

# Feline Mewsings #30



*Feline Mewsings* is a personalzine / newsletter published more or less quarterly by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, 29217 Stonecrest Road, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90275-4936, 310-265-0766, Laurraine@mac.com, <http://www.weasner.com/>. It is distributed through FAPA and sent to other friends and family. It is available for the usual (a response of any kind, including letters, e-mail, and phone calls of comment; trade; contributions of illos, fiction, or articles; or even money: \$1.50 per issue or \$5 per year). [ ] if this box is checked, I need to hear from you if you wish to stay on my mailing list. A slightly modified version will be placed on the web shortly after paper publication; please let me know if you prefer just to read the web version. I can also e-mail this in Word or rtf format. Kattesmint Press #359. ©2007 R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Permission is granted to reprint or forward any part or all of this newsletter created by the editor provided that it carries the following statement: "Copyright 2007 by R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Originally published in *Feline Mewsings* #30, <http://members.aol.com/felinemewsings/index.html>." All other material is copyrighted by their respective creators, and they should be contacted for any reprint permission.

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# Feline ~~Mewsings~~ Mewsings

#30

November 2007

## \* Editorial / Introduction

In my rush last time to complete the issue, I forgot to credit the photos. All of them, except the one he appears in, were taken by Mike Weasner.

Shortly after I finished the previous issue, our house entered the market. Our moving sale happened about a week later and was very successful. Unfortunately we have not had any offers, and our realtor is starting to stress out, so we are starting to consider other options.

As you might imagine, waiting for the house to sell can be occasionally very stressful. We've tried to stay somewhat active, but there are a few limitations. We don't want to do anything costly before we sell the house. There are some things we cannot do, because some of our belongings are in boxes. We also don't want to start any projects that will be difficult to put away on short notice, since we don't have much notice when people want to see the house. In fact on a couple of occasions, realtors showed up without any notice at all. It has helped that the fall TV season started soon after we put the house up for sale. TV provides some distraction. Friends of ours gave us a farewell party. We've had a few outings with friends. There are movies, of course. We've also made a sizable dent in our pile of unwatched DVDs.

\* \* \*

## \* Mike

Mike made an astronomical trip to Oracle in October and enjoyed some fair weather. You may see photos from the trip on our web site.

\* \* \*

## \* Local Activities

### Theatre

**The Thousandth Night:** This one-man play by Carol Wolf was the first for the 2007-08 season of the Colony, to which we subscribe. This play was created for Ron Campbell although it has been done by others. Campbell plays an actor in Paris during WWII named Guy de Bonheur, who works at the Café Shaherazad and has been arrested by the Nazis. He is on a train to a concentration camp when it is sabotaged. The people on the train have to wait for a replacement. Guy enters the station and tries to convince the soldiers within that his arrest was a mistake. To prove to them that he is nothing more than an actor, he re-enacts scenes from the Arabian Nights, playing all the parts himself. Most of the stories are well known. It was excellently done.

#

**Trying:** This second entry for the Colony's current season was written by Joanna McClelland Glass. Back in 1967, she worked as a secretary to Francis Biddle, then 81. Among other things he had been the chief American judge for the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. This play was based on her

experiences working for him. She tried writing this play only a few years after her experiences; the first version was a one-act play. She recently expanded the play to two hours, and the Colony run is its Los Angeles premiere. The time period of the play is the last year of Biddle's life, when his health was beginning to fail. Biddle spent mornings working in an office that was located above a garage about a hundred-fifty feet from his house. Much of the work revolved around his autobiography. The several scenes of the play were spread out over that year, the last scene taking place on the day of his funeral. It was touchingly done and very interesting as well. The two actors, Alan Mandell and Rebecca Mozo, were excellent. The play was directed by Cameron Watson. The play has received rave reviews.

###

## Cinema

**Stardust:** I became aware of this movie after seeing some online discussions. I looked it up on IMDB and discovered it's based on Neil Gaiman's book, which I have but it's packed up right now. According to comments by others that I've read, the movie is quite faithful to the book. It should be, as production stills show Gaiman on the set. It has been compared to *The Princess Bride*. I think that's a pretty good comparison. It's a fairy tale with a sort of modern twist. It's about a boy who grows up in an English village called Wall, situated next to a wall that separates it from a fairy kingdom that seems to be as large as England, possibly a twist on the Tardis concept. He has an adventure in this fairy kingdom involving potential heirs to the kingdom, a pirate, a fallen star, and evil witches. It's utterly delightful.

\* \* \*



## Amy's Motley Media Musings

Reviews by Amy Harlib



***A Fire Upon the Deep* by Vernor Vinge (Tor Books, NY, Feb. 1993, \$5.99, mass market paperback, ISBN#: 0-812-51528-5). *A Deepness in the Sky* by Vernor Vinge (Tor Books, NY, Jan. 2000, \$7.99, mass market paperback, ISBN#: 0-812-53635-5). <http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~phoenix/vinge/> <http://www.tor.com/>**

Veteran sf writer Vernor Vinge's book *A Deepness in the Sky* that won the Hugo Award for best sf novel of the year in the of its publication and the novel that inspired it, *A Fire Upon the Deep*, also a Hugo winner and a sequel that was written first, deserve re-assessment. That a work of sf and its sequel should both earn such recognition is unusual and attests to the author's skill and intelligence as a writer of richly complex hard sf "sense-of-wonder" yarns in the grandest style.

