on record keeping and e-mail before the fireworks were scheduled to start.

We went out early for the fireworks, thinking to beat the crowds; but there never were any crowds. When we first went out, we discovered that it had become quite a bit cooler than during the day. We met jan howard finder also heading back for something warm to wear. We went back to our room, where I put on warmer clothes. We also went exploring toward the Jantzen Beach Hotel, but they were not letting anyone in from the Columbia River. We went back to the riverfront behind the Columbia River. There was still a good forty-five minutes before the fireworks. If we had known there would be so few people, we would have stayed inside longer. From the Columbia River Hotel, the fireworks were on the other side of the bridge. The fireworks started promptly. Except for the low ones, we could see quite adequately. I took several minutes of footage with my videocam. Mike took a number of shots with his digital camera. Several of his came out quite nicely, though some were a little blurred. Mike's digital camera delays after he pushes the button, so he had to press it before he was really ready to take a picture. The timing didn't always work out. I got so cold toward the end that my teeth were chattering. I should have put on warm socks, but I hadn't thought of that. The fireworks lasted quite a long time – almost forty-minutes.

We came in right after they ended. It took me quite a while to thaw out. I was hungry, so I munched on the macadamia nuts I'd bought at Safeway. Mike ate the Doubletree cookies. I checked the weather forecast on the Weather Channel. It looked as though the weather would continue in the same vein – hot and muggy during the day and cool at night. In reality, most of the days turned out to be quite pleasant.

On Thursday I woke up about a half hour after the alarm, which had been set for 8h00. We went down for breakfast. I ordered the buffet and loaded up on protein and fruit.

We got registered for the convention okay, but the pocket programmes were not yet available. We saw Paul Allwood as he was registering, so we made a date with him for a bit later to get my filter kit. Paul was travelling with his mother this time and making a vacation of it. We had met Paul when he joined our trip up Mauna Kea at last year's Westercon in Hawaii. When I was shopping for a filter kit for my videocam, the only place I was able to track it down was a place in Britain. Paul had been kind enough to buy it for me.

In the registration area, Bruce Pelz asked us to sign a paper circle that would be made part of a paper lei being presented to Kathryn Daugherty as a thank you for her work on last year's Westercon.

We met Paul in the lobby of the Jantzen Beach hotel about 12h30. He delivered the filter kit to me, and I paid him. We chatted for a while then left him so he could get their room at the hotel.

Back at the Columbia River, we presupported the Phoenix bid for a Westercon in 2004. The programmes were still not available. There was a schedule at the registration desk. We checked that and didn't see anything that interested us before evening.

So we went into Portland to see the Chinese and Japanese gardens. The hotel concierge gave us directions for taking the bus and light rail system. It worked out quite well. The Chinese garden covers a small city block. It is completely enclosed by a wall, though there are windows in it. The garden was quite stylized, with paved walks and many structures.

Chinese Garden

Japanese Garden

The Japanese garden is part of Washington Park, which is at the north-west end of Portland. The zoo and rose garden are also in the park. The Japanese garden is quite large. It is nice, but I don't think it looks quite authentic, since there are many tall trees. We also saw part of the rose garden. Since there were no places to eat, I bought a small bag of nuts to stave off my growing hunger. Then we came back to the hotel.

It turned out that we were still in time to catch the opening ceremonies, so we went. It was quite weird, though. I'm not quite sure what the point of it was. They performed a skit loosely based on the old "In Search Of" series with Leonard Nimoy, complete with commercials. The commercials poked fun at Bill Gates, AOL, Al Gore, and others. Fan guest of honour Mike Glyer took part in the proceedings.

After that we had dinner at the coffee shop at the Jantzen Beach. The Columbia River coffee shop was not open for dinner, contrary to the information provided in the room. On our way back to the room, we bumped into David Bratman. I had intended to e-mail him to ask whether he was going to be there then forgot. Berni was also in attendance.

We got up a little after 8h00 on Friday. I had slept poorly.

We had breakfast in the hotel coffee shop. I had steak and eggs. Mike also had breakfast this morning.

Then we checked about the programme books, and they were still waiting for them. The site selection table was open, so we took care of that.

While we were turning in our site selection ballots, the programme books arrived. We also picked up the second issue of the daily news zine. According to that, the Columbia River coffee shop would not be open for dinner during the con.

Since there was time, we went over to the dealers room at the Jantzen Beach. We both bought CDs.

Then we returned to the Columbia River for our first programme item. It was located just upstairs from the registration area. On our way there, we passed the fanzine lounge. I nipped in there briefly and talked to David Bratman and Gerri Sullivan. I meant to return there when I had free time but never got around to it.

