

Feline Mewsings #27



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Feline ~~M~~ewsings

#27

February 2007

* Editorial / Introduction

This issue has turned out to be much longer than I'd expected. One reason is the new column debuting from Amy Harlib, a fan I met many years ago. She will be reviewing whatever strikes her fancy.

We got our flu shots in mid-November. The only side effect I suffered was a bit of a muscle ache for about a day.

My gardener shows up now and again, so he managed to remove some plants that had gone wild and replace them with something we hope will be a lot easier to manage.

In December I had my first colonoscopy. I recently changed primary doctors, and my new one insisted I get one done. The procedure itself is nothing to get excited about, but the preparation for it will nearly do you in. Colonoscopy is done under sedation. The stress of anticipation, the procedure itself, and possibly also the sedation did a real number on me. I was tired afterward for two whole weeks, and it took a couple of months for my energy levels to return to a semblance of normal. Nothing serious was found in the procedure.

The same month we were "treated" to a power outage that lasted all day and well into the night. We were told that it was a planned maintenance outage, but we are suspicious because we were never notified that it was going to happen. I had just started a load of laundry.

In January we went to a tribute for British actress Helen Mirren, who now makes her home in the LA area. The recent film *The Queen* was shown. Then she appeared for a short interview. The evening ended with the showing of one of her older films, titled *Some Mother's Son*. It is about the hunger strike that took place at the Maze prison in Northern Ireland.

I also finally had my dental implants inserted. The oral surgeon is very experienced and only took an hour to do both of them. I had no serious side effects, just a bruise that appeared on one side of my chin a couple of days afterward. I didn't even have to worry about having sutures removed, as he used the kind that dissolves by itself. I will not be able to use my electric toothbrush until they are crowned, which won't be for a few months.

* * *

* Mike

Mike was presented with a trophy honouring the tenth anniversary of his web site for the Meade ETX telescope by Oceanside Photo and Telescope.

* * *

* Language

A while ago in FAPA there was a discussion of the usage of prepositions after the word *different*. It was mentioned that usage in Britain and Australia differed from that in the US. Recently there was an article in *SPELL/Binder* about this. This magazine is published by SPELL (Society for Preservation of English Language and



Literature). I just would like to quote one paragraph written by Michael Quinion.

The usual advice these days is that “from” is irreproachable. “To” is unobjectionable in British English but may need thought if it is to appear in the US. “Than” is colloquially acceptable – in the US only – but but [sic] can be used in more formal prose anywhere if a difficult paraphrase would otherwise [result].

Unfortunately this magazine suffers, as many do, from poor proofreading and typesetting problems; but I think you get the drift. Michael Quinion is a British journalist.

* * *

* Local Activities

Theatre

The Musical of Musicals: This Los Angeles Premiere is a pastiche of musical styles and a loving satire of the typical musical plot. There are five scenes in all done in two acts. The five scenes are in the styles of Rodgers & Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Kander & Ebb. Although similar plots are used for each scene, songs are filks of the ones written by the actual composers or teams. It was very enjoyable for me as a lover of musicals. Mike is somewhat less familiar with musicals, but he still enjoyed the show even if not as much as I. The show was written by Eric Rockwell (music) and Joanne Bogart (lyrics) and directed by Jeffrey Rockwell (music) and Pamela Hunt.

#

Camelot: A new production debuted recently in La Mirada, located in southern Los Angeles County. I heard about it on the NPR station I usually listen to and ordered tickets. This new production is going on the road. It stars Michael York. According to the programme notes, it has been changed a bit for the modern audience. Never having seen the staged version before, I couldn't tell you what those changes might be. I've only seen the movie version before, and this one seemed very similar to that one. There were just a couple of songs that were different. It was excellently done and much appreciated by the audience, who gave the cast a standing ovation. According to the Internet, the show is currently scheduled for the following locations:

Indianapolis
Clowes Hall
Feb. 20-25, 2007

Orlando
Carr Performing Arts
Centre
May 15 - 20, 2007

Fort Lauderdale
Broward Center for the
Performing Arts
Jun. 12 - 24, 2007

Chicago
LaSalle Bank Theatre
May 1 - May 13, 2007

Philadelphia
Merriam Theater
June 5 - 10, 2007

Portland
Keller Auditorium
Oct. 2-7, 2007

St. Petersburg
Mahaffey Theater
Feb. 12 - 17, 2008

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Cinema

Casino Royale: We saw this on Thanksgiving Day. It is the latest James Bond film, this time starring Daniel Craig as the inimitable spy. I heard one reviewer on the radio (KPCC-NPR) say that he thought it was the best James bond movie ever. I'm bound to agree. It seemed at least partly faithful to the original book and certainly preserved the flavour, though it was updated to take place today. It was done seriously without any of the campiness that had crept in over the years. *The New Yorker* had a wonderfully clever review of it.

###

Others

Southern California Autumn Ball: This was held at the beginning of December this year. I particularly wanted to hear the teatime lecture on period flutes. We managed to get there in plenty of time for that. With my knees and hips feeling much better than they had earlier in the year and not suffering any dizziness as I had the previous year, I was able to dance quite a bit. There was even plenty of gluten-free food, which had been my main concern.

#

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum: We visited there on Boxing Day. It's located in Simi Valley on a hilltop. It opened in 1991. The exhibits follow Reagan's rise from local hero to president. Displays include items of historic and personal significance and gifts presented to the Reagans when he was president. Also on view are keepsakes from Rancho del Cielo, his Ranch in the Sky. The exhibits include a mock-up of the Oval Office. The museum acquired the previous Air Force One in 2005. The pavilion housing it also includes Marine One Helicopter from the Johnson era. Also on the grounds are a piece of the Berlin Wall and Reagan's memorial.

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Amy's Motley Media Musings

Reviews by Amy Harlib



Grand Illusions: The Best of Recent French Animation, Feb. 23 – Mar. 6, 2006, Museum of Modern Art, NYC. (All films in French with English subtitles.)

Animation fans enjoyed a very special Gallic treat at NY City's Museum of Modern Art from Feb. 23 – Mar. 6, 2006 – “Grand Illusions: The Best of Recent French Animation” festival. This primer on the best France has to offer of this particular art form screened eight features made in the past twenty-five years, largely without the big budgets and vast technological resources of American and Japanese studios. The quality of these productions proved the simple truth that great stories and memorable characters make any story and style of telling work.

The festival opened with the North American premiere of “Kirikou and the Wild Beasts” AKA “Kirikou et les Betes Sauvages” (2005). Directed by Michel Ocelot and Benedicte Galup, with a script by Ocelot, this long-awaited sequel to the (also shown) by now classic “Kirikou and the Sorceress” AKA “Kirikou et la Sorciere” (1998), again features its lush, pre-colonial West African setting as the backdrop for the adventures of the prodigiously precocious eponymous infant lad, who saves his village from a wide array of menaces. In both films, gorgeous scores of traditional music from Youssou N'Dour and company create the perfect ambiance for stories told via the splendid artwork inspired by African textiles and their colours and textures, giving the animation a unique quality not quite like anything anyone else has ever done.

“The Frog Prophecy” AKA “La Prophetie des Grenouilles” (2003), directed by Jacques-Remy Girerd with a screenplay by Girerd, Annie Lanclaux, and Iouri Tcherenkov, served up a charming fable illustrated in a brightly coloured, sketchy style that resembled children's drawings combined with Impressionism. In contemporary rural France, a community of frogs warns a pre-teen male/female pair of friends about a swiftly forthcoming disastrous flood of Biblical proportions, sounding the alarm to bring complacent humans to their senses. The grown-up adopted parents of the boy, the girl, and all the animals from her vacationing zoo keeper parents' operation seek refuge in the boy's family's hilltop farm's barn, which miraculously floats, becoming a latter-day Noah's Ark. How the carnivores, the herbivores, and the people learn to get along and survive forms the narrative of this wise and witty allegory, enhanced by a lovely score.

