

Feline Mewsings #35



Feline Mewsings is a personalzine / newsletter published more or less quarterly by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, 2173 East Rio Vistoso Lane, Oro Valley, Arizona 85755-1912, 520-818-3724, 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: \$3.00 per issue or \$10 per year). 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 #374. ©2009 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 2009 by R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Originally published in *Feline Mewsings* #35, <http://homepage.mac.com/laurraine/Felinemewsings/index.html>." All other material is copyrighted by their respective creators, and they should be contacted for any reprint permission.

Cover by Brad Foster. Photos by Mike Weasner. Illo p. 14 by William Rotsler.

if this box is checked, I need to hear from you if you wish to stay on my mailing list.

Feline ~~M~~ewsings

#35

February 2009

* Editorial / Introduction

One of the best pieces of news I can report is that in November Mike finally got a working telescope to replace the one that was stolen a year ago in December. It is a slightly higher end telescope with the only downside being that it weighs about twice as much as the old one, making it hard to transport. Of course the transportation issues will not exist once our house is finished, which, at this point, is expected to be sometime in March or April.

We ended up buying our bicycles at a bike shop. I have a friend who is an avid cyclist. As we were confused by the many different kinds of bikes on the market, I e-mail him for advice. He said we should avoid buying a bike at places like Wal-Mart, because a bike shop would offer all sorts of services that low-end retailers would not. There is a bike shop close to where we live now, so we went there. We really lucked out in our timing. Apparently like cars, new models come out in the fall. We were able to get good discounts on our bikes, especially mine, as it's a small one. Small ones are apparently not as popular, probably because most people are not petite like me. We received discounts on all the accessories we bought, and they were attached for free. In fact I think the water bottle holder and water bottle were freebies. As purchasers of bikes, we get lifetime discounts on other accessories we buy there. In addition, we get free checkups on the bikes. We recently had our bikes looked over to make sure everything was okay. I was a little concerned about the frame, since I'd fallen off the bike three times. Mike wanted the seat adjusted on his bike and had been unable to do it himself.

You may be wondering why I fell off my bike. It had been about thirty-five years since the last time I'd ridden. While it may be true that you never forget how to ride a bike, I was really wobbly. Also the way bikes are constructed is quite different from the ones I was used to. First I had to relearn how to balance myself properly on the bike. Then I had to learn a new way of getting on and off the bike. Once I got



those two things under my belt, I was pretty much okay. Now I just have to build up some stamina. We go out as frequently as we can manage, usually a few times a week. This area is quite hilly, so I get plenty of exercise.

A great deal of progress has been made on our house in Oracle. The framing has been done and then some. All the major woodwork on the house is done. In addition, all the windows and external doors have been installed. Also the siding has all been installed. The roof is covered and



tarpapered, and the skylights are all in. All the wiring for major electrical and low voltage things, such as the intercom, Ethernet, and phone lines, have been installed. All the major plumbing has been done, and currently the plumbing system is full of water to test for pressure and leaks. One of the bathtubs is in, and the valves for the other one are also installed. The ductwork for the AC is in as well as for the exhaust fans and central vacuum. Ditches have been dug to connect to the electrical,

phone, and water supplies. The insulation has just been finished; the outside walls have foam insulation, and there is sound insulation around the bathrooms and the media room. Because the land has a slope, we needed walls on the high side to prevent storm water from washing over the house. There are two

nice curved retaining walls made using Keystone blocks. The lower wall has stairs near the middle that are covered with slate. The photo on the previous page shows the house as the last of the siding was being applied and work on the retaining walls was beginning. The photo above shows the retaining walls. The photo to the right shows the steps in the lower wall; I'm standing on the lowest step (for scale, I'm probably about five feet high with the hard hat).



It was decided to go with a decorator to design our cabinets, bookcases, and other things. Our designer is in partnership with our building consultant on a factory in Mexico. So far we are just in the design phase. We also have ordered all our major appliances, which we ended up ordering from a local retailer. Most of the appliances are built-ins.

During this period, we had one interesting misadventure with our Toyota Prius. One day we had just finished our shopping at Whole Foods and were ready to depart. The car wouldn't start, and some of the electrical things were also not working. We checked our owner's manual and called the Toyota dealer and decided the small starter battery had died. We called AAA for a jumpstart; it took them an hour to get to us. After stashing the refrigerated items at the store, we headed to the Toyota dealership to get a new battery. We waited there for two hours before we could resume our shopping. As our car had over 112,000 miles on it, it wasn't surprising that the battery had died. It's just unfortunate that we'd had no forewarning.

