FELINE MEWSINGS #18

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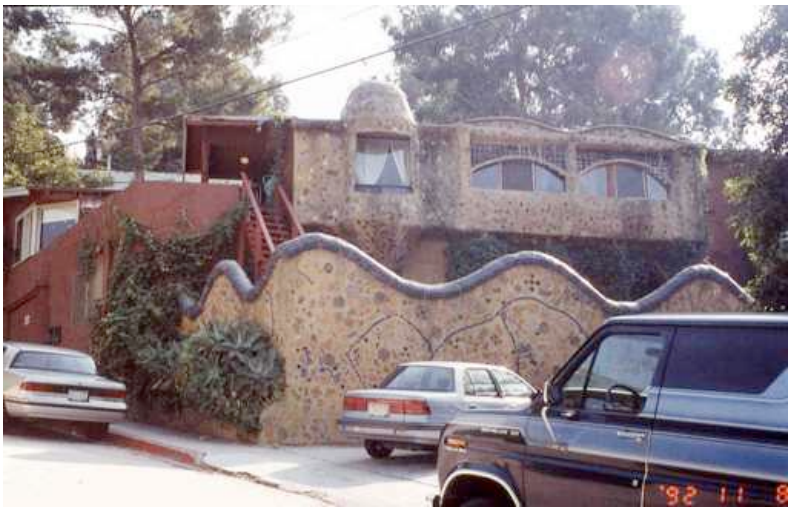
Feline Mewsings

#18 November 2004

* Editorial / Introduction

This issue catches up from the August one. The trip report that includes Westercon is included. I also cover the plays, movies, and other activities I ran out of time for in the last issue.

A while back I mentioned a Gaudi style house in LA, and I promised a reader that I would dig up the photo and include it in a future issue. So here it is (to the right).



Besides the activities described below, we purchased a three-acre lot in Oracle, AZ, which is northeast of Tucson. Oracle is at an elevation of approximately four thousand feet. Below is a picture of part of our land; what you see in the foreground is ours. We hope to retire to this land. After we sell the house we are living in now, we hope to build a custom-designed house there. We don't yet know when Mike might be retiring from his work. It will probably be a minimum of six years. That gives me at least that long to design a house. I'm thinking of a split-level design using ramps instead of stairs in a U or square shape around an enclosed yard. I plan to keep most of the land in its natural state. Experience tells me that I don't have the energy to have a full-sized garden. If the fruit I'm interested in will grow in Oracle, I may have a small orchard, espaliered for ease of care. Otherwise, I may have a window-box garden; but that would be it other than plants that need no care. I already know of one

beautiful flowering bush that needs no care. It is called the Mexican Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia mexicana*). I first ran into in Phoenix, but it seems to grow widely in Arizona and southwestern California. It is a large shrub with colourful orange and red flowers. The picture at the left is one Mike took at Westercon. There are no saguaros in that area, but I may be able to plant a few.

Unfortunately, there is also some bad news. I took Shadow (the tuxedo cat – twelve and a half years old) in for his annual checkup in the middle of October. I was somewhat concerned, because he had been vomiting with increasing frequency lately. This wasn't just hairballs. He seemed to have problems keeping down his food. The vet immediately took an x-ray. It showed that his liver was greatly enlarged, pressing against his diaphragm and his stomach. We compared the x-ray to one that had been taken a year ago, and the liver was almost twice as large. He was unable to assess the nature of the problem, so he sent me to an emergency facility that is open twenty-four hours a day. Their other tests were inconclusive, so we decided that we had to do surgery to get a sample for a biopsy. This was scheduled for a week later. As long as they went in, they removed most of the tumour. The biopsy showed that it was adenocarcinoma, which is an aggressive form of cancer. The sample cells, however, were relatively inactive. I spoke at great length with the oncologist a week later and decided that we would try chemotherapy. She felt that it might add a year or more to Shadow's life. Tests will be performed during the chemo. If tumour growth were evident, we would stop the treatment. Shadow goes in for removal of the staples holding the surgical cut closed in early November. We may be able to start the chemo then.

In my Arizona trip report below, I mentioned dental problems. After we got back from our Westercon trip, I ended up having to have two root canals and a new crown put in. My mouth doesn't seem to recover as quickly from dental work as it used to. July was not a great month.

We also went down to Encinitas one Saturday to help old time fan Earl Kemp celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday. His birthday is around Thanksgiving, but the celebration was in October to make it more convenient for more people. The party was held in the home of one of his daughters. He actually lives in Arizona.

* * *

* Hugos

Although I'm not unhappy that Lois Bujold's *Paladin of Souls* won the Hugo for best novel, I wish I'd been able to finish all the books before I voted. It turned out that I liked Robert Charles Wilson's *Blind Lake* even more.

Best novella went to my pick. I'm disappointed with the winner for best novelette. While Swanwick's "Legions in Time" wasn't bad, I was totally blown away by Ford's "Empire of Ice Cream".

I'm a bit disappointed by the fact that Gaiman's "A Study in Emerald" won for short story. While I liked it well enough, it lacked, for me, the depth of Resnick's "Robots Don't Cry". This is the first story of Resnick's that I've liked.

Was anyone surprised that *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* won the long dramatic presentation award?

I'm not surprised that *Fahrenheit 451* won the retro Hugo for best novel. I thought it might. I wonder

if the reason Blish won for best novella and best novelette is because those works were most accessible. I know I wasn't able to get my hands on most of the others.

* * *

* Mike

Mike has a new position at work. His title is Deputy Training Manager for the Shared Services Training Organization. This position helps coordinate learning among many departments at work, so he may find himself doing some travelling. He started the position in mid-October.

As Deputy Training Manager, Mike will lead teams to enhance their distance learning capabilities, develop new technical skill enhancement courses, help in the transition to the new THINQ Learning Management System, and generally assist the manager and the Shared Services Training organization in meeting the growing training needs of their customer base.

* * *

* Local Activities

Live Theatre

The Capitol Steps: This group has been performing at Caltech since 1991. They are so popular that extra performances will be added next year. This year we were given the opportunity to join the performers for a reception after the Saturday evening show. For those of you who don't know, they perform songs (filks, really) poking fun at all things political. Here are a few titles from their repertoire to give you a flavour – "Son of a Bush", "Cheney and the Jets", "Iraq around the Clock", "Sheik to Sheik", "The Angina Monologues", and "Send in the Clones". The performance was enjoyed by all, and I ran around at the reception taking photos and getting autographs.

#

The Drawer Boy: This is an interesting character study about farmers living in Ontario, Canada. Its genesis was a study of farm life by a group of young actors from Toronto. Over the years it developed into the play we saw. The play is about two bachelor farmers who are visited by an actor from Toronto. Little by little the actor manages to delve into the secrets of the farmers' lives. At the end, we learn that some things are better left forgotten. The play only has three actors, but they did an excellent job.

#

Let's All Kill Constance: This is a play based on one of Ray Bradbury's most recent books. It was done at the Court Theatre in West Hollywood. The story is a murder mystery of sorts. It takes place in and around Hollywood in 1960 and is also a sort of nostalgia trip. Bradbury pays tribute to many of the people living there at the time. To say more would be to give away the plot. It is very strange, and you wonder sometimes if it isn't a figment of someone's imagination. It had an excellent cast of many people. After the play, many of the actors stuck around to talk to the audience. Bradbury was in attendance.

#

Next in Line: We saw another play by Bradbury, this time at Theatre West in Hollywood. This play is based on the short story of the same title in the collection *October Country*. The plot has been changed a bit and expanded, but the basic story is the same. It is about a couple spending a vacation in Mexico on the Day of the Dead. However only one of them returns home. The script was written by S. L. Stebel and Charles Rome Smith. It was excellently performed by the cast. We happened to attend on opening day, and there was a reception afterward with lots of food and wine.

