Purrsonal Mewsings #62

Purrsonal Mewsings, formerly *Feline Journal* and *Feline Mewsings* is a personalzine I hope to publish every six weeks by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, PO Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 520-275-6511, Laurraine@mac.com, http://www.weasner.com/.

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#62 January 2018

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Cover photo—Succulent flower
Title page header—Sheryl Birkhead
Photos pp. 5-6 Mike Weasner, p. 12 Skel

Contributions of art, reviews, articles, fiction, letters, even poetry welcome. Publication not guaranteed, but all submissions will be given due consideration.

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

If you are reading this electronically and would prefer to receive a printed version, please let me know. Or vice versa.

* Editorial / Introduction

I hope all my readers had a happy holiday season and that 2018 is beginning well for you. There are no trip reports this time, but I hope you enjoy the items I have instead.

* * *

* Local Outings

This year's Treece Team (our realtors) Client Appreciation Event was "Christmas in the Big Apple" at the Gaslight Theatre in Tucson. As I observed in correspondence with a friend in England, the plays at the Gaslight bear a strong resemblance to the pantomimes presented in England around Christmas. This year's story was about a department store at Christmas. The store is apparently bleeding money; behind the scenes one co-owner of the store is trying to sell out to someone planning to raze it. He's been embezzling in order to make the sale seem necessary. This is the sort of presentation that encourages booing and hissing the bad guys and cheering the good ones. The show also includes a number of musical numbers both as part of the skit and otherwise. It was fun as always.

#

I also attended Tuscon 44 for a day. I had a singing engagement on Sunday, so I went on Saturday. I especially went to see Melinda Snodgrass and David Lee Summers. The former was one of the guests of honour. I went to a presentation she did in which she answered questions that were mostly about working in Hollywood. She had a lot of advice for those who asked. I videoed the session as is my habit at conventions. I was asked by a committee member for a copy of the video, which I will send them as soon as I get organized.

I also went to a panel on publishing that David was moderating. They discussed the big publishers, small publishers, and self-publishing. All three are now viable options depending on the situation.

At night I attended a panel about why young adult fiction is popular among adults. Then I went to a birthday party for David and Marty Massoglia. They share the same birthday, though not in the same year.

#

The singing engagement I mentioned above was a Veterans' Day Salute presented by the Voice in the Oaks Chorale, our local chorus. I sing soprano. This year's concert was free to Veterans. We had several choral selection plus some solo presentations.

Later in December the chorus presented a sing along for Handel's *Messiah*.

* * *

* Kritter Korner—"Rodent Alert" by Ray Faraday Nelson

We Siamese cats have always been able to speak impeccable English, but have chosen to remain silent, heeding the wisdom of that ancient feline proverb, "He who knows does

not speak: he who speaks does not know". We have not attempted to assert supremacy over humankind, but have simply assumed it, leaving the practical details of life to you humans and devoting ourselves to more elevated and spiritual pursuits, such as meditation, yoga, sex and violence.

If now I, Ding Ling the Philosopher Cat, break that immemorial stillness, it is only because, in my judgment, the danger to both our civilizations exceeds any danger that might arrise from the inevitable shock you will suffer from direct communication with our far older and vastly superior culture. Please, we do not desire your worship. A simple and wholehearted dedication to our modest and ascetic needs will suffice.

Believe me, only a pressing emergency could compel someone of my unworldly and retiring nature to crouch before the keyboard of this stupid laptop computer, tapping out this message to you with my delicate, aristocratic forepaws. We Siamese cats have often been aware of menaces invisible to you, but have contented ourselves with chasing them off with a show of force. Indeed, an arched back, a bared fang and a few well chosen threats have repeatedly nipped in the bud attempts to invade our plane of reality by vast, ancient, creeping, loathsome, eldritch and downright ill-mannered intelligences from the Infinite Elsewhere.

In case someone _ or some thing ~ interrupts this message before I complete it, I will be transmitting it at intervals to an electronic bulletin board where, with luck, it will survive a disaster that would end my life and destroy the bedroom in which I work, indeed destroy the entire neighborhood in which I have always made my home.

In addition, before giving any details, let me convey to you, while I may, this basic warning.

Watch out for a subtle oddness in an otherwise normal event. If some moonlit night you should see, gradually materializing at the foot of your bed, a six foot gray rat ina flowery Hawaiian shirt and sunglasses who wordlessly focuses a 35 mm camera and snaps your picture, inspect, I beg you, the rodent's hat. Should he be wearing a bright colored helicopter beanie, beware! Things are not quite what as they ought to be.