In *A Fire Upon the Deep*, Vinge has created a genuinely new and unique concept of the nature of the galaxy where the laws of physics vary with location; the greatest potential for intelligence lies furthest from the centre, at the edges where computer-like super minds far beyond anything possible in a biological brain can be found. Myriads of sentient species have moved physically and intellectually, over an evolutionary time scale measured in billions of years, toward the region on the galactic rim known as The Beyond and The Transcendence, where the entities that reach this locale are called Powers. They have attained a kind of god-like state of being, their concerns mostly incomprehensible to lesser beings though occasionally a Power turns its attention back to the rest of the galaxy.

When doing so with malign intent, they are Perversions, with the potential to do untold damage. In the centre of the Milky Way, are the Unthinking Depths with the Slow Zone the next layer out, regions where only simple creatures and technologies can function, the Slowness bordering on The Beyond.

When a team of scientists in the Straumli Realm of The Beyond discover and release an ancient Transcendent artefact, they unknowingly unleash an awesome power, The Blight, which destroys thousands of worlds by enslaving all natural and artificial intelligences. From this disaster, a ship escapes with a family of scientists with their two pre-adolescent children, Jefri and his older sister Johanna, aboard (notable examples of juvenile characters in an adult story that are not sickeningly cute or obnoxious)!

Their luck changes when they are shipwrecked on a planet in The Slowness; their parents are killed and the youngsters are taken captive by particularly fascinating aliens of a medieval-level society locked in a struggle for power. These indigenous beings, four-legged creatures who run in packs, are individually

no smarter than dogs or rats; but when they coalesce in packs of four or more, they form self-aware unitary persons of surprising abilities. Because their sharp claws and their spatially separate bodies work together like the tines of a fork, the humans call them Tines.

Another ship, escaping from the Blight, seeks to rescue the stranded pair of siblings and recover their ship, which contains an esoteric device, a countermeasure that, if it can be triggered in time, may prevent the destruction of the galaxy caused by the Blight. The crew of would-be saviours include: Pham Nuwen, a vivid, colourful “enhanced” human of bizarre origins who is also the protagonist of *A Deepness in the Sky*; Ravna, librarian/researcher and strong resourceful woman; and the vessel's entrepreneurial owners/operators, Blueshell and Greenstalk, a pair of genuinely charming sentient tree-like entities known as Skroderiders, who propel themselves about on individual mind-controlled six-wheeled carts.

When the spacecraft of hope arrives at the Tines' world at the climax of the local conflict that also coincides with a critical moment in their pursuit by the forces of the Perversion, the resolution of the three major plot strands of gripping suspense surprises and offers bittersweet satisfaction.

*A Fire Upon the Deep* fully deserves all its accolades: the overall concept is an utterly enthralling tour de force of science-fictional imagination; the aliens are developed with memorable skill and perception; the relentless pace of the story never lags (especially the plight of Johanna and Jefri, thoroughly likable kids ironically separated in the wreck and each one found and nurtured by the Tines and representing the two warring factions); not all the major characters survive (refreshing realism); and the clear, unadorned prose style conveys vast and strange galactic vistas and intimate emotional interaction with equal ease, sometimes simultaneously! This is science-fiction wonder—intelligent, aesthetic, moving, creative—of the highest order and deep enough to set readers on fire for more.

The eager reader can then turn to *A Deepness in the Sky*, which returns to the universe of *A Fire Upon the Deep* but is set 30,000 years before *Fire* and takes place entirely within the Beyond bordering on the Slow Zone and thus deals with somewhat different themes than the companion volume.

Equally huge, complex, and captivating as its sequel, *A Deepness in the Sky* follows three narrative threads centring on the system of the mysterious On/Off star that cycles from solar heat to dimness over periods of a couple of centuries. Investigating this enigmatic stellar phenomenon is the innovative Qeng Ho interstellar free trading fleet, hoping that understanding the star's weird physics may lead to an improved star drive.

Orbiting the On/Off star is a single planet inhabited by sentient arachnoid beings, the Spiders, who at present, though divided into bellicose factions, are thought to be descendants of an advanced civilization that once roamed throughout the galaxy. The Spiders survive the dark cycles of their star by hibernating in “deepnesses” far under the surface of the planet. Nearly simultaneously with the arrival of the Traders, there comes to the On/Off star system another human-descended political entity, the Emergents, a ruthless society based on the Focus, a bio-technological enslavement of minds. Anticipating the incredible riches to be obtained by the group that opens trade with the aliens, the Emergents attack the Qeng Ho; and the aftermath of their fight leaves both missions crippled and dependent on the Spider's ability to develop technology advanced enough to help them.

Awaiting the re-ignition of the On/Off star, the Qeng Ho struggle for freedom from the tyranny of the Emergent's mind-control and for the lives of the unsuspecting innocents on the planet below; for the victors intend totally to exploit them. As the star's On-cycle progresses, the Spiders, emerging from their dormancy and galvanized by a genius scientist with a vital scheme to bootstrap his civilization out of the near-extinction of the Darks, have an agenda of their own, unsuspected by either the Qeng Ho or the Emergents.

*A Deepness in the Sky* is every bit as rich and satisfying and deserving of its award as *A Fire Upon the Deep*. The far future, otherworldly settings are rendered in utterly convincing, awesome detail; and the characters, whether Qeng Ho, Emergent, or Spider—are totally dimensional and believable, depicted with understandable motivations, whether likable or not, with the most memorable being Pham Nuwen (the behind-the-scenes leader of the Traders, who survives to reappear in *A Fire Upon the Deep*), Sherkaner Underhill, the genius inventor of Spiderkind and his equally remarkable family, and Emergent leader (the smiling deceiver) Tomas Nau and his sadistic assistant, Ritser Brughel.