We've had a fairly wet winter so far, though we've enjoyed periods of warm sunny weather too. Right after Christmas, we even had a bit of snow.

Poor Fluffy, our black cat, has had more rotten luck in the health department. He is having urinary

tract problems and has been placed permanently on a special urinary health diet. I've also had to increase the dosage of the medication he is on for his bowel disorder.

* * *

* Local Outings

Gaslight Theatre: In late October the Treece Team, our realtors, invited their clients for an evening's entertainment at a dinner theatre. They paid for the tickets and a dessert, and we bought our own dinner. Because it was near Halloween, the show was *Frankenstein Lives! or "The Jolt's on You!"*, a farce based on the Frankenstein story. The entertainment began with a musical interlude, and the show itself included musical numbers. During intermission we had more music. Following the play was a take-off on the old *Ed Sullivan Show* with actors playing the parts of performers such as Robert Goulet and the Beatles. It was very fun evening. The Treece Team has been doing this sort of thing every year, but this was the first time we were able to partake.

#

Water Ways: The Oro Valley Water Utility presented a free class on "Care of Desert Plants". Over about two hours a representative of the Pima County Cooperative Extension, which is part of the University of Arizona, talked about gardening in the Tucson area. It was a very interesting talk with many photographs and samples that were presented for us to look at and handle. There were a lot of handouts, which I'll probably not have a chance to look at until we move into our new house; but that's when I'll need the information contained. A lot of things I'd learned in California about when to plant, prune, and weed are different here because of the different climate. In addition, of course, the things I can plant here are different. I found the lecture very interesting and useful.

#

Capitol Steps: We've been following the Capitol Steps, a political satire song and dance group, for a number of years. We used to see them at Caltech. When I found out they'd be in Scottsdale, we decided to go. First of all the cast was different. There was one performer I may have seen before, but the others were definitely different from the ones we've seen in Pasadena. The Capitol Steps comprise about thirty members, and only half a dozen perform at any one time or venue. The show was slightly shorter than the ones we were used to in Pasadena, partly because it was all done in one act without an intermission. What else was different would be difficult to say, especially as we don't know what they did or will do in Pasadena last/next time. Because the show relies on current events, it is ever-changing. Overall it didn't seem as entertaining as the last time we saw them, but the quality does vary each time. Partly we missed the special barbs aimed at Caltech. Not being as knowledgeable about Phoenix and Arizona politics, some of the local political humour may have gone over our heads.

#

National Geographic Live! Deep Ancestry: Inside the Genographic Project: This project seeks to chart the migratory history of the human species by collecting DNA from thousands of people from around the world. DNA is collected from indigenous people in as many places as possible. In addition the public is invited to purchase Genographic Project Public Participation Kits; the participant receives information about his genetic history, and the DNA data are added to those gathered in the field for a more complete picture of human history. The funds from the sale of the kits helps the research project and supports indigenous conservation and revitalization projects. With the kit, a person can send in a cheek swab to run a test. Tests can be run on mitochondrial DNA and the Y chromosome. Men can get either or both but only one test per kit.

The project so far shows that the human species originated in Africa and migrated from there in stages to the ends of the earth. To see where the research stands now, visit the project site on the Internet. The easiest way is to enter "Genographic Project" in Google.

The lecture we attended was at the Mesa Arts Center, which is southeast of Phoenix. The lecture was given by population geneticist Spencer Wells, who spearheads the project. I've been interested in genetics since high school, so this was very interesting to me.

#

Boyce Thompson Arboretum: The University of Arizona owns this little park located about an hour from Phoenix and ninety minutes from the north part of Tucson. It's located in scenic hilly country that must have been volcanic sometime in the past; there are a number of magma rock formations. The park has a number of easy trails through a variety of landscapes, including a cactus garden and man-made



lake. We went there in mid-December, at the end of the fall colour season. We didn't spend a lot of time there but hope to go back from time to time.

* * *



Amy's Motley Media Musings

Reviews by Amy Harlib



Message from Amy: For the foreseeable future, “Amy's Motley Media Musings” will resurrect all the reviews in my files in alphabetical order, for they are not readily found anywhere else anymore. I hope these will contain some interesting perspectives to amuse and enlighten on various genre and popular culture offerings in the past several years—opinions from a curious, feminist, inquiring, and, I'd like to think, culturally educated mind. I hope *Feline Mewsings* readers find what I have to say worthwhile. Thank you very much for your attention.