You will have seen, to put it in plain words that even you can understand, an inter temporal, trans dimensional, multi cosmic beaniecopter.

I imagine you have now begun to shudder, as well you might, but do not turn your back on these revelations, for, as our ancestors have written, "He who turns his backside to the claws of Truth may, with needless pain, lose the underpants of Illusion."

No, as you may have realized, not every six foot rat dons such unusual headgear. The rest of his costume may convey the unremarkable impression of a tourist recording a fleeting and superficial impression of an exotic native before returning to the bland routine of his cheddar existence.

But the beaniecopter. Where does that fit in?

Does this midnight visitor have pretensions to pop culture chic? Or has he embraced the teachings of some obscure and utterly unreformed branch of Judaism?

Even I, drawing on the accumulated wisdom of my race's eons of unbroken civilization, could not at first answer these questions only last night, when, at the foot of my bed, I witnessed the slow materialization of just such a creature.

I had been lying on a pillow next to my lifelong roommate, young Joseph Conan Phann. (You don't pronounce his last name. You bleat it.) He was reading a copy of the science fiction magazine "Stupefying Stories". I, too, was reading it, over his shoulder.

But allow me to describe this remarkable representative of humanity. The Conan in his name is his own addition, put there when he read that his hero, Conan the Barbarian, was two hundred and fifty pounds of solid bone and muscle. Joe had proudly noted, "Why, he's the same weight as me!"

Also like his hero, Joe was moody, sometimes, like some latter-day William Blake, seeing Infinity in a glass of diet Pepsi.

He had been reading aloud to me some of the more outrageously unscientific parts (of the stories, adding with approval such literary evaluations as "a breakthrough" and "cool!"

After a time he lowered the magazine, clicked off the bed lamp, and addressed me pensively.

"I wonder, Ding Ling, if we could talk together, how much you could learn from me. I mean, my mind."

I thought, About as much as I could learn from the mind of the average teddy bear.

Then he dozed off.

And there at the foot of the bed the creature began to materialize.

At first I saw only a vague blur, little more than a shimmering shadow in the moonlight. The shadow became transparent, then translucent, then opaque and looming.

The camera lifted and clicked.

And I saw the beaniecopter, rotating relentlessly.

I spoke up in his language. "What do you want from me?"

He answered in a sinister, sepulchral, totally creepy voice, "I want nothing from you. I am here to tell you that you are the lucky winner of two free tickets to the Garden of

Eden, plus three free days and two free nights at the luxurious Eden Hilton, plus two free tickets to a rock concert by Gabriel and the Angels. I just need to ask you a few routine questions."

But now I knew what he really wanted. I called out, "You want my name, address and telephone number. You want to know my social security number, my credit card number, the pin number of my debit card."

"Yes, but..."

"You want to know my mother's maiden name."

"Yes, but..."

"You want not only my body and my soul. You want my very identity!"

"Yes, but..."

I leaped.

He screamed.

My claws failed to find his eyes, but I caught hold of the beaniecopter. It came off in my claw as he hurled me across the room. Dazed, I staggered to my feet. The rat had already started to fade away .

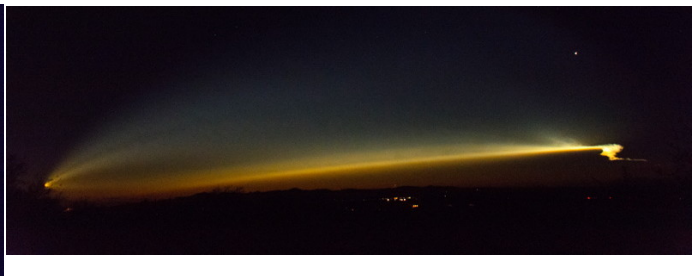
I spent the following day with the veterinarian, waiting impatiently for the night to come when I would be alone with Joe's computer and could send you all this warning.