#

Around the World in 80 Days: Everyone is familiar with the movie made from the Jules Verne novel, but this is a play based on the same book. The playwright is Mark Brown, who has written other plays performed in various venues around the country. He has also worked in television. Unlike the movie, there is no balloon. There was no balloon in the book. Otherwise, the play is remarkably similar to the movie. However, where the movie drags a bit in the middle, things move apace in this play. This was excellently performed by a cast of only five actors, most of whom played multiple roles. The lead was played by Tony Maggio, who has performed at the Colony before, including the outstanding *The Laramie Project*. He has many plays under his belt and has also performed in movies and television.

This was perhaps Mike's favourite of the plays he's seen at the Colony. He could have watched it over and over with pleasure.

#

The Ladies of the Camellias: This play is about the two actresses who played the lead in the play by Alexandre Dumas, fils. At the time, 1897, the two actresses, Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse, had quite a rivalry. The play imagines what might have happened between the two actresses and is characterized as a "divertissement". It is performed very broadly and was a scream, though it took me a little while to get into it. It worked excellently for me, because I am very familiar with the story, which has been immortalized by Verdi in *La Traviata*. There have also been a number of movie adaptations. Unfortunately for Mike, he was unfamiliar with the story, so the play didn't work quite as well for him.

#

Grand Hotel, the Musical: This was a one-act ninety-minute play that takes place over the period of about three days in an upscale hotel in Berlin in 1928. There is a Greta Garbo movie of the same story. My title for it is *Love and Death at the Grand Hotel*, but maybe that gives away too much. The story follows the lives of several people staying at the hotel. There is love, and there is tragedy. For a short work, it is pretty well packed with plot. There are also many lovely dance numbers.

####

Movies

I Robot: When I learned that Will Smith was starring in this, I expected the worst. However, the previews led me to believe that it might not be as bad as I feared. I was actually pleasantly surprised when I finally saw it. Although the movie does not follow any of the stories from Asimov's collection, it does have a somewhat Asimovian feel. The three laws of robotics are definitely used in the movie. Susan Calvin appears and is more or less as she was represented in the stories. The movie is a mystery of sorts, and some of Asimov's robot stories were definitely mysteries. The only areas that differed greatly from Asimov were in the use of an over-robot and the presence of an unexplained ghetto of out-dated robots. The logic used to explain the actions of the over-robot was flawed. Since the recycling of out-dated robots is shown, one wonders about the existence of the ghetto. The action sequences were definitely out of character and, I thought, boring because so predictable. On the whole, though, it was a fun movie for an afternoon outing. The presence of a cat in a couple of scenes was a nice touch.

#

Garfield: Mike is a big Garfield fan, and I like cats too. Purists object that this movie is too upbeat. However, we enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun. It's a mixture of live action and animation, similar to *Roger Rabbit*.

#

Spider-Man: We went to see this with friends. We all enjoyed it, though one of us thought the ending was sad. I really liked the ending myself. I felt this movie was less exciting than the first one. However, what it lacked in action was made up for in the character development department.

#

Alien vs. Predator: Unlike the original *Predator* movie, this one had a real story. The story wasn't terribly complicated, but at least it made some sense. The special effects were excellent, and there is a sort of giant Chinese puzzle box that I loved. Of course, there was a lot of action. However, being fairly familiar this genre, I wasn't exactly on the edge of my seat.

#

Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow: This is a unique movie. It is mostly CGI; the computer work was done entirely on Macs. Showtime showed a making of short about it that I watched. It has a thirties art deco look. Even the actors have been touched up to fit the background. The story itself is rather silly, when you come right down to it. However, it is exciting and there is a lot of well-placed humour. The acting is very well done. I think this movie may presage the future of the film industry. They demonstrate that real actors are not really needed any more.

###

Other

JPL Tour: In late May we toured JPL with a group organized by my alma mater, Carleton College. We got to see some of the areas involved with the Mars Rover expedition. We were also given an extensive illustrated talk about the mission. For me, though, the highlight was seeing all the deer invading the JPL

campus.

#

***Requiscat in Pacem* Allan Rothstein:** In late June Los Angeles fandom lost Allan Rothstein, one of the first LArea fans I met. We met first in the pages of LASFAPA, which is a Los Angeles based monthly APA. I remember how excited he was when he and his brother, Larry, bought a house together in North Hollywood. After I moved to LA, I got to see and enjoy it a number of times before they both became too busy to hold parties. In recent years, Allan suffered from a heart condition and had to carry an oxygen tank with him everywhere. Still it was a shock to hear that he had passed. He apparently died in his sleep. His funeral was very well attended, and many of us also gathered afterward at Larry and his wife's house in the northern Valley.

#

San Diego Comic-Con: I've been aware of this convention for years but had never gone. For the past few years, I knew that the Little Lulu Fan Club has been having its annual meeting at the con. A friend of mine publishes a fanzine for Little Lulu fans. I found out that he drives there each day that he attends the Comic-Con. I thought it might be interesting to find out what the con was like. I asked him if I could hitch a ride with him on the day that the Little Lulu meeting was scheduled. He readily agreed. So we went on the Saturday of the con, probably the biggest and busiest day of the con. My impression had been that Comic-Con was basically a trade show with a few extras thrown in. However, the con has programming very similar to regular sf cons. I had my pick from among many panels, interviews, and other events on the day we attended. I really spent very little time in the huge dealers' room, which resembled MacWorld Expo more than it did an sf con.

We arrived at the con in time for me to attend the second half of the Stargate panel, which meant that I got to hear the cast of *Stargate Atlantis* (Joe Flanagan, Rainbow Sun Francks, Torri Higginson, Rachel Luttrell, and David Hewlett, along with series creator Brad Writer, writer Martin Wood, and producer Robert Cooper) speak and answer questions from the audience. If I recall correctly, the show premiered while we were in Arizona. When I went down to Comic-Con, I hadn't had time to view my tape of it yet. Incidentally the show's producers seem to have done a good job in their choice of cast. The characters are interesting, and there seems to be good rapport among the characters. This had been my primary concern when I learned about the new show.

After a brief break for lunch, which I had at the concession stand in the dealers' room, I attended the Little Lulu meeting for a while. I didn't stay for the whole thing, because I wanted to attend the Farscape panel. On that panel were Claudia Black and Ben Browder, who star in the series, and Brian Henson, David Kemper, Rockne O'Bannon, and Thomas P. Vitale. They answered questions from the audience, showed a promo for the upcoming mini-series, and hinted at more to come if the mini-series is successful.

Then I attended the second half of a Bradbury interview and all of a talk by Forry Ackerman. That was the end of the daytime programming, and I did a bit of shopping in the dealers' room. I showed the programme for the entire con to Mike, and he said it might be something we could do in years when we don't go to Westercon. Two cons in one month are too much for us; we don't have enough energy for that much activity.

#

Palomar Observatory: We had been to Palomar before with another group. This was an outing organized by the Friends of Beckman Auditorium at Caltech. We had a catered lunch shortly after we reached the peak. Then we were given an illustrated lecture. Afterward we got to go inside the dome. We learned about the latest projects involving the observatory.

#

Santa Cruz Island: We went with a group from the Nature Conservancy to tour this island, which is a nature preserve. The Nature Conservancy offers many interesting field trips to members of its Legacy Club. To join this club, you include them in your estate plans. Santa Cruz Island is part of the Channel Islands. Most of the island belongs to the Nature Conservancy. There is a small section that belongs to the Channel Islands National Park. Like many of the other Channel Islands, this island at one time was used for ranching. You can imagine the damage that did to the ecosystem. The Nature Conservancy and the national park system has been working had to restore its former pristine state. The last of the feral ranch animals is being removed, and much of the island looks the way it used to before the ranching. The old ranch buildings are still on the island, and some of the tour group saw that. The rest of us went on the moderately difficult three-mile hike. It wasn't too bad, because we took a fairly slow pace with many rest stops. We each carried our lunches in backpacks. We had a beautiful day for the hike. Since the ocean

was visible from most of the trail, we had some magnificent views. At the end of the hike, we had our lunch in a rocky bay. We think we saw a seal playing in the water. The only other wildlife we saw there were crows and an island scrub jay. On our boat ride to and from the island, we also saw pelicans and seals.

