

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

The *Delta Queen* was in Louisville for the last time on October 24. A 1966 law made her illegal. She has had exemptions since then but time finally ran out. I walked alongside her for the last time. Memories came fast, myself as a child running down the river bank at the sound of her calliope. I wiped away tears at the thought that no other child would ever get to do that.

Last week I was barely sleeping because of the heat. This week I have turned the heater on. Fall has come in a rush. The times are changing. The air is now crisp and beautifully cool. No more sweltering heat when I go out but nice brisk bracing air.

— Lisa

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Joe's Birthday is **December 24, 2008**
Christmas is **December 25, 2008**

The 53rd Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 1, 2008** at Freehold Raceway in Freehold, NJ. Art Official was the winner.

The 63rd Running of the Little Brown Jug (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 18, 2008** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, OH. Shadow Play was the winner, in spite of a hoof separation.

The 52nd Running of the Messenger Stakes (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **October 25, 2008** at Yonkers Raceway. Somebeachsomewhere was the winner.

Printed on December 8, 2008

Deadline is **February 1, 2009**

WARNING!

For some of you, this will be the **last** issue — unless you subscribe, write, or otherwise indicate your interest.

Reviewer's Notes

When I was moving into my current office (they've canceled a plan to move me again, which would have been inconvenient and to a still smaller office, but one with its own toilet) I found an old copy of *PC Magazine*. It was from 1990, but in computer talk, that's old.

There was an ad in the back pages from a company that sold hard drives. They had one drive that was huge. It was gigantic. It was bigger than any single computer guy would ever need. It was a drive for the whole enterprise, or maybe even the entire death star . . . well it had a vast capacity. And cost appropriately: \$4999.95.

For the unimaginable capacity of **one Gigabyte**.

Nowadays you can't get a hard drive that **small**, and flash drives of that capacity are less than \$10.

This invalidates the one line from the Evil Overlord's List of padding out all crucial data files to 1.45 MB (just too large to fit on a standard 3.5" floppy). Which is why so much cyberpunk fiction is now absurd; it's out of date. (I wrote a satire of this which Guy Lillian published in *Challenger* but no one seems to have cared.)

Meanwhile, the mayor has addressed a budget shortfall by furloughing all the city employees for three days: December 26, January 2, and May 1 (Kentucky Oaks day). It's annoying, but having to put up with layoffs is worse. The last time we had to plan for layoffs, I had to prepare the new organization chart. I had hoped they wouldn't make me cut myself off, but then they could have been planning to do it anyway.

Happy New Year.

— JTM

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



The Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America have named the Author Emeritus, except that it's an "Emerita", for 2009 already: **M. J. [Mary Jane] Engh**. Who is known primarily for one book, *Arslan*, which I found neither plausible nor particularly likeable.

Locus reports the following circulations:

<i>Analog</i>	27,399
<i>Asimov's</i>	17,581
<i>F&SF</i>	16,489

When I first got *Analog*, back in 1969, the circulation was over 100k.

No problem, everything's migrating to the Net anyway, dead-tree fiction is over and done with. Except there goes the nurturing, the feedback, and the community. Not to mention the problem of being able to find the new Heinlein amid ten thousand stories about Harry, Spock, Buffy, Sookie, and Mary Sue.

A prominent supporter of nuclear power died in September. He had come to this position, so much against the general attitude of his social milieu, after befriending Richard Rhodes, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (1988) [it had to do with a job he was doing at the time], then going on to meet with other nuclear researchers. Having done so, he began a course of producing positive, if low-keyed, publicity. One surprisingly unnoticed more open statement had to do with his opposition to the proposed closing of the Indian Point Nuclear Station, which was close to his home. He bucked the Kennedys!

You don't think of him this way, however, because this was **Paul Newman**. What we had here was a failure to communicate.

I recently reread Lawrence David Kusche's *The Disappearance of Flight 19* (1980). What struck me was that he set out the pieces of his explanation and left it to a careful reading to dig them out. Lieutenant Charles Carroll Taylor, the commander of the unfortunate training exercise, had just been transferred from Key West to Fort Lauderdale. The one cross-bearing on the flight, poor though it was, showed that they were flying north, parallel to the coast. If

they had got lost flying out of Key West, flying north was the way for them to reach land.

And one of the things sent back to Taylor's family in the box of his property was — a watch. He may have had two watches, but, with no time reference, it would be dreadfully easy to get disoriented. Especially since he seemed to have been thinking that he was flying out of Key West.

Yes, it would have been nice if they had been saved by the flying saucerians for return to the Devil's Tower, but reality so often disappoints.

The Shackleton Centenary Expedition set out for the Pole from Scott Station on Ross Island on **November 13, 2008**. Led by Henry Worsley (who says he has been trying to find a link to Frank Worsley of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (*Endurance*)) with Will Gow (an in-law of Shackleton) and Henry Adams (great-grandson of Sir Jameson Boyd Adams, second-in-command of the British Antarctic Expedition (*Nimrod*)), the Ice Team will head south. At 88° 23' S, 97 geographic miles from the Pole, the point at which Shackleton was forced to turn back, they will be joined by Patrick Bergel (a great-grandson of Shackleton), Tim Fright (a great-great-nephew of Frank Wild, who was with Shackleton, Adams, and Dr. Eric Marshall on the original trip), David Cornell (another great-grandson of Jameson Adams), and Andy Ledger (not a descendant, but he won a contest). The two teams will make the last short stretch to the Pole together.

<http://www.shackletoncentenary.org>

Ruth S. Downie's second book of C. Petronius Ruso, *Ruso and the Demented Doctor*, has been released here as *Terra Incognita: A Novel of the Roman Empire* (Bloomsbury USA; 2008; ISBN 978-1596912328; \$23.95). Sent to the frontier with a detachment of the Twentieth Legion, Ruso finds himself pitchforked into a murder investigation when a local centurion is beheaded by natives. His investigation would be hard enough, but he is concurrently burdened by an insane colleague, his late father's staggering debts, and why his slave girl is running off for home. Which in turn brings in dire Briton traditions...

MONARCHIST NEWS

On **November 6, 2008**, **Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck** was crowned Druk Gyalpo ("Dragon King") of Bhutan. His Majesty succeeded to the throne on **December 14, 2006** when his father, King **Jigme Singye Wangchuck**, abdicated.

The King is an alumnus of Phillips Academy and of Magdalen College, Oxford. He is not married; the heir is currently his brother Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck.

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Michael Crichton** on **November 4, 2008**. John Michael Crichton was born in Chicago on **October 23, 1942**, graduating from Harvard in 1964 and Harvard medical school in 1969. Writing proved more profitable, and he produced a line of science-fictional thrillers beginning with *The Andromeda Strain* (1969), along with a number of less so works under the pseudonyms of "John Lange" (thus causing confusion with Professor John Frederick Lange, who writes under the pseudonym of "John Norman") and "Jeffrey Hudson", both subtle references to his height (6' 9"). His creations included the "Jurassic Park" movies, the TV show "ER", and *Electronic Life* (1983), a book on how to program in BASIC.

AND HERE'S TO YOU, MR. ACKERMAN...

By Johnny Carruthers
<http://www.xanga.com/janusfiles>

I knew this day would eventually come. We thought it happened last month, but that turned out to be a false alarm. I was hoping it was still a few more years away, but sadly, that was not to be the case. And this time, it is not a false alarm.

Forrest J Ackerman died Thursday, December 4, 2008. He had just celebrated his 92nd birthday last month.

All of us who call ourselves fans of science fiction and fantasy owe an incalculable debt to the man known as "Forry," "4SJ," and "4E," among other nicknames. Even if he never existed, SF fandom would probably exist... but it would be a much poorer place, indeed. For his contributions permeate every corner of the microcosm.

What did he do? "What didn't he do?" would be a more accurate question. I think he did just a little bit of everything.

I suppose first and foremost, he was a reader. I remember reading an interview with Forry many years ago, and he talked about how he had seen the first issue of *Amazing Stories* on the newsstands back in 1926, and how it called to him to buy that magazine. He did, and he was hooked.

From being a reader, it was just one step to becoming a collector. From all accounts, his "Ackermansion" held one of the largest collections of books, magazines, and other SF memorabilia. His collection included one of the three capes that Bela Lugosi wore as Dracula. (Lugosi was buried in one, and I have no idea what happened to the third.) He also had a ring that Lugosi wore when playing Dracula, and I saw him wearing it a number of times at conventions. From what I've heard, though, the piece in his collection that he prized the most was a model of the automaton from the 1926 movie *Metropolis*, which was his all-time favorite movie.

A few years ago, Forry began selling off some of his massive collection on Ebay. I was fortunate enough to be the high bidder on several of those auctions. I probably don't have anything that could be considered major, but I like knowing that I have something that was

once part of the Ackermansion. And I really hope that what remains of his collection finds a good home; preferably one where people will be able to appreciate it.

Forry was one of the organizers of chapter number four of the Science Fiction League, which eventually became the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, the world's oldest science fiction club. He was also one of the organizers of the LA area's first Worldcon, Pacificon 1. According to the stories I've read, he worked so hard on putting it together that he collapsed just before the beginning of the convention, and missed seeing all of his hard work come to fruition.

At the very first Worldcon in 1939, Forry wore a costume from the movie *When Worlds Collide*. This started the tradition of hall costumes at conventions, which led to the masquerade competitions now held.

In the 1970s, Forry translated the long-running German series *Perry Rhodan*, and gave it a new audience here in the US. I never got into *Perry Rhodan*, but I do remember seeing over 100 *Perry Rhodan* books, so there must have been some degree of popularity for the series.

He coined the term "sci-fi." The proper usage of the term is to refer to science fiction movies and TV. Books and magazines, on the other hand, are more properly called SF. Thus, Robert Heinlein's book *Starship Troopers* is SF, while the movie made from that novel is sci-fi.

Forry was a Hugo winner. In fact, he was one of the very first winners of the Hugo Awards, back in 1953. He won a Hugo as "Number 1 Fan Personality," a category that has never been repeated. (I suspect that if other Worldcon committees had presented an award in that category, he would have won it more than a few times.) I have even heard him referred to as having won the very first Hugo Award, which I would take to mean that "Number 1 Fan Personality" was the first category presented at the banquet in 1953.

But I suspect that Forry's greatest contribution to SF fandom was as the editor of *Famous Monsters Of Filmland*. I can remember reading any number of interviews with directors over the years who have said that one of their inspirations for becoming a director was reading *Famous Monsters*. This group includes George Lucas and Steven Spielberg.