***All Tomorrow's Parties* by William Gibson (Berkley Publishing Group; reissue edition, Feb. 2003, \$7.99, mass market paperback, ISBN#: 0-425-19044-7).
<http://penguinputnam.com/static/packages/us/about/adult/berkley.htm>
<http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com/index.asp>**

All Tomorrow's Parties concludes the popular trilogy that includes *Virtual Light* (1993) and *Idoru* (1996) and is set toward the close of the 21st century. As much character-driven as plot-driven, the story focuses on the approach of what celebrated American cutting-edge SF writer Gibson calls a “nodal point”, a moment in history when certain patterns, trends, and data associations converge in a critical moment that can irrevocably change life on Earth.

A young man named Colin Laney, down-and-out (except for his computer interface) in Tokyo, both blessed and cursed with the ability to read these nodal connections, possesses this talent brought about by childhood exposure to an experimental drug. Laney perceives a nodal point coming, potentially equally as calamitous as the previous one in 1911.

Unfortunately so does megalomaniacal industrialist Cody Harwood, who has also dosed himself with Laney's drug, effectively creating the node. As part of his plan to ensure influence over it, Harwood plans to build a network of nanotech replicators, presently forbidden by most governments, in every one of his franchised, ubiquitous, world-wide Lucky Dragon convenience stores.

Laney's and Harwood's struggle to influence the outcome of the nodal points draws in number of characters, many of them "old friends" from the previous two books in the trilogy; and they all head for predicted the "ground zero", the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, now too earthquake-damaged to support motor vehicle traffic. The famous span, currently transformed into a huge, self-governed, build-it-yourself shanty-town populated by hip outsiders, provides the locale for a gathering of Laney's old pal, former rent-a-cop, Berry Rydell, to whom Laney has given money and a package that conceals a projector containing the virtual personality or idoru, Rei Toei. Joining them are an erstwhile bike messenger named Chevette; the weird, watch-loving, intuitive, net-surfer Silencio; the mysterious hacker inhabitants of the virtual Walled City; Harwood's shadowy assassin, Konrad; and motley others. Rei Toei proves pivotal in the conclusion that Gibson builds up suspensefully only to end it all with a bittersweet, supremely ironic twist.

All Tomorrow's Parties proves a delight to read, filled with Gibson's vividly conceived near-future scenarios and concepts: the neural implants, the matte-black cyber gear, the nanotech construction materials, and the miscellaneous repurposed cultural detritus, not to mention the whole crew of appealingly eccentric characters. All this set forth in the author's unique and astonishingly textured prose rich in off-the-wall ideas and extended metaphors amidst the intriguing character interactions and exciting plot developments represents Gibson in top form - essential reading for SF aficionados.

#

***Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (Artisan Entertainment 2002). Directed by Lee Hirsch. Cinematography by Clive Sacke, Ivan Leathers, and Brand Jordaan. Running time: 103 minutes. Rated: PG-13. (In English, Xhosa, and Zulu with English subtitles).**

<http://www.amandla.com/home/index.php>

<http://us.imdb.com/Details?0303297>

It's hard to imagine that a person exists who has not been moved and emotionally affected by the power of music (in whatever form). The same goes for the powerful impact of this musical documentary feature that played in limited art house distribution in the USA. *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, winner of the Audience Award and Freedom of Expression Award at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, deserves every accolade for the dazzling way in which it tells the story of black South African freedom music and its significance in the struggle against apartheid. Aptly titled, *Amandla!* (a Xhosa word meaning "power"), unlike any other documentary about racism in South Africa, specifically examines the force of the music that nourished and energized black South African for over forty years and emphasizes the freedom movement's spiritual aspects expressed in song. This extremely exhilarating and expressive portrayal of South African life over the past half century until now hugely entertains while it edifies with its innovative form and content.

This quality becomes all the more amazing when one realizes that *Amandla!* represents the debut of director Lee Hirsch's (whose experience previously involved shorts and music videos) to full-length film. Hirsch spent nine years preparing this production that uses the auditory and visual magic of cinema to stimulate powerful emotional reactions in the audience. Skilfully edited cinematography shot in South Africa, filled with local colour and vibrant scenes, complements the rhythms of the songs in an ingenious narrative structure that blends original footage, stirring musical sequences, archival material, and effective re-enactments to pay homage to the strength of the people's spirit throughout the generations-long struggle for freedom in South Africa.