#

New store grand opening of Oceanside Photo & Telescope: Actually I don't want to talk about the store here, but this explains why we were in Oceanside. OPT recently moved to bigger quarters. We were invited to a party to celebrate this, because Mike does some work for them. We went down early, because Mike also wanted to buy a new telescope. We had some time to kill, so we drove to the pier and took a leisurely stroll on it. There was a large group of seals near the end of the pier. Some of them seemed to be floating belly up and just relaxing. But others were diving up and down, presumably after fish. A few of them actually jumped out of the water occasionally. We also saw a large number of pelicans, some of whom swooped down into the water from time to time to catch fish. I just wish I'd had my camera.

* * *

* Arizona Trip

We left home the morning of Thursday, 1 July, about 08h15 on our trip to Arizona for Westercon 57 in Litchfield Park, a small suburb of Phoenix, and visit to Tucson. We stopped for lunch at a McDonald's in Blythe and arrived at the convention venue, the Wigwam Resort, about 15h00. Our drive was uneventful, and we listened to audio books and dramatizations during much of the drive. The weather was fair. We noticed a lot of dust devils along the way.

We checked into the hotel and were assigned a room on the second floor of a building at the edge of the resort. The room was spacious with a large bathroom with two sinks and both a shower and a bath. The resort is made up of many small buildings and a large central building, where most of the convention was held. We registered for the con about 18h00, right after they opened up. Then we got dinner at the Arizona Kitchen, the restaurant that is in the main resort building (pictured below) and where we ate most of our meals. There was a Chat with the GoHs that evening, but most of the guests apparently hadn't arrived yet.

I had breakfast in the room on Friday.

We missed the opening ceremonies, because the pocket programmes were not available by then and we were unaware of when and where it was taking place. We spent some time going through the dealers' room and the art show.

After a lunch at the Arizona Kitchen, the first programme item we attended was a filk concert by Barry Gold. Then we attended two discussions, one of Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*, moderated by Sue Martin, and the other of Isaac Asimov's *Caves of Steel*, moderated by Jacqueline Lichtenberg. Although I had previously decided that my first choice for this year's retro Hugo was *Childhood's End*, I had second thoughts after the discussions. *Childhood's End* probably left a deeper impression on me, but it may be true that *Caves of Steel* speaks more to the changes in our society and world. After the start of the second one, Mike left to attend a talk on the "Mythology of the Stars" given by Tony LaConte. This talk was tied in to the objects visible in the sky while we were at the con, as there was a stargazing session scheduled for Saturday night in which Mike would be participating. I joined him at the talk after the second book discussion was over.

After that we dropped in at Meet the Pros. This was a sit-down affair. It would probably have worked better if everyone had been standing. There would have been more mixing. As it was, we spent most of our time at one table, mostly talking with Greg Brown and Adam Niswander. Everyone with "Participant" ribbons got a free drink. I chose to have tonic water.

After dinner at the Arizona Kitchen, we attended the Regency dancing, which started late because the room had been set wrong. It had been set as for a modern dance with a dance floor in the middle of the room. The hotel quickly sent some men to dismantle it. We retired after a couple of dances.

Saturday morning I didn't have time for a regular sit-down breakfast, so I bought yogurt and coffee from the little coffee shop in the hotel lobby. Then we met our group for the Challenger Mission, for which we had to go offsite. We almost missed our ride. The people who had been assigned to drive us had trouble finding where we were to meet. We had given up when they finally showed up. Luckily we managed to arrive on time. Another group ran out of gas on the way. We also heard that some people had been delayed by a flat tyre. The Challenger missions were set up to honour the people lost in the shuttle disaster. They are educational facilities that try to inform people about the space programme. The Challenger Mission in Phoenix is set up to take people on simulated missions. We were on a Mars exploration team. It was quite fun, though sometimes frustrating. Pictured to the right is one of the rooms where this took place. The mission took longer than expected, so our little group went to lunch at Chili's on the way back to the hotel. We missed some things we had planned to attend.

After we got back to the hotel, Mike returned directly to our room to get ready for the evening's scheduled stargazing session on the green. I stayed in the main building to revisit the art show. Then I also returned to the room for a while to try to catch up on e-mail and recordkeeping before the masquerade.

I took my cane chair to the masquerade to ease the inevitable wait in line; there was quite a wait before we were let into the room. It started late, but I was able to get handicapped seating. The masquerade had only about seventeen entrants, but most of them were quite good. The halftime show was provided by a talented musician named Heather Alexander, who was the convention's music guest of honour. She is an excellent performer and very entertaining. After the show was over, we found out that one of the reasons the masquerade had started late was because they'd had to find a new person to run the masquerade that very afternoon. Jan howard finder was the person who took it over, and the masquerade turned out very well.

After the masquerade I chatted for a while with Greg Brown, Adam Niswander, and John Davis.

Back in the room, I ordered dinner brought to the room. Mike returned fairly early from stargazing. He said everyone was becoming nervous about the sprinkler system. It had apparently gone fairly well, however.

Sunday morning I had omelette for breakfast at the Arizona Kitchen. Then I attended a reading by Vera Nazarian. Mike showed up unexpectedly for this. I was impressed enough by her reading to later buy her books. Vera is originally from Russia. Her books are fantastical in nature but clearly coloured by her Eastern European background. She read from her latest book – *Lords of Rainbow*. Her previous book is *Dreams of the Compass Rose*. She has another book coming out later this year titled *The Clock King and the Queen of the Hourglass*, which is a shorter work.

At 11h00 I attended a meditation session with Virginia Hey, whom people may know from her role in *Farscape*. There were six in the session. Someone had given her six aloe vera plants, so she distributed them among us. The meditation was good except for two things not under our control. The floor was not the best place for this. I had managed to put my left shoulder out of joint just before and had bursitis, which made me more uncomfortable than I otherwise would have been. I later bought a CD of meditation music Virginia was selling.

While I was in the meditation session, Mike went to "Enterprise: Love It Or Leave It" with panellists David Williams, Tammy Tripp, Chris Dickenson, John Vornholt, and Michael Underwood. Then I grabbed a quick lunch from a stand that had been set up in the hallway. In the afternoon, I went to the "Pessimistic Near Future" panel with Ctein, Scott Glencer, and Bruce Taylor. The panel discussed their concerns for the next fifty years; the one that sticks in my mind is the cost of health care. Mike went to

"Inside China", a talk given by Hugh Gregory about the Chinese space programme. He joined me for "Optimistic Near Future" with panellists Raymund Eich, Cary Riall, Louise Marley, and Steve Gillett. We also both went to "Mars: What's Up?" which was basically a discussion about NASA's direction with regards to our neighbour; panel members were David Silver, Louise Kleba, Loretta McKibben, Jonathan Vos Post, and David Williams. Then we had a bit of extra time so did a bit of shopping in the dealers' room.

In the evening we attended the Guest of Honor Banquet. This was a fairly intimate affair with only about thirty people. The guests of honour – David Cherry (artist guest), Heather Alexander, Diana Gabaldon (local author guest of honour), and John Hertz (fan guest) – gave speeches. C. J. Cherryh, the author guest, unfortunately was unable to attend the convention due to food poisoning.

A little after we returned to our room, there were fireworks across the street. All we had to do was exit our front door and stand or sit on the balcony. Considering the small size of the community, the fireworks were quite impressive. I was told that the resort pays half the cost.

Monday morning I had breakfast in the Arizona Kitchen. Then we attended "Collaboration over the Internet" with panellists Tee Morris, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Jean Lorrah, and Walter Hunt, followed by "What Is the Future of the Sci-Fi Channel?" with panellists Tammy Tripp, Lee Whiteside, and Jim Hay. Then I grabbed lunch in the hall again. I ate with Amy Bradley, who happened to be doing the same. She accompanied me to my discussion of Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*, which was also attended by Mark and Evelyn Leeper. Shortly after that, we attended the closing ceremonies.