I had the fortune to meet Forry several times at various conventions. The first time was at my first Worldcon, Magicon (Orlando, 1992). I got his autograph then, and he signed it "Beast Witches, Forrest J Ackerman."

In 1994, Forry was the Guest Of Honor at Louisville's convention, Rivercon. He mentioned that this was the first time he had ever been the main GOH at a convention. He had been a guest at countless conventions before then, but it was always as the Fan Guest Of Honor. What I remember most about that Rivercon was running a slide projector for him during a talk he gave. Just before the talk began, he handed me the box of slides, told me where to start loading the projector, and said that they were ready to go. I took him at his word, and

loaded them into the projector just they were in the box.

As everyone in the room learned sometime in the middle of the talk, some of the slides had apparently been flipped upside down the last time they were put back into the box. I had to scramble to get the slides oriented correctly, and while I was at it, double-check the remaining slides. While I was doing so, Forry kept the audience entertained with other stories unrelated to the slides. When I returned the slides to Forry after the talk, I was getting ready to apologize for not checking the slides before putting them into the projector. Before I could do so, Forry apologized for handing me the slides without checking them first.

I've been trying to think of the right way to describe Forry. What I've said here only scratches the surface of everything he did during his life. While it may be a cliché, maybe the best way to describe him is to say that he was the right person in the right place at the birth of modern science fiction.

I know I haven't done justice to Forry in this short tribute. To give you more of an idea of what fandom has lost, click on any of the links below:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forrest_J_Ackerman

<http://www.sfga.org/news/2008/fackerman.htm>

<http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/index.php?category=0&id=62610&type=0>

FORREST J ACKERMAN

November 24, 1916 —

December 4, 2008

BAN THE BOMB

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE SPY IN THE OINTMENT
by Donald E. Westlake (1966)

The pages of *PITFCS* (*Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, Theodore R. Cogswell's remarkable "fanzine for pros", available in a single volume from Advent:Publishers) contain a long and weary discussion by this author of how he's getting out of that skiffy stuff when the getting is good, and so is everyone else, to which the "everyone else" replied that no, they weren't. I didn't know about it at the time, but it wasn't that much longer after this exchange of correspondence that I read this book — yes, when I was in seventh grade. It struck me at the time as being pretty funny. Now, in addition, I can see Westlake's weaknesses.

The opening scene is enough to make the reader think that perhaps Westlake hadn't got as far from that skiffy stuff as he said he was: "I was trying to fix the damn mimeograph machine when the doorbell rang." [Page 3]

The mimeo is not for a fanzine; the narrator,

J. Eugene Raxford, chairman of the Citizens' Independence Union (all seventeen of them, and twelve inactive at that), is preparing yet another pacifist flyer. He suffers from a constraint not endured by most faneds, for he is under constant surveillance by the FBI. You see, an organization called the World Citizens' Independence Union had conducted some bombing operations, one of which led to the demise of the entire membership. (Inspiring the Weathermen?) A list dropped the "W" from "WCIU" and hence, the FBI is engaged in a constant surveillance of this dangerous group.

This being a Westlake novel, the surveillance is constant but incompetent. Indeed, the majority of the characters and organizations in this work are charmingly eccentric and comically incompetent; it comes across as a blending of the styles of Harry Harrison and Avram Davidson.

The doorbell was not announcing a G-Man, a Member (as Raxford refers to the composition of his devoted band), or anything like that. It's a man trying to sell him something; weapons, he implies. He drops some casual hints, arranges a further meeting, and leaves. Shortly thereafter, some incompetent (but uncharming) FBI men arrive, demand that Raxford identify a photo that resembles a less well defined inkblot, show themselves to be somewhat out of touch, and are about to leave when the only other really active Member of the CIU turns up.

Occasionally, Westlake could pull off a really good line, such as: "But alas, this charming head is hollow. Inside, the winds blow back and forth from ear to ear uninterrupted by more than the smallest nodule of brain." [Page 20] And Raxford is saying this about his benefactor and lover, Angela Ten Eyck, a trust-fund radical, the new arrival.

Having shaken off the G-Men, out of curiosity, Raxford and Angela go to the meeting, which turns out to be an Avram Davidson-style assembly of extremely fringe and totally outré radicals. Even Raxford notices that. Except for one attendee: Angela's brother, Tyrone Ten Eyck, heretofore thought to be out of the country in hostile terrain.

At this point, the novel runs into its problem. Tyrone has grandiose plans, ones at a level more associated with James Bond villains, except he lacks their particular grotesquerie. His grotesquerie is far more plausible. Westlake, somehow, created a terrifying depiction of a sociopath, a Ted Bundy with a bigger purpose, and the wit, will, and means to carry it out. This is remarkably at variance with everything and everyone else in the novel.

Raxford finds himself having to cooperate with the Feds to stop this. He is an authentic pacifist, and he finds himself among violence.

The plot progresses with this uncomfortable dichotomy. Tyrone is portrayed as utterly charming and repellent, a moral void, while around him swirl these comic lunatics. That the novel holds together at all is remarkable.

Having reread it now, I concluded that Westlake ran into a problem of the sort that nowadays I associate more with Connie Willis. (A generation ago I would have imagined an

episode of "Car 54, Where Are You?" about the two hapless cops having to deal with a man driving a truck bomb up to a government building, say.) He set out to write a novel about a man facing a fundamental moral problem, a pacifist in circumstances where violence was the only solution to his problem, and by paradox, the only available means to accomplish his goals, to preserve peace. The only methods Westlake had for explicating this, his habitual ways of writing, of characterization, of setting, of plot, were comic — eccentric incompetents falling over each other in the accomplishment of their stated goal. The tools don't match the use they are put to.

This would be a topic more suitable to Robert Bloch or perhaps Terry Pratchett; because of their realization of human evil and their skill at wit. Westlake has written an amusing and thought-provoking work here, but one not quite what it could be.

SUBMARINE!

Commentary by Joseph T Major
on the *Run Silent Run Deep* Trilogy
by Edward L. Beach, Jr.

Edward Latimer Beach, Jr. (1918-2002) was from a naval family; his father (Edward Latimer Beach, Sr., of course) had been captain of USS *New York* (BB-34), flagship of the U.S. 6th Battle Squadron of the British Grand Fleet, among other commands. The career of the elder Beach had been marred by the loss of his ship USS *Memphis* in a tidal wave while moored in the harbor at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Captain Beach, Sr. also wrote children's books, as well as an autobiography which was eventually edited and published by his oldest son. (For those who like chilling attachments, his second wife, the mother of his children, was from the Dominican Republic; her name was Alice Fouché and she claimed a relationship to Joseph Fouché, Duc d'Ortrante, the organizer of the Thermidorian Revolt against Robespierre and Napoleon's secret police chief.)

Edward L. Beach, Jr. attended the U.S. Naval Academy, one is tempted to say inevitably, and graduated in 1939, second in his class. He served briefly in surface ships, including USS *Lea* (DD-118) a Wilkes-class destroyer of the same class as USS *Ward* and HMS *Campbeltown* (ex-USS *Buchanan*) [and also the very real, if fictionally used, USS *Walker* and USS *Mahan* of the *Destroyermen* series] before going into submarines.

He served on the USS *Trigger* (SS-237), which had an uneventful patrol during the Battle of Midway and several more thereafter, including one into the Bungo Suido in the seas surrounding Japan. Beach was then transferred to the USS *Tirante* (SS-420), under Commander George L. Street III. During the *Tirante*'s very first war patrol, Commander Street carried out daring attacks on Japanese ships in the Yellow Sea that won him the Medal of Honor, with other awards for his subordinates, including the Navy Cross for his Executive Officer, Lieutenant Beach, and the Presidential Unit

Citation for the ship.

After the war, Beach had shore duty as an aide and sea duty commanding submarines, including the ill-fated USS *Trigger* (SS-564), named after his first ship, a casualty of war. The *Trigger* was first of a class of submarines built in emulation of the German Type XXI submarines, with streamlined configuration and compact engines. The new engines did not work out (some would put it that they were utter disasters) and were soon replaced. On the first post-shakedown cruise, Beach took the *Trigger* under the Arctic ice pack in cooperation with the USS *Nautilus* (SSN-571) during that boat's first excursion under the polar ice.

This was followed by his command of the USS *Triton* (SSRN-586) during her undersea circumnavigation. (The *Triton* was designed as a radar picket submarine, but that role soon became superfluous, and the boat was eventually retired in 1969, the first nuclear powered submarine to be laid up.) Beach went on to serve as a submarine squadron commander, instructor at the Naval War College, and in the Chief of Naval Operations' office before retiring in 1966. Besides the awards mentioned above, he had the Silver Star with a repeat award, the Bronze Star (with combat "V") with a repeat award, two other Presidential Unit Citations (for the *Tirante* and the *Triton*), and the Legion of Merit (for the cruise of the *Triton*), among others.

Oh, and like his father, he wrote.

Beach began his literary career with the book *Submarine!* (1952), recounting incidents in the undersea war, including some of his own. Later nonfiction works included *Around the World Submerged* (1962), the story of the voyage of the *Triton*; *The Wreck of the Memphis* (1966), the story of the loss of his father's ship; and *Scapegoats: A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor* (1995). He also wrote some fiction.

Run Silent, Run Deep (1955) is the narrative of Commander Edward G. "Rich" Richardson, on his experiences in the war. A bland memorandum printed before the text explains that Commander Richardson has been awarded the Medal of Honor for one outstanding patrol, and was asked to provide a stirring story to help sell War Bonds. The story was not what they were looking for, apparently.

Richardson begins his story in the spring of 1941, where he and a few others are struggling to reactivate a mothballed submarine, the *S-16*, which had been decommissioned in 1924 and was in poor shape. (The real *S-16* (SS-121) had been decommissioned in 1935 and recommissioned in December of 1940.)

In this peacetime navy, one of the conflicts of the novel begins between Richardson and his fellow officer Jim Bledsoe. Bledsoe has been trying to qualify for command, but fails to do so. Since Richardson has passed the test, and Bledsoe has more time in submarines, Bledsoe feels put out.

Then the U.S. is at war, and the game becomes serious. At least they're getting a new assignment; the *S-16* is being given to the Free Polish Navy, and the crew will be transferred to

a new submarine, the USS *Walrus* (The real *S-16* operated in the Atlantic until 1944 and was scuttled off Key West in 1945. There was no real USS *Walrus*).

Rich goes on to describe the working-up of the *Walrus* and her passage to the Pacific. He participates in several patrols, running into the problems of the submarine service as they mobilize and strike back at the foe. Rich rises to command of the *Walrus*, then is sidelined due to a broken leg (from a Japanese 120-mm shell [he says four-inch, but Japanese destroyers mounted 4.7" guns]).