As the story flows from the viewpoints of the Qeng Ho, the Emergents, and the Spiders, the narrative continually offers new ideas and plot twists that are gripping and exciting throughout, while the themes of first contact, the horrors of slavery and mind-control, and the senselessness of war add provocative depth. Vinge's superb skill as a writer is clearly evident in *A Deepness in the Sky*, a science fiction novel that is deep indeed; for as it spins its ultimately intimate tale of personal victories and defeats and the power of one man's pursuit of a dream, the book also conveys a sense of cosmic vastness and eerie wonder.

#

**Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (Kino International 1927/2002). Directed by Fritz Lang. Written by Mr. Lang and Thea von Harbou, based on the novel by von Harbou. Music by Gottfried Huppertz. Running time: 120 minutes. Not rated. (Available on video/DVD) <http://www.kino.com/metropolis/>**

Science fiction fans and cineastes in general have cause for great rejoicing now that a painstaking four-year effort by German film preservation specialist Martin Koerber and Alpha-Omega, a Munich firm specializing in digital restoration, makes it possible to see, in limited art house distribution and on DVD, a definitive version of the classic 1927 movie *Metropolis*, an allegorical, future dystopian saga directed by Fritz Lang, a master of German Expressionism, many of whose works have become classics. His most famous production *Metropolis*, now presented with significant footage restored after being lost for over seventy years and combined with newly re-translated titles and a resurrection of Gottfried Huppertz's magisterial, symphonic score, makes this version the closest possible to Lang's original conception. *Metropolis*, pioneering crucial SPFX technology and using imagery and concepts imitated countless times since, was one of the most expensive and lavish productions of its era; and its monumental scale and gorgeous production design dazzles to this day, while its story's themes and subtexts continue to resonate and be relevant.

The plot centres on Freder Fredersen (Gustav Frohlich), pampered son of Joh Fredersen (Alfred Abel), the ruler of the eponymous conurbation. Freder gets smitten by a young woman named Maria (Brigitte Helm) escorting workers' children on a field trip to the upper levels of the gleaming towers of the gigantic city of the future, a setting so awesome that it is as much a character as the human inhabitants. The protagonist follows Maria to her home territory, the lower depths, where he discovers the bitter truth behind the luxurious lifestyle of the elites. Freder witnesses slavishly regimented labourers with numbers rather than names toiling amidst hazardous steam-belching machinery that dwarfs its operators and causes injury and suffering. When an explosion occurs before Freder's eyes, he experiences a vision of slaves being herded for sacrifice into the flaming mouth of a huge idol of Moloch, just one of the numerous Biblical references heavy-handedly interwoven throughout the movie. Freder thus gets inspired to help the workers, along with Maria who supports revolutionary activities involving rallying for liberation.

Freder also seeks out the mad scientist Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge), an archetype conceived here for the first time, who knows the secrets of the subterranean realm but who also works for none other than the Big Boss, Joh Fredersen. Rotwang's mission involves creating, in anticipation of and to defuse expected unrest, an agent provocateur, a "robot-Maria" (Brigitte Helm again), so that the underclass, still following their radiantly lovely, charismatic leader, can be fooled and controlled. *Metropolis* also involves a significant subplot where a character called the Thin Man (Fritz Rasp) gets sent by Joh Fredersen to spy on his son, while the offspring befriends his father's dismissed assistant, Josaphat (Theodor Loos) and pursues Maria. As the ruler's plans unravel in spectacular fashion, along the way there are scenes rife with allusions to the Book of Revelations, imagery of the Seven Deadly Sins, and the tiresomely patriarchal tendency to blame everything that goes wrong on the woman; never mind that the simulacrum of Maria was created by men in the first place! Never mind that the whole stratified, exploitative society in the picture was male dominated (reflecting Lang's contemporary cultural milieu).

*Metropolis*, (according to legend) inspired by Lang's first glimpse of the Manhattan skyline, represents a visionary work of science-fiction that also was one of the first mega-productions that nearly bankrupted the studio (in this case UFA) that produced it, with its thousands of extras; already gigantic sets made to seem even larger by cutting-edge camera trickery (involving the first use of the seminal Schiufftan technique, named after its inventor, in which miniatures and live action get filmed simultaneously); and dazzling SPFX set pieces. These included the explosion of the "heart-machine", the stunning Frankenstein-esque creation of the robot-Maria, and a flood of apocalyptic, multitude-engulfing proportions. Gottfried Huppertz's resurrected, richly-textured orchestral score provides the perfect accompaniment to the proceedings.

The summit of German Expressionism, with its combination of stylized sets, dramatic camera angles, bold shadows, and exaggerated theatrics, *Metropolis* depicted its story with scenes of astonishing originality, being the first to introduce character types and imagery that inspired innumerable successor filmmakers ever since. This film, despite its flaws, fully deserves its classic status, for like all great works of art, it not only entertains, but also provokes thought, stimulates ideas, and challenges the mind, most notably with its timeless and eternally valid themes of liberating dehumanized exploited workers and the

concept that "the mediator between the brain and the muscles must be the heart". *Metropolis*, essential viewing for all film buffs and science fiction aficionados in particular, remains a monumental triumph of the imagination.

\* \* \*

## \* Reviews

*Supercomet: After the Impact*—This was a movie shown on the Discovery HD Theatre and will probably show up in repeat showings on one or more of the Discovery channels. In addition shows like this usually are available on DVD. This was a very interesting science fiction movie showing the possible effects of a comet hitting Earth in the near future. The forecasts are based on the facts known about past impacts on Earth, such as the one that caused the extinction of the dinosaurs. It probably won't destroy the entire planet and won't wipe out all of life, but it will wipe out most life. The recovery will undoubtedly be very slow with such a decreased population, but knowledge will probably not be totally lost depending on where the impact occurs. For this movie the impact site used was the Yucatan peninsula, where the impact that wiped out the dinosaurs is thought to have occurred. As many of you may know, more and more information has been learned recently about asteroids; and it seems likely that sooner or later one will come at our planet or very close to it. If we are unable to avert a collision, the events similar to those shown in this movie may occur.

