

Feline Mewsings

#6

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* Editorial / Introduction

On 11 September, the world received an unsettling shock when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked. It took a long time for some of the effects of the incidents to sink in, and it will take a long time for the world to recover. Things will be very different for a long time. Please keep in mind that the report of our travels that is featured this issue was written before the tragedy. I have been trying to live as normally as possible since then. We have not travelled since our Worldcon trip, so we have not personally experienced the aftermath. No one we knew lost his life to the terrorists. Mike had been scheduled to travel to Indiana for work shortly after the attack, but that trip was cancelled.

* * *

* Mike

The star party in Borrego Springs the weekend after the attack did take place. Due to the moratorium on air travel, the featured speakers did not make it. However, we believe the star party was relatively successful. Mike filled in as he could for the speakers. The event centred around observing the skies in the evening. There were two sessions inside. There was also a short solar observing session. Borrego Springs is a small town in the middle of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. In mid-September it was still quite hot during the day. The park headquarters, which are closed in summer, was open only on weekends until cooler weather. While Mike held his solar observing session, I drove around the park a bit. It was too hot to do any hiking.

* * *

* Millennium Philcon

Our flight to Philadelphia took off early in the morning and I had trouble sleeping the night before, so I had had very little sleep when we woke up the morning of Monday, 13 August.

This was our first extended flight in First Class, so we got to find out how the better half lives. After everyone had boarded but before the plane was moving, we were served a beverage. They took this away when the plane started to move.

After we reached cruising altitude, we were given a menu that differed from the main cabin service. Breakfast consisted of bakery items and a choice of three main courses. Mike had the French toast. I had a quiche, which was described as a "mushroom capellini frittata. The frittata came with ratatouille, beef medallion, chicken sausage, and fresh fruit. I gave the sausage to Mike.

Then there were a couple hours to do with as we liked. Two movies were shown, but I did not watch either. Mike napped for a while. I also tried to nap and managed a couple of short ones.

Then we were served a snack of a gourmet deli plate. I ate about half of it, as I wasn't that hungry. Cookies and milk were also served, but we both declined. This basically served as our lunch.

We landed in Philadelphia a little earlier than scheduled. We had hit a bad spot of weather just before we got to Philadelphia. When we landed, however, the sun was out. The restrooms at the airport were quite impressive. The stalls were square and very roomy. You could easily fit all your luggage in them. Each stall contained its own washbasin and a baby changing station. This was true in both the men's and women's restrooms. We picked up our rental car at Hertz. We were assigned a white Mazda Protégé. After we got on the freeway just outside the airport, I noticed that the "check engine" light was on. When we reached a good spot to get off the freeway, we checked a few possible causes for the light but were unable to diagnose the problem. We called Hertz and were told we could exchange the car at any Hertz office.

On the way to Succasunna, NJ, where Mike's brother and his wife live, we got lost. Mike tried to call them on his cell phone but was unable to get service. We later found out that his service defaults to "off" in New Jersey due to many problems with fraud; he had it reset so that we would be able to use the phone. We stopped at a convenience store. Mike tried the pay phones but was unable to reach his brother; the phones seemed to be out of order. He went inside the store to ask for directions and discovered that we were one town over from Succasunna. We were able to get back on our route. I had printed instructions from Mapquest and one other place, so we shouldn't have become lost. Mike hadn't trusted the directions and had insisted I turn when I shouldn't have.

We reached Mike's brother's place about two and a half hours after we had left the Hertz parking lot. We would have got there sooner if we hadn't hit Philadelphia during rush hour and if Mike hadn't got us lost. We had a bite to eat before we retired for the night. While we were eating, Linda, Harold and Marie's older daughter, dropped by to say hello.

Harold and Marie have one spare room where there are two beds, and one of them hides under the other. The bed underneath pulls out and then up to the height of the top bed. You end up with a split double bed. It was a bit difficult sleeping because of the heat and humidity. They have air conditioning, but it doesn't reach the level of the bedrooms very well. Their house is split-level. Still, I got more sleep than the night before.

I got up at 6h00 the next day but went back to bed hoping to get more sleep. I really didn't manage to get any more sleep and got up just before my alarm went off at 8h00.

Linda was over in the morning again for a short while before we went out.

After breakfast, we all went out to go to the local Hertz place. We received a gold Toyota Corolla in exchange for the Mazda. Marie opined that the Corolla was nicer than the Protégé. I know it had a smoother ride. I couldn't feel the road as well. The seat controls in the Corolla were not as good as in the Protégé. The latter had six-way control, whereas the Corolla only had two-way control. However, I discovered later that the Corolla had an outside temperature sensor.

Then we drove to Karla's house. Karla is Harold and Marie's younger daughter. Her kids are still young. Sarah, her older daughter, had drawn a picture of her and me. She had just turned seven.

We drove back to Harold and Marie's to change for lunch. On our way to lunch, we stopped at the AAA office. I had realized on our drive to Succasunna that I'd forgot all the maps and guidebooks we had got for the trip. We picked up a replacement set. Harold and Marie also got a few things. We also stopped briefly at Linda's, because she had been stung by a bee. The Chinese restaurant we went to for lunch was a buffet place. The Hong Kong Buffet had a very large and tasty selection of dishes.

We spent most of the rest of the day resting. I had my introduction to ice wine from Canada. Linda was over again for a short while in the evening.

On Wednesday, 15 August, I slept in a bit and, I think, managed to catch up with my sleep.