We went back to the room after that. We had dinner at the Grill on the Green. I didn't think it was as good as the Arizona Kitchen.

We ended the day in the con suite, which had wireless Internet. It wasn't great, but it was the best available. I had intended to catch up with my e-mail but ended up talking with a number of people instead, especially Kevin Roche, who gave me a private version of his presentation on "Spintronics: a New Spin on Electronics" that I'd been unable to attend.

We checked out Tuesday morning and drove down to Tucson. We reached the La Quinta Inn at the airport about 13h00. After a quick lunch, we got together with the realtors from Long Realty – Pam and Bob Treece, whom I had found on the Internet. They seemed very nice, and Mike liked them. We made plans to go out with them on Friday to look at some properties.

For dinner, we discovered a nice Italian restaurant called Mama Louisa's. I had pizza. Mike had ravioli. I also had wine with my meal and an alcoholic coffee drink afterward. I guess that was too much alcohol; I found myself very thirsty afterward. On our way back to our motel, we stopped at Circuit City and bought more videotape for my camera. After Westercon, I had only one and a partial left. We also stopped at a Barnes & Noble and bought three books.

Wednesday morning, we had the motel's free breakfast. About 08h30, we left for Kartchner Caverns, a living limestone formation that has only been open for a few years. It is located east of Tucson, near Benson. We got there about ninety minutes before our scheduled tour. We had plenty of time to look over the exhibits and the gift shop. The tour itself was about an hour long and featured the Throne Room and the Rotunda. Afterwards, we bought the items we had picked out in the gift shop. Photography is not permitted on the tour.

We picked up lunch on the way back to the hotel. Back at the hotel, we wrote down our search criteria for property in this area. I called the realtor with this information.

Thursday morning I went down to breakfast by myself. About 10h00 we went to the Pima Air & Space Museum. It is a very large place. Most of the exhibits are outside with some exhibits in a few hangars. We were there for about four hours, including a tour of AMARC, which is where old and spare planes are stored by the military. Among the old planes at the museum itself was an A-7 that Mike had flown in the Air Force (pictured to left). It started raining while we

were there. Fortunately, it didn't become heavy until we left.

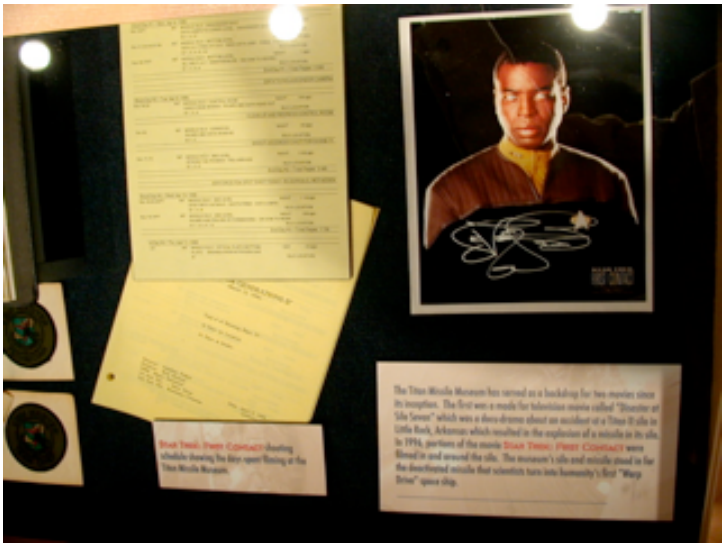
In the evening we met John Roulston, Mike's flight commander from the Air force, and his wife at an Italian restaurant called Caruso's in Tucson. On the drive to the restaurant, we saw a beautiful set of double rainbows. The restaurant wasn't a great place, but the company and conversation were very good. On the way back to the motel, we stopped at a supermarket to pick up Mountain Dew for Mike and water for me.

Friday morning we met John Martellaro, Mike's best friend and college roommate, who was coincidentally in town on business, for a late breakfast at the Clarion, which has a restaurant that is open most of the day. It is just north of La Quinta. Then we drove to a telescope shop in Tucson, where Mike talked briefly with them about the best place to live in Tucson for sky watching. Everyone seems to recommend places south of Tucson, but Mike feels it's better to be north. Then we went to a shopping centre we noticed on the way to grab a light lunch.

We met with our realtor in Oro Valley in the afternoon. Bob Treece drove us around to some properties in Oracle that are in areas planned for limited growth. The area is sparsely populated now, and new developments will have a minimum plot size of 3.3 acres. We could afford to buy a lot of that size now. We saw one area that looked good and may have him investigate that and similar areas further.

Saturday morning we drove south to the Titan Missile Museum. We took the 10h00 tour. Although it was a real Titan Missile site, the missile currently in the silo (see left) has never had any fuel in it. If it had been fuelled at any time, it would be too dangerous. I took the elevator down to the lower levels to save my knees and hips. This site was used in the movie *Star Trek: Contact* (see some souvenirs from the filming below).

After that we drove to the Stanges' place, which is in Green Valley just a bit further south of the museum. I met Klaus Stange when I was working at Xerox in Rochester, NY. He and his wife treated us to a very nice lunch at their home and then drove us around their area. We saw the retirement community they plan to move to when they can no longer take care of their own house. They also took us to the ruin of an old mission – Tumacacori National Historical Park. We ended up at a Mexican restaurant for dinner.



While we were driving around, it started to rain. We saw some spectacular lightning. Even though it was still raining when we got back to their house, Mike showed the Prius to Klaus, who was very interested in seeing it.

Sunday morning I woke up at the crack of dawn. After I had breakfast, we drove up to Oro Valley to the Roulstons'. John Roulston drove us to Sky Park, which is a residential community for aviators and has its own airstrip. He keeps his small two-seater plane there (see below). On the way, he showed us a house there that is for sale. It's a very nice house with many rooms and much closet space. However, it would not meet our needs. Besides, we don't need to live at an airstrip. Mike and I took turns going up in the air with John. I went first. John flew over the area around Oro Valley. When Mike was getting ready to go up, a small herd of deer crossed the airstrip. Mike and John were up in the air for a considerable

time, and Mike did some flying. He flew over the land we saw on Friday and took pictures. While I was on the ground waiting, I saw a family of quail.

After we both flew, we went back to the Roulstons' house. They have two cats, one calico and the other sort of an off-white colour. They are both pretty friendly. We had lunch with John and Lynn and stayed most of the afternoon just talking.

For dinner we went to Mama Louisa's again.

Monday morning we checked out of La Quinta after breakfast. I went down to breakfast alone and ended up sharing a table with a man and his young daughter. I'd seen them at breakfast before. They were from Iowa, if I recall correctly, and were in Tucson visiting the man's mother and sightseeing. He said he'd never want to live here. The little girl was happy to hear that we have three cats. They had noticed the cat socks I'd worn on one of the days we'd been down before.

On our way out of Tucson, we drove through the western portion of the Saguaro National Park. At the gift shop, I found a little skunk puppet.

Before we even split off onto the 8, we stopped for lunch at a Dairy Queen.

After we got near San Diego, Mike was running low on gas and there didn't seem to be a gas station in sight. He got sufficiently worried that he shut down the AC. Of course, we couldn't open the windows, either, since that would create drag. We finally found a gas station, but I think he had about half a gallon of gas left.

Soon after that, we stopped at a Denny's so that I could get dinner. While I was eating, one of my teeth started to bother me; but that's an adventure of a totally different colour.

* * *

* Leftover Mailing Comments on FAPA #266:

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.

Michael W. Waite (Trial and Air, No. 14): Thank you for a nice issue. I especially appreciated the memorials to our recently departed members.

Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute) is one of my favourite operas. I didn't know there were sixteen different versions available. Between audio and video recordings, I only have seven.

I apologize for the fact that I had bundled this zine with mailing #267. I see that it belongs with the previous mailing.