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*Freecycle.org*—This is an organization that was started in Tucson. If you have items you've tried unsuccessfully to sell or donate, you might still be able to find people to take them off your hands. After our moving sale, we had three pieces of furniture that no one wanted. Mike tried calling many organizations to see whether they would take any of them as a donation, but no one wanted them. A fellow LASFSian (Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society) told me about freecycle.org. There are chapters all over the world. I listed items to the list and found someone to take a sofa off our hands. I also later gave away some fabric I no longer wanted; I had bought the fabric when I was still working, intending to have suits made from them.

\* \* \*

## \* Mailing Comments on FAPA #280:

**General Comment:** Previously there was some discussion, if I recall correctly, about the life expectancy of the batteries in hybrid cars. The September issue of *Westways*, the magazine of the Southern California Automobile Club, had a short item about this. According to them the battery in the Toyota hybrids are warranted for ten years or one hundred fifty thousand miles. The current cost of a battery is about \$3000, down from \$4500 in 2000. "Toyota expects that by the time Prius owners need to buy new batteries, recycled battery packs will be available at significantly lower cost."

**Fantasy Amateur:** So good to see a new member joining our ranks.

**Eric Leif Davin (A Different Drummer, No. 10):** *If It Had Happened Otherwise* sounds very interesting to me. Checking amazon.com though, I find the least expensive copy is \$85, a bit more than I can afford.

Congratulations on collecting your royalty from the republication of your story. Condolences on the lack of a contributor's copy.



**Eric Lindsay (For FAPA):** Defined benefit retirement plans are going away here, too. Mike's retirement comes in two parts. His company was purchased by a bigger company a few years ago. The retirement benefits he accrued while it was the old company are available in a lump sum. However the other part is only available on a long-term basis as monthly payments.

The US should follow Australia's example in funding retirement plans.

If you're seriously interested in joining an electronic APA, e-mail me. I can send you more detailed information.

**Ben Indick (Ben's Beat #89):** Condolences on the loss of your sister-in-law.  
Rolling Hills Estates is due west of Long Beach, southwest of much of Los Angeles.

**Dale Speirs (Opuntia 63.3):** When I was in eighth grade, our geography class subscribed to a digest sized zine. I remember one issue that was devoted to the future, meaning twenty to fifty years from then. Among the predictions I remember were the ability to access libraries of information from home, self-driving cars, and wands you pointed to clump up house dust. We have the first, sort of anyway, but are still awaiting the others.

**A. Langley Searles (The Annex #24):** I read with interest your article about your family's encounters with the Lovecrafts.

**Mike McInerney (Number One #10):** You are lucky to have a job that allows you to do crosswords, sudokus, and zines during slow times. I once had a temp job where I could do those things, but most jobs I've had required me to look busy even when I wasn't. One viable solution for me was to write letters or other things. As long as I was word processing, no one looked closely to see what I was typing.

You know one person with earthquake insurance—me. I doubt, though, that we'll need it after we move.

*\* I assume, therefore, that the felines are either printer's waste or press overruns.—Dale Speirs \**

**Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #117: The Passing Scene):** Allergy shots can be very effective. However, they do not work overnight. I've gone through two courses of allergy injections. The first time was for rhinitis, the second for asthma. Each course was approximately six years. The rhinitis has never returned, but the asthma has. I was warned that they are not as effective for asthma. Some people with really severe allergies have to get shots all their lives.

Mike was in the habit of leaving for work anywhere between four and six in the morning the past year or so and sometimes had to stay late as well. When things went smoothly, though, with no late meetings, he sometimes came home as early as three.

I hope Jean's recovery from surgery went well.

**Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning Summer 2007):** I don't think going electronic will necessarily get more members for FAPA. There are only three electronic APAs that I know of (the N3F apa went nowhere with their electronic plans and is currently moribund). I don't have information about the third, to which I don't belong. However the two that I belong to could use more members. I don't oppose trying out an e-FAPA though.

Our two cats are doing okay, though Fluffy hates taking his medicine and hates having people come to look at the house.

**Gordon Eklund (Sweet Jane #52):** One of the nice things about the neighbourhood we currently reside in is the friendliness. We know both of our immediate neighbours very well and some others, too. We've also made a good start on our new neighbourhood in Oracle, where we don't expect to be living for at least another year. We are quite good friends with the people building next door to our lot; they expect to move in very soon. Mike has also met most of the other people in the area; there aren't that many houses.

**Roger Wells (Voice of the Habu, Vol. IX, Iss. 3):** How did you come to be a member of the Melbourne (Australia) Science Fiction Club?

**Tom Feller (The Road Warrior):** Several motels we've recently stayed at have had wide-screen



TVs but no access to wide-screen programming. Instead we had to watch regular TV stretched out to fill the wide screen. I find this very annoying.

It's good to know that your father's health seems to be improving.

A few years ago, some crazy person (IMHO anyway) printed out all the astronomy information Mike posted on his astronomy pages. At that time that took about three thousand pages of paper!

**Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien):** Congratulations on getting married.

**Jack Speer (Synapse):** HHO1/2K==>Ha Ha Only (half) Kidding.

The LA *Times* prints fiction, at least for children.