A packed house appreciated the screening of “The Triplets of Belleville” AKA “Les Triplettes de Belleville” (2003), written and directed by Sylvain Chomet. This recent comical, musical, and whimsical masterpiece already successfully distributed in 2005 in the USA and covered extensively, could not be left out of the festival program.

“The Island of Black Mor” AKA “L'île de Black Mor” (2004), directed by Jean-Francois Laguionie and written by Laguionie and Anik Le Ray, employs a sketchy impressionistic art style and a mostly earth-toned colour palette to tell an adventurous yarn set in 1803 Cornwall. There, a teenage orphan escapes from a horribly cruel workhouse and gets taken in by a pair of wreckers/smugglers, one with only one leg and the other an expert knife-thrower and wood carver. This unlikely trio manage to purloin a sleek and swift Coast Guard cutter, freeing and adding to their company the Ethiopian slave chained in the hold and adopting the ship's mascot, a clever monkey. Soon, the protagonist, calling himself “Kid”, persuades a young monk to join his crew, providing much needed literary skills and quickly discovering that the latest recruit is a feisty young woman in disguise. The motley bunch set sail seeking treasure buried by the notorious pirate Black Mor and experience exciting adventures and compelling relationship conflicts and

developments along the way to a surprising and satisfying ending accompanied by an excellent score.

“The Dog, the General, and the Birds” AKA “Le Chien, le General, et les Oiseaux” (2003), directed by Francis Nielsen with a screenplay by Tonino Guerra based on his book, tells the 19th century story of a Russian general who tries to thwart the advance of the Napoleonic forces on Moscow by using flocks of inflamed birds. Twenty-five years later, as he lives out his last years in St. Petersburg, the general is haunted by the memory of his barbarism toward the birds. Aided by his faithful dog, Napoleon, he tries to make peace with their brethren. Rendered in a sketchy, impressionistic, and colourful style with a fascinating and unusual setting and plot and graced by a fine score, this film was moving and memorable.

“La Table Tournant” (1988), directed by Jacques Demy and Paul Grimault: Famed director Jacques Demy (“Donkey Skin”, *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*) collaborated with France’s number one animator, whom he so admired – Paul Grimault – to create this tribute/portrait film of a brilliant artist. Using live-action footage of Grimault in his editing studio, Demy blends this with animation of the best-known characters from Grimault’s oeuvre, the fanciful creations interacting with their designer, wanting to know when they originated. The answers come when Grimault screens on his editing monitor a retrospective of his short works from the 1930s to the 1970s – highlights of an amazing career that spanned decades. Grimault makes interesting introductory and closing commentaries, as his animated characters and the audience gets to see a handful of wonderful brief films that document the development of his style and the flowering of his genius. The intricate complexity of Grimault’s inventive backgrounds and the fluidity and detail of his vivid characters and his whimsical, clever, witty and often emotionally and socially deep storytelling are all quite evident and would achieve their full fruition in his one feature, “Grand Illusions”, which was also on the schedule.

That “The King and the Mockingbird” AKA “Le Roi et L’oiseau” (1979), directed by Paul Grimault with a screenplay by the famous poet Jacques Prevert, remains virtually unknown in the USA is nothing short of criminal! This animated feature is a masterpiece in every sense of the word! Adapted from a Hans Christian Andersen story, “The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep”, the film was first released in 1953 in an unsatisfactory format. It wasn’t until 1979 that the definitive, re-worked, and expanded version reached the public. The great Japanese anime master, Hayao Miyazaki, asserts that “The King and the Mockingbird” was a major influence on his work. It is easy to see how. This animated feature is awesome – crammed with elaborate, intricate backgrounds, and finely detailed characters given fluid and fully articulated movements and graced with a delightful story. This yarn about the eponymous tyrannical ruler who will stop at nothing to marry the desirable shepherdess despite her firm love for the chimney sweep, is set in a remarkable world of neo-Victorian “steam punk” technology powering a Euro-Baroque aesthetic milieu. The humour, satire, adventure, romance, and ingenuity of “The King and the Mockingbird”, not to mention its eye-popping visuals and Wojciech Kilar’s lovely score, make this film a magnum opus that deserves to be widely known everywhere and acclaimed alongside animation’s greats, like Miyazaki and the best of Disney.

On the whole, the “Grand Illusions” festival was a true gift to animation fans and those who appreciate cinematic artistry in general. It was very gratifying to see traditional hand-drawn styles flourishing and thriving and to savour the variety and sophistication of the plotting and characters in these features. Of course, the *piece de resistance*, “The King and the Mockingbird” cannot be praised too highly. I hope that its screening here will generate interest in getting this masterwork, so undeservedly obscure in America, the recognition and distribution it deserves. I am so very glad and gratified that I had the chance to enjoy and appreciate the Museum of Modern Art’s wisdom in bringing these wonderful French animated films to NY City.

#

Negadon Attacks: Three Animated Odysseys from Japan (Central Park Media Corporation, NY) Imaginasian Theater, NYC, May 12-18, 2006.
<http://www.centralparkmedia.com/index.html>

A New York-based media company, Central Park Media, that imports Japanese manga (comics) and anime (DVDs) for sale in the USA, arranged for limited theatrical distribution for a ninety-minute long presentation of a trio of its best offerings under the title “Negadon Attacks: Three Animated Odysseys from Japan”. Though all are readily available on DVD, it was a great delight nevertheless to see these productions on the big screen. They were all skilfully dubbed in English.

The program started with “Negadon: The Monster From Mars” (<http://www.negadonattacks.com/main.html>), the independent dream project of writer, director, animator and CGI/VFX creator Jun Awazu, who has poured his passion for the kaiju (monster) film genre

into this first all computer generated homage to the original Godzilla and numerous other classics of that ilk that followed. The story, set in 2025, concerns a world with the population exploding to over ten billion and with a global effort to terraform and colonize Mars well underway. A Japanese spaceship on a return voyage from the red planet, carrying for in-depth study a mysterious object found in ancient ruins there, catastrophically crashes in central Tokyo, unleashing a giant and ferociously monstrous creature. Dr. Narasaki (Dai Shimizu/Sean Schemmel), who gave up on his Miroku giant robot-construction project a decade earlier after an on-site accident tragically killed his only beloved daughter, Emi (Akane Yumoto/Annice Moriarty), (shown in flashback), gets motivated to re-activate his powerful invention from its dormancy and, controlling it from within, fights the mindlessly ravaging alien (a particularly superb “mega-starfish” design concept).

“Negadon”, thanks to uniquely invented special rendering algorithms, looks terrific with a wonderfully retro feel to the incredibly realistic-looking, detailed imagery that includes passing nods to “Godzilla” and “Mothra”, which fans will gleefully spot. Creator Jun Awazu also took care to enhance his plot with quite a decent dose of character development and back-story, which greatly enriches the viewing experience as do his ingenious scene-staging and the excellent score by Shingo Terasawa, who also wrote the lovely closing credit song. A winner of many awards in its home country, “Negadon” deserves its accolades and bodes well for Mr. Awazu’s future in genre feature-length films.