Jim Bledsoe finally gets his chance, and proceeds to become a submarine ace . . . only to be killed, his submarine lost in the Bungo Suido. Already, one mentor and friend of Rich has died there, and they have identified the man responsible, a poacher turned hunter, *kaigun tai-sa* (Captain) Tateo Nakame of the Imperial Japanese Navy, a former submarine officer, called "Bungo Pete". (The British commander in the Battle of the Atlantic, Admiral Sir Max Horton, was a WWI submarine commander.)

One of the banes of the submarine campaign was the torpedoes that didn't work. This is a classic story of bureaucracy and "blip krieg"; the US Navy's Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd) had developed a new torpedo exploder, but had tested it more in theory than in actuality. When torpedoes failed to explode in use, the BuOrd insisted that it was a matter of incompetent use. The scenes describing the field testing that should have already been made don't quite qualify as thrilling naval adventure; what they show is what needs to be done to have a thrilling naval adventure.

Once Rich is passed as fit for duty, he gets command of a submarine, the USS *Eel* (there was a real USS *Eel* (SS-354) which was canceled in 1944 without being laid down) and, with his success in the torpedo work, he's owed a favor, so he gets assigned to the Bungo Suido. There, he works out how Nakame had detected the American submarines, sets up a deception operation, and in a ghastly battle eliminates the problem once and for all, if in a fashion some might find contrary to the Geneva Convention.

But then, the *Eel* cannot return to base. The boat's cruise is prolonged in order to be an air rescue craft, but even there, Rich's hands-on style leaves him at one point in a life raft with two shot-down flyers, while the *Eel* is submerged beneath them. It's a tribute to unit cohesion, but perhaps a bit too dedicated.

And speaking of dedication . . . a subplot involves Bledsoe's first girlfriend, then wife, finally widow, to whom Rich is also attracted. The story ends with the implication that he is going off to propose to her.

Beach pulled out all the stops in the technical arena. He describes the activities on a submarine with all the detail of someone who had done this dozens of times if not hundreds and had kept this ordinary set of events fresh in mind. Whether it is merely the procedure for diving or a more complicated method for "spoofing" Bungo Pete Nakame, Beach describes what the submarine is doing and what all the relevant crew members are doing. It can

overwhelm some readers.

(Perhaps not surprisingly, Beach did not like the movie (1958); he felt that they had taken his title and put a different movie beneath it. This is the sort of observation that Mike Resnick has made. Others noted that Clark Gable (Richardson) and Burt Lancaster (Bledsoe) were a bit older than submarine officers were by that time in the war. It was a young man's game; older commanders couldn't take the stress.)

In the last chapter, Richardson says, "We made three more patrols in the *Eel* and sank several more Japanese ships in the first two" [*Run Silent Run Deep* Page 339]. Seventeen years later, Beach wrote the story of one of those patrols, *Dust On The Sea* (1972).

This book picks up at the end of the last patrol in *Run Silent Run Deep*; the *Eel* is returning to Pearl Harbor. (However, *Run Silent Run Deep* is first-person narrative; this is third-person.) Richardson is still bothered by the events of the death of Bungo Pete Nakame.

With that threat ended, he encounters a new one. The U.S. Navy has decided to emulate the *Ubootwaffe* and send their submarines to sea in wolfpacks; three boats with a captain in overall command. The *Eel* will, therefore, be carrying the wolfpack commander, Richardson's former commander, Captain Joseph "Joe" Blunt (a minor but not insignificant character in the previous book).

This patrol is not quite like the previous ones, and it's not just the command structure. The mission briefing they had mentioned that the Japanese had begun using small trawlers as patrol boats. Being swept off the bridge again when the *Eel* has to submerge, Richardson is rescued by one of those boats, which is commanded by an outright sadist. He kills the petty officer captured along with Richardson as an example. (He's also a Berkeley grad.)

The subsequent rescue of Richardson and the destruction of his abuser seem just a bit contrived. He reached out of a porthole and painted "EEL" on the side of the boat. This gives Richardson an opportunity to contrast this officer with Nakame, who was a good man and a patriotic officer, for all that Richardson and his fellow officers hated the man.

But having been rescued, he finds that all is not well on board the *Eel*. Captain Blunt is deteriorating mentally. Richardson continues the patrol, worrying if his commanding officer will start quarreling about the coconuts (since *The Caine Mutiny* hasn't been written yet, it can't be strawberries).

Then the problem is solved, more or less, when Blunt dies, while a firefight is going on. It turns out he had a brain tumor, which explains the situation. (One of the men killed in the battle is a petty officer named "Quin". Edward L. Beach, Sr.'s first wife was Lucie Adelaide Quin. You have to get names from somewhere.) And so, covering for officers on both sides whose reputations shouldn't be damaging their respective service, Richardson takes the *Eel* back to harbor, having fought to her utmost.

The question of *Glory Road* (1963; NHOL G.148) was, "What happens to the hero after the adventure is done?" Beach set one answer to

this in *Cold Is the Sea* (1978). It begins with the hero sitting in a big concrete building, doing often meaningless work. Under such Dilbertian circumstances, Oscar Gordon would have clapped on the Lady Vivamus, stormed out the door, and gone off to meet Rufo for a trip down the Glory Road. Rich Richardson's ventures require a different level of equipment; Oscar merely used the Gates, he didn't have to learn how to operate them.

Freedom is coming for Rich, though, he is being named to command a submarine squadron. Then one little stymie comes up; he isn't scheduled for nuclear training school. He has to be nuclear-qualified to be really effective.

At the last minute the guardian of the gate reverses himself, again, in a typical for him pattern. Heretofore, Beach only described archetypes; he admitted that many of the exploits of the *Walrus* and the *Eel* were based on actual naval action, but none of his characters were renamed real people (or as James Blish put it, the sort of novel that becomes clear once the reader realizes that the character "Horace Mills FitzCampbell" is actually Henry R. Luce).

In this case, the cover is profoundly scant, and there may have been an element of legal protection involved. "Vice-Admiral Martin Brighting" is the driven, eccentric, brilliant, bizarre Hyman G. Rickover. No Rickovers were harmed in the writing of this novel, fortunately. In the next few chapters, Brighting jerks around Richardson, being aggressively neocratic, denying and granting training, manipulating the conditions of said training, being arbitrary and cranky. It is all too often easy to make a brilliant, great, innovative leader also suave and charming; to have him be petty, boorish, and manipulative and still be great is realistic, if not quite literary. Beach's writing skills improved over the years.

Rich survives the disasters of training, some of them actual disasters. One suspects that if Brighting had known about the *Kobayashi Maru* he would have put that in as well. This is followed by a farewell to the *Eel*, which like the *S-16* (remember her?) has been laid up, and is now being transferred to a foreign navy, in this case the Brazilians. There is an interesting scene of incomprehension during the towing of the *Eel* to the shipyard. Then, Rich goes off to New London to take command of his submarine squadron.

There is a problem. It begins as a hypothetical matter, so to speak: how can a submarine be towed if it's not possible to surface to rig tow lines? They have devised a way, and it turns out to be necessary.

The ballistic missile submarine USS *William B. Cushing* has collided with an unidentified (but presumably Soviet) submarine and been disabled. The propeller and shaft are damaged and the auxiliary maneuvering unit has been torn off, so the *Cushing* can go up and down, and drift with the current, but not move. Oh yes, and the ship is under the Arctic ice pack.

An added piquancy is that the captain of the *Cushing* is Richardson's former executive officer on the *Eel*, Keith Leone, one of the

fellow survivors of the training. (Polaris missile submarines were named after prominent Americans. William Barker Cushing was a Civil War navy officer who sank the CSS *Albemarle* with a spar torpedo, in the course of an extremely adventurous naval career. There have been five ships named after him but they have all been destroyers, the last (DD-985) launched in 1978.)

Rich and the third survivor of the special training course, Buck Williams (also an officer of the *Eel*; small Navy, ain't it?) head north on the nuclear submarine USS *Manta* (the real USS *Manta* (SS-299) was a conventional submarine that made two war patrols and was disposed of as a target in 1969) to rescue the *Cushing*. Because the *Manta* has two propellers and shafts, she can and does have a aft torpedo room, and so can be rigged for underwater towing.

Towing the *Cushing* has problems. It seems that the Soviet submarine is still in the area, and is hostile. Also, fitted with a jamming device that makes controlled torpedoes nonfunctional. (Here we may be getting into science fiction; such a device was certainly speculative then.) The subsequent combat is an episode in cold war grown hot, yet unable to be recognized, ending with Rich thinking in the old ways. One suspects if he had been facing Kirk in *The Wrath of Khan* ("The Wrath of Rich"?) he wouldn't have made the mistake Khan Noonian Singh made . . .

But in the course of the battle, the *Cushing* has been torpedoed, and is slowly sinking. The rescue of the crew is quite hair-raising, and very much controlled by the circumstances . . . including the tragic and excruciating ending.

And then, Rich has to deal with the reason why the Soviet Navy had stationed a submarine there in the first place. Sir Hubert Wilkins could have warned them about this.

The background plot deals with Rich's wife, Laura, Jim Bledsoe's widow. Indeed, there are a multitude of connections here to the previous books and the entanglements therein. Rich's and Laura's son is named after Joe Blunt; and there are dire rumors that Rich and his crew frayed Blunt when he began acting up. And Laura has to deal with Joan Lastrada from *Run Silent Run Deep*, who among other things had been the lover of both her husbands. The strain on Navy wives then was considerable. One can sympathize with Eowyn's plaint to Aragorn about having to stay behind, albeit Laura didn't quite have the resource available to "Dernhelm".

There are one or two piquant points. One is perhaps coincidental, but striking; the diving officer on the *Manta* is named "Tom Clancy". This is, you will note, four years before *The Hunt for Red October* came out (1982). In the acknowledgements for *Dust on the Sea* Beach cites an assistant named "Clancy" but not "Tom Clancy" and it looks as if the Tuckerization here had a coincidental element.

The other is . . . strange. In a comment about Brighting's mercilessly elevated standards for performance and design, the observation comes up that:

... the new fleet submarines built during the early 1950s had been a hushed-up scandal; their diesels had been undependable, their torpedo control input erratic, their freshwater distilling apparatus farcically ineffective, their torpedo tubes a maintenance nightmare. The skipper of the first one to go to sea, an experienced wartime submariner, had furiously radioed in during her shakedown cruise that his new boat was a travesty not fit for service — with the shattering result that he was severely dressed down, nearly relieved of command, for excessive forthrightness.