Mike and I left Harold and Marie's at 10h15. We stopped at a grocery store to buy Mountain Dew and bottled water. I saw some soy nuts, so I picked up three bags. We drove to Teaneck to visit Ben Indick and his wife and reached there about a quarter to noon. We took the turnpike part of the way. The other toll road we took was a real design mess. The road widened to something like fifteen or twenty lanes at the tollbooths. From there all the cars had to merge back into two lanes. A real traffic nightmare.

Ben and Janet Indick live in a very nice brick house. Inside looks like an art gallery, most of which is work by Janet, both sculptures and some paintings. We took a few pictures, some with people. Janet prepared a very nice lunch for us. Unfortunately, Mike didn't like the main courses; but Janet very graciously accommodated him with an alternate selection. We talked for a quite a while about many subjects until we had to leave for a meeting with one of Mike's astronomy contacts.

For this meeting, we drove to Cranford. Joel Powell lives in a house with his brother and a cat. We had dinner at a pizza place near Joel's work. He works at a place that does high quality reproduction and sells art supplies. After dinner, he graciously offered me the choice of some art pencils. Then we visited the observatory where his astronomy club meets.

It was still light when we drove back to Succasunna. Just after we reached Harold and Marie's house, Linda also

dropped by for a few minutes.

We got up bright and early the next morning for an early start on our drive to Gaithersburg. Unfortunately, we didn't leave Succasunna as early as I'd hoped.

By the time we reached Valley Forge, it was lunchtime. We took a bus tour of the place and also toured Washington's headquarters building. Then we got lunch at a small shop behind a church operated by volunteers. Part of the church was also a museum, which we also toured.

We then went to Longwood Gardens, which turned out to be much bigger than I'd expected. Combine this with the fact that we were running late and we had very little time to see anything. Besides, the hot and humid weather was not very conducive to doing a lot of walking outside. Longwood Gardens was created by Pierre Dupont, who later bought the Dupont company. I bought a video of the place.

We were further delayed in departing the gardens, because it took time to determine exactly how we should proceed. The route we took turned out to be slow and serpentine. When we reached the Baltimore area, there was quite a bit of traffic that also slowed us down. After we got off the Baltimore beltway, we called Rich and Nicki Lynch to alert them that we might be late. After some discussion, they decided to wait dinner for us.

We had further trouble getting to their house, when we got lost just a few miles from there. We finally reached their place more than an hour after our intended time.

Sheryl Birkhead was also there waiting. The three of us went to dinner at a pasta place. Sheryl has been doing fan art for many years, but she doesn't enjoy large social gatherings so rarely attends meeting or conventions. We had some interesting conversation about cats. She is a vet and also has cats at home.

We got up relatively early on Friday, 17 August. The cleaners were coming to the Lynchi house, and we wanted to be out before then. They showed up early, so Mike and I left a little bit after they came.

After stopping for breakfast at a nearby shopping centre, we drove to the Metro stop in Rockville. There we were able to find a space in the park and ride lot. It was raining a bit. It was enough that we both got out our umbrellas.

One of the maintenance men servicing the ticket machines helped us get our one-day passes. The ride to DC took about an hour. There is a metro stop a couple of blocks from the Air and Space Museum, which is a very large building. Inside are exhibits about aviation from the early days through space exploration and future possibilities. There are many original planes and spacecraft. The U. S. S. *Enterprise* model from *Star Trek* is now relegated to the souvenir shop, where we spent nearly an hour. We also saw the IMAX film *To Fly*. It is a sort of overview of transportation.

We had lunch in the cafeteria in the museum.

I was sufficiently tired out by the day's activities that I decided a walking tour of DC the next day was not a good idea. I needed to catch up on my rest and sleep.

At night, we had a Chinese buffet dinner with the Lynchi, Sheryl Birkhead, and several other local fans. Then most of us proceeded to the house of Alexis Gilliland for a meeting of the Washington Science Fiction Society. The Gillilands have two cats, Pepper and Smoke. I talked to several fans. Just before we left, I photographed one of the cats and several fans.

On Saturday I slept in until about 10h00. We took things easy during the day, catching up with laundry, e-mail, and such.

In the evening, we had a light dinner at the bagel place where we had breakfast yesterday. Then we drove to Hagerstown to visit legendary fan Harry Warner. We stayed there for about an hour and took a bunch of photos.

We got back to the Lynchi house in time to see *The Outer Limits*, but I decided I was too tired to stay up to watch it.

The weather forecast had been for showers, and it was cloudy Sunday morning.

Mike, Rich, and I left the Lynchi house about ten but discovered that most things didn't open until noon. Our first Metrorail stop was a bust except that we got a look at the National Police Memorial. We took the Metrorail again to Union Station. There we bought tickets for the Tourmobile, which would take us to various stops during the day. From there, we went to the Philatelic Museum. Then we went to the National Gallery, where we ate lunch in the cafeteria. We saw a bit of artwork. Next we went to the old Post Office. It is a relatively tall building, and we went to the top for the view. Since the windows are either barred or closed in with acrylic, it's not easy to take pictures but we managed okay. It was also very hot there. We walked down a flight to look at the carillon bells. There was supposed to be a tape of the bells, but it was not working. After we went down from the tower, we treated ourselves to ice cream from Ben & Jerry's. As we were about to leave, it was raining. We waited until the rain let up. Our next stop was at the Natural History Museum. We saw a bit of the dinosaur exhibit and also went through the rock and mineral exhibit, which also included meteorites.

Then we went to the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial. This is laid out like a park and is quite spacious. Our next

stop was at the Vietnam Memorial. Nearby was also the statue of Albert Einstein outside the American Academy of Science. Just as we got there, the sky opened up again. We stood under our umbrellas until it stopped. Then we took pictures. We were out of time and energy. Rich used Mike's cell phone to call Nicki to tell her where we were and give her an estimate of when we would be home. Then we caught the Tourmobile to the Metrorail station near the Smithsonian. Rich called Nicki again to decide where we would have dinner.