* * *

* Mailing Comments on FAPA #268:

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #99): What kind of game is Bamboozled?

Janine Stinson (Bird of Prey 3): No I didn't catch *Deep Core*. The reviews on IMDb give it a definite thumbs down.

Ben Indick (Ben's Beat 77): "Her Pilgrim Soul" was my favourite episode from the 1985 version of *Twilight Zone*. It's the only one I kept on tape and just watched after reading your zine. The story was quite changed from the version you describe. In the TV episode, there are two scientists working on a project to create 3-D holographic images. One day a foetus appears in the apparatus. They try rebooting, but it comes back. The next day, it is a baby. One of the scientists decides he must stay in the lab to see what happens. I don't remember the exact wording now, but the imaged person seems to age about a year for every ten minutes. This

scientist has been having problems with his wife, who wants a baby. His marriage is on the brink. Basically the plot revolves around reincarnation. I found it really deep emotionally. It is an hour long and has also been shown as two half-hour episodes. It stars Kristoffer Tabori, Anne Twoomey, and a really young Gary Cole. Gary Cole has changed so much that I wouldn't have recognized him without the name in the credits.

I hope that Janet is doing okay with her breast cancer treatment. My mother had surgery for her lump when it was found about twenty years ago. She opted to play it safe and had surgery.

John S. Davis (FAPAlement #504): When we were driving south of Tucson, we noticed the highway signs in kilometres and wondered about them. Thanks for the explanation. It did seem strange that there were no comparable signs in miles.

Speaking of being in Tucson, we tried to call you. We called the number we found in the phone book, the only one in Vail, as you said. I left messages three times.

Eric Lindsay (Gegenschein 98): Silk might not take up much room in packing, but it doesn't wash very well. It tends to come out wrinkled and needing ironing.

You mention stopping for "apple slice" frequently. I figured you couldn't possibly be talking about just a slice of apple. I did a Google search. There is apparently a kind of cake called apple slice. A recipe I found on an Australian site was unusable; because it called for packets and tins of things, which wouldn't be sold in this country, at least not in the same sizes. I found a couple of recipes that looked inviting. One called for using puff pastry. Another had instructions for making same. Some recipes didn't use apples at all but just apple juice. Since the Australian recipe used a vanilla cake mix, I don't suppose the puff pastry recipes are the same at all. Could you describe exactly what you eat when you eat apple slice?

Eric Lindsay (For FAPA): I wouldn't be so sure about not checking PBS drugs. Just because a drug has been tested and found effective doesn't necessarily mean it's safe for everyone; people vary in response to them. I frequently find that I get one of the "rare and unusual" reactions to some drugs. For instance, I reacted to one antibiotic recently by getting a sore throat; my dentist, who had prescribed it, gave me a prescription for a different antibiotic. My sister's (a paediatrician) reaction to the second was that it was useless and didn't work very well; but it worked fine for me. I don't know about Australia, but here when you buy a prescription drug, you get an informational flyer about it. I don't usually read them unless something weird happens or it's the first time I've used it.

Whether Hawaii has the "best climate" is a matter of personal taste. I personally hate humidity, so Hawaii is hardly the best for me. Of all the places in this country, Arizona comes closest to having an ideal climate, as far as I'm concerned.

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 54.3): Thank you for the information about pruning. I knew the how, but I was never told the why.

Bob Silverberg (Snickersnee 2004): I'm happy to hear that sf kept you from becoming a smoker. I never even tried it. My father quit when I was about ten. I asked him why, and he said it wasn't good for you. That was good enough for me.

The photo of the two of us was taken in San Diego at ConDor. I wasn't in Toronto. You are about the same height as my husband, Mike.

Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #43): Our Turner Classic Movies is still in the regular analogue service portion of our cable service.

I misspoke sort of before about high definition. The target date has also been changed to 2009. The plan is to change all TV transmission from analogue to digital by that date. Whether the transmission is high definition or not is, I guess, up to the individual station. In either case, the digital transmissions need a TV designed to receive a digital signal or one with a conversion box attached. The FCC will apparently be acting more actively to get stations changed over, as they want the analogue channels back to use for emergency communications.

Readers of electronic fanzines have the choice of printing or not, so it's not a given cost. I've never printed out an electronic fanzine, except one time where the zine could only be read if printed out. I read them on the computer and store them on my hard drive.

Eney (Target: FAPA for Mailing 266): Getting dizzy when getting up can also be a sign of low blood pressure. That's why I get that symptom.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #100 Part 1: The Passing Scene): What is a "pizza ghena"? I was unable to find anything in Google or a dictionary.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise Part 2: Ride the Lightning, Summer 2004 for FAPA #268): I don't use a cell phone, either, though Mike has one; I've borrowed it on a couple of occasions when I felt the situation called for one. One was when I went driving by myself in the Anza Borrego area on my own, though I must admit we didn't check to see whether I was in a covered area.

I believe most Shakespeare plays are performed with modernized English. As to whether the language in his plays represents the way people used to speak, I believe it does except for the fact that I don't think most people spoke in poetry even back then. I've seen many Shakespeare plays so often that I have no problems with the language. It helps to have read the plays first. I've read all the plays at least once.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #100 Part 3: Wondrous Stories): I found your listing of the books in your collection by author interesting. I thought I'd try the same thing, looking only for authors we own at least ten books by. The list is long enough even with that limitation. Please also keep in mind that of the 4310 books currently catalogued and that may include a few duplicate records, four hundred ninety are Star Trek books that belong to Mike.

Isaac Asimov – 103
Harlan Ellison – 48 (including 2 Star Trek)
Arthur C. Clarke – 43
Larry Niven - 35
Robert A. Heinlein – 34
F. Paul Wilson - 33
Gerald Durrell – 30
Michael Jan Friedman – 30 (mostly Star Trek)
Greg Bear – 29 (including 1 Star Trek)
Diane Carey – 29 (Star Trek, one as co-author)
Gene Wolfe - 27
Ray Bradbury – 23
Beatrix Potter – 23
James Blish – 22 (about half Star Trek)
Peter David – 22 (mostly Star Trek, a few as co-author)
William Shatner – 22 (including 10 Star Trek)
John Vornholt – 21 (mostly Star Trek)
Lilian Jackson Braun – 20
William Faulkner – 18
Craig Shaw Gardner – 18
J. M. Dillard – 17 (mostly Star Trek)
Rudy Rucker – 17
L. Frank Baum – 16
John Gardner – 16 (James Bond)
Jean Lorrah – 16 (including 4 Star Trek)
A. E. Van Vogt - 16
Hal Clement – 15
Ian Fleming – 15 (mostly James Bond)
Alan Dean Foster – 15 (mostly Star Trek)
Somtow Sucharitkul (including works written as S. P. Somtow) – 15 (including 1 Star Trek)
H. G. Wells – 15
David Gerrold – 14 (some Star Trek, one co-author)
Dean Wesley Smith – 14 (mostly Star Trek)
Brian Jacques – 13
Mark Twain – 13
Chelsea Quinn Yarbro – 13
L. A. Graf – 12 (Star Trek)
Frederik Pohl – 12
Edward E. Smith – 12
J. R. R. Tolkien – 12 (includes many duplicate titles in different editions)
Gordon R. Dickson – 11

Diane Duane – 11 (many Star Trek)
Rudyard Kipling – 11
Jacqueline Lichtenberg – 11
Anne Rice – 11
Fred Saberhagen – 11
Robert Silverberg – 10
Theodore Sturgeon - 10

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 54.5): Breast height seems very nebulous. Whose breast? Mine? Yours? Are all horticulturists the same height?

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu, Vol. VII, No. 3): While I don't care to be talked down to, sometimes I feel that writers are just showing off their obscure knowledge.

Keith A. Walker (Forty Years Ago Revisited): I enjoy your autobiographical writing.