The panel we sat in on was "The Writers and Illustrators of the Future." This was about the competition held by Bridge Publications. None of the panellists were scientologists. They consisted of Algys Budrys, who is in charge of the competition; Tim Powers and another author, who are two of the judges; an author who won the most recent writers round; and Frank Wu, who won the most recent illustrators competition. It sounded like a very worthwhile competition. In addition to the trophy, winners receive money and publicity assistance. Their works are published in an annual anthology.

Then we parted ways for the next item. I went to the "Mike Glyer GoH Interview." The interview was conducted by John Hertz. There was quite a bit of audience participation, as well.

Mike went to "Soviet Inner Planet Probes," a talk given by Hugh S. Gregory. He announced that Russia was taking its shuttle programme out of mothballs. The rest of the talk was mostly historical.

We met after that to view the art show together. There was still about an hour before the next items that interested us. Mike went back to the Columbia River and returned to our room for a while. I sat in the hallway near the art show and read and did crossword puzzles. Sean Smith came by and stopped to talk until it was time for my next programme item, which was about "Colored Pencil Technique." This was a fascinating talk and demo given by artist Mark Ferrari. He said he has been giving these talks for a while, and he is amazed that so many people come

to hear and watch him. He demonstrated techniques that I'd never heard of. I took art through high school, and our work had included coloured pencils. I imagine many members of that audience will now go out to purchase coloured pencils and try our hand at the techniques. This talk went almost to 17h30, so I was a bit late meeting Mike near Brickstones restaurant in the Columbia River for dinner.

I had a prawn dinner, and Mike had chicken. Just as we were getting ready to leave, Art Widner sat down, so we said hello to him. He was having dinner with his son.

We returned to our room. We had planned to go to the Regency dancing at 20h30, but I was just too tired. I got to bed about 22h00. The walking I had done over the two days was apparently too much for me. From that point on, I used the shuttle buses provided by the convention between the two hotels.

Even with the extra sleep, I had trouble getting out of bed Saturday morning. I felt like death warmed over but forced myself to have a buffet breakfast and made it to the 10h00 Algis Budrys reading. He read out of his latest novel. Mike and I both decided we wanted to get the book to find out what happened. Unfortunately, the dealers room did not have a copy. After the reading, the person assigned to push Budrys's wheelchair did not appear, so we helped him to the men's room.

I was still feeling pretty lousy, so I sat outside in the hallway while Mike went around the dealers room. He came out after his unsuccessful search, and we both sat for a while.

Then we went to the "Tim Powers GoH Interview." Mike Glyer interviewed Powers. It was very entertaining and informative as well. Tim Powers is always interesting to listen to.

Mike came back to the Columbia River for his next panel "Trekking with a Pocket Full of Books: the Future of Star Trek in Print." The discussion focussed around an upcoming book.

Star Trek Panel

I thought my panels were in the Jantzen Beach, but a close inspection of the programme book showed that they were in the Columbia River. I took the convention shuttle back to our hotel. Since there were two items that interested me, I split my time between them. I attended the first half of the Jordin Kare Concert. He had brought some CDs to sell. I bought one before leaving to sit in on the second half of "Apahacking: What Is an Apa's Function?" I had gone mostly because David Bratman had mentioned being on it. I was pleasantly surprised to see Jenny Montaire and Greg Brown there. After the panel, I asked whether they might join us for dinner. Unfortunately, they had other plans.

I went back to the Jantzen Beach to sit in on "Print Technology – What Happens Next?" for Mike. Unfortunately, it had been rescheduled for an earlier time; so we had missed it. I returned to our hotel to join Mike for "Bridget Landry Presents Voyages to the Red Planet: a Survey of Earth's Invasions of Mars Slide Show."

Another shuttle took us back to the Jantzen Beach for dinner at their coffee shop. After we ate, we went outside to look at and photograph Mount Hood. Then we joined Greg Brown in the line waiting to get into the masquerade. The doors were supposed to open at 18h30 but didn't open until an hour later. The set-up was very bad. The stage was too low for the flat-floor seating in the room. Unless you were in the first couple of rows, you couldn't see anything without craning or standing up. We sat through several costumes. Then there was a presentation that was about ten times longer than it should have been, so we left.

I decided that I was tired enough not to attempt any parties.

I managed to catch up on my sleep, finally, on Sunday. I woke up before the alarm. We went down to breakfast and came up again. Mike took a nap until it was time for the first programme item we planned to attend.