The weather was relatively dry when we got back to the Lynchi home. We changed out of damp clothing and headed to the Fingers & Claws restaurant, where we dined on seafood.

It was already fairly late when we got back. Nicki showed me some of her quilts. She had shown some at the county fair. All of the pieces had won ribbons.

My alarm failed to go off Monday morning. Mike also didn't get up early. I woke up naturally at about 8h30, about an hour after I had intended. Fortunately, Rich had decided to stay home from work that morning. We left the Lynchi house about 10h00. Our drive to Williamsburg was relatively smooth. We reached the Holiday Inn about 13h15.

After we got our room, we had lunch in the hotel. The restaurant was not impressive. They got Mike's order wrong. At least, they didn't charge us for it.

Then we returned to our room to unpack. I decided to use the backpack and fanny pack for the entire stay here.

Then we drove to Colonial Williamsburg, where we bought tickets that were good for five days and also included admission to Carter's Grove and Jamestown. It's also good for Yorktown, but we didn't intend to go there. We took the shuttle into the historic part. There is also a shuttle that goes around the historic area. There are more buildings there than there were when I was there last in 1971. When we arrived, a guided tour was just starting; so we tagged along. It was basically an introduction to the place. Then we had time to do the Governor's Palace and grounds. I didn't remember it at all.

By the time we finished there, most of the exhibit buildings were closed. There was a fife and drum group marching, and we got pictures of them.

We walked to Chowning's Tavern to see whether we could get in for dinner. They gave us a time about an hour away, so we decided to take it. While we waited, we dropped into a couple of shops that were still open. We didn't get seated till after 19h00, about fifteen minutes after our supposed reservation. Mike wasn't hungry and only had dessert. I had a rib eye steak. The place is rather expensive. There was entertainment. A man played first the fife and drum, then a strange looking violin, then something that looked like a small version of a violin. He also sang us the drinking song upon which our national anthem is based.

When we emerged from the tavern, there was something happening at the Magazine. Some tourists were playing at being soldier. We looked on for a while and took some pictures. Then we took the shuttle back to the parking lot. By this time, it was dark.

Back at the hotel, Mike couldn't make the data port on the phone work.

I slept okay that night except that I woke up several times during the night. The bad thing was that we were unpleasantly awakened by a wake-up call at 7h00. Later, we discovered that the hotel's phone system had been on the Fritz since a thunderstorm.

I ordered an omelette for breakfast, and it was very filling.

We went to Jamestown this morning after much difficulty finding our way there. At the site of the original settlement is recreated the Jamestown Fort and an Amerindian village. The weather was fair and less humid. It was not too bad if you stayed out of the sun.

On our way back to Williamsburg, we stopped for gas.

I never did get hungry for lunch. The only thing I had was one of the gingerbread cakes sold at the Raleigh Tavern bakery. We bought quite a few souvenirs at practically every shop we entered.

We had dinner at the Cascades, a restaurant near the Visitors' Centre. It was good quality for the money.

After we returned to the room, we started writing some postcards.

We retired very early.

I woke up at a reasonable time on Wednesday. We had left the phone disconnected to avoid being awakened prematurely.

I had breakfast in the hotel, but service was very slow.

We went to Carter's Grove this morning after some difficulty with the directions. At one point, we inadvertently found ourselves in the driveway to get into Busch Gardens. Fortunately, there was a place where we could turn around and leave.

When we finally got to Carter's Grove, it turned out to be much bigger than I had expected. Not only was the Carter's Grove mansion there, but also there was an excavation site for the Wolstenholme Towne, an archaeological museum, and a recreation of the slave quarters. We took a country road back to Williamsburg.

Before we re-entered Colonial Williamsburg, we had lunch at the Cascades. The menu was the same as the dinner menu, but we ate different selections.

Back in Williamsburg, we saw the church, the Wythe home, and a few other homes and shops. In the evening, we saw the hanging by effigy of Lord North by the courthouse.

We had dinner at the King's Arms Tavern. It was a very filling event. We also enjoyed some entertainment with the flute and guitar.

We got up early on Thursday morning and drove to Cascades for breakfast. Breakfast there turned out not to be as good as the hotel and more expensive.

We got to Colonial Williamsburg right after it opened. We looked at a number of exhibits we hadn't seen yet. We also got a carriage ride. We didn't get to everything but, by about noon, I was too tired to do any more. After I bought a few items at the bookstore, we returned to the hotel.

Back at the hotel, we did some laundry. We also finished writing all the post cards.

In the evening, we returned to Colonial Williamsburg to have dinner at Shield's Tavern. We both had buffalo prime rib. I had syllabub for dessert. Mike was disappointed in his dessert and returned it.

A bit later, we went to the Williamsburg Lodge to see the play *The Clandestine Marriage*. This was performed as it would have been done in the eighteenth century – very broadly. Afterwards, we were able to talk to some of the actors. I had seen this play before but don't remember where.

Unfortunately, it was pouring down rain when the play let out. However, we were parked very close to the hotel. We were able to get to the car without getting too wet. It was raining a bit more heavily when we got back to the motel, and there were some big puddles in the parking lot. However, we managed to get inside without too much trouble.

The package that Mike had been waiting for had arrived. It had filters for his camera. He had wanted it before the trip, but it had been on backorder.

We did much of our packing before we retired.

Friday, 24 August we woke up to find that much of the power in the hotel was out. The air conditioning was out, the lights in the hallway were mostly out, and the elevators were not working.

We had breakfast at the pancake house next door. I wished we had discovered the place earlier. It was the best of the breakfasts we had in Williamsburg.