The musical cinematic flow is punctuated by minimal but strategically placed diverse talking heads in pithy interview segments in which the subjects openly share their experiences in protest movements that were inextricably connected to tunesmithing. Thus the verbal bits are cleverly interspersed with musical scenes, bringing to the screen dozens of freedom songs from sources ranging from original recordings to exciting spontaneous live performances by famous South African professionals and amateurs alike. These stirring and lovely anthems, interwoven throughout *Amandla!* serve to guide the viewer on an enthralling journey that will awaken him to the terrible emotional, spiritual, and physical trials of living under the apartheid regime.

Amandla! further illuminates by uncovering the story of an exceptional, undeservedly obscure hero: composer and activist Vuyusile Mini, a brave political leader and talented songwriter and poet who soon learned to employ the potency of song after the government in 1948 imposed the apartheid system that wrested the most basic rights of citizens from the black South Africans. Mini's most famous tune, "Beware Verwoerd", with its pleasing melody and Xhosa lyrics that warned perpetrator of apartheid Hendrik Verwoerd that his day of comeuppance was imminent, gave hope and a voice to the downtrodden. Mini's activism ultimately cost him his life, but he went to the gallows singing!

To carry the story forward from Mini's day in the 1950s, the documentary's interviews draw on the knowledge of many locally well-known and internationally famous South Africans who helped to inform the world about the injustices in their home country. These most notably include trumpeter Hugh Masekela, songstress Miriam Makeba, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, singer/songwriter Vusi Mahlasela, singer Sibongile Khumalo actress/singer Sophie Mgcina, freedom fighter—now in the present-day government's department of foreign affairs—Lindiwe Zulu, activist music producer Sifiso Ntuli, and current parliament member Thandi Modise, whose ordeal—while pregnant, surviving by singing, and torture as a political prisoner—makes for one of the most heart-wrenching stories.

Cleverly dispersed amidst the songs and the talking heads, *Amandla!* utilizes startling archival footage (some never before seen) ferreted out from motley sources. These clips portray the harrowing history of apartheid—highlights being black South Africans being forced to move into wretched, government-built townships; the imposition of oppressive pass laws; and the jailing of Nelson Mandela, a leader of the then outlawed African National Congress. We also see how, while the repression of the white rulers grew more violent in the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s, freedom songs reacted by encouraging the fight to continue, culminating in a potent new song and dance combination, the toyi-toyi, which the police found intimidating and unnerving.

Amandla! climaxes when it depicts the persecuted black people's triumph in 1990 with Nelson Mandela's release from long-term imprisonment followed in 1994 with his election to the presidency in South Africa's democratic polling process, and it concludes with the uplifting Victory rally held in 1995 just before the new government's first democratic local elections that marked the final phase in the nation's democratic development.

Amandla! emphasizes that the story of freedom songs continues, a never-ending integral part of the new South Africa; for that vital voice of an oppressed population communicates the heartfelt soul of their efforts to inspire the new strivings of the post-apartheid generation. Lee Hirsch's movie—an exhilarating, enthralling documentation of the heroic courage and hard fought achievement of the black South Africans—crystallizes the intuitive awareness everyone has of the potency of music to transcend the boundaries of time, place, and culture to touch the hearts of people everywhere. *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, indeed!

* * *

* **Movies I Have Seen**

Changeling: This is a historical piece directed by Clint Eastwood and written by J. Michael Straczynski. It takes place in Los Angeles in the 1930s and is basically about political corruption, especially in the police department, which just goes to show that nothing ever really changes. The story revolves around a mother whose son goes missing. Angelina Jolie is excellent in the part of the mother. I thought the movie was quite good; it has an 8.1 rating (out of 10) on the IMDB database. It would be of particular interest to students of LA history or historians of the period.

#

Quantum of Solace: This is Daniel Craig's second entry as James Bond. As such I found it a bit of a disappointment after his excellent start in *Casino Royale*. I guess I expected too much. It's the typical Bond film with lots of action and violence.

#

Tale of Despereaux: I wouldn't have known anything about this movie except that I accidentally saw

an interview on the *Today Show* with Matthew Broderick, who does the voice of the title character. It's an animated fairy tale adventure about a brave mouse. It takes place in a fairy kingdom far away in time and place. A rat causes a terrible accident to befall the queen, and thereafter rats and soup are outlawed in the land. Into this place is born an uncharacteristically brave mouse. It's very entertaining and fun and heart-warming.