**Janice Morningstar (Comment-ary Redux):** Your comment about the pronunciations of the combination "ough" reminded me of this little piece I had saved, origin unknown: "The combination "ough" can be pronounced in nine different ways. The following sentence contains them all: "A rough-coated, dough-faced, thoughtful ploughman strode through the streets of Scarborough; after falling into a slough, he coughed and hiccoughed."

Currently about fifty percent of the e-mail I receive is spam. That's higher than I'd like, but some of that is due to my cox.net address, which will go away when we move. Only a small portion of my e-mail replaces written letters. I would like to ask you, though, how much correspondence you engage in? If you don't write letters, e-mail or otherwise, people are not going to write to you. When we move, I will invite interested friends to write us, either by e-mail or snail mail. I don't expect a lot of takers. Most people are not into letter writing by any means.

There's nothing wrong with literary criticism and analysis if it's done right. A teacher insisting that his interpretation or the one in a textbook is the only correct interpretation is not doing it right. One of my favourite activities in my senior year French class were the analyses we engaged in.

According to the web site of the UMich Museum of Zoology, the Malaysian Sun Bears "are the smallest bears in the family Ursidae", so it sounds like they are true bears.

\* \* \*

## \* 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.

Last time I managed to leave out a couple of letters, so I present them first.

**Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA**

**19 May 2007**

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*Feline Mewsings #27:*

Period (Georgian/Regency) flutes: Why was that a lecture that you particularly wanted to hear? Do you play the (modern) flute or something?

((As a matter of fact, I have played the flute though I haven't for many years. I recently retrieved it from my parents along with the music. Maybe one of these days I can get back to it.))

I like Amy's roses. "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." I predict that the prediction of Earth's human population being over ten billion in 2025 is correct but that the prediction of global co-operation on any, even one, thing by 2025 is wrong and the prediction that terraforming Mars will be well underway by then is also false.

The reviews of Judith Merkle Riley's books make them sound delicious.

Laurraine, how is your parents' wanting you to get a PhD not "encouragement to excel"?

((Their wanting me to get a PhD was a tacit understanding, never talked about. I didn't find such an expectation encouraging in the least.))

...

Oh, what yummy astronomical photos!

...

So, okay, who is Bernie Wrightson? A Loscon GoH?

((He was the artist guest of honour.))

...

*Feline Mewsings* #28:

...

Oh, my, what a lovely round illo by Amy Harlib. The heart-shaped things are leaves.

#

**Murray Moore, Mississauga, ON**

**? July 2007**

Our Prius dashboard touch screen computer is bust. Only fix is replacement. Not covered under extended warranty. Cost: \$3000. Dealership rep said he would talk to dealership owner. Told us this failure is very unusual.

#

**Marcia Meldrum, Culver City, CA**

**12 August 2007**

Enjoyed the pictures on the cover of *Feline Mewsings*.

#

**Karen Anderson, Tujunga, CA**

**12 August 2007**

I'm sorry you're leaving the area. I didn't see as much of you as I'd like, since I've been down here—Tujunga is just so far from Palos Verdes.

I do hope you'll keep sending copies of *Feline Mewsings*. I do enjoy it though I never manage LoCs.

Best wishes for the future!

#

**Stella Nemeth, Macungie, PA**

**13 August 2007**

I was scanning your *Mewsings* (I'll read it more fully later) and noticed that you stopped at Little America on your summer trip. I just loved that place. We actually not only had lunch there but also stayed overnight. So we ate three meals, and I was very impressed with it all. Dinner was top rate and very inexpensive for the kind of meal we had. The room was one of the best we stayed at in our entire trip across the country.

#

**delphyne, Chicago, IL**

**13 August 2007**

Laurraine... thanks for the issue... hope all is going well with your house sale and move.

#

**Ed Meskys, Moultonboro, NH**

**15 August 2007**

Thanks again for another good issue.

We have seen Capitol Steps twice on tour in NH and enjoyed them a lot. I used to like their regular appearances on *All Things Considered* and their quarterly half-hour programme, but it is either gone or my station no longer carries it. On PBS we occasionally catch Mark Russell and saw him live once on tour in NH. We have not gone the last few years, because \$35 a ticket was a bit rich for us.

I went to the California Universal Studios only once, in 1969. I was still sighted and remember a staged western fight in front of a saloon, with broken "bottles." They explained they were made of sugar and smashed like regular glass. We also saw how they did snow scenes with fans blowing...snowflakes?... into the faces of an actor "struggling" to move ahead and a demo of a make-up technician at work. They chose one person in the audience for the technician to work on. Only other things I remember were a bus ride on streets with houses and stores that were used for shooting city scenes and a sound stage with a "burning" mansion on permanent display. When I was back in LA in 1975 with my first wife and her sister, we did not get to Universal.

I was at the Florida Universal studios with my son Stanley, 17, and second wife, Sandy, during Magicon in 1992. There were none of the things I remembered from the LA tour, twenty-three years earlier. I do remember an open vehicle tour of outdoor scenes, including a mock flood or fire-fighting scene, where we got sprayed with water. We were told that a bazillion gallons of water were stored in a reservoir and dumped thru in a minute or two, gathered up, and pumped back to the reservoir. On the last day of our very action-filled stuff at Disney World, Sea World, and Universal, there was an Indiana Jones stage show with machine guns and an exploding gasoline truck; and my exhausted guide-dog, Gerry, slept thru it. I remember being shown a scene with props from *Honey I Shrunk the Kids* and a water set with splashes of strafing machine-gun fire being generated from under the water but am not sure whether this was at Universal or Disney World.