Gordon Eklund (Sweet Jane 41): Gardening doesn't necessarily imply getting dirt under your fingernails. I wear gloves when I garden. But a certain amount of getting dirty can't be helped. It's also very hard on your back, because there is a certain amount of bending over required. Worms make for healthy soil, but I haven't personally run into any. I run into a lot of bugs, though.

Speaking of history being bound up in fanzines, I should ask you if you can identify a movie for me. It's a western I saw in the late fifties or early sixties. I saw it at a drive-in, so it may have been made earlier than I saw it. It was in colour. I can only remember a few scenes from it. One scene involved canoes. If I recall correctly, one canoe was chasing another. The first canoe may have carried white settlers and the second Indians. Another scene I remember is a large Indian bonfire with what may have been a war dance; that scene gave me nightmares. I seem also to remember a fort on water. I thought that it took place near Niagara Falls, but I could be wrong about that.

My apologies. I have run out of time to finish my mailing comments. I will put any leftover comments in the next issue.

* * *

* 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.

John Hertz, Los Angeles, CA **31 July 2004**

Liked the Miklis cover on *FM* 16.

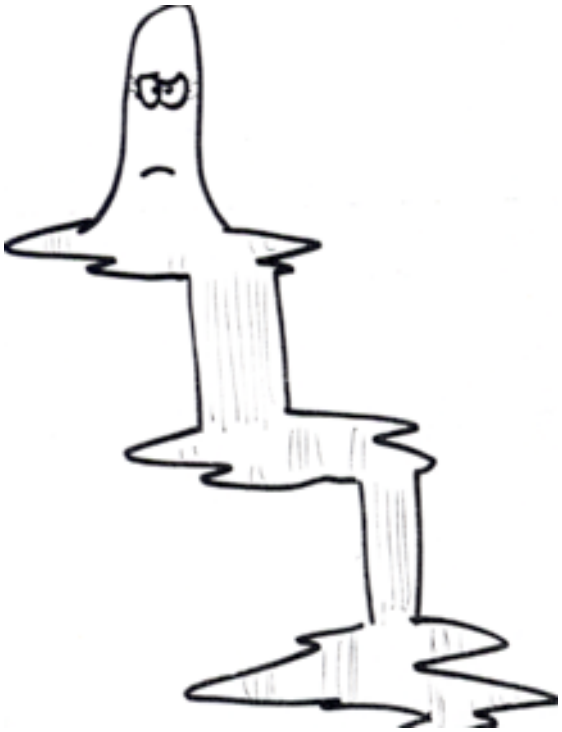
Mission of Gravity is one of the best. *Childhood's End* is below the very highest rank – even though the pseudo-*Looking Backward* passage proves to be a red herring, it's still clumsy – and what about those wings? From Clarke?

Duck Dodgers is a shining gem.

Thanks for Corflu report. I wish more fanziners had attended Westercon [in Phoenix], but we got some of the finest – and *many* thanks to Mike for telescoping [Mike took his ETX telescope there].

#

Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD **12 August 2004**



Now I sincerely *hope* I've written, but I just found *FM#14* sitting quietly in a stack of zines with no notes on it, so I presume I did *not*. *sigh*

I have OS 9.2 on my Mac with the update to OS X sitting *in* my filing cabinet. I researched the software I use and the real (not hyped) compatibility with OS X and decided *not* to go there. I may be forced (eventually) into it. I am rarely on live. The last time I checked, Mozilla said my version is out of date; however, none of the updates indicated any OS other than X; so I didn't upgrade (and no way to reach "them" to ask).

((We have not upgraded my sister from whatever version of OS 9 she is using. So you're not the only one running an older OS. She doesn't use her computer much. Upgrading her to X would be like getting her a brand new computer that works differently, not to mention that she would have to upgrade her software. She told me last time I talked to her that she was thinking of just paying someone to upgrade her computer.))

The colour pictures are a great addition. Keep them coming!

The Alaskan trip sounded busy but relaxing at the same time. Some day....

Thanks!

#

Gerri Balter, St. Paul, MN **16 August 2004**

I don't know why, but I thought you weren't going to Boston. Then I received *Feline Mewsings* and read that you were voting for the Hugos.

Does that mean you are going to Boston?

Let me know your plans.

((Sorry, we did not attend the WorldCon this year.))

#

rich brown, Arlington, VA **19 August 2004**

Wanted to report that I've received and enjoyed your Corflu Blackjack videos.

And as long as I was doing so I thought, hey, why not send you a few comments on your latest FAPAzine? Note that I address you now as "R-Laurraine" rather than just "Laurraine," now that I know that's your preference; I can't very well expect people to respect my affectation if I don't respect theirs....

((Actually I use Laurraine for informal purposes.))

Your mc to Marty Cantor about the *Chicago Hope* episode that used LA City Hall as a Chicago courthouse

got me thinking about the number of times I've seen things like that happen in movies and on TV. One of my favourites in that regard for pure bemused amusement was *The Man With One Red Shoe* (the U.S. remake of *The Tall Blond Man With One Black Shoe* [*Le Grand blond avec une chaussure Noire*]), in which a sequence filmed in Georgetown is totally surreal to anyone actually familiar with that upscale Washington, D.C., neighbourhood.

((I recently watched the remake. It was funny. I'd be interested in seeing the original, but it's only available on tape and only in a dubbed version. I will wait to see if it comes out on DVD in the original French. There is a DVD available in Germany, but it's in PAL format and dubbed in German!))

FYI, Georgetown's major east-west axis, coming off the [Francis Scott] Key Bridge from Rosslyn, Virginia, is M Street NW; Georgetown is, in effect, bisected at its centre by Wisconsin Avenue, which runs north south. Georgetown University, from which it gets its name, is in the northwest quadrant of this "plus sign"; and the shops on both M Street and Wisconsin Avenue are a mixture of trendy bars, book shops, discos, restaurants, theatres, art galleries, and other things that might appeal to the day and night life of college students.

Back to the film: Tom Hanks, on bicycle, is taking on a car containing the villains and his captured girlfriend. He sees them first as they turn left (east) off Wisconsin Avenue, a block below M Street. The next shot has the car turning right (south) off of M Street onto Thomas Jefferson St. NW -- a street where I worked for a few years. To do this from the point they were last shown, they would have had to take a left (north) at the next intersection, then a right on M two blocks east to Thomas Jefferson. Add to this the fact that Thomas Jefferson is a one-way street -- and they're going the wrong way. Not to worry, though, as the next shot has Hanks eluding them by travelling north on 38th (or perhaps 39th) Street (both of which are east of Thomas Jefferson) with M Street clearly behind him (to the south). He picks a long 2x4 off the back of a truck and turns on his bike to ram the car, rather like a knight on horseback with a lance; the car turns right (east) into an alley and crashes, but the alley is actually two blocks south of M Street (and thus really three blocks away). Hanks and his girlfriend run away on the little towpath/walkway beside the C&O Canal -- believable for a change, as it's only a short distance north of the alley (with a canal boat ride that starts at Thomas Jefferson Street) -- and reach the actual mall at the southwest corner of Wisconsin & M and the clearly marked Metro subway stop. There is no Metro subway stop there -- or indeed anywhere in Georgetown. Then we see them rushing down the escalator on what is clearly the Dupont Circle station -- Dupont Circle being another upscale DC neighbourhood (where I lived for a few years in a relatively inexpensive apartment since Bolivia reportedly makes a slightly larger postage stamp), roughly, oh, three or four miles away, north and east of Georgetown -- five minutes by car when there's no traffic (i.e., practically never), 10-20 otherwise and easily 45+ minutes on foot. The station they enter from that point is not the same station, which perhaps explains why the subway that pulls in is not a Metro train but a Baltimore rapid transit car. They exit, rush up the steps of the Smithsonian American Art Museum/Renwick Gallery, which, when they cut to the next interior, is a corridor leading to a Senate hearing room.

The movie's a comedy, not as good as the French original but not bad either -- but this part has people from the DC area laughing for the wrong reasons.