We saw people working on the repairs to the electrical system, which was still out when we returned to the hotel. We lugged our bags down two flights of stairs. Just as we got down, the power was restored to the elevators.

We drove to Reston, VA, to visit Leslie David. Mike slightly altered the directions I had got. We got to Leslie's place about 14h00. She was not there. Mike walked around to investigate and found a note she had put on her door. He met her as she was walking back from some shopping.

Leslie has a spare room with a convertible couch, which we slept on. The room was a bit small but manageable.

She made us a delicious steak dinner.

Leslie left to do some shopping Saturday morning about the time we woke up. When she came home, she made me breakfast.

We left for the National Zoo about noon. We spent about three hours there, including time out for lunch. Although the sun was not out very much, it was quite humid. We thought it might rain, but it did not.

We returned to her place to change for dinner.

We had arranged to meet Rich and Nicki at a Brazilian restaurant in Rockville. It was a very nice dinner. I tried a Fuzzy Martini and had strawberry mousse for dessert. We enjoyed a lively dinnertime conversation.

I was up past midnight.

We got up about 9h00 Sunday morning.

About 11h30, we headed out toward Alexandria. Mike took over navigation when Leslie got lost. We did the historical walk described in the AAA tour book. After we toured one historical building, we stopped for lunch at a middle-eastern restaurant. We didn't cover all the places in the walk. We stopped at a museum, a church, and an apothecary shop. We also did a little shopping at a store that had a cat in its window. I bought a skunk stuffy.

On our way back to Leslie's, we stopped at a supermarket so Mike could get more Mountain Dew.

After we got back to Leslie's, we did some laundry. A while later, we ordered Chinese take-out for dinner.

Mike had a gift certificate from amazon.com that had to be used up before we would be home, so we placed an order in the evening.

Leslie went out late to pick up a friend at the airport and take her home. We were in bed by the time she got back.

Monday, 27 August we were up about 8h30. Leslie had decided to take the day off from work.

We left Leslie's place about 11h00. We stopped for gas and at a rest stop but otherwise drove straight to the

Philadelphia airport.

After we turned in the rental car, we took the Hertz shuttle to a taxi stand. We reached the Holiday Inn Express in downtown Philadelphia about 14h30 and had to wait in the lobby 'til 15h00 to check in. I wanted to get lunch, but Mike wanted to shower before we ate.

The Holiday Inns have come down from where I remember them. Instead of pens beside the phone, they have short wooden pencils. The facial and toilet tissue are not a whole lot better than newsprint.

We found a McCormick & Schmick's a few blocks away from the hotel and had a hearty lunch-dinner. By that time, it was too late to do anything else. The TV channel selection in the hotel was about half that offered at the Holiday Inn in Williamsburg.

Tuesday morning I didn't hear my alarm and overslept. I think possibly the alarm clock had failed to go off.

We had a continental breakfast downstairs. Then we got a cab to the Philadelphia Zoo. We got in with our GLAZA (Greater Los Angeles Zoological Association) membership. The zoo is small but has a nice collection of animals. It was early enough in the day that many animals were relatively active.

From the zoo, we took a cab to the Independence Hall Visitors' Centre. We got a map and bought a few souvenirs.

We went to the most important sites – Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Then we grabbed a bite to eat at a food court nearby. We saw a few other places, mostly near Independence Hall. Then I felt too tired to go on, so we caught a cab back to the hotel.

At Congress Hall, where Congress used to meet before Washington, DC, was ready to be occupied, we ran into a ranger who was interested in sf. He told us about the Poe House. I told him that one-day memberships would be available at Philcon.

For dinner, we ate at an Italian place called Maggiano's across the street from the Marriott. The food was excellent. We saw some people already wearing convention badges. I guessed they were on the committee.

We retired very early.

For a change Wednesday morning, I woke up before the alarm.

After a quick breakfast downstairs at the hotel, we took a cab to the Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site. It is a brick house with three floors, two rooms on each floor. There is a short film shown about him. Poe lived in Philadelphia for a few years, and this is one of the houses he occupied. The other places have all been torn down.

A short while after we returned to the hotel, we went out to lunch.

Shortly before one, we checked out and transferred over to the Marriott. Mike subscribed to the DSL line for a week. It cost as much as a month of cable modem at home. Body lotion is supplied at the Marriott.

After we unpacked, we had dinner at the grill restaurant in the hotel.

Afterward, we went up to the third floor and from there to the convention centre. It turned out the convention were still processing registrations, so we got our badges. We met Rich and Nicki Lynch on the way. I had some problems at registration. The guy working behind the counter couldn't find my badge. I got a new badge prepared. It was better than the pre-processed badges. The type is larger and the name can be read. We also found the party board and took down room numbers. Both Charlotte and Boston were having parties this night.

We returned to the room first to look over the pocket programmes. I left Mike working on the computer and headed to the parties. There weren't that many people at the Charlotte party, and I didn't stay very long.

The Boston party, which occupied ten rooms, was teeming with people. I found St. Paul fan Gerri Balter there. We talked for quite a while and made a date for dinner Saturday night. When she left for the Charlotte party, I moved around the party. I found Chicago fan Mike Bentley in another room. Shortly thereafter, his wife, Alice, came around. I talked briefly then with Chris Marble, from back in LA. I moved to another room and bumped into Paula Lieberman from the Boston area. Going out into the hallway, I said hello to Andy Porter from New York City. He was talking with Tullio Proni from Kalamazoo, and I talked with Tullio for a while. I decided that I had better head back to the room before I wore myself out.

Mike was in bed when I returned.