Next came “Kakurenbo: Hide and Seek” (<http://www.centralparkmedia.com/kakurenbo/main.html>) from Yamatoworks, with original screenplay, directing, storyboard, producing, CGI animation, and editing by Syuhei Morita and with character design, layouts, and art by Daisuke Sajiki. Equally compelling as “Negadon”, “Kakurenbo”, set in a contemporary but still rather traditional, small Japanese town, focuses on a deserted, sinister street, reputed to be demon-haunted, where ghostly lights flicker in the gloom. Rumours abound that children who play “otokoyo”, hide-and-seek, there after sunset get snatched by the demons, never to be seen again. The story concerns one group of seven youngsters led by a lad named Hikora (Junko Takeichi/Michael Sinteriklaas), who participates in the game with the express purpose of finding his sister Sorincha (Mahito Suzuki/Veronica Taylor), who had never returned after the previous hide-and-seek event. In the midst of the area’s maze-like structures oddly lit by streetlights that inexplicably flare at unexpected, unnerving moments, the game proceeds with its participants discovering all too soon that the demons are very real indeed, their purpose for kidnapping children being truly horrific!

“Kakurenbo”, rendered in a clever CGI technique that uncannily resembles hand-drawn cel animation, offers up astonishingly detailed and intricate visuals and fluid character movement, all graced with an appropriately sombre, earth-toned palette so subtly shaded that the complexity of the action never feels obscured. Expert pacing, fine character development to make the viewer feel sympathy for the children and more concern for their plight, and an excellent atmospheric score by Karin Nakano and Reiji Kitasato combine to build suspense and to deliver genuine frissons of fright. Another multiple award-winner, this memorable, dark fantasy/horror story, with its fiendishly inventive denouement, disturbs and haunts the mind as much as it thrills.

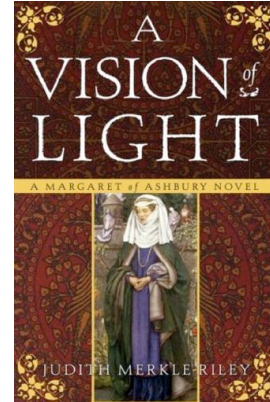
Finally, there was “Cat Soup: Nekojiru-so” (<http://www.centralparkmedia.com/catsoup/index.html>, also <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/anime.php?id=1011>), the oddest of the three. Another award winner produced by JC Staff, this wonderfully strange confection, directed by Tatsuo Sato, who also collaborated on the scenario with storyboard artist and animation producer Masaaki Yuasa, employed a hand drawn style that cleverly combined naïf primitivism with impressionism and also utilized a contemporary yet still mostly traditional village setting. In this seaside community, there lives a family of anthropomorphized cats consisting of a husband and wife and two kittens, the boy, Nyatta, being very close to his sister, Nyaako.

When Nyaako falls gravely ill and while her soul is on its way to the Underworld escorted by Death, Nyatta tries to retrieve his sibling’s life essence but is only partially successful in doing so. Nyaako revives but is left in a zombie-like mental state. Nyatta then takes Nyaako on a quest to search for the rest of his sister’s personifying animus, a wondrous and disturbing journey that takes them through surreal, dreamlike milieux crammed with fantastic characters and backdrops. These include a wacky sea voyage, a crazy carnival, a creepy mansion, and all sorts of constantly morphing beings and places - everything contributing to the overall hallucinogenic effect. “Cat Soup” takes place with no dialogue, but clever sound FX and an excellent eclectic score by Yutoro Teshikai create a suitably eerie atmosphere and continuity; watching this creation induces the feeling of pleasantly amazed bewilderment. Although a discernable theme concerning the transience of existence underlies “Cat Soup”, this opus is best enjoyed by relaxing and letting its trippy, mind-bending, bizarre, and fascinating imagery flow. “Hello Kitty meets Salvador Dali” aptly describes “Cat Soup”!

Whether seen on a big screen, preferably, or viewed on DVD, “Negadon Attacks: Three Animated Odysseys from Japan” reveals a variety of styles and a range of subjects that impresses and proves hugely entertaining. The creativity and imagination displayed by the creators of this programme’s three short films are profound and valuable additions to the genre. Anyone who loves animation and fantasy must not miss these treats!

#

A Vision of Light by Judith Merkle Riley (Three Rivers Press, reprint edition, NY, May 2006, \$13.95, trade paperback, ISBN#: 0307237877). *** In Pursuit of the Green Lion by Judith Merkle Riley (Three Rivers Press, reprint edition, NY, Oct. 2006, \$13.95, trade paperback, ISBN#: 0307237885). *******



Recently, the first two remarkably polished and entertaining historical fantasy novels of a not nearly prolific enough American writer have at long last been reprinted; they were first published in 1989 and 1990.

A Vision of Light, the first volume of the pair, is also the first novel by an American writer, whose metier is historical fiction with strong fantasy elements, set in late medieval or early Renaissance England and France. Altogether Riley, a college professor, has written five such books; the most recent, *Master of All Desires*, was published November 1999 and was a selection of the SFBC. Her stories all feature spunky, smart heroines who survive and achieve lives of fulfilment and a measure of happiness despite the horrendous oppression of the patriarchal societies (very realistically and accurately portrayed based on the author's extensive research), in which they live. Riley's prose skilfully evokes the atmosphere and flavour of the time period of her tales without resorting to self-conscious archaisms and preciousness. She is equally adept at unpredictable plotting and creating believable characters, whether protagonists or antagonists, her fondness for them and their vividly detailed milieux charming the reader and sweeping them into the story. Supernatural and fantastic elements entirely suited to the beliefs of her narrative's historical era are incorporated into the text as genuinely real manifestations of the uncanny and not explained or rationalized away.

Despite being a first effort, *A Vision of Light* already displays the highly polished prose, rich detail, engrossing plot, and engaging characters that made Riley's more recent books receive glowingly positive reviews. The setting is 14th century England, where the heroine, Margaret of Ashbury, though very much of her time, also surprisingly, at times, resembles a contemporary woman in spirit and thoughts.

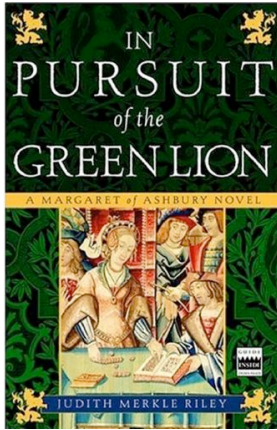
Young, wealthy, twice married, Margaret wishes to write a book - a modest enough ambition; but in 1355, the idea of a woman wanting to record her experiences and thoughts is not just unseemly, it's possibly heretical. After several clerics contemptuously refuse to be Margaret's scribe, the starving Brother Gregory, a wandering Carthusian friar with a mysterious past agrees to take on the questionable job. There follows the first-person narrative of Margaret's life story as recorded by Brother Gregory (who eventually teaches his employer to read).

This text gets punctuated at intervals by omniscient observer segments that depict what is happening to the protagonist in her immediate present until the events of the autobiography, and the third-person intervals coalesce in the penultimate chapter. The dynamic and exciting climax in the final chapter (in which Brother Gregory assumes unexpected importance) is again told from the omniscient observer's wider perspective. This fascinating authorial technique reveals a character who is a woman of rare resourcefulness who has survived the Black Plague, invented the forceps (while practicing midwifery and herbalism), and been accused but acquitted of witchcraft.

The fantasy aspect of the story is Margaret's experience of a Mystic Union, a vision of light that illuminates her soul and endows her with a miraculous gift of healing and more. Even when the power is dormant, the heroine's charisma is such that, to every person she encounters in her full life, she becomes special - to her traditional parents, to the band of travelling players who adopt her, to the bishop's court that tries her for heresy, and ultimately to the rich merchant, Roger Kendall, who saves her and whom she marries.

Riley's excellent wordsmithing creates a heroine who, despite her uncanny ability to heal, see auras, perceive ghostly spirits, and even hear the guiding voice of a higher power, remains unassuming, matter-of-fact, and utterly lovable, thus offering a compelling focal point to illuminate 14th century England in colourful detail with an emphasis on women's surprisingly diverse lives, not usually found in standard historical textbooks. Margaret's voice and the events of her life and the depiction of her world in *A Vision*

of Light is so entertaining, thoughtful, exciting and absorbing (even when some attitudes prevalent in that era are appalling to today's readers), it is a great gift to readers that, after more than a decade in obscurity, this excellent historical fantasy can now be easily found in a nicely packaged, reasonably priced, trade paperback edition, as can its successor.