— *Cold Is the Sea*, Page 35

Later on, while discussing the engineering matter again, Richardson and Buck Williams consider the case of the *Trigger*. Williams reiterates the points above, including the angry and reproached skipper, and Richardson says:

“Later on, a couple of that class had to be towed back to port, one all the way from England, so he was sure right,” said Richardson. “The Navy made it up to him with the *Triton*.”

— *Cold Is the Sea*, Page 208

You will remember that the officer who commanded the unfortunate *Trigger* and the globe-girdling *Triton* was Edward Latimer Beach, Jr. That’s right, the characters are talking about the author. And you thought *Six Characters In Search of an Author* [*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*] (1921) was surreal.

There is a delicate balance between overwhelming a reader with technical minutiae and leaving too much to be imagined. Dave Barry, for example, wrote a satire of techno-thrillers which I had thought was overblown until I read one which listed the model number of each item of equipment every time it was mentioned. Beach shows us how the commonplaces of his experience work; he knows he has to describe what he takes for granted in the course of his career.

Ever wonder what the conversation would have been like if Admiral Dan Gallery had invited Beach to dinner? And doubly so, if Nicholas Monsarrat (author of *The Cruel Sea* (1951) and many other novels, including the fantasy epic *The Master Mariner* (1978 & 1980)) had been there as well.

Run Silent Run Deep (movie)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0052151/>

THE FOX AND THE HEN

Review by Joseph T Major of
H. BEAM PIPER: A BIOGRAPHY
 by John F. Carr
 (McFarland & Company; 2008;
 ISBN 978-0-7864-3375-9; \$45.00)

It’s entirely possible to consider that the gentleman on the cover is carefully loading his

fine back-acting flintlock pistol with the intent of using it on the author of the book lying on the desk. Otherwise, given the significant recastings in continuity perpetrated in *Great Kings’ War* (1985), which just by the way happens to be by the author of this book, a sequel to a book written by his subject, the choice of cover art seems just a bit untoward.

After his untimely demise on November 5, 1964, for all that he was a lively fixture of East Coast fandom and prodom, H. Beam Piper became a figure of mystery. Not that he hadn’t been so before, so far as to retaining the mystery of what the “H.” stood for.

And now, his best or worst follower has gathered together the scattered shards of this life, creating a delineation of it that shows Piper more clearly than perhaps he indicated. Oh, the “H.” was for “Henry”.

Carr seems to have been able to find sources. He got hold of a collection of letters Piper had written, someone else’s unfinished biography of the man, and even Piper-written background work; a short guide to his Terro-Human Future history and his log of his sales.

Which in itself explains a lot. (More on this later.)

For every question explained, there is another posed. It appears that Piper spent twenty years writing before he ever got published. None of these earlier stories seem to exist; it would be interesting to see his earlier work, to see if the themes and techniques in it prefigure the work that did sell. (As *For Us, the Living* (2003; NHOL G.004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) prefigured the themes of early Heinlein and the habits of later Heinlein.)

Similarly, his life raises problems. Piper was expelled from high school and his only day job (so to speak) was as a night watchman for the Pennsylvania Railroad. This seems to have enabled him to read up to the level as which he could lecture at colleges. This seems to need an explanation. One other item, however, gives its own explanation; Piper loved to drink. I guess he was preparing to become a writer.

Even small items have their explanation. Four of Piper’s works are collaborations, but who is John J. McGuire, the collaborator? Carr found his children and got a story from Fred Pohl about the guy’s post-Piper life. He too was a boozier. Yet, there’s something more to the man. (Somehow, having OSS agents sneak behind German lines to rob banks [Page 85] sounds like the sort of thing they would try, and the sort of thing that would spectacularly fail.)

As for the decline that led to his end; it seems to have begun when the Pennsy closed its shop and Piper was laid off. Then, his marriage fell apart when his wife was transferred by her employer to Paris. His income then came from the sale of his gun collection and from his writings. Thus the importance of the sales log. Carr points out that the return on effort for almost all science fiction writers in that period was preposterously low. He does slip up when he talks about Heinlein “making most of his income from sales to *The Saturday Evening Post* and his juvenile science fiction novels.” [Page 119] Heinlein sold only four stories to the

SatEvePost, all in the forties, and Carr is referring to the mid-fifties.

This was why it was so important that in 1964, Piper made \$1197. He had difficulties with his markets, too. Avon had wrecked the sales of what it retitled *The Other Human Race* (1964) [originally, and now, titled *Fuzzy Sapiens* (1977)] and left Piper stuck with the now unsaleable manuscript of *Fuzzies and Other People* (1984). Then his agent died, and his new agent sold the novel *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* (1965) so it was out on the stands before the third part “Down Styphon!” was out in *Analog* (November 1965). Carr opines, probably correctly, that Campbell would not have liked this — thus perhaps ruining another market!

Carr also elucidates matters relating to other parts of Piper’s career. For example, he describes the cleaning-up of Piper’s apartment after his death. (If I haven’t made it clear, he shot himself.) It can be assumed, therefore, that the presumed detailed gazetteer of his TerroHuman Future History was not inadvertently disposed of then.

There are some other clarifications that deserve to have been done. For example, Piper’s relationship with his sometime wife, Elizabeth “Betty” Hirst, which turns out to have been far more complex than his bitter comment about her only marrying him for a French vacation would indicate. She was sent there as part of her job, and Piper’s inability to live there contributed to the breakup of the marriage.

Literary matters also come up. The origin of *First Cycle* (1982), for example. I had heard speculation about how much of it was Piper and how much was Michael Kurland. There was more than an outline, the original work was intended as a Twayne Triplet.

This was one of those shared world gimmick anthologies popular in the fifties, as opposed to the shared world gimmick anthologies popular in the eighties. Fletcher Pratt asked his friend John D. Clark to devise a planet, then he got writers to write stories set on this planet. The other two stories set in the system are James Blish’s “Get Out of My Sky” and “Second Landing” by “Murray Leinster” [William Fitzgerald Jenkins]. The idea seems to have fallen prey to editorial changes. (Was the original novella “A Case of Conscience” (1953) one of these? The book (1959) has an essay describing Lithia that reads like the essay describing Uller in *The Petrified Planet* (1952).)

Somehow, the writer whose life I was reminded of while reading this was H. P. Lovecraft. The similarities in their lives are almost too numerous to mention, though Piper was not as squamous, rugose, and mephitic as Uncle Theobald was. Fortunately for Carr, he has such a presence in the fan base that he will not receive any criticism from the fanboys of his topic, as was done by the fanboys of Lovecraft and Howard when a biographer discussed the problems of those writers’ lives.

Carr has his own dubious points. As I’ve said, he has written a number of mediocre sequels to *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*. Much of

his previous critical commentary has been on the goshwow fan level. However, he has dug farther into the background than anyone else, and he does discuss Piper's failings, albeit in a low-keyed manner. (The drinking, for example; Carr even mentions that Piper was buried with a bottle of his favorite rum. This may explain why his need for money was as it was.)

One of the other contributors to the research was Peter Weston. Carr seems not to know who he is. (For one thing, he manufactures the Hugo rockets; also, he currently publishes the fanzine *Prolapse*, available on efanzines.com.)

The reader wishing to know more about Piper, or wanting to see the painful destruction of a life, will find this book worth the substantial investment.

IN AN OCTOPUS'S GARDEN — Part 2

Review by Joseph T Major of
SEA FEVER

by Virginia Kantra

(Berkley Sensation; 2008;
ISBN 978-0-425-22297-3; \$7.99)
"The Children of the Sea"

In our last throbbing, er thrilling episode (*Sea Witch*, reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5), Margred the selkie, or ex-selkie, finally renounced her selkiedom to wed Caleb, human son of the selkie Atargatis. But Caleb has a brother who is selkie, Dylan, who is something of a self-centered sort.

All the same Dylan manages to make the wedding. Bored by these human things, he wanders off and encounters Regina, a local with a sort of crush on Caleb, and they have a very brief hookup. And so that's that. Right?

Regina had one encounter already, and instead of taking the easy choice, or the social one, she came home to World's End, had the child, and took up a job in her mother's restaurant. So here she is, cooking seafood, resolved never to get entangled with a man again. Right?

Dylan is used to loving 'em and leaving 'em. That's the way it is with selkies, whether the other partner is mortal or not. This is just a passing thing, in his endless years of life. Right?

You may have the feeling that there is an "of course not" coming. And indeed there is. You see, there is a prophesy that a descendant of Dylan's and Caleb's mother will preserve the selkie folk. And Margred has been targeted once enough and has no desire to be so again.

Which means that when it turned out that in that one brief encounter, Dylan scored, and Regina is indeed with child again, matters are not entirely in their own hands.

Not to mention that Dylan is struggling with an unprecedented emotion. Love.

Indeed, much of the conflict in this book is internal, as the two protagonists each have to decide to commit. It isn't the stock case of the woman having to tame the man and reduce him to a item, for her use, of exceptional size and warmth. But there is a bit of external struggle, too; the demons don't seem overly thrilled by

the idea of the prophesy being fulfilled, and not only is Regina a target, so is her son.

And did I mention that Kantra is going to run into a *lot* of trouble? Regina turns down a . . . procedure . . . to disencumber her of this inconvenience (don't want to use the "a" word). Then a demon-possessed human tried to force it on her, which we are resolutely told is impossible. As they say, "Mrs. Kantra, you are a great deal of trouble."

Not to worry, there is **Hot Sex™** involved. In the worldview here, passion is a bonding part of a relationship. Did Dylan realize he could love, and Regina realize she could commit, because they fit together so well?

We'll know how they do in the forthcoming third book of the series, **Sea Lord**, which has the third child of Atargatis, their sister Lucy. (And in the preview section printed in this book, she's in a pumpkin patch. Football, anyone?) She will have her own problems, with her in-laws even, when this is . . . **To Be Continued**.

ON A COLD WINTER'S EVENING

Review by Joseph T Major of
THRAXAS UNDER SIEGE
by "Martin Scott" [Martin Millar]

(Baen; 2005, 2008;

ISBN 978-1-4165-5573-5; \$6.99)

A *Thraxas* novel

<http://www.thraxas.com>

<http://www.martinmillar.com>

What I liked the most about the poker game in "Kenny Rogers as The Gambler" (1980) was that Brady Hawkes [Kenny Rogers] won the big game on the train with a **Jack-high straight flush**. [For non-poker players: Jack of Hearts, Ten of Hearts, Nine of Hearts, Eight of Hearts, Seven of Hearts. You got to know when to hold, know when to fold . . .] If (as, say in the first episode of "Bret Maverick", when Maverick won the bar) one player had four kings and another four aces, you would have thought that the players would suspect that something was up. (Like the bridge game in *The Wizardry Compiled* (1991) where everybody got a hand with only one suit.)