I got up a bit after 8h00 Thursday morning. I had breakfast at Allie's American Grill in the Marriott. Then we went over to the convention centre. We did some reconnoitring of bid tables and such. When the dealers room opened, we took a turn in there. I bought two skunk stuffies, and Mike got a small robot reproduction from *Forbidden Planet*. Mike also picked up three books. Another book was a give-away.

We returned to our room to shed all our purchases. Then we had lunch at Allie's.

We returned to the convention centre in time for me to sign up for some Kaffee Klatsches. Then we finished going over the dealers room. We also turned in our site selection forms for the Worldcon in 2004; for those of you who haven't yet heard, Boston won handily.

At 15h00, we attended our first panels. I went to "Fannish Inquisition I: Worldcon Bidder Presentations."

There were presentations for 2004 (Charlotte and Boston), 2005 (Glasgow), and 2007. Only one of the bidders for 2007 (Japan) was there.

Mike went to “Galactic Patrols and Beams of Force: the Space Opera of Smith and Campbell.” John Ashmead, Hal Clement, Simon R. Green, Yuri Mironet, and Mark L. Olson discussed the impact of these early works on their reading habits.

Then we both attended the Opening Ceremonies. There were some skits relating to Philadelphia’s history, and the guests of honour were introduced.

We both went to “The Machines, Alien Invasions, and Invisible Men: the Legacy of H. G. Wells.” The panellists were James Cambias, Craig Engler, Paul Levinson, and Art Widner, though Levinson didn’t arrive till the panel was nearly over. He is local and got stuck in traffic. H. G. Wells is still very much appreciated. Craig Engler, who works for the Sci Fi Channel mentioned some works in the pipeline based on Wells’s work.

At 18h00, I went to the Meet and Greet. While I was there, George Schithers was the only featured guest present. Cake was served. One cake was decorated with “Happy Birthday to Greg Bear.” The other cake said “A Toast to the Toastmaster.” We had a choice of chocolate and some kind of light-coloured cake.

I left to attend a filk session by New York City fan Marc Glasser. When I got there, someone else was performing. He went over his time limit. Marc got started late and was cut off early. Each performer was supposed to have half an hour. I taped all three of the songs he performed.

I returned to the room afterward to get a new videotape and the extra battery. Then I returned downstairs for Leslie Fish’s session. She was given more than a half hour. I had to leave early, because I was meeting Mike and Jack Stelnecki for dinner. Jack treated us to dinner at Maggiano’s. Mike has displayed some of Jack’s ties at the Mighty ETX web site. Jack has made a number of sales because of this. Many of Jack’s ties, shawls, and caftans are painted with an astronomical theme. Mike may be featuring more pictures of Jack’s wares on the web.

After dinner, I went partying. Besides the 2004 bid parties, there were parties for UK in 2005 and Chicon 2000.

I got up before the alarm Friday morning. We had breakfast in the hotel.

At 10h00, I went to “Slide Show: ‘Big Names’ – a Cautionary Tale about Fictional Trips to Well-known Stars.” Hal Clement presented a programme similar to the ones he once presented at Star Trek cons, where he tried to justify the scenarios in the *Star Trek* episodes. This day’s talk covered three star systems, including Rigel and Alpha Geminorum.

Mike went to a reading by Forry Ackerman.

We had a one-hour break in our programming selections, so we looked through about half the art show. Then we went to a Fred Pohl reading.

After that we had lunch in the hotel. We returned to the room to change for the Regency dancing. While there, we returned a call from Rochester, NY, fan Liz Lehmann and arranged to get together with her and her husband for dinner.

At the dance, we did two dances: Hole in the Wall and Margaret’s Waltz. Then we left for a FAPA meeting. However, when we got to the location, we discovered that the meeting had been cancelled. There wasn’t really enough time to go back to the dance because of where I wanted to go at 16h00. I spent the time in the fan lounge. There were penguin and star stickers to indicate the number of Worldcons one had been to. With the help of Gerri Sullivan and some others that were there, I determined that this was my fourteenth Worldcon. That meant two stars and four penguins. Each star represented five Worldcons. After I got home, I counted the Worldcons by looking in the back of the programme book. The Millennium Worldcon was actually my fifteenth Worldcon.

Then I went to check out a Mensa meeting. The main activity seemed to be arranging dinner get-togethers for each night. I left that to attend a reading by Nancy Kress.

After that, I attended a reading by Amy Thomson. I have been following her career since the beginning, and all her books have been good. The upcoming one she read from also sounds good.

Then I attended the second half of a slide show by Tom Kidd. A friend of mine has been telling me for years about this artist. I introduced myself after the show. He told me he had a dealer’s table, so I told him I would try to stop by the next day.

After that, I went to a reading by Walter Jon Williams.

We met Liz Lehmann and Dan Kinsella for dinner after that. We went to Chinatown for dinner. We picked a restaurant that featured Asian fusion. The food was only so-so, and the service even less so.

Mike and I went to the retro Hugo presentations. They started late. I videotaped most of it. Greg Bear’s GoH speech was scheduled to follow immediately, but that was also very late. However, the speech was very good. It focussed on Poul Anderson.

Afterward, I went to the Sime~Gen party. By that time, it was late enough that there were only stragglers. I stayed far too late, so I did not get too much sleep even though I slept in.

Saturday, 1 September we had breakfast in the hotel.

At 10h00, I went to a Kaffee Klatsche with Harry Turtledove. It was quite interesting. One of the participants was from South Africa. Harry used to teach at UCLA but is now a full-time writer. The book he is working on now is about a world in which the Spanish Armada won; this sounds quite interesting to me.