The End

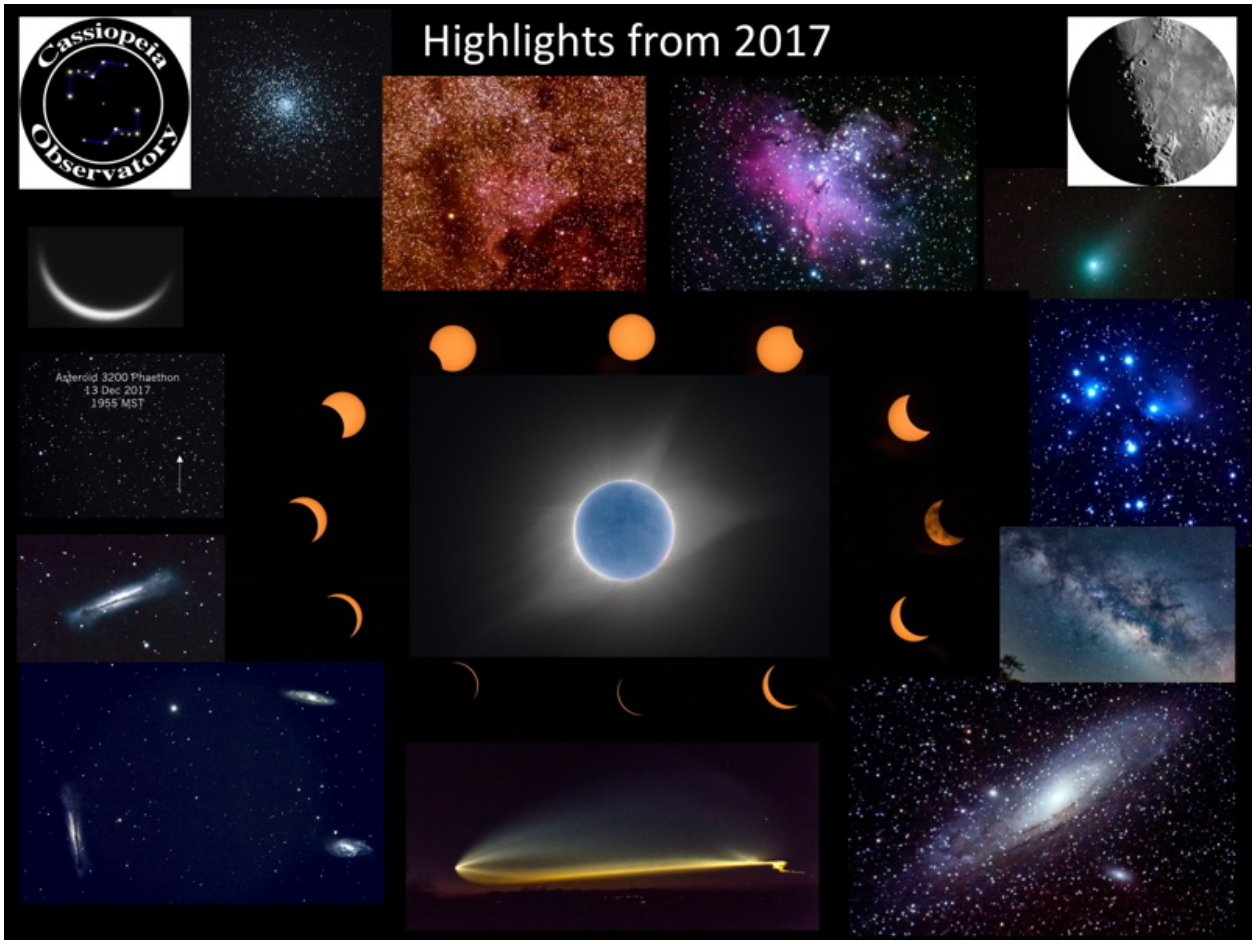
* * *

* Astronomy

The most interesting thing Mike saw recently was launch of the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg AFB. We were far enough away to get a spectacular view. Here are two photos, one from the beginning of the launch and the other at the end.



Here is a year end collage Mike made for 2017.



* * *

*** Reviews:** reviews without attribution are by the editor

Blade Runner 2049

After reading several reviews of this film, I didn't expect too much and was pleasantly surprised. I felt that this sequel naturally followed from the original movie. The appearance of Harrison Ford was a plus that reinforced the connection. I found the balance of action and thought-provoking animals to be good. Mike and I both enjoyed it.

I imagine most of the readers have seen it, so I won't go into any plot details.

#

The Iron Heel, by Jack London

This was the selection for the Oro Valley Science Fiction Book Club last October. It's not one of London's well-known works, but I had heard a dramatization of it before reading the book.

London wrote it as a history written a few centuries from now. It is written as an

account based mostly on a diary kept by a woman who lived through political turmoil in the United States shortly after 1908, when the book was published. The book is based on the rise of oligarchy in the country followed by the "inevitable" (according to Marx) rise of socialism. What happened historically caused the rise of oligarchy to be greatly modified by such acts as child labour laws.

Current incidents, such as the concentration of wealth in smaller and smaller numbers of people, make the book once again more relevant than it has been in a long time. Once again, though, events may change things from the expectations of Marx. According to Marx capitalism is inherently unstable, and socialism would inevitably take over.