Like Brady, in the climatic card game in this book, Thraxas the Investigator is playing for not only a lot of money, but a lady's virtue. Though Makri, the quarter-Elf, quarter-Orc, half-human might make a sharp-edged and piercing objection to being characterized as a "lady". But, you see, if he loses, Makri has to marry Horm the Dead, the half-Orc sorcerer.

There is, of course, the small problem that Horm is supposed to be with the Orc army besieging Turai. Oh, that's right, this is the follow-up to *Thraxas at War* (2003, 2006) which explained how the Orc army defeated the army of Turai and laid seige to the town.

Before the game, though, Thraxas has to conduct his investigations. One has to do with a ship that sailed through winter storms straight into the harbor; the captain disappeared, and someone is getting to everyone who might have helped Thraxas find the powerful artifact he was transporting, much less the captain himself. The second has to do with a fortune, buried

somewhere near the harbor; rumor spreads, and the usual treasure-hunt ensues.

Thraxas plods through this, Investigating by ordinary means (here, though, they do include magic), hindered by ordinary obstacles (as before). This is an ordinary story of this world, not the Ultimate One. If asked to join the **Diverse Band of Ordinary But Special People** for the **Ultimate Battle Between Good and Evil** which will mark the **End of the Faerie Folk in Our World**, Thraxas would likely go up to his office and try to crawl out the window. The Elves make good beer and wine (lots of practice) and he'd really miss that.

Meanwhile, everyone seems to be coming down with the winter malady, which means Thraxas's rooms are full of sick women. This is not a comforting environment in which to play cards, much less defend a city.

In fact, the card game turns out to have drawn together all the threads of the plot, including the reason the defense of Turai has been less than optimal. Alas. Thraxas hasn't the satisfaction that Brady Hawkes had of saying, "No, it's **my** money," and tossing down the eight of hearts to fill the straight. And then in the end, Thraxas has to know when to run!

What characterizes Thraxas is his running up against the limits of his abilities. He's out of condition, a failed sorcerer, and generally wanting his comfort. He hasn't achieved a final triumph which would gain him a life of ease, and isn't likely to perish heroically. In short, he is not that much better off, or indeed even better, than most of us. That resigned British humor, that it's been a bad year and likely to get worse, resonates more now.

Worse yet, there are no more Thraxas books, and for various reasons Millar doesn't seem to know when there will be.

DER MANN, DER DIE ZEIT BETROG

Review by Joseph T Major of
AFTER THE DOWNFALL

by Harry Turtledove

(Night Shade Books; 2008;

ISBN 978-1-59780-130-0; \$24.95)

Calvin Morrison said to the driver, "Your license, please." He handed it over without a bother. Illinois license, "Paul J. Finnegan," it said. He looked up at the man. "You a vet?"

"The Big War. Served in Europe."

"My war was Korea." He handed the license back. "I hate to write you up. Don't go driving like all the devils in Hell are after you."

"Officer, you don't know the half of it. Thanks."

As Morrison walked back to his patrol car, wondering how the guy looked so well preserved, he heard (but didn't understand) the woman with Finnegan — she'd been quite the looker! — say, "Kickaha, why didn't you just kill the lebelebbly!"

"Ana, we can't go doing that sort of

thing here now.”

— Not by P. José Farmer or Henry Beam Piper

Hauptmann Hasso Pemsel, of I believe the 18. *Panzer Grenadier Division*, a long-term veteran of the Russian Front (which says a lot in itself), is about to have his luck run out. If he had any sympathy for the *Amis*, he might spare some for Simon Tregarth, who would have his own problems and his own way of getting away from them. But that is to come (*Witch World* (1963)). Right now, he's fighting in the *Altesmuseum* on the *Museuminsel* in the Spree River in Berlin, and not wishing to meet the fate of the *Kerls* in Stalingrad, is trying to go down fighting. Then he notices this relic, too clumsy to move to safety. It says ΟΜΦΑΛΟΣ, also OMPHALOS, and claims to be an intersection between worlds. Any port in a storm, and so the captain sits down on it — and disappears.

The next thing he knows, he's seeing a beautiful Aryan woman in rags sufficient to reveal both conditions being chased by three grimy greasy subhumans. The *Witch World* would have been more welcoming. Well, he knows which side he's on. And then, surprise follows surprise when she rewards her rescuer extravagantly. Maybe the *Witch World* wouldn't have been so welcoming after all.

And once in with those in power, with good fortune, he sets about helping his benefactors. (Indeed, given that the woman he rescued is a divinely-imbued priestess, who takes him as a lover, he is in with those in power.) They are conquering an inferior race of grimy greasy subhumans, and Pemsel gives them a bit of advice from Onkel Heinz, “Boot them, don't spatter them,”

The new strategem works very well, the first time. The second time, however, Pemsel discovers that for every trick, there is another trick. And then he has to start all over again, with some significant black marks against him, both internal and external. Calvin Morrison hadn't been fighting for Styphon first.

Caught between distrusts, Pemsel has to counter-innovate against his own innovation, all the while struggling against the values of his old life. His former friends can make his nights unpleasant and his current captors always have the option of ending his days. Compromised, beset, uncertain, he faces battle with little to look forward to and much to decide about himself, with an ending that requires him and others to make a choice.

Had Pemsel remained cockily certain that he would turn out victorious no matter what, the way that Kickaha [Paul J. Finnegan] is, he probably would not have done well. In this case, the story is Heinlein's “Man Who Learned Better” plot.

SKULL ISLAND

Review by Joseph T Major of
DESTROYERMEN: CRUSADE
by Taylor Anderson

(RoC; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-451-46230-5; \$23.95)

Sequel to *Destroyermen: Into the Storm*
(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5)

It is rather amusing to imagine Lieutenant-Commander Quintin McHale, Commander Rich Richardson, Commander Algernon “Beaver” Monk, and the like in this fine mess. Problem is that you would likely get Commander Philip Francis Queeg and Commander John Morton (of the *USS Reluctant* from *Mr. Roberts*) instead, under the command of Admiral Blackjack Broderick (from *In Harm's Way*). And no Fatso to save them, either.

But I am pleased to note that Anderson is avoiding one cliché of the genre. To discuss this in some detail; the problem is that some plot elements are becoming standardized to the point of being cliché. The hero who, pitchforked into a desperate war, has the precise skills needed at that place and time. (It's possible to wonder if Leo Frankowski isn't deliberately parodying this in his Conrad Stargard series, except from what I've seen, he doesn't seem to realize that having Conrad always have all the right things he needs, plus a super horse, plus friends in the time-travelling business who make sure events work out for him, is a little off.) The even more competent villain who hives off with most of their equipment, who is not only sociopathic and power-hungry, but immensely talented and utterly persuasive. (I mean, DuQuesne couldn't trust people!) The great smashing battle that leaves one side almost obliterate . . . oh, I'm sorry, that's the other genre cliché. I wonder if Dame-all-the-honors would ever have a Lieutenant Keefer keeping a “Mad Log”.

Well, enough of that. Commander Matthew Patrick Ready has to be. He and the men of the *USS Walker* (DD-163; in our world, renamed DCH-1 and sunk at sea 28 DEC 1941) have thrown in with the Lemurians, the cat-people, against the Grik, the lizard-people, but the Grik don't seem to be particularly deterred by this intervention. They have some help of their own.

However, the one Lemurian intervention, albeit marked by some rather unseemly infighting between their allies (on the principle of let's you and him fight and I'll pick up the pieces) does turn up something interesting. Namely, the *USS Mahan*, last seen steaming into the sunset with a round the bend (if he wasn't already by definition) Air Corps captain having taken command. Much has happened to their fellow sailors.

Anderson's alternate fauna just might cause a continuity lapse here; the *Walker* needs a propeller replaced, but the sea is full of small, powerful, and active carnivores. How did the locals ever get going to sea in the first place?

And speaking of improbable hindrances to navigation, it seems that *HIJMNS Amagi* is still on the loose, her commander having thrown in with the Grik. How do you say “Mad Log” in Japanese?

One realistic, if not particularly reassuring, item was presented in the beginning of the book. Captain Kaufman is indeed with the Japanese on the *Amagi* — far from being their charismatic, sinister, and talented leader, though, he is a prisoner; for the moment more useful alive than dead.

Commander Ready and his men (and

women, the few, the proud) have to apply their skills to the crucial situation in which they operate. There are losses, there are failings, and the Lemurians are facing an enemy as determined and unhampered by scruple as the Americans are. Moreover, the physical resources are running out (the piquancy of there being one last mortal bottle of Coca-Cola™ left on the *Walker* has a certain Giles-Habibulan resonance), and they are learning that the ultimate resource is the mind.

The preview of the next book, *Destroyermen: Maelstrom* (due out February 3, 2009) hints that there may be some solutions but more problems, if only they stay around and alive long enough to meet them when this is . . . [To Be Continued].



HOW FEW REMAIN

Review by Joseph T Major of
BRITANNIA'S FIST:

*From Civil War to World War —
An Alternate History*

by Peter G. Tsouras
(Potomac Books; 2008;

ISBN 978-1-57488-823-2; \$29.95)

“Volume 1 of the *Britannia's Fist* Trilogy”

The numerically-oriented Robert Conroy did something back in 2006 on this topic. Harry Harrison had a flier at the subject.

Tsouras, the maven of the alternate alternate history writing field, has a different point of departure here. If he'd acknowledge his popular colleagues at all, he'd say he chose a different Point of Departure. And indeed, the hot-headedness of Charles Wilkes has been deeply explored of late; it's time for a new approach.

Which has to do with shipbuilding. As you know, James Bulloch (whose little nephew Teedee gets a mention on Page 185) did not rest on his laurels after getting the *CSS Alabama* armed, manned (they manned ships in those days, not crewed them), and out to sea, setting a record to emulate Rogge, Eyssen, Detmers, and most of the rest of them. (It was Captain Waddell's *CSS Shenandoah* which set the standard for Captain Krüder of the *Pinguin*.) Bulloch wanted to give the secesh some heavy metal, and had ordered two large armored ships from Laird & Sons.

Which did concern the Federal government. Accordingly, Lincoln himself ordered a ship refitted and sent out to catch these Laird Rams. This happened. However, there was enough ambiguity to make it an act of war.

This time it's clear whose waters are

involved and who's doing the shooting. The reaction is quite straightforward. As if Lincoln doesn't already have enough headaches.