((There are a couple of movies I've seen and remember where the geography was all mixed up. The first was *The Naked Gun*. It takes place in LA. However, the Dodger game they supposedly attend was filmed at Angel Stadium. Also there is one scene where they drive past the domes of the San Onofre nuclear plant. The domes are shaped like breasts, so it's a visual joke. They are supposed to be driving from LAX to the police station. However, the San Onofre nuclear plant is located in San Diego County.

((Another movie where the characters get from one place to another as though they had a matter transporter is *Time after Time*, the one about H. G. Wells chasing Jack the Ripper through modern-day San Francisco. I don't believe it was a comedy. I saw it when I was living in the Bay Area, if I recall correctly. Anyway, my friends and I were cracking up about the way the characters jumped from one part of the city to another.

((I heard an analysis of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* that criticized it for taking place in the wrong area of

Washington, DC; but I don't have enough familiarity with the city to know personally.))

Lloyd Penney's LoC confirms something I'd heard before -- that Wil Wheaton is a genuine human being who willingly attends our conventions as a fan, which makes me think I'd probably like him -- but I was brought up short by Lloyd's mention of Armin Shimerman which seems to imply that Armin was in *I, Claudius*. Patrick Stewart appeared in *I, Claudius*, in the role of Sejanus -- a little hard to recognize at first because he's wearing a rug (and of course is years younger), but there's no mistaking that voice. Even a search of the Internet Movie Database doesn't show Armin having any part in it. Shimerman has loads of movie and TV credits, though, and personally I rather enjoyed him as Principal Snyder on *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*, most particularly an episode entitled "Restless", which has (as part of a dream sequence) a thoroughly delightful pastiche of *Apocalypse Now*, with Shimerman doing a priceless Brando.

((Lloyd Penney's LoC referred to my mention of Wil Wheaton and Armin Shimerman's appearance at Loscon last year, so you lost some of the context. Wil Wheaton also spoke at the LASFS a few weeks before Loscon. That was, as I understand it, Wil Wheaton's second visit to the LASFS, where, he claimed, he felt quite at home. I saw Armin Shimerman in *Hamlet* in January at a theatre in West Hollywood.))

rich replied: Yes, I definitely messed up there; I somehow read and/or inferred *I, Claudius*, as in the Robert Graves Roman epic done by "Masterpiece Theatre", whereas what you and Lloyd were actually talking about was Claudius, as in the character in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Oops. Oh. Well. Nev-er mind!

Oddly enough, although I'm originally from the LArea -- born and raised in Pasadena -- I recognize only a few major landmarks (e.g., the "Hollywood" letters, Mt. Palomar observatory, the inside of the Bradbury hotel) whenever I see films set in the area. I didn't do much travelling around while I lived there as a kid (I got to Disneyland and the rides down at Long Beach and had relatives in both Norwalk and Monrovia), and a good deal of what little I was once familiar with has changed; the main north-south street, Fair Oaks, two blocks from where I lived, was totally alien on the west side and only partially familiar on the east side the last time I was in the area, which is now over twenty years ago. I'd be more inclined to recognize the glitches in *Time After Time*, which movie I saw and enjoyed (it had some humour but, right, wasn't a comedy); because I've been around the San Francisco area more frequently and more recently.

((I don't believe the Bradbury building, which is what I think you were referring to, was ever a hotel.))

You've piqued my curiosity, though, regarding that analysis of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, which maintains that it took place in the "wrong" areas of DC. I'm familiar with and recognize almost all of the areas used in the movie and can't fault them; I've even lived near a few of them. Right now, for example, I'm five blocks from the gate at Ft. Meyer where all the tanks come wheeling out in the opening sequence after Klaatu's flying saucer lands. The hospital Klaatu is taken to, after he's shot, is on North Capitol Street, just across the DC line; when he escapes, he winds up in a rooming house in the 1300 block of Harvard Street NW, which is back in DC and perhaps a thirty minute walk from the hospital. I actually lived in a house with Dan & Lynn Steffan that was only seven blocks away from where that was supposed to be -- and in fact, when I walked to work, I came down 14th and crossed Harvard St. daily. (The 1300 block is between 13th and 14th.) I even once, on a lark, checked out the address -- 1314, iirc -- but while it existed, it wasn't on a building that looked at all like the one in the movie. Still, I was there in the '80s, which was more than thirty years after the film was made -- and the movie has to be allowed some license. That location is a 15-20 minute walk to the mall, where Klaatu's spaceship had landed. When Klaatu takes Patricia Neal's boy on their outing, their progression is perfectly logical: They go from the space ship (in the centre of the mall, near the Washington monument), to the Lincoln monument (the west side of the mall), to National Cemetery (just across the Potomac, west of the Lincoln monument). Don't know where Professor Barnhard's house was; it could have been in any of several neighbourhoods but from its looks was in the Georgetown/Foggy Bottom area. The cab ride Klaatu shares with Patricia Neal, while they're trying to get to Professor Barnhard's, thinking (correctly) that the authorities have been alerted by Richard Carlson, also seems a logical progression, assuming I'm correct about the general location of Barnhard's home. The cab goes just a few blocks north, via Columbia Road (passing within blocks of the house where I lived with Dan & Lynn) to Connecticut Avenue and from there down to Dupont Circle. I recognize only a few of the places where the military are set up looking out for them, but none of those shown seem to be too far off the path they took. Klaatu is shot and killed near Dupont Circle, two blocks

from where I lived on 19th St. NW. I've seen the entrance to the "underpass" Patricia Neal uses just off Dupont Circle when she walks away; the underpass itself still exists but has been blocked off and is no longer used, so these days that entrance is littered with, well, litter. Getting to the other side would have put her half a block further away from the space ship (where she was supposed to go to utter the four words that would save the world), but I think we're supposed to believe she was using it in a successful attempt to slip away unnoticed. So, really, I wonder what I missed. Maybe, the next time I watch it, I'll try watching a little closer!

((If I recall the discussion that I heard correctly, the woman speaking said the neighbourhood with the rooming house was not the kind of neighbourhood with that kind of building.))

Not to get into a long digression about it or anything, but it recently occurred to me to wonder why Klaatu was so "impressed" by what he saw at the Lincoln monument that he up and declared Abe to be a Great Man. I mean, he's able to read part of the Gettysburg Address, engraved in the wall behind the statute of Lincoln; but that speech is a glorification of people who died in a civil war. The moral justifications offered for that war in that speech are not unlike the platitudes politicians use to justify most wars; and given that the speech was new to Klaatu, it seems unlikely that he could have had the historical context needed to sift this particular bit of wheat from the usual chaff.

Oh, as long as we're talking about such things, for a while I thought I had similar criticisms to make about a longish segment in the beginning of *Being There* where Peter Sellers (Chance the gardener, a.k.a. Chauncy Gardner) goes walkabout in DC for a day. But on reflection, I think perhaps it was intentional. I recognize buildings in all but one of the neighbourhoods he wanders through and, in the one exception I recognize, the general area (downtown, around 11th Street). I think the sequence they were filmed in was deliberately mixed. There's one segment where the natural flow would go from the southernmost to the northernmost -- specifically from (1) the Smithsonian Museum (he's just standing in front, seemingly baffled) to (2) the corner of 14th St NW and I St NW (I recognize and in fact have been in the topless bar) to (3) the corner of 14th St. NW and Vermont NW (where Chance is accosted by some punks). The sequence shown was actually (3), (1), (2). I now think what's actually being "said" in showing them in the way they're shown is, "he wandered all over, for most of a full day, pretty much choosing his directions at random." (He's never previously been outside in his life.)

#

Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON, Canada **6 September 2004**

Thank you for *Feline Mewsings 17*...it is the day after the end of Noreascon 4, and we were not there. Instead, we spent the weekend at home; we admired the air show at the Canadian National Exhibition, and Yvonne took some more flying lessons on the holiday Monday. [Noreascon] was financially out of reach; the next three years of Worldcons will be more so. Oh, well...some comments on the issue at hand.