Mike attended a panel about "Chasing Science: the Excitement and Wonder of Science" with Fred Pohl and Charles Sheffield. Pohl recently wrote a book of the same title, and the talk covered roughly the same topics.

At noon, I attended "Cutting Edge Physics: Theories of Everything" with Catherine Asaro, Greg Benford, John G. Cramer, David DeGraff, and one other. Topics covered included the weight of the neutrino, wormholes, string theory, and the speed of light. We seem to living in some exciting times.

After that, I had a half-hour of free time, so I stopped in the dealers room to talk with Tom Kidd. It was not quite long enough, so I promised to go back later.

Mike went to "Greg Egan, Vernor Vinge, Stephen Baxter, and the Rebirth of Hard SF" with Stephen Baxter, Jim Frenkel, Charles Oberndorf, and Robert J. Sawyer. Various authors of hard sf were discussed.

At 13h00 I went to hear Catherine Mintz read. She is in FAPA with me. Jack Chalker, who was before her, went over his time by almost ten minutes; so she did not have much time. The readings were only scheduled to be a half hour long.

At 14h00, I met Mike to finish going through the art show. We found Tom Kidd's work there – very nice but too expensive for us. After we finished in there, we went to the dealers room. I introduced Tom to Mike. I had Mike take pictures of me with Tom and his wife. Then I continued talking with Tom for a while. I bought a small book of his work.

I almost forgot Craig Gardner's reading and barely made it to the second half. He is much changed since the last time I saw him. I left before he finished. Mike and I were attending "The Killer Bs" and were expecting the room to fill up. The Killer Bs consisted of David Brin, Greg Bear, and Greg Benford. They inducted Stephen Baxter to join them. The main function of the group is to promote reading.

After that, we met Gerri Balter for dinner at Maggiano's.

We returned to the room after that. I decided after a while that I was too tired to go back down for the masquerade. It would be telecast on the closed circuit TV in the hotel, so I decided to watch that. I was just too tired.

LA fan Gavin Claypool called from the masquerade venue to let me know that he had found my original nametag. It had been misfiled.

Surprisingly, the masquerade began on time. There were about thirty entries, but only a few would have been worth videotaping. So it's just as well that we didn't go. Besides, it might have been difficult to return to the room afterwards. Only one bank of elevators was available during the event.

We went to bed after it was over. Considering that the judging took over an hour, it was fairly late.

I had Mike wake me up at 9h00 Sunday morning. This left no time for breakfast. I munched on some soy nuts to take my morning vitamins.

Our first programme item of the day was "My Life in a Time Machine: 75 Years As a Fan" with Forry Ackerman.

Then I went to a Kaffee Klatsche with Jean Lorrh and Jacqueline Lichtenberg. They had been listed separately but combined. All the attendees were female. I met Karen MacLeod. I found out that WorldCrafters, which is part of the Sime~Gen web site, is for editors as well as writers; so I guess I will have to enrol. Later, someone mentioned that Shirley Maiewski of the Star Trek Welcomittee had been there, but I guess we hadn't recognized each other.

My next item was a reading by David Brin. He read a story I'd heard before. This time, though he announced that it would be published soon. He also has a graphic novel and a book illustrating his Uplift series coming out. The graphic novel is about Star Trek.

On my way to meet Mike for lunch, I stopped by to say hi to Gavin, who was sitting by the registration area. I also saw Robbie Bourget, who now lives in England.

We had lunch in the hotel. As we were leaving, Nancy Kress and Tom Kidd, separately, were being seated. We chatted briefly with Tom. I asked Nancy about the story she read about a year ago that was to be published in French. I wanted to get the title so that I could try to find a copy. The title is *Destinies 3000* and will not be published in English. She will be submitting her story elsewhere for publication in English. Afterward, we checked out the con suite. I also took Mike to the Fan Lounge to get his penguins. Bridgit Bradshaw, who is a fellow FAPAn, was there.

We returned to the room to rest and catch up with notes.

In late afternoon, I attended a Connie Willis reading. She read a Xmas story slated for the December issue of

Isaac Asimov's. It and she were very amusing. Mike had headed off for a David Gerrold reading, but he didn't show up. Mike stayed in the room for the next reading, which was Hal Clement. I joined him for that.

After that, I went to "Sixty Years of the N3F" featuring Catherine Mintz, Art Widner, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, and Helen E. Davis. This year is the sixtieth anniversary of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, which is especially useful to isolated fans and to all new fans. Mike went to "The Year in Physics and Astronomy" with Ctein, Jordin T. Kare, Dave Kratz, and Mark L. Olson. He reported that the room was packed. Many of the same topics were discussed as in the earlier science panel I had attended.

We had dinner in the Marriott. There was a long wait to sit down and a long wait to order. I must have looked very displeased when we approached the cashier. The assistant manager asked if we were unhappy and offered us a voucher for a free breakfast the next day. By the time we got to the Hugo Awards, they were already starting. We were seated in the middle of the room, and I had to stand to take videos. Unfortunately, I ran out of tape towards the end.

I went to a couple of parties afterward – the ones for Charlotte and Boston. Then I went to the Fan Lounge, where I spent quite a bit of time talking to a fan from Detroit.

After I got back to our room, I went back out to get some bottled water from a vending machine. However, the one on our floor was "Sold Out." I went on an elevator and punched the wrong button, but I got off at the first stop. It was the nineteenth floor. The vending machine there appeared to be working. I put in a dollar, which it accepted. Then it refused to take any more money, refused to give me any drinks, and refused to return my money. I went to the fourteenth floor, but the vending machine there was also "Sold Out." I decided to give up. It was after midnight, after all. I called Guest Services and was told I'd have to go down to the front desk for a refund. Then I ordered bottled water brought up. However, it had not materialized after half an hour and I decided to call it a night.