The land campaigns that ensue have their ups and downs. The gallant Thirty-Fifth Maine and their brave and bold Colonel Keane will likely not get their chance to conquer the Bermuda Triangle, as the War Department has pulled all the Maine troops out of the Army of the Potomac and sent them Down East to defend hearth and home. They proceed to pull off a close one in the stony fields and woody hills of Maine.

Meanwhile, due to General Grant's having had a horse fall on him (didn't we hear this before?) and other defeats in Tennessee, General Hooker gets a chance to restore his reputation. (His name is doomed, but that's another story.) Somebody has to bail out the Army of the Cumberland after the catastrophe at Sentry Peak . . . er, Chickamauga.

But the Navy's here. Except it's currently outmatched, as a great battle of the armored and armoured ships takes place off the Confederate shores (they can tell the difference between New Orleans and Biloxi), where the locals turn out to have the home-field advantage. It is not a great smashing battle with one side annihilated and the other reduced to one ship, its crew almost all killed, and the admiral wounded again; Tsouras is realistic in his naval operations.

All the same, General Lee doesn't need to see any Cape Dutchmen with special repeating rifles to realize that opportunity lies before him. The Federals are victorious but beset.

Two problems often noted with Tsouras's books have to do with his pacing. On the one hand, he sketches in and skims over events; on the other, he lays down great chunks of background. Neither of these is unique to him, naturally; yet together they make the book less than easy to read.

His scope, notably, is world-wide. Too often, the great events have no influence whatsoever on the outside world. Here, the U.S. works in an international political milieu; if the British look fair to attack, the Russians can send a squadron of "observers", for example. As the man said, this is the World War in the making, and we can look forward to even more conflict when this is . . . [To Be Continued].

DOWN ON THE BAYOU

Review by Joseph T Major of

BAYOU OF PIGS:

The True Story of an Audacious Plot to Turn a Tropical Island into a Criminal Paradise

by Stewart Bell

(Wiley; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-470-15382-6; \$24.95)

. . . Colonel Hammer removed his boots, then, in his combat gear, lay on the harsh combat cot and composed himself for a night's rest.

Tomorrow would be The Day. The Slammers, his crack force of mercenaries, hardened in battle, as much his own get as if he'd spit them, would

easily smash the Friesland defense force.

As for the future . . . he already had spoken to Howard Alan Treesong about operational groups, and sold rights for casinos to the Cunhas. There would probably be something worthwhile done with diplomatic bags in the commerce line, as that man Raoul Duke was saying, but he had better keep that little item plausibly deniable.

The hardened soldier threw himself into sleep, visions of a principality of mercenaries, able to smash soft weak planetary governments, forming in his mind, filling his dreams. "Good soldiers can always get you gold."

It was, therefore, a shock when two heavily armed agents from the Friesland Bureau of Investigation shook him awake. The ship captain had locked down the mercs, but then he had been an agent of the FBI from the beginning . . .

— Definitely not by David Drake

If this weren't so serious it would be a great comedy vehicle; Ah-nuld and Arnold in "Bayou of Pigs", a laugh riot about some drunken rednecks who try to take over a Caribbean island paradise.

However, it wasn't; and it involved a mercenary wannabe, a suit-and-tie Klansman, drugs, gambling, and other appurtenances of organized crime, all capped off with an assurance that All Will Go Well worthy of a naive two-year-old.

The target was the island of Dominica, a very small ex-colony, formerly British, in the Caribbean. Like so much of the British Empire, it was picked up in a fit of absent-mindedness, and let go because it was too much bother to keep. As with the other islands in that sea, it was mostly repopulated by former slaves. Aside from this, it is best known for being the shooting site for the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies.

Enter a lost soul named Michael Eugene Perdue. Perdue left a broken family for the Marines, and apparently managed to win an honorable discharge. But that seems to have been his last honest effort for a while; he combined a very real career at petty theft with a perhaps fantastic one as an international soldier of fortune. At the age of thirty, in 1979, he decided to go for the big one.

In 1978 veteran Congo mercenary Robert Denard had overthrown the government of the Comoros for the second time, apparently at the behest of the enigmatic Jacques Foccart, the French government's principal advisor on African policy. That was the year that another Congo mercenary, Michael "Mad Mike" Hoare, attempted a coup in the Seychelles, which might have been as successful if that one man hadn't tried to declare his AK-47 at customs. Also that year, the London *Times* published an article alleging that Frederick Forsyth had done some rather realistic research for his novel *The Dogs of War* (1974), which is about a similar coup attempt against a fictional African country.

As Perdue was an avid reader of Robert K. Brown's magazine *Soldier of Fortune*, he had to

be aware of these events. Unfortunately for him, he ignored or forgot the bits in *SoF* warning against racism.

Perdue began his recruiting in of all places Canada, meeting with white supremacists there. One named Wolfgang Droege became his principal assistant. Perdue and Droege recruited several more such types, including one Don Black, who was an associate of David Duke, Ph.D. Dr. Duke was a Grand Wizard, but not the sort of grand wizard that Hogwarts would produce.

"Gold can't always get you good soldiers," and if you don't even have gold, the problem increases. Perdue offered the prospects of casinos and even drug smuggling and other organized crime activities under diplomatic cover. Playing with these people is a good way to get played out rather permanently.

Then the Big Day came. Perdue felt a rush of adrenaline as his crack team motored through the Louisiana streets towards their ship . . . however, there was a superior force of local police, BATF agents, and FBI agents waiting for them. Their trusted ship captain had gone to the G-Men when he had been approached.

The subsequent trials were rather brief. They couldn't put up much of a defense. At least, unlike their connection on Dominica, they weren't hanged. The government of Dominica had problems with its own defense force, and ended up with its own trials.

The would be nation-conquerors had various fates. Both Droege and Perdue have died. Droege was killed by a dissatisfied customer — he had become a drug dealer. Perdue tried several more mercenary ventures before dying of AIDS.

In the real world, one suspects, Edward Lessingham of the Zimiamvia Trilogy would be dispossessed from his Lofoten paradise not by the Royal Norwegian Air Force, but by a policeman with an arrest warrant. At the other extreme, Rick Galloway of *Janissaries* and sequels would have died before a firing squad commanded by a sociopathic commanding officer before he ever got near to a rescuing flying saucer. (The history of the mercenary intervention in Angola is a great persuader that the CIA is run by idiots.) And so on.

It is often pointed out that unlike reality, fiction has to make sense. In contrast, fiction generates its own rules, which are often contrary to reality.

COLD BURIAL

Review by Joseph T Major of

FARDIG TOMANDSFÆRD

(*Two Against the Ice*)

by Ejnar Mikkelsen

(Steerforth Press; 1955, 2003;

ISBN 1-58642-057-7; \$14.95)

Cold Burial: A True Story of Endurance and Disaster (2002), by Clive Powell-Williams, tells the story of the life and death of Canadian adventurer Jack Hornby. Hornby had the idea that any exploration trip that did not include a disaster had not been worthwhile. This

philosophy was to lead to his demise, starving to death in a cabin in the Canadian North due to a slight miscalculation about the migratory habits of caribou.

Evidently Ejnar Mikkelsen was his Danish oppo. This book tells of one (only one!) of Mikkelsen's on-the-cheap expeditions. In 1907, the ship *Danmark* returned to Denmark without the expedition commander, Ludvig Mylius-Erichsen, who had died in the north of Greenland. Mikkelsen, after turning down a solicitation from British press baron Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe to lead an expedition to find Mylius-Erichsen's death site and recover his journals, decided to lead an expedition to find Mylius-Erichsen's death site and recover his journals. There was a little matter of national integrity to consider.

Mylius-Erichsen had died while exploring the northeast quadrant of Greenland; the body of one of his companions had been found by the other explorers. Mikkelsen set out to recover Mylius-Erichsen's records.

In 1909, Mikkelsen and his ship, a cheap yacht named *Alabama*, sailed for Greenland, arriving at Shannon Island off the eastern coast. The next step was to head north to Lamberts Land, where Mylius-Erichsen's dead associate had been found, and on the basis of the scant records the man had been carrying, find where the others had died. And he did. Then the problems began.

Mikkelsen seems to have been more careless than anything else. His original teams of dogs died before they even got to Greenland, and his replacement teams seem to have been little better. When he returned to Shannon Island, the *Alabama* had sunk at her moorings. In the course of the expedition, he managed to contract both scurvy and hypervitaminosis A. This last is best known from Lennard Bickell's *Mawson's Will* (1977, 2001). Since Mikkelsen and his companion Iver Iversen were not quite as desperate as Mawson and Mertz, they did not get quite as sick.

Polar explorers tend to be somewhat odd, but some are a different sort of odd. Mikkelsen comes across as the sort of person who sledges through catastrophe while commenting eloquently on the surroundings; a Forrest Gump of Greenland, in a sense. The descriptions of the land are clear and precise. Mikkelsen admits that he quarrelled with Iversen occasionally, but paints a positive and approving picture of him; just the sort of fellow to have in a desperate situation. The reader can see that Mikkelsen was just careless (i.e., his lack of curiosity as to the fate of the other members of the expedition when they found the *Alabama* sunk at her mooring, though they did survive.)

Mikkelsen had been on the Baldwin-Ziegler North Pole Expedition of 1901, which was one of the greater cock-ups of the era, fortunately failing before anyone got killed. He returned to Greenland several times after that, the last time in 1964, seven years before his death. In København, far from the frozen north.

This is a self-portrait of a man who had the will to go to the north and the luck to escape the

consequences of his carelessness. That his methodology matches the preparedness of most expedition parties in works of fantasy (and those who do make preparations have all their gear stolen or destroyed) indicates the kinds of hardships that they should be enduring.

VISION

by Joe

Saturday, July 26, 2008

It had been rather some time since we had last had our eyes checked, and with a long drive ahead of us, such an investigation was not a bad idea. By convenience, an office of the Metro Government's preferred ophthalmologists and opticians, Dr. Bizer's Vision World, was across the street from Dooley's, the site of our Saturday breakfasts.

So we repaired thence. Not after some negotiating with the insurance department on how to get paid. And the usual waiting, with the waiting area packed with screaming kids, and the television set to the Poopy Panda Channel for their viewing indoctrination, er pleasure. (The stories with Miley Cyrus as a student at a school where most of the students are so dumb they can't make a connection between the dates when their favorite singer performs and when one particular student shows up late, tired, or both, were among the more intellectually challenging and endurable.) If Uncle Hugo had seen that, would he have gone forward with the idea?

We went through the usual sequence of tests. The word charts are a little more diverse, so you can't use the Croat guy's answer, "Can I read the bottom line? That's my brother-in-law!" However, one test proved a little dubious.