In Pursuit of the Green Lion, a direct sequel to *A Vision of Light*, picks up where the first one left off. The year is 1358 and Margaret of Ashbury having been taught to read and write) continues to record on her own the events of her life in a sort of diary-as-chronicle. These first-person accounts, as in the prequel, are interspersed with omniscient observer passages that offer the reader a wider perspective on events as they happen to significant persons in the heroine's life as they affect them and in turn, Margaret.

The story opens with Margaret, newly widowed and an heiress, kidnapped and forced to wed none other than her literacy tutor, the unfrocked monk, Brother Gregory, who, it turns out, is the prodigal younger son of the piratical, fortune-hunting de Viliers family. Gregory, nearly as reluctant as Margaret to get married, is coerced by intense family pressure and resumes his former name of Gilbert de Viliers with the acquisition of his bride and new wealth. Margaret, still mourning Roger Kendall, struggles for the sake of the two daughters she bore him, to make a home among the violent, argumentative de Viliers family in their decaying manor in Hertfordshire. Margaret's gifts of healing and second sight serve her well and earn her a measure of respect, tinged with some envy from her otherwise exceedingly sexist male in-laws. She even manages to befriend the previously spiteful and scary ghost of her mother-in-law and is comforted by the shade of Roger Kendall, who has followed her to her new home.

Gradually Margaret and Gilbert learn to love each other so deeply that when Gilbert is drawn by his family into campaigning in France during the Hundred Years War only to be lost without a ransom demand or a death notice, Margaret realizes she must have him back no matter the cost. To aid her in her quest to go to France to hunt for her lost love, Margaret enlists her old friend and mentor, who had nursed her through the plague, the herbalist/midwife Mother Hilda. She in turn recruits her lover, Brother Malachi, the most notorious alchemist in England, and Sim, an orphaned teenage boy they adopted who serves as Malachi's apprentice and general helper. This adventure is welcomed by Brother Malachi as a chance to search for the Green Lion, the secret of transmutation contained in an untranslatable book of alchemical code, and he assures Margaret that finding a lost man will be far easier than discovering the Philosopher's Stone. Also eager to go along is the ghost of Margaret's mother-in-law, braving the ordinarily ectoplasmically impossible feat of crossing open water in her passion to help find her son!

As the protagonists journey through France, the reader, along with them, discovers the complexity, wonders, and hardships of pilgrimage in a foreign land in medieval times, as portrayed in Riley's inimitable style so rich in vivid description, intense emotion, wit, and excitement. Events rife with irony and suspense test the mettle of the intrepid band, building up to a dramatic climax in the dark castle of the Count d'Aigremont in the Pyrenees, where Gilbert is being held. This formidable antagonist sponsors alchemists who practice forbidden rites that conjure up demons with human blood sacrifices. It takes all the ingenuity and skill of the heroic rescuers and, especially, Margaret's abilities to hear messages from the voice of a higher power, to heal, and to see spirits, to save Gilbert and see him safely home to England after thwarting the evil count's odious plans. The return is just as thrilling as the rescue, especially when Margaret gives birth to Gilbert's son on the road and when the group evades some exceedingly violent marauders under the leadership of the archpriest. The plot continues to offer surprises right up until the thoroughly satisfying ending.

In Pursuit of the Green Lion once again portrays an unusual woman leading a remarkable and utterly fascinating life in 14th century Europe. Her story, told with all the skill and panoramic vividness that marked *A Vision of Light*, makes this book a worthy sequel to be sought after with as much zeal as its predecessor. And to the joy of fantasy fans everywhere, at long last, after a hiatus of sixteen long years, a third Margaret of Ashbury novel, *The Water Devil*, in a matching trade paperback format, is due in early 2007.

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* Autobiography (by request)

I originally hail from Japan, where I was born a few years after WWII. I moved to this country with my family, my parents and a sister, in 1956. My paternal aunt had preceded us, having married a soldier who was in the occupational forces. This eased our way here, as there is a cap on the number of people allowed



to immigrate into this country. If you have family who are already citizens of the US, it is much easier to come in. We lived mostly in the Northeast for the first couple of decades we were here. My immediate family attained citizenship in the early 1960s while we were living in Marblehead, MA.

To left is a photo of the first house we lived in after moving to this country. The photo was taken in 1998, but it is little changed from when we lived there. It's an old house that was converted into apartments. It used to have an upstairs apartment and two downstairs apartments. The last time I was inside was when some fans lived there during the 1970s. At that time the two

downstairs apartments had been merged into one.

For college I went far away – to Minnesota, Carleton College in Northfield, to be specific. My parents were acquainted with the institution through friends, one of them a faculty member. I wasn't exactly pleased with the choice, but I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. Unfortunately my parents couldn't see allowing me to take a year off before college. When I became unhappy with the place, I went to England to study during my junior year. I did a lot of social growing up there but probably wasted the year academically. Still I managed to graduate college in time and went on to library school in Chapel Hill, NC, with a grant. It took me longer than normal to get my masters, but the grant made this financially relatively pain free. By this time I was thoroughly sick of school. I'm sure my parents were disappointed that I didn't get a PhD.

My sister, three years younger, probably made up for their disappointment by becoming a medical doctor. She tried harder, because her innate abilities were less. But I wasted mine, partly because I had no encouragement to excel.

For nine years I worked as a corporate librarian at Xerox in Rochester, NY, where my father also worked as a physicist. It was during that time that I discovered fandom. Actually I read about Torcon 2 in 1973 while I was still in grad school. I figured that since it was just across Lake Ontario from home, it would be easy to check out. I dragged my sister to it, and she's never forgiven me. She still thinks fans are rude and strange.

To the right is a photo of me with my first supervisor. The photo was taken in 2000 when we were in Hawaii, where she was living. Unfortunately she died a few years after that.

After Torcon 2, I started joining APAs and received and locced fanzines. As for conventions, I met a Trekfan locally; and the two of us went to several Trekcons, mostly in Michigan and New York City.

It wasn't until 1976 that I went to another straight sf con. But after that I usually attended several cons a year.

In 1983 I moved to California after being laid off from work. I was unemployed for longer than the unemployment benefits would have lasted except that I had a year's severance pay from Xerox. In late 1983 I found a job as a corporate librarian at Rockwell International in Downey, CA. For the first time, I moved out from my parents' house. They were living in Atherton, CA. I got my first apartment in Downey. My sister had preceded me to the LA area, having found employment at LA Children's Hospital as a paediatrician. She was living by then in Glendale. Because Glendale is a lot closer to the LASFS than Downey, I used to drive there after work on Thursdays with my laundry in my car. She usually works late, so she was hardly ever there. I would use her washer and dryer and eat dinner there and then head toward the LASFS.

After about a year at Rockwell, I segued into being a computer programmer. I learned some programming at library school, though I never used the language I learned there. Not too long after that I found a more lucrative position at Hughes Aircraft, which company no longer exists. While it lasted it was



a great place to work. After Hughes got bought out, things went downhill. I was eventually laid off – again. This time things were tougher. I owned a condo by that time, and I exhausted my savings during the almost two years that I was unemployed. Just when I was about to sell and move back in with my parents, who were by then living in Bellingham, WA, the Northridge quake happened and opened up a job opportunity for me with the City of Los Angeles. While the work was good, I hated working downtown. The commute was terrible and the parking situation even worse. Working for government, there was not only office politics but also real politics to deal with.

Then a new job opportunity popped up in Long Beach.