As usual, I greatly enjoyed Amy Harlib's reviews. I have so many books I want to read and must add *Perdito Street Station*, but not *The Scar*. I would probably like both but do not have time, so I have selected the one that sounds more to my taste. You had a marvellous vacation trip, accomplishing so many connections with Mike's past. I have no experience with auto navigation systems, but it is obvious that it would only know what was in it. Can you buy upgrades for the software? If so, is that very expensive?

((Upgrades are available for the navigation system every few years. Our system has been upgraded once. For the replacement of a DVD, the cost seems a bit high but not so high when you compare that with other car service items.))

#

**Brad Foster, Irving, TX**

**15 August 2007**

Wow, loved the plan for the new house. All that storage and those nifty specialty rooms and that great kitchen with island and spinning corner shelves. Drooling in lust here!

Cindy has been getting by with just a hot plate, a microwave, and a toaster oven for a couple of years; as all the appliances here have gradually given up the ghost. The oven was the last to go, and that was back last December. Since these are all built-ins and in such old styles that new appliances won't fit in the same spaces anymore, we have to get the cabinets ripped out and replaced to get anything new. Crunching numbers this summer to see if we can afford to get one section replaced, put in a combo oven/range. Now, if I can just get someone to finance a few thousand dollars at no interest for the next five years, we're there!

And the storage space and library would have been the dream for another friend. He recently sent out a notice that he just bit the bullet and cleared out his condo by selling 19,000 volumes. (He doesn't say how many are left; but going by the fact that the last time I visited, every bit of wall space was full of shelving

with double-deep books, and there were mountains of books on the floor that were measured in yards, not feet, my bet is that was still only half the collection!)

The reviews of the Mieville books by Amy were so impressive in conveying the richness of what they contain, I'm now going to HAVE to get them. Seriously, it's no longer a matter of just having heard they were good, or that I would "like" to read them some day. Those reviews were so strong, I feel IMPELLED to seek them out!

Got to get back to work, but keep them coming, and hope you can make use of those last two fillos down the line. I'll send you some new stuff after that.

#

**Mary Manchester, Rochester, NY**

**15 August 2007**

What news! What news! I'll write more when I get back from my second visit to Stratford [Ontario] (Aug. 20-27), but I just had to respond to the news in F. M. 29.

You are about to take, are now taking, in fact, BUSY to a whole new level.

Congratulations to Mike on his retirement. The circumstances may not have been of his choosing; but once things settle down, he'll enjoy being retired so much he won't mind how it happened. I predict.

#

**Torun Almer, Hawaii**

**19 August 2007**

Enjoyed your mewsings. Look forward to hearing about your move and adventures in house building.

#

**Tim Marion, New York, NY**

**28 August 2007**

Sorry I've been out of touch. Interesting that you're moving to Tucson. Quite a few fans seem to be moving there or have moved there already. Perhaps it is a new fannish Mecca? At least the air there is nice and dry—keeps the heat from feeling as oppressive and surely is better at preserving paper than the humid East Coast of this country!

Ever since Christmas I've been involved in the mammoth task of organizing and reorganizing my fanzine and APA mailing collections. Right now there are thirty-six bankers' boxes and very well organized. A consequence of all this organizing is that much of it is done in a breathless fashion, sort of a variation on the old *Rawhide* TV theme tune, "Don't try to understand them, just board and bag and file them." Not very much time for fanzine reading during this time.

I did however note your autobiography a few issues ago, which was appreciated.

John Purcell, in your latest issue, waxes nostalgically for the "Ballantine Adult Fantasy" series that Lin Carter edited. I remember fondly many lush, well-written fantasies that have since faded into obscurity. To give an example, *Excalibur* by Sanders Anne Labenthal.

Ed Meskys mentions how he hates to waste anything, even medicine, and recalls how he was told by medical personnel to dispose of medicine by pouring it down the drain. I've heard in the recent years that our water table is actually contaminated by antibiotics and other medicines now, thus creating a need for ever-stronger antibiotics to be created. Reading along, I see that Lloyd Penney refers to this also.

All the discussion about prednisone reminds me of my dear, departed Casper. It's the end of August as I type this, and I "put him to sleep" in early January, but still the memory is pretty damn painful. At least Jesse is alive and healthy, and I doubt that I will feel like going to any conventions as long as that is true.

#

... That long-eared animal on the cover photo collage looks like a kangaroo, but I guess it's a jackrabbit. Showing its tail would show which it is.

((Take my word for it. There are no kangaroos on our land in Oracle.))

Tucson storage prices being high while home rents are low suggests that too much land that should have been used for storage facilities was instead used for building homes. The price of renting is however supposed to go up nationwide, as all the foreclosed people need places to live.

I like the phrase, "if people don't have easy access to their own Air Force personnel".

The homes of Mark Twain, Huckleberry Finn, and Becky Thatcher? Mark Twain was a real person and had various homes over the years, but Huck's and Becky's home is a printed page. "Molly Brown's birth house"—the unsinkable?

((Picky, picky—the homes of Huckleberry Finn and Becky Thatcher are the homes of the people on whom Mark Twain based those characters. Yes, the "unsinkable" Molly Brown.))

Shingles is supposed to be quite awful, so my sympathy.

You comment to Eric Lindsay, "In my opinion a place with a population as low as five is only a village or a hamlet, not a town". Think of a place with a population as low as five, it could be a single house all alone in the wilderness or an extended family (not extended very far!) "compound" of two or three houses and their outbuildings. It hardly sounds like enough people for a village.

Ed Meskys: Flushing excess drugs down the toilet is not only a waste, but it also pollutes water, because sewage treatment is designed to remove solids and germs not dissolved chemicals.