#

Defiance: Daniel Craig plays a very different character in this historical film about Belarusian Jews during World War II. As the first time I saw Craig was in a historical piece, also taking place during World War II, about the meeting between Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg (*Copenhagen*), it seemed appropriate. This is basically the story of the Bielski brothers, who have a somewhat spotted reputation. It is perhaps their spotted character that makes them so appropriate for helping to save over a thousand Jews from the Nazis. They hid from the Nazis in the forest, fighting and killing Nazis and collaborators when necessary. With so many people representing practically every occupation, they were able to have a village in the forest. The surviving Bielski brothers eventually ended up in the US, where recently their story became known. This is an excellent film for anyone interested in Jewish history or the history of World War II.

* * *

* Mailing Comments on FAPA #285:

Fantasy Amateur: Much thanks to Milt Stevens for acting as OE for the past few years.

Jim Caughran (A Propos de Rien): Before we moved, we took all our hazardous waste to a collection centre.

Currently the electric company in Oracle will gladly take our surplus solar energy but will not pay us for it. The company is part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and doesn't have to obey the state mandate. With Obama as president, I don't know if the situation will change. Even without compensation though, we should still save on energy costs. Unfortunately the battery to store solar energy was beyond our budget.

Dale Speirs (Opuntia 65.5): What has been the impact of the recent nosedive taken by the price of oil on the Canadian oil producers?

In December the price of gas in the Tucson area was about \$1.50 per gallon. Since then it has risen rather dramatically.

My dislike of sitting in traffic jams was one reason for moving where we did.

My guess is that the price of oil will rise again once the financial crisis is past us, but this may take several months or even a year. I don't think prices will rise to the highs of this past summer, at least not in the short run.

Eric Lindsay (Generic APA Zine 3): Congratulations on acquiring an iPhone. I hope the small problems you report were straightened out to your satisfaction.

Eric Lindsay (For FAPA): I don't seem to have had your problems with Flash movies on the Mac. I don't go looking for them, but I learn of many from Mike or friends who e-mail me.

Ben Indick (Ben's Beat 94): So sorry to hear of your health problems.

John S. Davis (FAPAliment #908): I can see that it would be easy to count the people talking on cell phones if they have their phones up to their ears, but it must be difficult to detect the ones who are talking hands free.

There's no period in my name. The symbol between the R and the L is a hyphen.

The liveable house space in our new house is a little less than 3300 square feet.

Prices at Costco appear to be lower for ink cartridges, but we get frequent discount coupons from OfficeMax, so maybe that makes up for the difference. We're not currently members, and we'd have to drive quite a bit farther to shop there.

Milt Stevens (Alphabet Soup #60): I frequently dream of places—houses, college campuses, workplaces. The basic theme is that the place is new to me, and I'm trying to find a room or someplace that I'm supposed to be. This is kind of a reflection on my real life, as it seems to take me longer than the average person to get to know my way around a place. At a lot of conventions, it seems that I finally figure out where everything is just when the convention is coming to an end. Actually I seem to have become better at this sort of thing lately.

Lee Gold sent me a few cover illos. I think they are computer generated art, which is not to belittle it. I've tried to do computer graphics, but so far I end up losing my patience and pulling out paper and pencil.

I never thought of drinking coffee as a way to occupy otherwise idle hands. I've often thought many people use cigarettes like that, though.

What you call the "Sad Sonata" sequence in *Allegro Non Troppo* is, I believe, Sibelius's "Le Valse Triste" (sad waltz), which is used for the sequence of the cat and the house that had been torn down. That sequence always makes me cry, but it's probably my favourite sequence in the movie.

I find Kim Stanley Robinson lacking in character development and interest. He has a lot of interesting ideas and sweeping visions, but I've never been able to identify or sympathize with any of his characters enough to make me want to keep reading.

The biggest problem with the Roman numeral system is that it doesn't have a zero. There was a very interesting story in a British sf zine I picked up at Denvention about that, basically a story about nothing; but it is a crucial concept.

Robert Lichtman (King Biscuit Time, No. 53): Thanks for explaining why my printer doesn't need a drum replacement. I've never had a printer that needed a drum replacement. Copiers are a different matter.

Thanks for reminding me about the fact that Marty Cantor stopped smoking his pipe.

Tom Feller (The Road Warrior: Special Report on Trip to the Hawaiian Islands): I enjoyed your trip report very much, and you've reminded me that there are things I have yet to see in Hawaii. There are certainly many reasons for going on a cruise as opposed to having to deal with today's frequent unpleasantnesses of flying from here to there. You only have to deal with the one two-way flight to the beginning of the cruise. It's definitely something to consider in making travel plans.

Roger Cadenhead (Release the Hounds!): Welcome to FAPA.

Robert Michael Sabella (Visions of Paradise #131): I hope Jean's knee is doing better.