The glaucoma test was not the most auspicious. It didn't help that I kept on blinking, the puff of air made me react a little too soon. Therefore we scheduled further investigation, for the month of September.

Lisa bought new glasses. Peculiarly enough, my own prescription yet sufficed, so I only got my glasses repaired. And with this, we set off for points west.

Saturday, September 6, 2008

The puff-of-air test was repeated. I may have been less sensitive; didn't have to go holding my eye open this time.

They had another test for visual fields. Now one of the first symptoms of glaucoma actually having an effect is a narrowing of the visual fields. This particular test involved looking at a screen where random points of light appeared, and clicking a clicker every time the testee saw a light.

I kept on seeing false positives, or at least clicking every time I thought I saw a light. Then too, I kept on not looking at the center, where I was supposed to look.

The ophthalmologist, Dr. L, after reviewing this, said that perhaps they should test again. They could do it right away but I wanted to wait a week.

Saturday, September 13, 2008

The lead-in was the same. I was less patient or whatever with the visual fields, and had to take the test over and over again. After they gave up on that one, other matters followed. For example, they took photographs of my retinas. This involved staring into a searingly bright light.

Other implements used more lights to enable the technician or doctor to view the eyes more closely. That, and the drops needed to dilate the pupil and numb the cornea, left me rather at odds with the sunlight.

Dr. L was now pretty well satisfied that I probably did not have glaucoma. However, he did want me to see a specialist, Dr. W. Who, conveniently, had an office nearby.

I dropped Lisa off at work and went home and back to bed.

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

It was rather earlier in the morning this time. The doctor's office was part of what they call a medical complex. Now that medicine is getting more complex, the name turns out to be antanaclasis (so look it up already). The waiting room had *Los Angeles* magazine but not *Louisville*. Had someone moved, but wanted to keep up with the old town?

The tests this time began with more of the same. They used the complicated eye-scope that fires dazzlingly bright light into one eye at a time.

Another new test required more eye-numbing. This one was to determine the thickness of my corneas. Yes, having them actually touch my eyes.

Dr. W gave me a friendly talk afterward. I mentioned the problem of Cousin Herbert, who went blind from untreated glaucoma, but Dr. W said that he wasn't close enough to matter (Herbert was the son of Great-Aunt Emma). Herbert's plight was one reason for my being so attentive to this matter.

I also mentioned that event in the fall of 1996 when I had a sinus headache and then for about a week couldn't see out of my right eye. He was surprised that I did not seem to be showing retinal damage, since I'd been diagnosed as diabetic back in 1978 or thereabouts.

The news, for what it is worth, is that I almost certainly do not have glaucoma. Why had that looked like the case? Because my corneas are thicker than normal!

Indeed, diabetes seems to counteract certain tendencies that promote glaucoma. So you go blind for other reasons.

However, Dr W wants to examine my optic nerve. This will need to be done at . . . another office, since the equipment is not at that one. This office, moreover, is closer to our home. Now why didn't they think of that the first time?

That afternoon I went to work. The tests and such were over by nine-thirty but I ended up having to wait until my eyes could function properly again.

Wednesday, November 5, 2008

I saw Dr. K the internist earlier this day, regarding my ongoing bowel problems. There

was good news and bad news. He was taking me off one of the steroids. My blood tests had come in and almost everything was all right. On the other hand, or end, I had to get them a stool sample. I don't think you want to hear any more of this.

Getting to Dr. W's other office was harder. I went to the nursing home next to the building by mistake. However, once I signed in, they took me in almost right away.

This test that they didn't have the equipment for at the other office involved looking into an eyepiece until I could see the red rectangular field with a blinking red light that I was supposed to look at. This was no problem, the test took only a minute or so, and I could sit back and look at the rectangular cyan afterimage. However, for some reason the pictures didn't take, so I had to have it done twice on the left eye and five times on the right eye, the last time by Dr. W himself.

Developing the pictures took less time than taking them. Dr. W told me that my optic nerves are smaller than most, and while there were some patches in the nerve field that look suspect, there didn't seem to be any indication, so same time next year.

So I can see. *BLEEP* the triflids.

HORSE NEWS

by Lisa

The long-awaited duel between Curlin and Big Brown is off. This morning, October 13, 2008, Big Brown tore his foot badly in a workout. The injury does not appear to be life-threatening but his racing career is over. Perhaps it's just as well. If it had happened in a race, the injury could have been much worse. Nor do I think he could have beaten Curlin. We'll never know now, of course. We may get clues in races between their foals.

I got a real shocker when I did a search to see how Windsong's Legacy, the 2004 trotting Triple Crown winner, was doing. He wasn't. He died of a ruptured aorta back in March. I could only stare blankly at the computer screen. Then my mind flashed back to watching him overcome a very bad post position to hit the finish line half a length to the good. His first foals haven't even raced yet. I remember his trot as being swift and true, beautiful to watch. A trotter in full stride is truly an elegant sight and Windsong was one of the best.

Alysheba is coming home!!!! After eight years in Saudi Arabia, Alysheba will be coming to the Horse Park October 31. Alysheba won the Derby in 1987 despite nearly being knocked down by Bet Twice. At three he looked a bit unfinished. At four he was magnificent, a lean bay racing machine. He will not be that now. He is 24. There will be gray on his muzzle, perhaps even a swayback. I wonder how Cigar will react to having another stallion in the barn. How will Alysheba handle being back in a cool climate? He has been in the desert the past eight years. Will he be able to handle the humidity? It is cool here now, not the desert heat he is

accustomed to.

It turned out that Ike's silver lining for me was that I had gotten into the habit of listening to a local talk show instead of watching TV and so it happened that the radio was on when there was an announcement that 1987 Kentucky Derby winner Alysheba was coming back from Saudi Arabia and into a stall at the Horse Park.. I went first cold then hot, for when Alysheba had gone to Saudi Arabia I expected it to be lifetime exile. I let myself have a few minutes to absorb the news and then I called Joe. He graciously changed plans and gave up the Nashville trip.

With the first euphoria gone I began thinking about Alysheba's age and how he would handle the trip. He would no longer, I knew, be the fantastically agile colt who had so miraculously not gone down that first Saturday in May 21 years ago when Bet Twice knocked him to his knees. He was 24 years old now. I found myself wondering if the king of Saudi Arabia was sending him back because he was in poor health.

My wonderings went on until the day Alysheba arrived at the Horse Park. We got to the Horse Park and went full speed to the Hall of Champions. Alysheba had not actually arrived but we had gotten there in time to obtain seats in back where we had a good view of where Alysheba would be arriving. Soon the arena was full and the speeches began, first Alysheba's breeder Preston Madden, then trainer Jack Van Berg and finally jockey Chris McCarron, who had been aboard Alysheba for his Derby win.

While this was going on the huge van carrying Alysheba pulled up and I divided my attention between van and speeches. Finally a big bay horse appeared in the van door. My breath sucked in sharply and at the sound my neighbor turned and looked. Alysheba pranced down the ramp. I was struck first by his proud, erect ears and second by the dancing movements that recalled vividly the agility he had shown Derby Day all those years ago. His handlers kept up a steady supply of peppermints up the walk and through his parading around the ring.



I noticed some gray around his muzzle but other than that he betrayed no sign of his age. He was not the sleek, powerful racer, of course, but he looked remarkably well for his age. The king of Saudi Arabia had taken excellent care of

him. He was a bit nervous but it had after all been many years since he had been exposed to such a crowd and given he is a stallion, behaved remarkably well. He never once reared or lashed out.

CAMERAS

by Lisa

Joe bought me a camera for my birthday. We went to Circuit City because they were having a very good sale. I looked over them all and my gaze fell on one with burst shooting, which is quick snapping. This would be great for the Horse Park and sold the little Sony. I did look seriously at another camera. It was \$140 and in a display case. The salesman showed it to me but told me it was at least four years old. I sighed and passed on it. It was a lot of camera for the money. Had it been a film camera it would have been a marvelous bargain. Digitals, however, age much faster than film cameras. Improvements come much faster, necessary accessories harder to find, and so I took home the little Sony and not the bigger camera.

Now I am learning its abilities and limitations. The Sony is noticeably heavier than the Kodak and its zoom not as good. However, I didn't choose it for the zoom. I wanted the burst shooting to shoot Parade of Breeds at the Horse Park. I'm really looking forward to shooting those with burst shooting.

BACK SEAT DRIVER

by Lisa

I had to take Gemellus to the vet today because of a skin irritation. On the way back I heard the cage door rattle in an unusual way but did not think much of it until a dark gray head poked up alongside me. Luckily I had just turned into my very low-traffic neighborhood. I considered pulling over and shoving him back in his cage but I was almost home and Gemellus was not going berserk, just exploring his surroundings. Had he been panicking as Delenn certainly would have, I would have been in serious trouble.

A TRUE STORY WITH MINOR EXTRAPOLATION

by Grant C. McCormick

I work for a national cable television, internet, and telecommunication company that shall remain nameless, but which I will call Ch*rt*r Communications. I work in the Value Added Services department. One of our primary duties is help-desk technical support for our Home Networking service. With this service, Ch*rt*r provides a wireless gateway (a term meaning a modem and a router combined into a single unit – no connection to the computer company of the same name), and we help out with issues that our clients might have. The single most common problem that we face is people needing to get their wireless encryption keys, in order to add new computers to their networks.

Just about a year ago, the FCC and Congress

mandated that anything involving account or consumer security had to be better protected, to help prevent identity theft and to protect our clients. Over all, this is a Good Thing. But it can lead to problems.

Wireless encryption keys are among the items so protected, and these can only be released to the account owner or to a designated authorized user, and even then only after verification. (As a note, you wouldn't believe — no, you probably would believe — how many accounts are in one spouse's name, the other is not yet listed as authorized, and it's almost always the unauthorized spouse who needs the information. Make sure your spouse is authorized, or, better yet, make sure the account is in both names!) It can be even more interesting when the account is not for a family ...

The names below have been changed to protect whomever.

Several weeks ago I got a call from a Brother John of the Brothers of Saint George of God, in California. He needed their encryption key. The Brothers' account was set up as a Residential account (Business accounts are handled somewhat differently), and was set up as Last Name: "Saint George Brothers", First Name: "God". There was one authorized user, a Brother Paul.

When I asked to speak with Brother Paul, Brother John informed me that he was no longer at this location, having been transferred to a different facility in California. I asked if Brother John could conference in Brother Paul. The Brother that I was speaking with said that this wasn't possible.