#

Pirates of Venus, by Edgar Rice Burroughs

This book was the November selection for the Oro Valley Science Fiction Book Club. To tell the truth, I hadn't been at all familiar with Burroughs's Venus series. It is a later work with only a few books.

The premise is rather far-fetched. The main character leaves Earth headed for Mars. Due to a miscalculation, he ends up landing on Venus. Here he finds conditions more pleasant than he had expected and meets many people and native flora and fauna.

Although the main character is more believable than his previous heroes, the story itself leaves a lot to be desired. The main character is not perfect as his previous heroes. The plot seemed rather pointless, and I did not enjoy the book as much as his Martian series.

#

Star Wars: the Last Jedi

Again reviews and reactions of people who saw the movie before I had the chance had me expecting less than what I found. I found this movie as satisfying as the original movie. Even after the death of the Emperor, the Star Wars universe still suffers from oppression. The Rebellion seems to be stuck in a hard place. The events in the movie give the audience much needed optimism.

Two new animal species were introduced to the Star Wars universe. The first are the porgs, somewhat humorous looking birds based on the puffins that populate Skellig Michael where key scenes in the movie were filmed. Skellig Michael is an island southwest of Ireland. The filming crew made use of the abandoned dwellings found there.

The other animals were icy wolves that help rescue the rebels toward the end of the film.

* * *

* StippleAPA

StippleAPA is an amateur press association. An APA is like a group pen pal. Each distribution includes a fanzine from each member, who usually writes about his or her interests and life and makes comments on the previous issues of the other members. If you're interested in joining, please let me know and I can get you in touch with the

person who runs it.

Mailing Comments on Stipple-APA #313

Ruth Odren (The Once and Future Zine): Your arthritis problem with your thumbs sound similar to my problem. I read that some of us inherit a condition in which using the distal joint in the thumb affects the joint between the thumb and hand adversely. My mother had problems with this, although I didn't realize it was the same as mine until recently as my problems grew worse. Several months ago, I found a splint on Amazon that I thought might help. I recently got one, and it works so well it's like a miracle. It's called an Oval-8. It comes in many sizes, and their website tells how to determine the correct size. It's usually sold in packs of three with three adjoining sizes. The one I'm using is smaller than the one I thought after measuring. Basically it helps by keeping the distal thumb joint from flexing.

Dale Cozort (Space Bats & Butterflies): I was disappointed with the direction taken by *Once upon a Time* and *Hawaii Five-O* and have stopped watching. I've been enjoying *The Orville* and *The Good Doctor*.

Stephanie Meyer (Monkey Mind): Thanks for sharing the photos from Helsinki. I especially like the one of the penguin statue.

Victor J. Raymond (Leonardo's Marvelous Orrery #3): I'm puzzled by Jo Grey. The name is feminine, but you never refer to the sex of your adopted child, instead using the grammatically incorrect "they". Are you insinuating that Jo is a hermaphrodite?

Michael Kingsley (Delicious with Sauerkraut #4): I've been in Hannibal but at the wrong time of year for the Big River Steampunk Festival. We went there to visit the caverns as described in Mark Twain's books.

Cy Chauvin (Amazons & Swallows Forever! #58): There was recently a show on PBS about Scott Kelly's year in space and aftermath.

Marge Sehnert (Mamma's Mutterings): I'm sorry to hear about your eyesight problem. I hope you recovered quickly.

S. Rayne (Wight a Rayne): Interesting article about Halloween and related holidays.

Gerbil (Quick, Robin! To the Nerd-Cave!): I sympathize with Hurricane Irma leading to the cancellation of your Florida trip.

Bill Thomasson (Musings from the Gathering Dusk #11): I hope to

meet you in San Jose in August.

Jacky Boykin (Hollywood 101: the "Talk" of the Town): I always enjoy reading about the goings on in theatre.

Jeanne Mealy (Quirky Bits): I don't understand about the silent "h" in ophthalmology. I pronounce both of them.

The dinner at Rula Bula was the best tasting.

You might have to come down here to see a slide show by Mike!

The proximity room keys actually have to be right next door to the lock on the door.

You can see the Lego scenes at **http://cactusbrick.org**.

I didn't actually know all the names of the people on stage at opening ceremonies.

I don't know how to do captions in Pages.

The poster Mike won is a photo from *Star Trek: the Motion Picture* signed by David Williams and Bjo and John Trimble, who were guests of Westercon.

You get three and a half people when one of them only stays for half the panel.

* *

Mailing Comments on Stipple-APA #314

Jeanne Mealy (The Periodic Table of Variable Elements): I'm happy that Wolf is back but sad that Marge is leaving. Perhaps she will return sometime.