By coincidence, I looked at other house floor plans recently. Blundering about on the web, I fell into where Loew's Home Improvement is selling blueprints for several models of Katrina cottage (I hadn't known there were several models). It says they charge \$700 for the blueprints but give back the \$700 if one buys all the building supplies there. So I looked at the floor plans and saw at least one had bathroom and kitchen separated by a single wall. My late mother raised me to believe that it's illegal, in California anyway, for the kitchen to be separated from the bathroom by a single wall. They must be separated by at least two walls and a space (room or hall) between the two walls. Does anyone know if that is true? I also was disturbed that they didn't have garages, but I suppose the architect thought hurricane survivors could just park on the lawn. Your floor plan has neither of these problems.

I suppose building houses was much easier before electrical and indoor plumbing. Then one only had to put walls up, not fill the walls with pipes and wires.

There's a block of Venice Boulevard east of Fairfax where the houses on the north side have their garages in front of the house, right out to the sidewalk. That's an efficient use of space, none wasted on a driveway; but it looks so ugly! I've been trying to think of how they could be beautified. Maybe if they printed murals on those garage doors?

((Building to completely fill land turns me right off. Before we bought our current house, we looked at one in Redondo Beach that was like that. The house was bigger than ours at the same price. It would have been acceptable on a larger lot. The whole neighbourhood was like that, and the street was very narrow. Since we knew we would be living in the house for at least five years, I knew we'd go mad in such an area. Our land in Oracle is three acres. I'd originally hoped for more like ten. There were lots that size further out from Tucson. Unfortunately they were in open range country, and we would have had to allow cattle to graze. That didn't please me at all.))

#

**Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON**

**5 September 2007**

Thank you for *Feline Mewsings* 29. It looks like life has crept up on you and given you a surprise you weren't expecting. You wanted to retire, but you wanted it on your own schedule. Now the timetable's jumped up on you, and it's time to act whether you're ready or not.

There's the sale, the move, the paperwork, the legalities...when do you actually move to Tucson or Oracle? I can imagine the household is upside down right now, especially that it's now September.

I certainly agree with Amy Harlib on *Perdido Street Station*. As I read it, I always had the feeling that all of New Crobuzon was anywhere between grimy or dirty or slimy to just plain filthy and covered with ichor. Once that feeling is planted, you have the basis with which to judge the characters, none of them all that good, and most of them of questionable character. No white or black hats but mostly dirty grey. The degradation of the city reflects the degradation of humanity in the stories and description of its inhabitants. After reading it, you get the feeling that perhaps you should wash your hands several times.

I am surprised that any health worker would simply say to flush old prescriptions down the toilet. There are enough chemicals in the water supply these days. Like I said last loc, you can take old medications, prescriptions and over-the-counter meds, to any pharmacist for safe disposal.

Brad Foster's definition of retirement is just right for me. I doubt I'd be able to afford to stop working; so I'll just keep working, doing what I do. As long as someone will pay me to do what I do, of course... Whom am I kidding; I would need a lottery win in order to retire and do all the things I want to do?

I would still like to get into reading books on tape for purchase; but as of right now, I haven't found the way yet. Yet is the right word; it's just a matter of time.

((Many libraries in the US loan out audio books. Are they available that way in Canada?))

The Japanese Worldcon has come and gone, the silver rockets have taken off to places old and new, and Montréal will have the chance to redeem Canadian fandom in the eyes of many by staging their own Worldcon in 2009. We are deciding if there's anything we can offer or even if we want to go. Final decisions will come later. Anyway, take care, and keep moving stresses to a minimum if you can.

((I stress out really easily, and it has been tough.

((We also don't know whether we will be able to get to Montreal. I'd like to, but a lot depends on what is happening in our lives at that point.))

#

**John Purcell, College Station, TX**

**9 September 2007**

Brad Foster is right: I, too, always grin a little when I type your zine's title.

Well, here it is a couple months after the 4th of July, and I still haven't made up my mind about joining FAPA. Mike McInerney contacted me yesterday about membership; and I gave him a definite maybe, such as in, "Maybe if I see what it looks like now, I can make up my mind after I give it the old once-over routine" or words to that effect. I might yet, so who knows? Judging by the mailing comments you're making in FM #29, there are some really fine people in here, and that is a big enticement. Stay tuned.

((If you want a spec copy, I believe Milt Stevens is the one to contact about that.))

Good luck with the move. I really hope all goes well with it for you and Mike. That floor-layout you included at the back of the zine looks nice and impresses me. Did you say that you and Mike designed this? If so, I really like the basic flow idea from room to room and where you set up the master bedroom and offices in relationship with the guest rooms. Am I correct in assuming egress to back yard is through sliding glass doors in the master bedroom and a door in the pet room? Where is the street in relationship to your house? I have to assume it's straight down from the garage, but that could be deceiving since

many houses are built catawampus to the street, not placed linearly. Still, your plans at the moment look nice, and I am envious: 3500 square feet. That's the kind of room Valerie and I need! \*Sigh\* Someday...

((The patio doors, as such, not sliding doors but French doors, are in Mike's workroom, since he will want to wheel out astronomical equipment from time to time. The door from the pet room goes out but only to an enclosed patio area. The bathroom next to it has access from the patio. I figure it's a good idea to have a bathroom accessible from outside.

((Our lot is on a corner. The streets, such as they are, are to the north and to the west. The streets, as of now, are unpaved.))

Sheryl Birkhead's loc is very sweet. I thank her on behalf of Alan White and Brad Foster for her kind comments; but Sheryl's cover on the third issue is wonderful, too, and has received many nice compliments. Her style is quite distinctive and makes a nice counterpoint to the other covers on my zine. Getting artwork from Sheryl is always appreciated.