Also about this time I met Mike Weasner, now my husband. We met through a pen pal type singles group called Science Connection. I saw the ad in Andy Porter's *Science Fiction Chronicle*. Mike saw it in *Sky and Telescope*. We could tell right away that we shared practically all our interests. He'd never been to a science fiction convention, though; but that was soon taken care of.

The Long Beach job would have continued except that I fell ill in mid-1999. I felt really tired and just slept a lot for about two or three weeks. I didn't know how long this was going to last, so I decided I had to resign from work. I spent much of that year going to see doctors almost every week. I was lucky to have well-informed and open-minded doctors. My primary care physician diagnosed me fairly quickly with chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. The specialists she sent me to agreed with her. My energy level improved slowly but has never recovered fully. Today I'm capable of part-time work, but I



haven't found anything I want to do close enough to home. On the other hand, I haven't looked very hard, either. Mike makes enough to support both of us. I have instead been doing a volunteer job online.

Now though, we are looking at the spectre of retirement, and I'm wondering whether I should make more effort to make a few pennies. On the other hand, should Mike be forced to retire earlier than we had planned, there's a lot of planning to do. Life is never easy, is it?

Also recently I have had my plate full with sick cats. We used to have three cats. We lost one of them

to cancer right after Xmas of 2006. Now one is sick with Inflammatory Bowel Disease. The other one also had a bout with a virus that had me really worried for a while and spending time taking him to the vet; otherwise he is fine except for periodic problems with epilepsy.

Above is a photo of our two remaining cats. The black one is Fluffy. He's the one with the abdominal problem. The other one is Mercury. Fluffy is eight years old. Mercury is six and a half.

Mike and I were married in Las Vegas; and the Las Vegas fans were very nice to help us celebrate. The cake to the right was baked by the fans.



* * *

* Nature Conservancy Trip

Thursday, 2 November 2006, we got up early for a short trip up to the Amargosa River near Death Valley. The Amargosa system covers a wide area that includes Las Vegas. Much of the river runs underground. The growth of Las Vegas and other cities in Nevada is threatening a fragile ecosystem.

We arrived at the Shoshone Inn outside Death Valley in early afternoon. It's just a roadside motel that seems to have seen better days.

We had dinner at the Crowbar Café across the street.

The next day we got up relatively early, probably because we got to bed so early. On the

other hand, we didn't sleep particularly well. Peculiar noises in the night kept waking us up.

After breakfast at the Crowbar Café, we packed up the car and checked out of the motel. Mike moved the car away from the motel just before we met with the Nature Conservancy group. After an introduction at their headquarters, across the street from the Shoshone Inn, we piled into two vans. Our first stop was Crystal Spring in Ash Meadows, which is actually in Nevada. The place is under development as a conservation project. Some walkways are in place, and we followed the main one to the spring. The native pupfish can be found there. We had a lunch there. Unfortunately I ran into some gluten in the form of the flavouring on some potato chips; fortunately the reaction was on the mild side, affecting me towards evening.



Then we drove back south and stopped at Devil's Hole, which is home to the endangered desert pupfish. Then we proceeded to China Ranch, where dates are grown. The land has ceded environmental rights to the Conservancy. They grow a wide variety of dates there, not the kind you will find in the supermarket. Dates can be purchased from their web site: <http://www.chinaranch.com/>. A little after sunset we were driven back to the inn, from where we drove home.

* * *

* Kitt Peak

Thursday, 9 November 2006, we got up really early for an early start to Tucson. I got less than four hours of sleep.

The sky was just starting to lighten when we left. I had breakfast in the car when it was light enough to see.

We made several stops for gas, food, and nature calls; and I managed to get some napping in.

We stopped at Oracle, where Mike tried to figure out where the house would lie on our property. I had to keep reminding him that the picture I had drawn was only approximate (see picture on page 14).

We got to the Tucson Airport just before 18h00 and checked in to La Quinta. After unpacking we walked down the street to the Clarion to eat at Morgan's. The food was good, but the service was extremely slow; we'll probably not be going back any time soon.

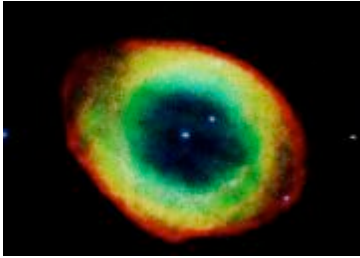
Friday morning I managed to get down to breakfast while it was still being served. I ate heartily for me. Instead of hard-boiled eggs this morning, they had egg patties.

A bit later we left for Oro Valley to meet Pam and Bob Treece, our realtors, at a Coco's. We got there early and were seated before they arrived. We showed them our tentative floor plans. I had lunch there.

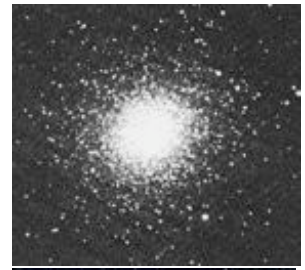
After returning to our motel to regroup, we drove to Kitt Peak. This outing was organized by Indiana University, Mike's alma mater, as part of the consortium that runs the WIYN 3.5 metre telescope.

We arrived early enough at Kitt Peak to shop at the gift store. I hadn't planned on buying

anything, but I found a neat shoulder bag that should be very good for conventions.



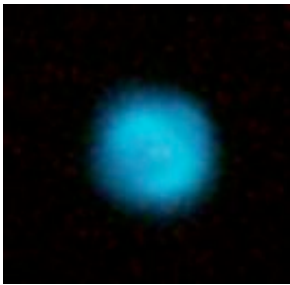
The Indiana University group met in the gift shop parking lot starting around 16h00. We had a catered dinner near the dining hall. There were only a couple of



dishes I could eat. After dinner we viewed the sunset. I think I saw the green flash, but I'm not entirely sure.



We went back to the same room where we ate for dessert and a slide show presentation. The rest of the evening was spent looking at things through the telescope. In all we looked at ten objects. We started off



with Neptune and Uranus. The third object was M2, a globular cluster (see above right). Our fourth object was M57, a ring nebula (see above left). The fifth object we saw was M27, the Dumbbell (see right). The sixth object we saw was NGC7662, known commonly as the Blue Snowball (see left).



For our seventh object, we were treated to NGC7479, a barred galaxy (see right). Our eighth object was M32, a satellite of the Andromeda Galaxy (see below left). The ninth



object we viewed was M74, a spiral galaxy (see below right). Last but not least we saw NGC891, an edge on galaxy (see last photo this section). (Photos are not copyrighted and were found on the web. They are very similar to the views we saw through the telescope.)



It was about midnight when we got back to the motel and another hour later when I finally managed to get to bed.



On Saturday I got down to breakfast earlier than the previous day. I packed after that. Then we checked out.

We stopped once for gas and several times to use the facilities on the way back. I slept a lot in between or at least closed my eyes.

* * *



* Loscon 33

Friday morning, 24 November 2006, we left for the Airport Marriott as soon as I'd cleaned up after breakfast. After checking into the hotel and unpacking, we registered with the con. I was surprised to see that programming began as early as noon. Fortunately there was nothing I was interested in until 13h30, so we took time to have lunch.



The first programme item I attended was a reading by Mel Gilden. He read part of a novel and a short story. On my way to hear William Tenn explain "Why I Stopped Writing", I ran into Robert McMillin, who is a former co-worker from Hughes; and we chatted for a while. William Tenn (see left) is a very entertaining speaker with many amusing anecdotes to relate.

After that I was on a panel called "Fanzine in an Hour", during which George Van Wagner, Vanessa Van Wagner, Chris Garcia, and I put together a fanzine, with assistance from the audience (see photo below).