Your Hugo votes were well placed. I vote only in the categories I feel comfortable in. So, I didn't vote in many of them. I have already heard the moans of anguish about Dave Langford winning the Best Fan Writer award for the 2Xth year in a row. My congratulations to him. A nice surprise was to see Cheryl Morgan win the Best Fanzine Hugo for *Emerald City*. I had thought of joining FAPA, but I can see how many FAPAzines I already receive. My loc-writing load suits me just fine right now, and I was in apas a long time ago.

My LoCs may have confused some people...first I had the job in Markham, and then I was job-hunting again. The job in Markham lasted seven weeks. I replaced a man who had been in the job for ten years, and the company's main client was Wal-Mart Canada. My job was to proofread the Wal-Mart flyers for the entire country. Not long after I started, the company announced that it would be moving to a new, larger location elsewhere in Markham; and a new agreement with Wal-Mart Canada meant that two Wal-Mart marketing department staffers would be resident in the company's new location. Not long after the move was made, I was laid off for a week because of little work coming in from Wal-Mart. On the Thursday of that week, I got an e-mail telling me that the layoff was now permanent. That's a disgusting way of being told your services are no longer required... I cleared out my desk the next Monday, and I found out later from one former co-worker that the Wal-Mart staffers were there to do the proofreading,

and my salary provided some savings that needed to be made after that expensive move.

The X Prize now has some real competition. Burt Rutan's organization now has competition from the Canadian Arrow and the DaVinci Project, both Canadian groups. Yvonne went to the Canadian Aerospace Museum where Brian Feeney of DaVinci had a press-covered showing of his proposed capsule. I have the feeling Rutan will win, but these two Canadian groups will be breathing down his back.

When Yvonne goes out to Vancouver next month, she'll be gone for ten days. Her first stop is an annual Mars-Moon conference, followed by the weeklong International Astronautics Congress; and she will wrap up her trip with a day doing space-related panels for VCon 29. I might get my wish to go to Corflu. There is a move afoot to have Corflu in Toronto in the next couple of years. I don't know anything about it, not having been approached to help out yet.

I will hold out some hope that my job hunting days are finally done, and I can plan a little bit for the future. I need some kind of break from all of this uncertainty. Take care, and see you in the next issue.

((I was one of the people confused by your employment situation, so thank you for clarifying everything.

((Sounds like Yvonne has a great interest in space exploration. I'm unfamiliar with the Canadian Aerospace Museum. Is it in Toronto? I must check it out should I find myself in Toronto again.

((Toronto getting Corflu only seems fair. Since next year's is in San Francisco, that makes two in a row for the western region. I don't know whether we would be able to fit in a trip to Toronto. I am working on our budgeting, so we'll have to see. There are so many things to do and limited money.

((Thank you for your LoC. My next issue should be more meaty.))

Lloyd replied: The Canadian Aerospace Museum is on the lands of the former Canadian Forces Base Downsview in the northern part of Toronto. It's not large, but there are lots of old planes to see, and lots of references to the Avro Arrow. I've always wanted to go to a Corflu, but other local fanzine fans aren't very communicative; so I expect the first I'll see of a local Corflu will be the flyer, and probably from an out-of-town fanzine, too. The Corflu is not a certainty, though.

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Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA **11 September 2004**

I'm only a *month* late with my LoC ... can I blame it on my annoying job, where a very big project involving many departments and very unrealistic deadlines (now more than a year behind the original schedule) would be less stressful if there weren't so much political in-fighting...?

"I bought a product called Mole Out, which is sprinkled on the ground to discourage gophers. I guess I will found out soon enough if it works."

You know by now if it works.

If it discourages both moles and gophers, it should also discourage rats. I say so because of what I studied last month. During the past month or so, there was a news article about the discovery that prairie gophers give supersonic alarm calls. The included mention of prairie gophers standing guard at the entrances of their burrows made me wonder if prairie gopher is another word for prairie dog. My web search told me only that:

Prairie dogs are more correctly called prairie marmots and that they were named that because their call sounds like barking. Marmots are ground squirrels and chipmunks and the woodchuck and the groundhog, with taxonomy Kingdom *Animalia*, Phylum *Cordata*, Subphylum *Vertebrata*, Class *Mammalia* (all obvious so far), Order *Rodentia*, Family *Sciuridae*, Subfamily *Sciurinae*, Genus *Marmota* -- altho' the prairie dog is Genus *Cynomys*, which I imagine to mean "dog mouse". *Sciuridae* has two SubFamilies, *Petauristinae* and *Sciurinae*. *Petauristinae* are the flying squirrels, which are related to

squirrels but not the flying squirrels who are bats. *Scuirinae* are tree squirrels and ground squirrels.

Gophers are Order *Rodentia*, Family *Geomyidae*, and therefore not marmots. Moles are in Order *Insectivora*, so a product named Mole Out that works on gophers either is erroneously named or works on a wide range of animals.

As for my original question, Lee [Gold] found the answer in just two searches. Prairie Gopher is a name of *Spermophilus richardsonii* - Richardson's Ground Squirrel -- which looks like a black-tail prairie dog and behaves like a prairie dog, except that each adult female has her own burrow, with two to seven sleeping chambers, one for the babies. And each new page to which Lee went gave yet another name for them: flickertail, yellow gopher, tan marmot, something I forget, picket pin. I assume that "picket pin" is Canadian (it was a Canadian page) for "picket post", *i.e.* fence post, because of the way they stand up like fence posts.

#

Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD **24 September 2004**

Well, by now you know the Hugo results. About all I can say for the Retros is that it was a choice among the best (but perhaps that is what time does to/for perspective.).

Finding a doctor who knows "anything" about fibromyalgia (other than the word) can be daunting in and of itself.

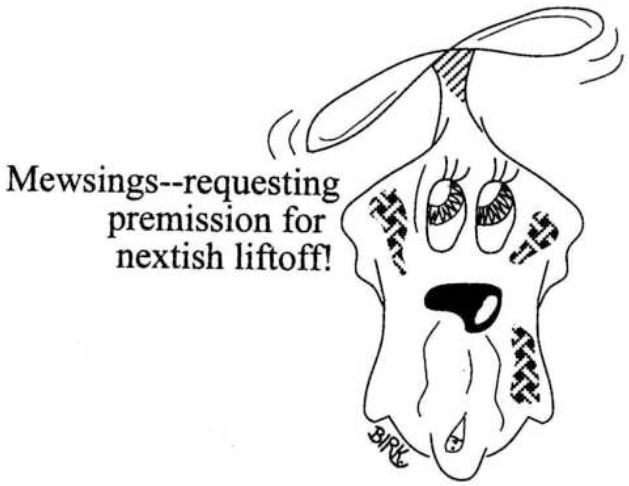
The "new" typer is at home (I'm not). It was a bit of a shock to start typing with it and find it has a *script* typeface. The seller did warn me he knew nothing about type when I asked what it was, that I'd have to take it as is. I thought it over. Cheapest Apple laptop $$$, this one $10 plus $10 shipping – so as long as I can get ribbons, not much of a decision.

I actually tried to call Lloyd to wish him the best in his job search, but my white pages search said the phone number I had was disconnected. Well, Lloyd, I *tried*.

Nice front cover. Haven't seen much in writing by him lately. Nice to know he is still out and about.

The pictures of this year's Hugo made it look *very* nice. Odd, looking back, that the idea of a flame support has not been used, at least to this extent, before. Also, now that the Worldcon lead-time has been dropped back to two years, next year there won't be any site selection.

I need to make a library stop to see if any movies on my list (for the last few years) are now available yet, and, yes, free; so the price is right.



I just bought and had installed a back-up generator; so if the current goes out again, the way it did after Isabel, I will *not* have a foot of water in the basement. One more major project done.

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IAHF: Leslie David, Mary Manchester, Janet Weasner

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* Closing Remarks

The holiday season has started, and I find that I must wrap this up so I will have time to

print and collate it.

I have little idea what will be in the next issue. It probably won't be as packed as this one. Holiday activities will keep us too busy to do much else.