I heard a segment on NPR recently about a teacher who was sent to fight in Iraq. Like you he had friends who were students and those who were fellow faculty. One remark that was made was that the best teachers have these kinds of relationships. This teacher stays in constant contact with his favourite students and co-workers via e-mail and whatever other means he can.

I went to baseball games a few times in LA with a group of fans that included Fuzzy and Larry Niven. It was Fuzzy who was interested in the game. Larry just tagged along and always brought a book to read.

Robert Michael Sabella (Ride the Lightning): Nevada hasn't been a destination for the retired for very long. Florida has been a destination for decades. Nevada has a way to catch up.

Fred Lerner (Lofgeornost #93): I have met fans who have attended Burning Man. In fact one of them celebrated the fact that with the Worldcon no longer always being on Labor Day weekend, she could now attend both.

There is no need to attend the theatre in the evening. There usually are matinees. Many older theatre goers prefer going in the afternoon so they can retire earlier at night.

* * *

* 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.

Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA

1 September 2008

Thanks for *Feline Mewsings* #33 with the Lunar Settlement Cat on the cover.

Building houses was easier before they had gas, electricity, indoor plumbing, and central heating.

Is an eight-foot difference a *slight slope*? ((When you just eyeball the land, it doesn't seem to have much slope at all. It's only when you have to provide a level place to build a house that you start seeing the degree of the slope. I would call that a slight slope. Our neighbour to the east is definitely on a hillside, though it's not too steep at that point. Grading their property for their house was a serious undertaking.))

The reviews of *Get Smart* the movie seemed to be split over whether not being corny ("vaudevillian") like the TV show was a good thing or a bad thing.

Laurraine to Bob Silverberg: ... "Coffee doesn't have to be bitter. Most American's don't like it bitter." Most Americans do like *burnt* coffee, judging from the popularity of Starbucks. A friend of a friend bought (and is in the process of moving to) a coffee farm in Hawaii and gave everyone "home-grown" Kona coffee for Christmas, and it's wonderful. ((I've only had Starbucks coffee a few times, and it didn't taste burnt to me. It may vary from store to store. I prefer Kona coffee, but any coffee can be burnt if it isn't made right. I use the drip method at home.))

Laurraine to Robert Michael Sabella: ... "The water in Oracle appears to be only moderately hard." The last I heard (but it was long ago), hard water (high calcium, right?) is good for heart health. However I don't like the taste and therefore drink bottled water. Just for the taste, not that I think it's less germ. So that makes me an environment ultra sinner. ((I've also read that hard water is good for heart health; I believe it's not so much, though, that hard water is good for heart health but that the water softening process creates salts that are definitely bad for heart health. I don't believe the taste of water has anything to do with the hardness. In LA I found that the water usually tasted okay but occasionally would taste horrible from too much chlorination. The chlorine taste was so strong at times that even coffee wouldn't mask it. In our house there, we had a whole house water filtration system to make the water taste good. A similar problem exists in Tucson; the water here seems always to smell of chlorine, though the smell isn't too strong. I'm not absolutely certain about Oracle, but I'm assuming the same problem exists there and have looked into a water filtration system for the new house.))

#

Rita Prince Winston, Venice, CA

19 December 2008

Scorpion in the house! Do you mean the house that you're *living* in? I *hope* (don't expect) it was in the house under construction instead! ((The scorpion photo was taken in the house we're living in. There may very well be scorpions frequenting the construction site, but we've never seen them.))

Tiger picture! The giraffes reaching for a human hand (presumably holding food). Is the head of a thing with two central horns bending its head down a rhinoceros or a dinosaur? ((Definitely a rhinoceros.))

That view of the almost vertical ladder filled with people was scary even before I read that you got vertigo on it. I have a couple of problems with heights myself, like when we went to the more recent Vancouver Westercon, we went to a tourist attraction that featured a glass bottomed bridge suspended on cables over a deep gorge. I inched along it holding the handrail while some preteen boys chased each other back and forth across it.

The convention in Denver—was it a worldcon? The question shows how out of touch I am. It hope it wasn't worldcon, as from your narrative it seems to have been badly organized: reading by Lawrence Schoen who wasn't told that the room had been changed, Chesley Award ceremony scheduled before the voting took place, mumbling interviewer. They could have tried him out (audition) and replaced him, a solution not available when it is the interviewee who mumbles. I don't blame the concom for Mike catching a cold. ((In general I believe the con was very well run. Things started on time, for one thing.