I met Mike back in our hotel room. Then we had dinner; in the restaurant I conversed briefly with LA fans John and Judith Chapman. After we ate we wandered in the area where the Ice Cream Social was scheduled and waited until the ice cream was delivered. LA fan Ruth Judkowitz wandered in a bit later, and we chatted for a while. I also later talked with a couple from Lemon Grove.



Mike walked to the front of the room to reserve places for us for the Lux Theatre scheduled to start a bit later. I had to go back to our room to retrieve my video camera; I'd had to recharge the batteries. This year's Lux Theatre was a film noir interpretation of *Bladerunner*. I'm sure I missed a lot of the film noir references, but it was a very entertaining play.

Mike retired after that, and I went on to the parties. I even managed to make it to the Weinstein Herbangelist wine and cheese party before they ran out of food. However, I stayed up way too late. Still I had interesting conversations with Janice Gelb, Mike Willmoth, and a neighbour of ours on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, among others.

I had room service deliver my breakfast Saturday morning. I woke up with a headache, but I'm not sure whether it was related to my lack of adequate sleep or what.

After I got downstairs to the Ballroom level, I talked with the Chapmans again briefly before going to the panel about the DAWN and SIM Missions. In fact we walked there together, as it turned out we were both interested in it. The speakers, Robert Gounley and Steve Collins, were not very polished; but the talk was informative. DAWN is a mission designed to explore the asteroid belt, and SIM is a project to look for extrasolar planets.

After the panel, I found Mike in another room where William Tenn was finishing up his talk on "Orson Welles and the Panic of 1938". We went to the hotel restaurant for lunch, but it was closed. We decided to check out the Con Suite, where we were assured that lunch food would be forthcoming soon. After waiting more than half an hour, though, I gave up and went back to our room, where I munched on some snack food I always carry around for such situations.

After I went back downstairs, I bought two William Tenn books published by NESFA. Then I went to the taping of "Hour 25". Warren James interviewed the guests of honour (William Tenn, Bernie Wrightson, and Fred Patten) and the convention chairman, Scot Beckstead.

After that was over, I met Mike back in our room; and we went to dinner at the hotel restaurant.



We returned to our room to regroup before going back down for the masquerade. We didn't have to wait long in line before being admitted into the auditorium. The masquerade was quite nice with about fifteen entries. We stayed for a bit to hear Emmet Chapman play a strange instrument during half time. He took a break for an award presentation, and we left after that. The music wasn't really to our taste after the initial novelty wore off.

I went partying for a bit. At one party I had an extended conversation with LA fan Sean Smith.

I had breakfast Sunday morning with Marty and Alice Massoglia in the hotel restaurant. I left Marty when I realized that I had to return to the room to finish packing and check out. While I checked us out, Mike checked our luggage with the bell captain.

I went to hear William Tenn read "On Venus, Have We Got a Rabbi!", while Mike went to "Screwing with Einstein", a discussion of quantum mechanics, string theory, and related topics, with Steve Bartlett, Larry Niven, Steve Collins, and Genny Dazzo.

I went on to "The Horror That Is Bernie Wrightson!", which was basically a question and answer session. Mike went to "The Golden Age of Science Fiction Films" with Bill Warren, Eric Hoffman, and Charles Lee Jackson II.

We met up at my panel on "How To Judge a Book by Its Back Cover". The other panellists were Martin Young, Michael Engelberg, and Marina Stern, with Michael Engelberg moderating. Martin Young arrived late. Engelberg came prepared with copies of back covers from numerous books in his collection. The panel turned out to be quite interesting, between trying to guess books from reading the back covers and the panellists giving their take on back covers. There was also quite a bit of audience participation.

That ended the convention for us. While I went to get the car, Mike retrieved our luggage. There was a fairly long and slow line of cars leaving the parking lot, so Mike unfortunately had to wait for a while. The weather had turned quite chilly.

* * *

* Mailing Comments on FAPA #277:

Jukka Halme (Arimoniiti #3): Your usage of *bi-weekly* is correct. *Bi-monthly* would mean every other month.

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 62): I enjoyed looking at your art covers relating to the Twin Towers.

Bill Warren and Allan Rothstein (Fandom Is a Way of Death): I enjoyed reading this. It's not a great mystery, but the portrayal of the fans seemed spot on.

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 62.1A): Thanks for the great review, in the style of the *New Yorker*, of writings on the state of the petroleum industry. I appreciate your having read the books for us and digesting the information. I'm sure I ought to read those books but will probably never get around to it.

Jack Speer (Synapse): Anyone can go to zillow.com, enter an address, and get an estimated value of the house located there. Be aware, though, that this may not reflect the latest market conditions. When my sister sold our parents' house, the price that she managed to get for it was quite a bit lower than the estimate shown on the site. In the case of that house, I'm sure the fact that the houses in the surrounding area were worth a lot less had something to do with the situation. I'm not a realtor, so I don't know exactly how these things work; but the information at zillow.com should only be taken as a very loose approximation. It seems to be based simply on public information and is not as accurate as having an appraiser walk through the house.

A DVR cable box has a hard drive similar to the one in your computer. The information on the disk can probably be copied from one box to another. However, since our old drive wouldn't even turn on, this was not possible without going through a lot of hoops and over a lot of hurdles. The cable guy was not equipped to do this, and it would probably be quite costly.

I apologize if I don't catch every typo or error that people make in their letters or even my own typos. Mike read over the zine as well. Still, between the two of us, we don't catch every error.

ME/CFS is a syndrome. ME stands for myalgic encephalomyelitis, which is the term used in Britain for CFS, which is the acronym for chronic fatigue syndrome.

Arthur D. Hlavaty (Nice Distinctions 15): I've read that the "number of the beast" isn't 666, that that was a misreading of the original text.

Ben Indick (Ben's Beat #86): There's no period in my name. You also mistyped Tom Feller's name as Tom Weller.

Bo Stenfors (Darn That Dream): Thanks for reprinting the second part of the *Playboy* article. I found it interesting. It makes me wonder what the living members of that conversation think now about what they said then.

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 62.3): You talked about superheroes having to disclose their true identities. J. Michael Straczynski has been treating this very question in the Marvel comics.

You talked about the dangers of wind turbines to birds. I recently heard on NPR that city birds have changed their songs to compensate for city sounds.

Sounds like the decline in US healthcare is due to many people not having PCPs. So if you factor out those people, the level of care in this country may be as high as other industrialized nations.

The fact that the PO is processing fewer letters but more packages seems to indicate that there is less direct interpersonal interaction all around. Of course the telephone and computer may have substituted for old-fashioned letter writing. In fact some of the people with whom I used to correspond on paper have mutated into e-mail correspondents. In most cases we are communicating more frequently than we used to.

Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu, Vol. IX, Iss. 4): Good luck with the move. As for home ownership, it probably will make sense to you if your rent rises to be the same as the mortgage payment on a house or condo. That's how I initially became a homeowner.

Eric Lindsay (For FAPA): I still occasionally use our VCRs, mostly these days just to view.

The credit card problems I experienced a few years ago mostly seemed unrelated to the use of them on the Internet. At least on a couple of occasions, the problems happened after hackers invaded the computer systems of the issuing firms or of credit reporting agencies.

So far the resale value of the Prius is very high. We have had ours for almost five years, and our battery is still good. The Toyota dealer has given us excellent service besides.

Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien): The redundancy of using different ink colours and using the double parens seemed advisable after a couple of people confused what I said with what the loccers said. Also this may not seem redundant to anyone who is colour-blind.

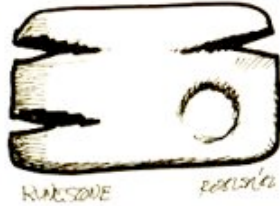
Jack Speer (Synapse): Since you asked, I have included an autobiography. I recently wrote up one for

SNAPS, so I am reprinting it with a few changes.