And that should do it. Take care, and I hope the transitioning goes well.

#

**Mary Manchester, Rochester, NY**

**13 September 2007**

Thank you for FM 29, most especially for the revised floor plan. I can see where it's an improvement—more compact and comprehensible. The style is still non-northern. How nice not to have to think about furnaces and heat-runs and such. The only puzzlement is the Pet Room. That is a totally new one for me. Is the Video Room a home theatre? Allowing for changes as you build, I like it. I really like it. A lot of thought and common sense went into it, and it shows.

((Actually I've done a lot of thinking about heating ducts. It will be done with hot-water heating either under the floor or baseboard, depending on the room; baseboard heating would not work in the library, for instance. While it's true that we won't need heating as much you do in upstate New York, it does get down to freezing for short periods of time during the winter. Of course, with all the insulation we are putting in, we might not really need it. But I think it's better to be prepared than be caught by surprise. And, of course, AC ducts are very important, though again the insulation we'll have put in might make it less necessary than where we are now even though summer daytime temps there are a lot higher.

((The pet room was an idea I got originally from some TV show, I think, where they showed a house where there were cat runs from room to room, etc. Since then I've seen articles in various magazines as well. When we visited one old co-worker of Mike's near Tucson, their house had a variation on my idea. There is a pet room and a run to it from a cabinet in another part of the house. They have a lot more cats than we do.

((I guess you could think of the video room as a home theatre, but I think it's less elaborate than my concept of a home theatre. I guess you could think of it as a cross between a home theatre and a den.

((I've certainly lived in enough houses to get ideas about what an ideal house should be. I also get ideas from seeing pictures in magazines. Seeing what other people have done to remodel also gave me ideas. The builder we talked to certainly seemed to be impressed with my plan.

((Besides the floor plan, we have managed to write up quite a list of specifications for the house. Many of those ideas were generated by talking to the builder, as he asked a lot of questions.))

A few things I marked as I read—

You've always enjoyed LA's cultural offerings. Will Tucson be a disappointment in that regard, once you have time again?

((I don't expect Tucson to be a cultural disappointment. That's one of the factors I considered when choosing Tucson. I knew, for instance, that there's been an opera company there for years. I also knew

there was theatre. In fact the artistic director of the Colony, where we currently have a subscription, told us that there is very good theatre in Tucson. I hope we can check those things out once we move there and settle down.))

You like *Ratatouille*!

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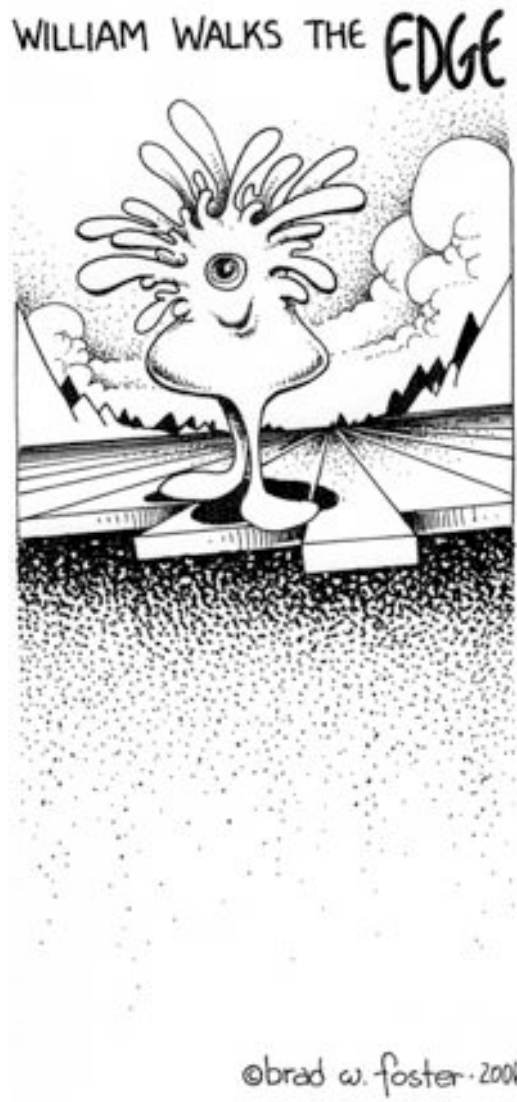
delphyne, Chicago, IL

22 October 2007

Thanks again for the fanzines, they are entertaining and lovely... I have been reminding myself to mention a tiny typo in the zine featuring my cover of Rich's story characters, Axel and Rotomotoman... Rich's last name is "Chwedyk" ...your credit was "Chwedy" ...I realize time has passed, but a correction would be nice... thanks!

((My apologies for the typo. I do re-read each issue before I publish it; my husband also reads it, but each issue I usually find after the fact that a couple of typos went uncorrected.))

\* \* \*



### \* Closing Remarks

As I wrap this up prior to printing, our skies were hazy for four days with yellowish smoke blowing over us from the many fires to the north and east of us. The weather is finally turning around, so the fires should be coming under control very soon. The high winds have gone away; in fact there is barely any wind anywhere now. The humidity is also beginning to rise. Lower temperatures are forecast for the next several days. However a lot of people have lost their homes, and a few have lost their lives. Arson is suspected for at least one fire. Since the fire is on national forest land, the FBI was called in. The latest word is that one man has been arrested and another suspect shot and killed.

We have a couple of weeks left on our current contract with our realtor with no bids, and I'm not feeling terribly optimistic.

*Laurraine*