I got up about 8h30 Monday morning with a bit of difficulty. However, we did want to make it down for the free breakfast. Since it was free, Mike ate. Before breakfast, I stopped at the front desk to get my refund from the vending machine. I also reported that I had never received the bottled water that I had ordered up to the room. The reply I received was a shrug, as though this was a routine occurrence.

Since there was some time, we wandered around the exhibit hall looking at some photos of writers and other noted people. We also talked with Helen Davis for some time. Then I went to the "World Premiere – Excerpts from Lois McMaster Bujold's Latest Unpublished Miles Book." Unfortunately, I had had to make a rest stop on the way. It took longer than I had expected, and there were no chairs left when I got to the programme room. I tried sitting on the floor, but I was so uncomfortable that I was unable to concentrate on the reading. It probably would have worked out better had I just stood leaning against a wall, but I that did not occur to me. I left. I ran into Nicki Lynch talking to a Philadelphia fan, and I ended up talking with them for about half an hour. Then I left for the next panel, which was "First Fandom Then and Now" with Forry Ackerman, Hal Clement, and Jay Kay Klein.

We returned to the dealers room where Mike had earlier seen a skunk stuffy. We found the dealer again. She had several and some books about skunks. I made a large but fairly inexpensive purchase. We also had our final chat with Tom Kidd and his wife.

Then we went back to the Marriott. After putting my purchases in our room, we went back downstairs for lunch. Service was very prompt. Many congoers had either left or were in the process of leaving. Then we went to the Closing Ceremonies. This was delayed a bit. The panel preceding it – "The Field Since the End of World War II" with Greg Bear, Gardner Dozois, Esther Friesner, and George H. Schithers filled in the time until the tech crew was ready.

The Closing Ceremonies were mostly pretty straightforward. Some reference was made to the Clarke-Kubrick *2001*.

We had dinner at the hotel. Between our main course and dessert, Jay Kay Klein joined us for some conversation.

After refreshing myself back in the room, I checked out the dead dogs.

Tuesday, 4 September I made a breakfast of soy nuts. I opted for sleeping in rather than ordering breakfast. We caught the 9h30 shuttle to the airport. Milt Stevens was with us. When we got to the airport, we found Bruce Pelz already waiting for the same flight. He had taken the earlier shuttle. While we were waiting, he managed to break his walking cane. He said he had another one at home and was not too perturbed.

Our flight was smooth. We were well fed. Mike didn't eat anything except dessert, which was an ice cream sundae. I managed to catch about a half hour's worth of sleep. The downside of taking ginger instead of Dramamine is that ginger doesn't make me sleepy. I was pretty exhausted from the con and could have used more sleep. Instead, I read quite a bit.

After we landed, I noticed that Bruce had hired a wheel chair to take him to the luggage retrieval area. The luggage was so slow in coming that an apology was delivered over the PA system.

Mike opted to take a taxi home rather than waiting for the shuttle. The price turns out to be about the same.

Fluffy and Mercury greeted us with relief that we were finally home. Everything was in order. The VCRs had taped everything I had programmed. However, when we tried to play back the messages from the answering machine, we discovered that the machine was not working. We tried a few things, but the machine was kaput. Any messages left during our absence were gone forever.

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*** Mailing Comments on FAPA #256:** 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.

John S. Davis (Ghu Fapalement #601): What's in a name? Unfortunately, many people seem to think the word "opera" represents some kind of stuffy, old-fashioned entertainment. People differ in their definitions of opera, as well. In my view *Phantom* is an opera. The Los Angeles Opera has done a great deal of out-reach, and its audience represents a wide cross-section of the population. I guess the people in your neck of the woods have not been enlightened.

Jack Speer (Synapse): Every time I've been at jury selection in LA County, a thirteenth and fourteenth juror have been selected.

Although there is much light pollution in the Los Angeles basin, there is a mountain range between it and Mt. Wilson; so the light pollution does not affect it as much as one might imagine.

Mike did not attend the same college as I. I graduated from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. He went to Indiana University in Bloomington.

"Would have liked to have seen it" is not "double perfect." It is called pluperfect and it is absolutely correct as it was written by Nic Farey as all of the action was in the past.

Tim Marion (On East Broadway 12): There seems to have been some turnover in the cats in the Gilliland household. We did not see Critter when we were there.

Tim Marion (On East Broadway 1): Kurt Russell, not Jan Michael Vincent, was in the movie *Stargate*.

Robert Lichtman (King Biscuit Time #37): I have also been collecting the state quarters. I have two sets, one for Philadelphia and the other for Denver.

The San Diego Wild Animal Park is not really a misnomer. After all it is in San Diego County.

I was taking Armour Thyroid, which is made from cows, and therefore natural. Synthroid has had to re-apply for FDA approval, because it suffered from a lack of consistency from batch to batch. Synthetic thyroid supplements supply only T4, on the theory that the body can convert some of it to T3. Armour Thyroid supplies both, although not in the same proportions as humans need. I am off it for now but will find out at my next blood test whether I should go back on. I feel marginally worse since I got off it. Mike takes Levoxy, and the dose has been increasing slowly since he started a few years ago. However, he has not had any symptoms. Hypothyroidism is not uncommon among postmenopausal women.

There is a newsstand on Sepulveda just north of National. You may be thinking of that one.

According to Mike, colour inkjet printers do better than colour laser; but I have not compared them personally. We are looking to replace our ColorStyleWriter 2500, since the cartridges are hard to find and very expensive now that the printer is no longer manufactured. We considered the all-in-one printer/scanner/copier/fax machines. However, I'm hoping to do a bit more research before we decide.