The DVR has a hard drive similar to the one in computers. Because the old DVR unit couldn't be started, it was not possible to copy anything from its drive to our new unit. Even had it been possible, I'm not sure that the cable guys are equipped to do that sort of thing.

Michael W. Waite (Trial and Air #16): Wow, "cover art by Connie Reich Faddis"! I met her in Trek fandom years ago. I wonder whatever became of her.

* * *



* Letters to the Editor

The text of letters received will be in brown. My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and the like.

Brad Foster, Irving, TX

9 December 2006

Got in the new issue of *Feline Mewsings*, with your summer time adventures, this past week. I'm worn out after only reading about it!

Contact lenses to reshape your cornea? Wow I may not have my personal jetpack, but reading about stuff like that reminds me that I really am living in the future after all!

We've missed out on the last few Worldcons due mainly to lack of extra funds, but hoping to get back to some in the future. Nice to at least get a feel for things from reports like yours. Really sorry I missed out on seeing that movie-robots display you had a shot of.

It was flattering to see several folks making nice comments about my cover art in the LoCs. My records show you still have three small fillos on hand I hope you will be able to make use of. In the meantime, I've been playing around with trying more colour work recently and wondered if you'd be up for another cover down the line, this time in colour? Got a few odd ideas (like the one I sent you wasn't odd enough, right?) and be fun to finish one of them up and see how the colour will come out.

((See cover.))

#

John Purcell, College Station, TX

10 December 2006

You and Mike sure get around a lot. Your trip reports are peppered with some really nice photographs and make me quite envious that Valerie and I don't get out much. We've been pretty tied down to our academic endeavours for the past two years, so we do have a valid excuse there; plus children have a way of sucking funds out of your pocketbook, which is an expense that you two don't have.

Of course, you and Mike have pets. So do we: a pile of them, in fact. At last count, the Purcell Petting Zoo includes two fish aquariums, a beta tank, seven cats, three dogs, and a cockatiel. That's the domestic menagerie. If you step outside, there's a good chance you'll see geckos, anoles, maybe a snake, wood rats (although Waldo, our in-and-out cat, has been keeping the yard free of mice and wood rats, and Pulcinella, our Maltese/Chihuahua mix dog, handles snakes, believe it or not), and all sorts of odd insect life. It has been a long time since we've seen any wheel bugs or mole crickets, but the weather's been unnaturally cool down here for this part of Texas for the last two weeks, so that probably accounts for their lack of visibility.

But that's what it's like in our humble abode. Having a menagerie like that and three kids keeps life interesting, to say the least.

I really enjoyed your WorldCon write-up, and the pictures came out nicely. You made me a little maudlin writing about all the people you met and talked with - David Schlosser, Gerri Balter, John Stanley, Jeanne Mealy, and so on; but I shall have my chances to hook up with them again, I am sure. I am hoping to make Westercon 2008 a graduation trip for our family: Valerie and Penny should be done with their degrees at Sam Houston State University by the end of 2007, and I might be done with my doctorate by May of '08, mostly likely December, '08. Don't hold your breath on this, but this is my plan at the moment.

Skimming through your FAPA comments was a bit interesting, but no real comments to make since I don't consider myself part of that conversation. But you have a nice selection of fun letters. Sally Syrjala and Leslie David have been LoCcing my zines, which is nice. Now if Sheryl Birkhead will be so kind as to send a piece of art, that would be wonderful! I have always enjoyed Sheryl's style.

Not much else to comment on, but I still had a good time perusing your zine. Take care of yourself and your kitty-cats - oh! and Mike, too; and I hope to meet up with you again Real Soon Now.

#

Amy Harlib, New York, NY

14 December 2006

Really enjoyed your zine - especially the photos and the Con reports.

Sometimes I wished you had described some events more (like the contents of speeches and panel discussions), but OK. Thanks for sending it.

#

Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON

19 December 2006

Many thanks for a paper copy of *Feline Mewsings* 26. I might be tackling this fairly early, but I am eager to get caught up with a lot of fanzine writing. I am still recovering from my eye operation on December 5. I had the partially detached retina in my right eye re-attached, and the details are a little gory, as you can imagine. My ophthalmologist has given me the green light to go ahead and hit the computer again, so here I am with a vengeance.

C. difficile is named correctly. There are few hospitals in Quebec that have had problems clearing *C. difficile* from their facilities, and those who do have it will have it for a while. It's not impossible to get rid of, but it is obstinate.

((My father does seem finally to have got rid of it.))

When Yvonne and I decided that we had enough money to go to a few places before L.A.con IV took place, the Griffith Observatory was one of our potential choices, and that's when we found that it was closed. We checked the map and found it close by...a shame the timing wasn't right. Mount Wilson was a little distance away; and our worst time on the phone was with a rude jerk at JPL, who may have made the assumption that anyone who called for information was local and was being a pain. We did go to the California Science Centre and to the gift shop at the L. A. County Coroners' Department.

Many of us are at the age where our bodies are starting to betray us...eyes, ears, teeth, metabolism, joints, circulation...a full-body transplants sounds good right about now.

I would like nothing better than to visit the SF Museum in Seattle, but it's not likely we'll be passing through town any time soon. I'll rely on the reports of others to find out what's inside, and how they enjoyed it. Maybe there'll be an on-line tour soon, if it's not there already.

Worldcon...we found that having brought FRS radios with us helped us stay in touch with each other in

case we were separated or were at different panels. With a convention that size, the FRSs came in very handy several times. The Trimbles' 40th Anniversary Trek party was a good time; Yvonne wound up coordinating getting the cake out to the masses of people in attendance. And I know we chatted for a while at Milt Stevens's fanzine lounge, a very comfortable place to be.

When we attended this year's annual convention in Rochester, NY, the Trimbles were the Fan GoHs. We were on a few panels with them, and we had an excellent time. Astronomicon 10 was a busy, comfortable little convention; but under new management as of next year, A11 may be transformed into a media/anime, multi-thousand-attendee multimedia extravaganza. We all ask, "Why?"

Great to see Kees van Toorn in these pages. I haven't seen him since I surprised him in the Chicon V dealers' room. Just another example of how a surfeit of geography keeps us apart.

I wish the Bush presidency gone for all, Barney-cam notwithstanding. If many Canadians knew that the last presidential election was stolen, it was because few of them actually used CNN, Fox, ABC, NBC, or CBS as their news source. Perhaps AP and Reuters reported it, but I use Canadian, British, and European sources; as they can be more objective and less worried by ratings points, fancy graphics, and how more patriotic-than-thou they look to the average US news consumer, who is probably more interested in the current adventures of Tomkat and Brangelina, anyway... John McCain is currently looking at how to control opinion on the Internet by fines of up to \$300,000. I am certain that such comments by me would put me on some kind of watch list.

There was recently a rather lame attempt to reintroduce discussion of same-sex marriage into the Canadian Parliament. It was soundly defeated, and even six of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's cabinet ministers voted against it. Serves him right; and as the PM of a minority government, we're ripe for another federal election, probably in the spring.

I remember when APA-NYU was a paper APA, mostly because a NYU grad was a local fan here -- Joan McDougall, long gafiated, as far as I know.

Time to go, because there's a lot more catching up to do. Take care, and see you next issue.

#

John Purcell, College Station, TX

21 December 2006

I don't think I've ever mentioned this before, but I have always liked your logo with the cat silhouettes forming some of the letters. Very nicely done, and it gives your zine a certain personality.

It sure seems like you and Mike enjoy going for hikes. Good for you two! Of course, being in a state with lots of interesting places to go for hikes really helps. When I lived in L. A. with my first wife back in '86, we never got into going to exotic and cool places. One time we spent an afternoon at Zuma Beach, which was nice; and once we took a day trip out to Santa Barbara, which is a very lovely place. Having lunch out at the end of that long pier, watching porpoises dancing in the waves, was really something else. That was neat.