The problem with the Chesley Award was not the fault of the con. Since cons depend on volunteer labour, I doubt whether it was that easy to replace an interviewer. And the con was a worldcon.)

My memory for time is not good. Was that trip during the phase when gas prices were hitting new record highs every day? And then you got home when they fell? ((Our trip took place when gas prices were high, but I don't think they fell right after we got home. We were very glad to be driving a Prius. Current (December) gas prices are ridiculously low because of the world financial crisis and low demand. They will definitely rise when the financial situation improves, though possibly not to the heights reached this past summer.))

Sheryl Birkhead's realtor who kept showing her houses and lots that didn't meet her specifications and showing her houses that she had already seen may have been accustomed to clients who changed their specifications constantly so ignored them. And telling the seller that Sheryl was under time pressure may have been that they are in one of the states (I heard about this on a travel radio show years ago) that have a law that real estate agents must serve the best interest of the *seller* rather than of their client. Or it might all have been because she was stupid.

#

delphyne woods, Chicago, IL

4 December 2008

What wonderful photos from Denvention and your trip; once again your zine is head and shoulders above most other fannish sf zines. ((You are too kind to say so.))

#

Brad Foster, Irving, TX

5 December 2008

Cool photo of the "outline" of your new house set out there on the ground. Actually, what was more impressive in that shot was seeing that great long, open view you are going to have to the horizon! Though, flipping the page to see what kind of wildlife might be sharing that home made me doublethink how nice that view might be.

Enjoyed the Worldcon report. Especially nice to read a report where someone actually went to the programming and enjoyed it. Cindy and I haven't been able to afford to do a Worldcon for several years now; but one of these days, one of these days...

Hopefully, after this issue gets out, you'll get enough feedback that you can fill in the names for the "?" folks on the photo of the fanzine editors. It's nice to have faces to go with the names I've seen in print for so many years. ((Unfortunately so far no one has filled in any of the questions marks. If and when someone does, I will make corrections on the copy on the web.))

#

Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON

30 December 2008

Thank you for *Feline Mewsings* 34. I might have gotten off to a late start with this zine, so forgive me for that; it has been a hectic time, especially with Christmas just past. Hope yours was a good time; we sure did spoil each other, and best thing is nothing went on the credit cards. If the world's finances are in bad shape, ours shouldn't go the same way if we can help it.

I have been invited to join several APAs, but I don't think I'd have the time to do a proper job for any of them. The APA in Ottawa wants me to come back, and they've been sending me spec copies.

Any Harlib probably knows, if she knows about Bollywood movies, that Toronto has become a popular place to premiere new Bollywood movies in North America. We've got such a large Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi population here, some productions are starting up here. We may be Hollywood North, but in some ways we're also Bollywood West. Last year, there was quite a fuss over Aishwarya Rai and Amitabh Bachchan premiering their new movie here.

I haven't seen Gerri Balter in such a long time. Gerri and I were in TAPA together a long time ago. I have been told by Joseph Major that I will be kidnapped and taken to the fan editors' dinner in Montreal. I've never been able to get to one. I would have liked to have gotten to the panel remembering Arthur C. Clarke. I've heard lots of good reports about the Denvention but also heard that it was small. I think a good panel for future Worldcons would be the future of Worldcons themselves; and will rising costs of everything, plus recession in many parts of the world, eventually kill it off?

Gordon Eklund should know that for many people in other countries, international travel can be a hassle, but especially if you are flying from elsewhere to the USA. US Customs are now stationed in international airports, so now you can be harassed by US Customs before leaving your own airport. The guards we've had to deal with at Pearson International in Toronto aren't the brightest; so we've had to explain food allergies, why we have to bring certain foods with us, etc.

My LoCs...current work status is thus: I am still working in the evenings at the *Globe and Mail*; but in the daytime I now work at Southern Graphic Systems, a short distance away from home elsewhere in Etobicoke. Head office for SGS is in Louisville, Kentucky. (Work at the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada came to an end; their computer systems must have been designed by Rube Goldberg, and I simply could not learn how to use them, and I usually have no problems with learning new software. There was no documentation for the software and little training.) I am under contract to SGS, and I've been there nearly four months now. Yvonne's contract with the Ontario Realty Corporation comes to an end tomorrow as I type. They want to keep her; but because she was a contractor, their hands are supposedly tied. I wish it wasn't so difficult to find decent, full-time work. Because of the wildly fluctuating currency conversion rates, we have decided to cancel our trip to Florida and this year's International Space Development Conference. The conference is just so expensive; and while we probably could afford the trip, we are now asking why should we go. Florida can come another year.