The panel wasn't exactly what Mike had expected. "Online Publishing: Things to Watch Out for When Dealing Online" was mostly about publishing fiction. There was one member of the audience who offered to send copies of his notes to anyone interested. I gave him my card. We e-mailed the notes to a friend of ours who has been publishing fiction on the web.

Then we went to a Steven Barnes reading. He was scheduled to share the room with another author, but she never showed up. He has a new alternate world novel in the works. It is based in a world where the African Blacks are dominant, instead of the European Whites. The selection he read was very powerful. The alternate world sounded very fascinating to me. He will have a web site about it with lots of background about the alternate history. He will probably write at least two more books that take place in this world. The first book is titled *Lion's Blood*.

After that, we cruised around the registration area for a while. We picked up our programme books for Westercon 52 in Spokane, which we had not attended. We really didn't want the programme books, but the con representative did not want to take them back home with him. I asked Kevin Standlee about the site selection results. Because it was an uncontested race, not very many people voted. Seattle won handily. We had missed the Seattle people, so we converted our memberships by mail. There was one announcement for a Dead Dog Party.

We returned to our rooms to rest.

For dinner, we ate at the coffee shop in the Jantzen Beach. John Hertz stopped by to talk while we were eating. I explained to him that we had missed Regency Dancing due to fatigue. Then we looked up the one dead dog party that was posted. We stayed there for a short while. Bruce Pelz answered some questions we had about the Hugos.

We decided to retire early to prepare for travel the next day.

* * *

* Mailing Comments on FAPA #255:

Note to non-FAPA members: FAPA is an APA of people in science fiction and fantasy fandom. It has a large membership, currently about fifty. There are openings right now. If you are interested in joining, let me know and I can send you the relevant information.

Fantasy Amateur: Ken seems to have moved to the middle of nowhere. Actually, I have been to the nearby city of Redlands.

I'm sorry to see so many people leaving.

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu #14): When I was talking about videophones, I wasn't thinking so much of the person being called, since, as you say, he might have been taking a shower or otherwise not be presentable. I was thinking of the caller. I would be suspicious of any caller, other than someone I already knew, who refused to let me see him. If I refused in-coming calls where the video was blocked, this might discourage junk calls. On the other hand, what would keep a telemarketer from showing a video of a different person or a doctored video image? This would require real-time processing, but that is probably not an impossible concept.

If sometimes putting the same coin back in a machine that rejected it makes it work, I wonder if that's an application of quantum physics in real life?

Bruce Pelz (Ankus 48): I asked you about this at the LASFS, but I want to write about it here in case others may have wondered about the same thing. I asked you what you were referring to by "Sky Shows at sunset." You

said you were talking about the sunset and not about the aurora australis.

Arthur D. Hlavaty (Derogatory Reference 97): Congratulations on being chosen as Fan Guest of Honor for Minicon next year. Sorry we probably won't make it, as our calendar is already full.

Fred Lerner (Lofgeornost 63): I don't understand why the Social Security people want to know the identify of a person's birthplace. What does that have to do with Social Security? I thought it was only related to your working history.

Tim Marion (Terminal Eyes 2): "Crusade" will run again. I've forgotten the exact dates, but I believe in July, so you should have had a chance to see it again before you read this. Nothing has been decided as far as whether more episodes will be made.

You certainly watch a lot of TV. I don't think I know anyone else who watches as much. I occasionally watch four to six hours of TV in one day but not regularly.

One does not need a phone number to listen to a web cast.

Harry Warner, Jr. (Horizons, Vol. 63, No. 2): Computers don't become obsolete in three years unless the user is a real power user and wants or needs to have the latest and greatest. We have a friend who is using equipment that is about ten years old. She has difficulty learning new things, so she doesn't want to be upgrading every time something new is available. She can't run the latest operating systems and applications, but she can run the programs she is familiar with.

I recently sold my iMac, which was probably about two and a half years old for a respectable price. It doesn't have as much memory as the newer models and runs a bit slower but is very functional. The computer we are using as our server was purchased new in 1996.

Soma was the name of the drug in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. I don't know if the manufacturers of the current medication knew that.

Moi (Feline Mewsings #4): The Griffith Planetarium is scheduled to close for remodelling in January 2002. It will be closed for almost two years before it re-opens.

We have upgraded to Office 2001. The new version of Word has many of the features of Publisher. Unfortunately, it also seems to crash a lot more.

Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #30): I also have received spam promising to enlarge my penis. It might be a good deal if true. Let me hasten to add that I'd not interested.

Having thought it over, I'm no longer certain whether it was LASFAPA or AZAPA that was used in a lawsuit. It may have been AZAPA, since I believe the case was in Arizona. On the other hand, LASFAPA did have members in Arizona at some time in its history. Now that Marty Cantor is a FAPA member, perhaps he can remember.

Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning): Doesn't your cable modem company give you any web space? We have access to some through our cable provider, though we are not using it.

Is that a photo of you on the back page? Do you have a beard, or does it just look that way because the picture is dark? Sorry we won't be seeing you in August because of your being out of town.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #88): I think it's incorrect of you to correlate drinking water with being dull. I drink water these days, and I have never been accused of being dull.

What are "optimization problems"? You were talking about Math Lab.

Condolences on your wife breaking her ankle trying to jump over Mark. It seems to be the type of thing that happens a lot when I try to jump over one of our cats. They will suddenly move, and I will lose my balance. I hope Jean is all healed now.

To me it makes sense that Andy needs less sleep when he runs regularly. I have in the past found that I need less sleep when I do yoga regularly. I think it is one of the benefits of regular exercise.

Ben Indick (Ben's Beat #62): Much enjoyed your account of your Thailand trip.

I didn't care for Stephen King's *The Shining*. As I read it, the book lead me to expect one type of ending. When it ended in complete opposition to my expectations, I was so angry that I threw the book across the room. I subsequently gave away the book. I preferred the movie and especially the TV remake.

Bill Bowers (Xenolith #45): I had the same idea as you when I brought *Convention Log*, now *Feline*

Mewsings, to FAPA. My hope was that the regular schedule would help me keep my publishing schedule from slipping. At the time I did this, I was doing well to get my zine out once a year. It took me a while to improve my schedule. Then I combined my mailing comment zine with *Convention Log*, at which time I changed the title. I have been doing better since.

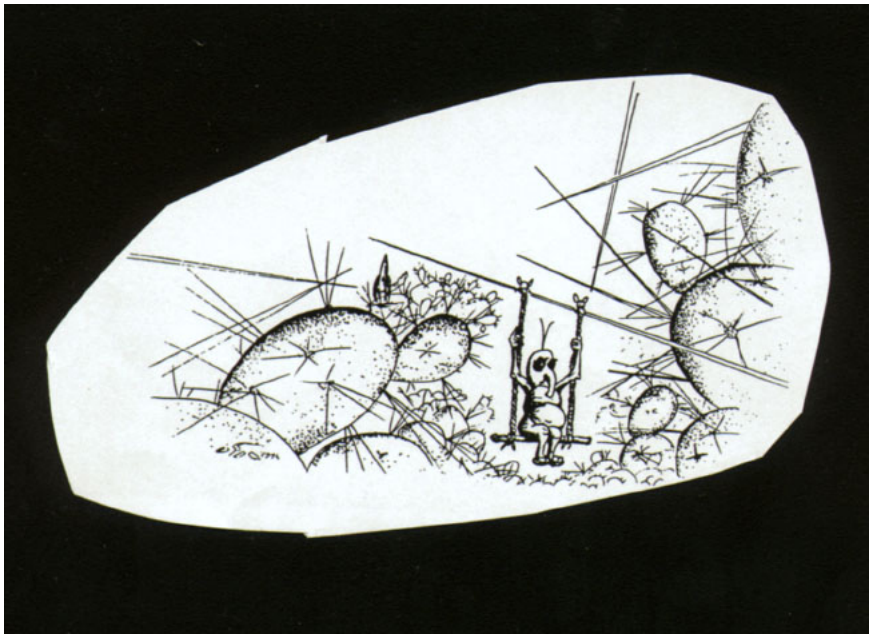
Thanks for alerting me to the Astronomy Picture of the Day site. Some of the pictures are really neat.

Having the first manned lunar landing on your birthday is pretty good. Mount St. Helens blew its top on *my* birthday.

I hope you have finally had your cataracts taken care of. The operation seems to be fairly routine. My mother and her sister both had the operation in both eyes. My optometrist says I have the precursors of cataracts, so I expect that I will also need the operation at some point in the future.

Tim Marion (On East Broadway #10): "Jacobs Hurzfeld Syndrome"? Do you mean Creuzfeld-Jacob (Kreuzfeld Jakob) Syndrome, the spongiform disease similar to Mad Cow Disease? Or was that one of the made-up things you mentioned?

* * *



Illo by Franz Miklis

* Letters of Comment (For the uninitiated, these are letters commenting on previous issues of my fanzine [newsletter])

My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and so forth.

Roslyn Willis, 704-200 Westfield Drive, London, ON N6H 2M4 Canada **16 April 2001**

Thanks for the most recent *Feline Mewsings.* I especially enjoyed reading about your trip to Hawaii. Although I'm not a hot weather person, I've always wanted to go to Hawaii, perhaps from seeing so many "Magnum PI" and "Hawaii Five-O" shows.