You must stop having these accidents. They are no good for you. I'm glad that you have made a good recovery.

Ben Indick (Ben's Beat 63): It was so nice to meet you. We enjoyed our visit to your house very much and appreciate your hospitality.

A few days after the terrorist attack, Matthew Broderick, who was in *The Producers* was interviewed on NPR. He is a somewhat awkward speaker when he doesn't have lines, but he expressed the thought that people were ready to try to get back to a more normal life. He indicated that it was cathartic for the cast to get together again to do a show.

When *Glimmer, Glimmer, and Shine* was being done here, one of the local NPR radio hosts gushed about it. Of course, he happens to be a jazz fan. The subject matter didn't interest me, so I never tried to go. I wonder if an interest in jazz makes a difference in how the show is perceived.

Harry Warner, Jr. (Horizons, Vol. 63, No. 3): I don't have a comment on your zine, but I just wanted to say that I'm happy to have met you.

Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien): I'm sorry to hear about your Seasonal Affective Disorder, as I perceive your depression to be. I have a pen pal in England who suffers from this. In the winter, she usually takes a holiday on the Canary Islands to keep the depression minimized as much as possible.

When you say you had a second cataract operation, do you mean you had it in the eye that hadn't been operated on before or do you mean the operation had to be done over?

The web can lack permanence, but that depends on whether it is backed up somewhere. On the contrary, it may lead to the existence of multiple copies of documents. When I download a zine from the web, I usually keep a copy on my computer.

When you say "raw HTML," are you referring to HTML code? If so, depending on what one is doing with it, it can be very easy.

Our answering machine died while we were travelling on the East Coast. Any messages left while we were away were lost. Going over the CallerIDs from all the calls received during that time, I only found one that had a name attached. I called her in case the call had been important. I guess it hadn't been, because I never heard back. We have anonymous calls blocked, but many are "unavailable."

I think the Australian ballot would probably be a lot fairer than the system in place now. However, its administration would be a lot more complicated. I don't think it could be done easily with punched card ballots.

The Gene Autrey Museum isn't about Gene Autry, although there is some stuff about him there. It is a Western Heritage Museum, which means the exhibits are related to the history of the western part of this country. It is named for its founder. I don't know anything about the Hayden for whom the planetarium in New York City was named. Or what about the Field Museum in Chicago? I presume Field is the name of its founder.

Marty Cantor (The Fish Wrap Digest): Welcome (back) to FAPA.

Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #31): An on-line FAPA could be run very similarly to the print FAPA with the only difference being that contributions could be sent by e-mail and the final product would be produced on-line. There would still be a Official Editor. Instead of making paper bundles, he would compile all the zines into a web site. It could be put on-line quarterly on the same schedule as we have now. You could even make provisions for people without computers. This would require scanners and some printing that would be done centrally, either by the OE or by someone else.

It seems to me that the African states have changed several times since we were in school. Only Egypt and a few other countries there have stayed the same.

We have eliminated some sales calls by blocking anonymous calls. However, it seems to me that I heard there had been some legislation passed recently that would allow us to opt out of those kinds of calls. This is an option that is available in Washington state, and probably elsewhere.

One of the problems about being stationed in Antarctica for two years was that many of the guys came back with penguins as war brides. – Milt Stevens

Peggy Rae Sapienza (FAPA Party Flyer): I was sorry this was cancelled.

I notice that cereal companies always make their calorie estimates under the assumption that you eat their product with distilled water. – Milt Stevens

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu): I sincerely hope that your work life will stabilize soon.

Cereal companies advertise that their product is part of a balanced breakfast presuming you also eat some food. – Milt Stevens

Karen Johnson (The Karen Report): I'm sorry to hear about all the bad things that have happened in your life. I hope you get your life back on track soon.

When I was young, my parents once left me with my grandmother while they went somewhere. I screamed the

whole time they were away, and my grandmother told my parents never to leave me with her again.

What is card threading?

Fred Lerner (Lofgeornost 64): At least you called it by its original name of “hoof and mouth” disease. I keep wondering how it got changed to “foot and mouth” disease by the media.

Moi (Feline Mewsings #5): Shortly after I wrote this, I received information that indicates that the Griffith Observatory planetarium will be closed for nearly three years.

Jack Speer (Synapse): Our “beloved toys” were mostly given away, not thrown away, when we moved.

All cell phones are mobile phones, but not all mobile phones are cell phones.

Cathy Cupitt intended to enclose postage stamps instead of using International Reply Coupons when submitting manuscripts to this country.

So what is the interior of the Luxor in Vegas like?

Shareware can be downloaded free. However, if you intend to use it long term, it is morally incumbent upon the user to pay the requested or suggested fee. Some shareware programmers leave the amount up to each user. Shareware operates on the honour system. Freeware is free. Mike used to write shareware. He has registered users around the world. All the shareware that we use at home is paid for unless it has been given to us by a programmer friend. Some shareware has a limited life or can only be used in a limited way until you register it and get a password.

Web addresses may be case-sensitive, depending on the server. I think you are thinking of e-mail addresses, which aren't.

Murray Moore (Green Stuff No. 16): I am enjoying reading Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*; this is one of those rare books whose reading is enjoyable, not just wanting to know what happens next.

What I didn't like about Michael Resnick's “Redchapel” was that I couldn't see how it could be considered to be science fiction or fantasy. I have not read any stories by Resnick that I considered to be better than average.

Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip. – Murray Moore

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* Closing Remarks

My convention and trip report is so long that I'm afraid there is no room for anything more. Before I post this to the web, I will add photos to the trip report. I should be able to catch up next issue since I won't be doing any travelling before then.