Rayne Sienna (Wight as Rayne): Sorry to hear about your computer problems. I hope your computer is working now.

Marge Sehnert (Mamma's Mutterings): Sorry to see your departure. Come back soon.

Sparrow and the Wolfe (Not unlike a Sparrow's Perspective): Some of us do wait instead of waiting in line to board an airline. However if we have a carryon that has to be put in the overhead bin, it pays to board ASAP to make sure there's room for it.

At a Hilton hotel in Denver, I had no end of problems with a real key. The lock was so hard to turn that I could have used a wrench. The people at the front desk were no help, as they were strong enough to open the door without problems.

I don't recall any one book that made the real world seem unreal. However I used to spend most of the time during breaks from college reading. After reading so many books one after another, the real world seemed like a dream.

Joyce Maetta Odum (Cold Blooded Jelly Donut): Sorry to hear about your continued health problems.

Sorry to hear about your spider adventures. At least that large spider is not dangerous. I had the usual fear of spiders until a few years ago. It's very strange, but I discovered that the fear had gone away after I had watched a TV show segment about someone being treated for fear of spiders. They used a tarantula for the treatment. I've never been afraid of tarantulas.

Sorry to hear about your lack of a heater. I hope it was fixed in time for the unreasonably cold weather recently.

Erik Biever (Century of Pi): What do you do with the deer if you get one?

Chrystine Omori (Not unlike a Sparrow's Perspective): The one thing that makes me feel better about our politics situation is knowing how things are in Brazil. Unfortunately for you, you live there. I sympathize.

Nicole Bourgoin (A Fool's Errand): So sorry to hear of the loss of your job. I hope you have found another one by this time.

Bill Thomasson (Musings from the Gathering Dusk #12): You typoed my name so badly that I don't know where to begin. It's R-Laurraine—no period, a hyphen, three Rs, one N.

Lucy Schmeidler (Don't Ask #5): By "super sweet wine" do you mean dessert wine? I like good dessert wines such as late harvest Riesling. I would never use a sweet wine for cooking.

By "three and a half" in the audience, I mean that the fourth person was only there for half the session.

Antelope squirrels are destructive. I had to cover my potted succulents with hardware cloth to keep them from being eaten by the squirrels. Of course I shouldn't blame them for all the destruction. We also have many rabbits and javelinas.

Sorry to hear about your accidental bone breakage. I hope you're all healed.

Can you see any astronomical objects other than the sun and moon where you live?

Gerbil (Quick, Robin! To the Nerd-Cave!): Your chinchillas are really cute!

Ruth Odren (The Once and Future Zine): I hope your neck pain has improved.

Sparrow and the Wolfe (Not unlike a Sparrow's Perspective): You had a photo of a battery pack and said there was something unusual about it. You said the answer was later in the issue, but I didn't find it.

Not having seen *Come See the Paradise* or *The War between Us*, I couldn't really compare them to Takei's story other than to say that his play is a musical.

My only longterm debt is a mortgage.

The Hunger Games were instituted as punishment to discourage rebellion. The government purposely kept the territories poor for the same reason.

I've bookmarked Duckduckgo.com.

Jeanne Mealy (Quirky Bits): There were a couple of movies I wanted to see last month, but I was just too busy.

* *

* * *

* Letters to the Editor

The text of letters received will be in brown. My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses and will be in black. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and the like. Deadline for next issue is probably mid-January 2018.

Robert Kennedy, robertk at cipcug dot org **7 November 2017**

Thank you for #60. Great cover!

In your extensive Westercon Report I noticed that you do not seem to need much sleep. At least not compared to myself who needs some 9 hours that is seldom obtained. The Ice Cream Social did not have Chocolate Chip ice cream? Chocolate Chip is my favorite and not having it would be a tragedy.

((I seem to do okay on about seven hours a night on average. I can go short periods time with less, which often happens when I travel. Naps help.))

The *Zookeeper's Wife* – I have seen the movie but have not read the book. On my range scale of 1-5, I gave the movie a 5.

Amy Harlib letter (p. 16), she certainly is Amazing Amy and an incredible contortionist. Her flat looks a lot like my living room and dining room.

Cathy Palmer-Lister letter(s) (p.19) and your response mentions David Levy. I was reminded that back about 1994 I went to Santa Barbara for a presentation by David Levy. I have in a frame three photos of Comet P/Shoemaker-Levy 9 (1993e) inscribed "For Bob" and signed by David Levy.

Once again thanks for the photos, especially the Milky Way. I look forward to Mike's photos of the solar eclipse.