Ron Clarke, ronl_clarke@hotmail.com **18 June 2001**

Yes, I can access your web pages. In *Feline 3* most of the photos came out very dark - the Turtledove in particular. ((I'm not very good at editing photos.))

Enjoyed *Feline 4*, particularly the visit by the DUFF winner. I had tried to make it on a DUFF trip but didn't get picked. I wasn't all that fazed. I am a lot less an introvert than I was thirty years ago but still am not the life of the party. I would rather watch and listen than get up and exhibit.

Good to see the photos of you and Mike.

I [want] to comment on Eric L's mention of 19C where he lives. Lately it has been 14C in my kitchen. At the moment I have a vegetable soup cooking on my gas stove - though it is more of a stew. I did wonder why the recipe calls for two chopped-up frankfurts. I suppose it gives that nitrate taste...

Richard Lynch, jophan@zdnetonebox.com **26 June 2001**

I read through your latest online fanzine. Not too many comments, but it's a nice looking production. Your few days with the DUFF delegate, Cathy Cupitt, sound pretty typical for DUFF visitations. Perry Middlemiss stayed with us during his DUFF trip and did pretty much the same thing as Cathy -- did some touring and sightseeing during the days and met some fans (we even took him to see Harry Warner) and went to fan events in the evenings. I was a bit surprised that Cathy didn't include Washington in her DUFF tour; I'm not sure I got to say more than three or four words to her the only time I crossed paths with her at the Chicon.

I also see that you're interested in classical music. Me too. Whenever I'm in Eastern Europe, I don't consider a trip complete without a few classical music events. This year's events included a performance of Mendelssohn's 4th Symphony and Orff's *Carmina Burana* (complete with a ninety-person chorale) in Prague, an evening at the ballet for *Swan Lake* in Bratislava, and a chamber orchestra version of a Mozart *Simfonia Concertante* in Budapest. My newest (7th) Postcard Diary of Eastern Europe (all the others are on the Web, links at the Mimosa web site, below) will describe these. (I've also written some informal reviews of classical music CDs for my SFPAzine, which aren't on the Web; not too many comments on these yet, but on the other hand, nobody is screaming in agony, either.) Anyway, we will probably able to do some music talk when you come here in August.

Torun Almer, starfire_retreat@hotmail.com **30 June 2001**

I'll try to read the newsletter soon. We're still moving in here in Placerville. With all the animals in the sanctuary, there's precious little time for anything but animal care, cleaning and unpacking, running to the vet, allergy shots, etc. David works in SF during the week and is only here on weekends. Whew!!!

As soon as I find a "real" Internet provider, I'll start putting up photos of our property and the progress we're making, however slowly, in turning it into another beautiful Starfire Retreat.

Hope this finds you well and happy.

Clif Flynt, clif@cflynt.com **9 July 2001**

Not much of a LoC, but I'm enjoying reading the 'zine.

I'm doing a lot of training sessions these days (I was on the road for seven of ten weeks during April/May/June), and part of this is making the handout booklets.

After dealing with CopyMax (too much of my time), the local copier (too expensive, and not reliable enough), and my own copier (damn thing broke *again*), I've ended up with a printer from http://www.compgeeks.com/products.asp?cat=PRN.

They've got some IBM Network Printer 17 refurbs on sale for about $260.00.

The machine worked out of the box, but started making streaky/blobby copies after about two reams - a new toner cartridge fixed that.

It does seventeen sides per minute, duplex with a five hundred-page receiver tray.

The network interface is Token Ring, which is expensive and hard to find; but the 'normal' centronics parallel interface works just fine for me (it might be faster with a faster connection to the main computer.)

I've run about six reams of paper through it so far with about six miss-feeds.

The printer memory is a bit small, but it takes real cheap normal SIMMs. I upgraded mine from my scrap bin of SIMMs that are too small to use in my regular computers. (You could triple the RAM for about ten bucks if you shop a bit.)

I'm happy with the toy. It's paid for itself already in reduced copying bills. It might work for doing hardcopy versions of *Feline Mewsings*.

Chuck Ermatinger, St. Louis, MO, MIKJEAJES@aol.com **11 July 2001**

Thanks for posting information about George Laskowski.

I hadn't known about his passing. I hope to obtain several issues of *Lan's Lantern*, thanks to your link to Kathleen. Take care...

* * *

* Closing Remarks

I managed to catch up entirely this time, so I shouldn't have so much dated material in future. We are about to leave on an extended vacation of visiting and sightseeing before we attend the Millennium Philcon.