Valerie and I don't get out much at the moment for hikes; school and family duties take up most of our time. But we do love camping. Our favourite camping experience so far has been up in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah. The campground was 6600 feet above sea level, and the scenery was simply spectacular. On that same trip, we spent one day down at Arches National Park, which is like being on another planet; and another day was trout fishing in the Green River. On our way back to Iowa, we stopped at the Dinosaur National Monument, which is totally cool. If you ever get a chance, go there!

In any event, great pictures to go along with your trip report. I enjoyed them.

Now your WorldCon report made me feel a bit sad, because it is highly unlikely that I will ever be able to attend one of these events again. Maybe if I get lucky and finances are willing, Denver in 2008 may become reality. No promises.

It sure sounds like you two enjoyed the WorldCon. Lots of fun events going on and even more fun people to hang out with. If I had been there, you would have found me either in the fanzine lounge or the convention suite; those are my favourite places to meet and chat with people. Party hopping is fun, of course. Again, if I'd been there, I would have had my guitar with me; so I would have searched out music parties - like the Minneapolis in '73 Party. Great people there.

With that, I think I'll sign off. Have a happy holiday season, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Like next month in SNAPS.



Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA

31 December 2006

...

Years (decades?) ago, KCRW used to broadcast Capitol Steps concerts a couple of times a year, then gradually reduced them to half a hour each and then none at all. I don't know whether the station didn't want to play them any more or found the price too high or the group didn't want to be broadcast any more. Anyway, in those days, Tim and I once won free tickets to a Capitol Steps concert at the Comedy Store (?) from KCRW.

I believe I went to Abalone Cove as a child. I believe I went on school field trips to a few different tide pools over the years. I don't remember any of them having educational signage, but that may be because I didn't have glasses yet then.

"When Fluffy[/Cinnamon] doesn't feel good, he eschews the litter box and goes wherever he feels like." Under the bed is especially annoying, because moving the bed (to clean up) is hard work.

...

Catastrophic Population Loss – "slowly, as from disease" now occurring in Africa, from AIDS. The combination AIDS-malaria-tuberculosis is much worse than just the malaria-tuberculosis, because it predominantly kills productive working adults.

Did they discuss population decrease due to people ceasing to reproduce? – voluntarily, involuntarily.

...

LoCs – Tim Marion – Cheetahs who lived with humans (mostly royalty) were never domesticated, because the only time pre-modern cheetahs reproduced in "captivity" was when Shah Jahan gave over one of his palaces and all its land to three thousand captive cheetahs (and presumably servants to feed them) and got one litter.

...

Did the Science Fiction Museum begin as the Experience Music Project, which failed to become self-supporting after Paul Allen donated so much money to create it? I remember an article in *Smithsonian* when EMP opened, praising what I would call its hideous gelatinous shapelessness, similar to your photo but purple. ((I don't know whether the place is self-supporting, but more people were visiting the main

Experience Music Project than the SF Museum.))

Once when we were driving north, we encountered a long traffic jam up there and eventually reached the cause, a herd of Roosevelt elk grazing in a forest clearing next to the road.

Scooter running over a coffee cup, a human foot. I used one of those at things at the LA County Fair once, and I am not safe, I mean safe for others, to use one.

...

Feller: IIRC the time is wrong for the explosion of Santorini to explain the Ten Plagues. Also, an article in the latest *Biblical Archaeology Review* (which alas has absorbed *Bible Review*, wasting space that could have been used for archaeology articles on textual articles) insists that the Hebrew for what they crossed is the Reed Seas, not the Red Sea, with a map of where the Reed Sea used to be – a big tidal swamp. ((I believe here you're commenting on my response to Tom. The History Channel had a programme called *Exodus Decoded*. The show went into the disagreement about the dates. It also covered the Reed/Red Sea issue. I found the show pretty convincing.))

Nice to hear anything from Kees van Toorn, so many years after he used to be in APA-L!

Tim Marion: Poor Casper! Poor Tim for losing Janke!

Birkhead: I've heard that flu spreading from wild to tame birds in USA is much harder than in Asia/Africa/Europe, because we tend to keep our farm birds caged up inside factories with no contact with outside.

#

Tim Marion, New York, NY

3 January 2007

Thanks so much for *Feline Mewsings* 26. Since much of your written-about travelling occurs in California, it inspires me to think sad thoughts about California, to which I have never been. You mention "Torrance" and I think immediately of Gil Gaier, a schoolteacher who quickly outgrew me in his fannish social climbing and who became a rather large BNF for the period in which he was active and publishing several different fanzines. A couple of years go by, and he's blind and inactive and almost no one in fandom either remembers or mentions him. (Just as few remember me now that I'm so inactive...) Then he died a few years after that, one of our many who have fallen...

((I had a short correspondence with Gil Gaier a few years before I moved out here.))

And your writing about your vision and my writing about Gil Gaier above, inspire me to mention that I have been unable to focus my right eye for a couple of years now; I am mainly reading with my left eye, which puts more strain on it. Just looking at this computer screen to type this message is a challenge.

Love all your photos both from nature and from conventions! In particular, that photo from the "Babel Conference Reception" was reassuring to me that I had made the right decision to stay home.

((That was just one event among many at the Worldcon. Don't judge the whole con by it.))

Thanks for listing the Hugo winners; I'm definitely so detached from the scene that I didn't know any of them. I'm glad to see that a couple of the recent *Doctor Who* episodes won something.

Also glad to see obscure, or not-so-obscure, names in your zine. David Singer, whom you say you met again at the WorldCon, is someone I met in Richmond, Virginia, (when I lived in Newport News) in, I think, 1974. I had no idea he was still in fandom. Likewise, it's a real thrill to see a letter from Kees van Toorn, but I guess I'm easily impressed. I haven't seen his name much since the APA-H days of the early 1970s, when he produced an impressive and colourful dittoed apazine.

Interesting to see that Mike McInerney has done nine issues of *Number One*, as I thought I was on his

mailing list since I wrote him such a nice, two-page loc in response to the first issue he sent me. I'm glad there are dependable faneds like you out there who really appreciate it when someone takes the time to write a substantial loc, instead of just ignoring it and then asking for a favour later.

...

I like how you put all your letter writers' letters in red, as tho' they are Jesus's words from the New Testament.

((It's actually brown.))



Tim Marion, New York, NY

4 January 2007

I wanted to add that Sheryl Birkhead's letter was mildly amusing where she talks about hitting her dentist when he hurt her.

It reminded me so much of one of Hope Leibowitz's first trips to her dentist, who later became my dentist. She told him she wasn't ready to start yet, but he went ahead and started sticking his fingers in her mouth. So she bit him. Not exactly what I would have done, but still funny, I thought (as long as I'm not the dentist).

Years later, that dental practice was taken over by a younger, but still portly and silver-haired gentleman whom I only later found out was a couple of months younger than myself. After one gruelling cleaning session (my teeth and gums are very sensitive), he decided to "test" the most sensitive tooth by taking a small hammer and "gently" tapping it. I immediately doubled over in pain. The next visit, after my teeth were cleaned by the hygienist, I was up and waiting out of the chair for his visit. "You're not going to tap my tooth," I informed him. Needless to say, he didn't.

#

John Hertz, Los Angeles, CA

22 January 2007

At the '05 NASFC, I went to the Science Fiction Museum with Dave Kyle (as reported in *Vanamond*)! We had one hour before my plane and took turns pulling each other away from things.

Thanks for the worldcon report. You saw lots I couldn't, *e. g.*, my panel on "No Woman Born" simultaneous with Bradbury.

* * *

* **Closing Remarks**

We have no trips planned before the next issue, so it will probably be more normal in length.

Laurraine