#

Skel, paulskelton2 at gmail dot com **9 November 2017**

The Harris Hawk on the cover threw me initially because of the length of the beak. The sparrow hawks that hunt in our garden (see below) tend to have shorter beaks,

((The sparrow is a small hawk, relatively speaking. The Harris's hawk is quite large, though not the largest hawk. Incidentally Harris's hawks often stay in groups and hunt together. By the way your photo is very similar to one Mike took of a Cooper's hawk that killed a dove in our backyard.))

As does the only other raptor we've seen here (more reddish-brown coloured), though we have no still photos of that one. We do also get foxes…

((There are foxes in this area, but we've never seen one in our yard. This is probably because there's no food for them. I only put out food for birds that are occasionally also eaten by small animals.))

...indeed sometimes pairs, though these are long-gone, as indeed is the fox shown. In fact we thought that the recent demolition of a nearby old disused hospital (where we assumed they were living) and the conversion of the site and grounds to up-market housing had driven them away; but just a few weeks ago, another started to visit us. Unfortunately this one comes very early, when it is still too dark for photos; so even if I do catch a glimpse of it (I get up very early of a morning), all I can see out of the window is a vague dark shape, far too big for a cat, moving about on the lawn. We put out food as that seems the least we can do having practically driven them from their normal country environment into an enforced urban lifestyle.

We also get a couple of squirrels. Though nothing out of the ordinary. I'll try and attach a video of a family of starlngs enjoying the birdbath. Thanks for sending this zine, which was well enjoyed.

#

John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle College Station, TX 77845; askance73 at gmail dot com **23 November 2017**

Love that Harris's Hawk picture on the front cover, Laurraine! Mike definitely takes wonderful pictures.

((Mike got lucky. The hawk was in a tree when he started focussing in on it. Then it took flight.))

The best part of this particular issue was your Westercon Report. This is a convention I have always wanted to attend but never attended, even when I lived in LA one year. I think the biggest challenge for me in attending any convention these days is not knowing any of the primary guests and other professional writers and artists present. Case in point, of all the names you listed as this year's GoH's, the only names familiar to me were Connie Willis and Bjo and John Trimble. Once you started naming the fans you met during the weekend, then I felt much better. I definitely appreciate all the panel summations that you attended and the photos you supplied and very glad you and Mike found them interesting. Reading about your allergies kicking in and dehydration spoiling the opening of the convention for you, that triggered memories of how my wife Valerie felt for the first two full days of LoneStarCon III in San Antonio four years ago. She was totally miserable; but like you once Valerie got her strength, back the rest of that con was very enjoyable. So I am glad you recovered and were able to get about and enjoy yourself. Some year we should attend a Westercon. I forget where the 2018 edition is being held. Eh, I'll look that up in a few minutes.

((Westercon this year is in Denver, and we have plans to attend. I don't always know all the guests at a con, but I'm open to meeting new people. It helps to know one or two.

Some guests have strong pull for me. Connie Willis is one of those. She's very nice and easy to talk to.))

It gets viciously hot here in our part of Texas too. Our pets and the local fauna respond to it just like those beasties pictured on page 9. When it gets that hot, finding a shady spot to lie down in takes priority.

Well, I think that will do it for today. I thank you for continuing to produce your zines. It is always good to see the names of long time friends in these pages. Until I see you again at a convention or during a vacation trip to Arizona, take care, and give my best to Mike.

#

Jason Burnett, brithistorian at gmail dot com **18 December 2017**

I found *Purrsonal Mewsings* #61 in my PO box yesterday, and I'm really enjoying reading it.

Your eclipse trip sounds like quite the adventure. It was fun seeing you come far enough east that you went to places that I've been before (the Houston Zoo, the Huntsville Space and Rocket Center). We should have had a good eclipse show at our house - not full totality, but still well worth seeing; but it decided to be totally overcast that day, so we got nothing.

Which reminds me that I still haven't mailed off my leftover eclipse glasses to Astronomers Without Borders. If you or any of your readers have unneeded eclipse-viewing glasses that they're wondering what to do with, you can donate them by mailing them to:
AWB Eclipse Glasses Donation Program Explore Scientific
1010 S. 48th Street
Springdale, AR 72762

#

Amy Harlib, brithistorian at gmail dot com **18 December 2017**

Very glad to read the Total Solar Eclipse Report and the 50th High School Reunion Report. I watched the eclipse on my computer, which is nothing like experiencing it live.

Loved the Kritter Corner photos and the astronomy photos too.

Happy you also loved *Victoria and Abdul* and *Blade Runner 2049*.