We're getting ready for some New Year's party, so I'll fold this up and send it off to you. Many thanks, and I wish a happy 2009 for all of us.

#

Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD

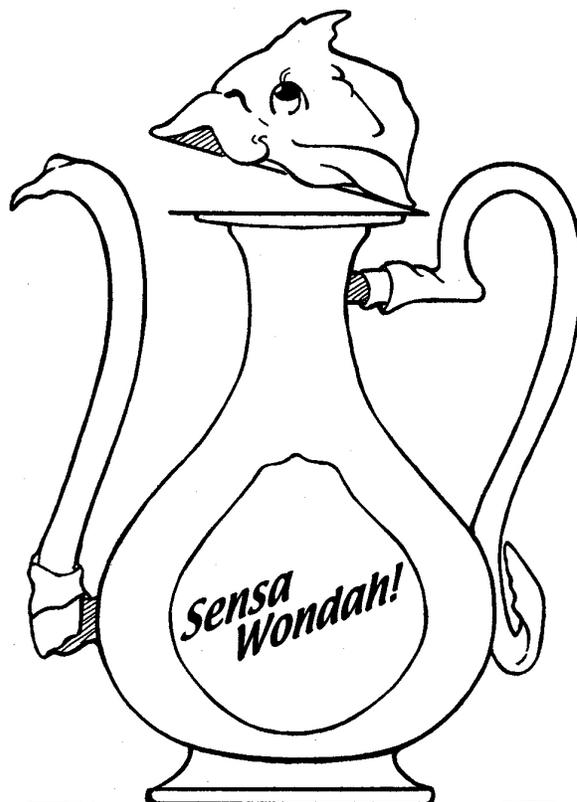
2 January 2009

Well I obviously did not manage to respond before the end of the year (well not before the end of 2008), but this will get done early into the new year.

Sounds as if you two are decidedly on the go--keep it up!

Way back when...my grandfather moved to Arizona (from New Jersey). I specifically recall that one of the Christmas presents that year was a (relatively) small chunk of petrified wood. I recall that for many years it resided on the dining room bookcase, but when I moved it was nowhere to be found. I remember exactly what it looked like. Wonder where it "went"? At about that same time, my sister was given a "bunch" of Kachina dolls. I recall that she actually made up a display of the dolls identifying each. I need to ask her if she remembers what happened to them.

If I never mentioned it before, when my siblings saw our mother on their visits, they felt she had Alzheimer's. After extensive testing at



a nearby geriatric dementia clinic, it was determined to be extremely advanced carotid artery disease. The physician explained it would present the same as Alzheimer's but was actually a series of micro strokes from vascular compromise to the brain. I made sure my primary physician knew about this, but she had no interest in getting a baseline value for me. I just bit the bullet and paid to have one of the companies that offer such testing at various schools do the carotid Doppler for me. Interestingly when the results came back that one side was compromised and needed monitoring, my physician got a bit more interested. Now I visit the cardiologist (along with some murmurs found suddenly, but that is another story), and he says that he wants to do the carotid Doppler at least twice a year to monitor the minor occlusion and make sure it either remains the same or improves.

Hmm, I used to hear about Clarion quite a bit but not recently. Nice to know it is still in business. ((The Clarion panels were retrospectives, and each of them represented a different time period. However I do believe the workshops continue.))

I am not particularly fond of the taste of coffee (but I do like coffee ice cream) but in college would try drinking it in a vain attempt to stay awake to study organic chemistry. Very irritating to come back from the Student Union after gulping down several large cups of coffee and immediately fall asleep.

It sounded as if you enjoyed the Denver trip; that's the way it is supposed to be. If possible, please put the final house plan in FM. I'd like to see what you finally went with (well, saying with what you went sounds far too stilted). ((The house plan I ran was the final one. Any changes made after the plans were approved will not be redrawn. The changes exist in reality but not on paper. Any changes really were quite minor. Most of the so-called changes we made were things like adding the placement of electric outlets, phone jacks, and the like. The biggest change was to what I call my "artist's window" in my workroom. It sticks out about six inches further from the house in order to accommodate the size of the windows we finally chose.))

May this new year manage to fulfil the promise we all have for it!!

#

I also heard from: Mary Manchester.

* * *

* Closing Remarks

By the time the next issue comes out, the house should be finished and we should have moved or be in the process of moving. We're not planning any major outings between now and then for obvious reasons. We do have firm plans to attend Westercon, which is in Phoenix this year so not very far for us to go.

Laurraine