Other films I enjoyed recently:
Human Flow, stunning documentary by Chinese dissident artist Ai Wei-wei, tracking human refugee migrations around the world in the past few years.

Wonderstruck, lovely drama about 2 deaf children 50 years apart who are connected in a very interesting way.
Thor: Ragnarok, delightful superhero romp – the best of the Thor trilogy.
The Breadwinner, beautiful animated story about a young girl in 2001 Kabul, Afghanistan, who must disguise herself as a boy to go out and help support her family when the father gets unjustly jailed.
Mudbound, gut-wrenching, powerful drama about the intertwined lives of a black family and a white family in rural Mississippi right after World War 2 and the tragic consequences of systemic racism.
Coco, Pixar's latest animated feature about a Mexican boy who enters the Land of the Dead on Dia de Los Muertos to get the blessing of his ancestor to become a musician is a dazzling delight.
Justice League, DC's superhero team up is a decent romp that tries but doesn't quite reach the gonzo fun level of the Marvel output.
The Man Who Invented Christmas, very entertaining and visually striking historical drama about how Charles Dickens wrote his classic "A Christmas Carol" in 6 weeks in the 1840s.
Star Wars: The Last Jedi, a worthy 8th film in the monumental space opera franchise that offers lots of interesting character developments, but gives the Jedi such excessive Force powers it strains the suspension of disbelief.

December has been disappointing for me for lack of gigs, getting too few chances to perform my uniquely wacky holiday themed act: Yoga Yenta's Yuletide Yiddishe Yoga! Kosher Kontortion for Chanukah and Christmas! OY! So meshugah, you'll laugh till you plotz! To Klezmer Nutcracker music, lots of red and green sequins and Yiddish and holiday exclamations included.

Fiona the Fluff continues to do well. Sorry your kitties are having health issues! It's a natural part of aging unfortunately.

#

Richard Dengrove, richd22426 at aol dot com 20 December 2017

I am afraid I originally missed downloading *Purrsonal Mewsings* #60. For that moment, I was wary about downloading fifty pages. So now I'm late, I hope not too late. I finally decided, given my printer, fifty pages was nothing. So I downloaded it, read it, and wrote you my usual letter. What is my usual letter? I comment on a whole bunch of topics. I am afraid to miss a good comment. My comments used to all concern politics, but I have branched out.

For instance, I found a good comment hook in your account of a Westercon panel, July 1st, which commented on the science fiction Golden Age and changes in science fiction publishing. In particular the need to bypass the big publishing houses and publish more controversial, more innovative, and more enjoyable works. You believe the internet will change things. It already has. The short story, long shrunken to amateur and vanity publishing, has staged a come back. I have downloaded several short story anthologies from the web. The problem is to get the message out; so more people will download

short story anthologies and internet story magazines. All manner of awful and worthless things have been transmitted via the internet. Why not for story telling?

Also, at Westercon was John Hertz's, July 3rd discussion of H.G. Wells's *Time Machine*. I don't know what case he made for the novel being relevant. It seemed to me that Wells's Eloi and Morlocks were caricatures of the British class system, where the Eloi, the aristocracy, lived beautiful but purposeless lives; and, below the surface, the Morlocks did the work. Of course, periodically, the Morlocks roamed the Earth and ate Eloi. Whatever the relevance, all the attempts at filming *The Time Machine* I have seen have soft pedaled the class system. In fact, we have heard very little about it in politics recently. Not even the American class system lite.

((The relevance of *The Time Machine* is as commentary on today's American society, where 1% hold most of the wealth.))

Let's go from a con report to a book review of a re-reading of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. You wonder why man pulled back in his horns and retreated from space exploration and settlement. If I remember correctly, the Moon landing was inspired by the Cold War and our need to beat the Russians. The Cold War is no more, however. I suspect we will have to wait until space travel gets cheap enough for industry to do it; or, like, with the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s, industry gets the Federal government to do it.

Now we'll go from the books reports to the letters. There, Jacky Boykin, tells of how two linguists discussed teaching languages to people who know the grammar but not the vocabulary. I suspect vocabulary is more important in learning languages. However, grammar is certainly important. Not for everyone, though. I knew one Hispanic woman in my Toastmasters' club who pronounced English perfectly but had a problem with the sequence of words, i.e., grammar. For instance, she placed a lot of adjectives after nouns, like in Spanish, when we would place them before. Also, she placed a lot of verbs before nouns.

Another letter discussed something more physical. Amy Harlib discussed being a contortionist in, I guess, her fifties. I imagine it was just common sense not to be a contortionist after surgery; and she was practicing common sense. I wish her luck in remaining contortionist now that her right hip has been recovering. I am sure she knows a lot more about what she is doing than I will ever know. Still, I get the feeling a "good luck" is in order. Who knows what you can do and what you can't. At seventy-two, I still do exercises. Nothing heroic, not like Amy. Still, I can't tell what aches and pains will arise. I credit my exercise with avoiding big problems with arthritis. However, I never know when it, and other maladies, will turn on me.

Another letter is more personal. Personal not as in a single person or small group, but perhaps personal for all of fandom. I may as well answer a question Sheryl Birkhead posed: how is Steve Stiles doing? When I saw him at CapClave this year, he looked OK. I didn't come up to him and ask him. However, when I observed him from afar, there didn't seem to be any problems.

This time I'm making a comment on faanish folklore mentioned in a letter rather than on a fan. Lloyd Penney says he and his wife Yvonne drank kraken rum and said "Smoooth!!" The only time I heard about smoooth!! being used was by Wilson Tucker and fellow fans when they drank Jim Beam whiskey. Maybe the tradition has spread to other alcoholic beverages.

I guess, literally with a good shot, I'm ending my letter. Let us see what subjects I have discussed: the future of publishing, Wells's *Time Machine*, the '60s space race, languages, contortions, Steve Stiles, and "Smoooth!!" Thus, I hope this gives you a birdseye view of a letter with probably too many topics.

#

Timothy Lane, timothylane51 at gmail dot com 21 December 2017

Very interesting issue. As usual, I liked the photographs; but I found your trip report of the August trip to see the solar eclipse, attend Bubonicon, and more especially interesting. My friend Joseph Major, who I believe is one of your recipients, also visited Hopkinsville to see it; but of course it's only a few hours from Louisville, and he was visiting family as well.

I was also impressed by how many tastes for tourist attractions we share. It especially reminded me of our long trip (but not as long as yours, since we didn't have that much vacation time) to the San Antonio worldcon. Elizabeth and I share a taste for zoos and visited the Fort Worth zoo and the Dallas and Chattanooga aquariums (aquaria?) on that trip (as well as many others on other trips). We also visited the Johnson Space Center and the NASA facility in Huntsville on that same trip (arriving in Huntsville late at night just like you did, having started the day by touring the Vicksburg battlefield (we also visited the Shiloh and Chickamauga battlefields on that trip).

((Retirement is nice that way. There's no limit to vacation time.))

We've also visited the Stone's River battlefield around twenty years ago, as well as Fort Rosecrans (also in Murfreesboro). In between we had lunch at a Hardee's, which was appropriate. Unfortunately, neither of us is physically up to such things anymore.

((We're still able to do quite a bit of travelling, and we'll keep at it until we are no longer able.))

One thing I'll also mention that you might find interesting is state capitols. They can be very interesting, especially when there's a lot of good (and usually very symbolic) art in key places.

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Marcia Meldrum, Center for Social Medicine and the Humanities, UCLA Semel Institute, 760 Westwood Plaza; mlynnmel at gmail dot com
22 December 2017

Thanks so much; great photographs!

Interesting to hear about your eclipse trip and also your high school reunion. Do you realize we've known each other for fifty years? Amazing.

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Joy V. Smith, pagadan at aol dot com **22 December 2017**

Wow! That was a really ground-covering journey--or two!! Sounds like a lot of fun, and you got to see the eclipse. And doesn't that make for an impressive cover photo! Thank you also for sharing the photos from the zoo and our universe and everyone.

I enjoyed the reviews, especially the one of *Victoria and Abdul*. Now I understand why I never heard of him before. Ah, I didn't know there was a sequel to *A Dog's Purpose*. I'll keep my eyes open for *A Dog's Journey*.

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Robert Kennedy, robertk at cipcug dot org **9 January 2018**

Your coverages of Local Outings, the Eclipse Trip Report, and the Kritter Korner were much appreciated. Especially the fine photos.

The High School Reunion Trip Report was also appreciated. I have never heard from my high school since I graduated a very long time ago. After college and serving a little over two years in the navy, I applied for a job at the company where I ended up working 35 years and retiring. Before my being hired, the company did an investigation of me. When the investigating company went to my high school, they could not find a record of me even though some of the employees seemed to remember me. It was all rather strange since my mother was a librarian at the school. In any event, I have no interest in attending a high school reunion.

I noticed that you had some minor problems at a Denny's. I have had to eat at a Denny's a few times, was never impressed, and had at least one poor meal.

* * *

* Closing Remarks

Deadline for next issue will be approximately 17 February 2018.

Laurraine

9 January 2018