About this time, the call dropped. (As another note, if you're calling the cable company on a cell phone or a cordless phone, please make sure the battery is fully charged first!). Since we had a queue of incoming calls waiting, I couldn't call back. I can only wonder how the call might have gone if it hadn't dropped: If I had followed proper Ch*rt*r procedure, it might have gone like this:

"Since Brother Paul isn't available, may I please speak with the account holder, God?"

"Certainly, God is listening to us all every instant."

"Does God know the four-digit security code for this account, please?"

"Of course. God knows everything."

"Could he please tell me the security code?"

"He's told you in your heart of hearts."

Actually, we do have a procedure for a wireless encryption key when there is no authorized user or account holder present (but, of course, God was present. Omnipresent, even!). It involves logging in to the gateway

with a computer connected with an Ethernet cable to get the key — this avoids the "next-door neighbor wanting free Internet" scenario. The logic is, if they are in the house in the physical presence of the gateway, either they are supposed to be there, or they are already guilty of something more serious than theft of internet services.

And that's what we probably would have done if the call hadn't dropped. Still, me being me, I would have asked to speak with God first. Who knows what might have been said then?

WHY, ROBOT?

Commentary by Johnny Carruthers
<http://purpleranger.livejournal.com/>

I've been looking through Harlan Ellison's illustrated screenplay for *I, Robot*. Now, this is not the screenplay for the movie that came out a couple of years ago. You know, the one that claimed to be based on Isaac Asimov's collection of stories, but in reality, the only similarity was the title and the fact that they used Asimov's Laws Of Robotics?

No, this screenplay was actually based on Asimov's stories. Ellison took the stories in that collection, and wove them together into a breathtaking and imaginative tapestry of storytelling — and while there may have been changes made in the translation from prose to script, the screenplay stayed true to the spirit of Asimov's stories. Unfortunately, this screenplay was never brought to life on the big screen. (At least not yet. We can always hope.)

The text on the back cover of the book proclaims that this screenplay is "the greatest science fiction movie never made." While I will concede that there might be just the slightest bit of hyperbole in that statement, if there is an unfilmed screenplay for an even greater SF movie, it has not been brought to my attention.

This isn't the first time that I've read Ellison's screenplay for *I, Robot*. I first read it many years ago, when *Asimov's* serialized it in 1987. I was probably mesmerized when I read it then, and just leafing through the book now, I think I still might be. Harlan Ellison is more than a good writer; he's a damn good writer — although most of you reading this already know that.

In his introduction to the book, Ellison talks about what could be his only regret involving this screenplay; that will never be able to sit in a theatre with his good friend Isaac Asimov and watch the movie made from this screenplay. And he's right — there are times when I really wish I could read a new story by Isaac Asimov, or open up a new issue of *Asimov's* and find one of his editorials in front. But however much I might wish that Dr. Asimov were still with us, reading this screenplay has made me realize something, and I suspect that Mr. Ellison might find himself in agreement with me on this point.

I'm glad Dr. Asimov wasn't alive to see the Will Smith version of *I, Robot*.

RUSSELL STOVER DARK CHOCOLATE MARSHMALLOW PUMPKIN

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers
<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>

I think this may be a new Halloween offering from Russell Stover. At least, I don't remember seeing it on the shelves before, and I'm pretty certain that I would remember something with dark chocolate.

As is the case with Russell Stover's other chocolate pumpkins, this is only vaguely pumpkin shaped. Nothing wrong with that, I suppose, but I think it would look a lot more impressive if looked like a molded jack o'lantern. The outer shell is dark chocolate, which contains a marshmallow filling.

When I've reviewed Russell Stover's milk chocolate selections, I've frequently mentioned that their milk chocolate has a richer flavor than that of, for instance, Hershey. The same holds true for Russell Stover's dark chocolate. It has a darker brown color than Hershey's or Nestle's dark chocolate, and it also has a deeper, richer flavor. Perhaps you might even call it a mellower flavor. My initial thought is that the Russell Stover chocolate has a higher cacao content than either of those other companies' dark chocolate, but it could also be something in their manufacturing process.

The marshmallow is the same as the marshmallow I've found in other Russell Stover candies. Very light, very spongy, very sticky. Mild flavor, with a hint of vanilla.

Biting into one of the Dark Chocolate Marshmallow Pumpkins is pretty much the same as biting into any of the other marshmallow pumpkins that Russell Stover has produced. The marshmallow provides a slight springy resistance as you chew, but it also almost melts like cotton candy after just a few seconds on the tongue.

As you might expect, the dark chocolate is the dominant flavor. It isn't overwhelming, though; the vanilla flavor of the marshmallow is just strong enough to make itself known at all times. Together, the two provide a harmonious contrast of flavors.

Okay, this is a Halloween candy, so the usual holiday disclaimer applies here. You should easily see this on the shelves through Halloween. Starting November 1, though, it will be shoved off to one side as the stores start putting out the Christmas candy. This might be the first year that I've seen the Dark Chocolate Marshmallow Pumpkin, but the odds are that we'll be seeing it again for Halloween 2009.

GHOST DOTS

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers
<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>

This is one of those Halloween candies that I didn't feel the need to purchase before Halloween. But, since Halloween is over, and they were marked down 50%, I decided it was time to indulge my curiosity.

Ghost Dots are a seasonal variation of regular Dots, which are gumdrops that come in assorted fruit flavors. I am vaguely familiar with the standard variety Dots, although they are not one of my regular purchases when it comes to

candy.

The major difference between Ghost Dots and regular Dots is that the Ghost Dots all come in the same color. It's that pale shade of green you most commonly associate with things that glow in the dark. Yes, when I saw them, my first thought was to wonder if they glowed in the dark or under a black light. And I checked. They do more or less glow when you put them under a black light, but they don't glow in the dark.

I'm guessing that the whole idea of candy that glows in the dark hasn't occurred to the people at Tootsie Roll. If someone in their R&D department had thought of it, and they could find the right coloring that was safe for humans to consume, we would indeed have Ghost Dots that glowed in the dark with a ghostly light.

As for the flavor of Ghost Dots, the boxes say "Which Flavor? Which Ghost? IT'S A MYSTERY!" and "Assorted Fruit Flavored Gumdrops." And yes, the flavor is a mystery. They are vaguely fruit flavored, but I'm not certain what those fruits might be. Yes, I can detect two or three different flavors, but I really can't distinguish more than that. I'm not even familiar enough with the regular Dots to determine if Tootsie Roll is using the same flavors as the regular Dots, and just giving them all the same ghostly green color. (I am assuming that, though, until I can definitely determine otherwise.)

As could be expected from gumdrops, the Ghost Dots have quite the chewy texture. They have about the same consistency as Gummi Bears or similar candies. Not much else I can say about that part of the candy.

This is one of those candies where the usual seasonal disclaimer applies. Since Halloween is over, the Ghost Dots are already on the clearance shelf, and will gone within a week — maybe even less. But I'm also more than a little certain that they will return to the shelves somewhere around the last week or so of August 2009 — right after the back to school rush has ended.

BIG MAN ON CAMPUS A University President Speaks Out on Higher Education

by Stephen Joel Trachtenberg

(A Touchstone book

published by Simon & Schuster,

2008, 266 pp., \$26.00,

ISBN # 139781416557197)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

The author is the recently retired president of George Washington University in Washington DC. He headed that school for 18 years. Previously, he was president of the University of Hartford (Connecticut). He discusses his experiences and his thoughts about those jobs in this volume. And he does so with insight and humor. His words are easy to read and not overly academic.

Of course, like any reasonable university executive, he rails against the self-aggrandizing bunch of academically trained, but totally ungovernable, bucking broncos, the Faculty Senate. They consider themselves the equal of

the president, and, therefore, wish to make university decisions, but they aren't willing to be accountable for their actions. However, the university president ends up taking the heat for their and his own errors.

The author enjoys his meetings with students individually and with their parents. Unfortunately, it's frequently a confrontation over grades, finances, or personal problems. Still, the president tries to deal fairly and smoothly with unhappy university students and their moms and dads.

A big part of his job is fund-raising. It's a never-ending job. He's put forth a monumental effort to bring in donations at both institutions of higher learning that he has led. It's basically, he claims, a sales job. And so, you have to know donors' motivations. Most large gifts, of course, come from alumni. But even they need convincing. Yet Trachtenberg is, and has always been, up to the effort.

He laments that some prestigious universities, read: the Ivy league and their ilk, emphasize the research aspect of academic life as opposed to the job of teaching, which is often looked down upon at many research-oriented institutions. He recommends that students would be better off at smaller and/or liberal arts schools than the big name institutes for undergraduate work.

This outgoing president laments grade inflation at colleges and a lack of a core curriculum. He's also upset that many students aren't reading books these days, can't do their math problems, and could not find various countries and states on a world map. And that's the case after graduation at many schools. He's gotten flack about it from employers and parents of students. By the way, far too many in the immediate family want their student to come out of college ready for a good paying job, not necessarily to be a good and critical thinker.

The high, and going higher, cost of going to college is realistically discussed. He explains that most schools have to operate on tuitions received, not on an endowment, like Harvard 's reputed 36 billion. And with operating costs rising at all colleges and universities, so are tuitions. It's a hopeless cycle. And it's getting worse.

College athletics come in for scrutiny herein. Basically, Trachtenberg loves sports. He bashes those who put down athletics. And he takes umbrage at those academics at Duke who before the case was resolved highly criticized the Lacrosse team. Actually, the charges against them were dropped because the accuser was found to have made up her testimony. On the other hand, the president fully understands why colleges want to get more into athletics, particularly in the top ranks. First it gets attention for the school. Secondly, it gets the attention of wealthy, sports-minded donors. And, more importantly, athletics rounds out a student, many of whom, incidentally, are top-level academics, also.

Lastly, this writer is saddened by the events of recent years of the classroom killings, such as what happened recently at Virginia Tech. And though university presidents have been heavily

criticized for not having proper security at their schools, Trachtenberg explains, in painful detail, why it's nearly impossible for such tragedies to be prevented.

He talks about his mentors in the early years, people like President Silber of Boston University and John Brademas, former U. S. Congressman from Indiana and retired President of New York University. Trachtenberg had also written speeches for John Brademas, presumably while in Congress.

The author writes in his Preface, "I want you to understand what it is like to be a university president and what a university is like from the inside out. But I have not written a textbook. That is not my style and probably not what you would enjoy reading anyway. Instead, I have written a very personal and a bit unconventional book about my life as a university president. It is meant to give pleasure as well as make you think about these institutions with increased concern and empathy. Maybe it will even cause some readers to reach for a checkbook and donate to some worthy university. Welcome to my world."

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg serves today as University Professor of Public Service and president emeritus of George Washington University. He resides in Washington DC.

Recommended.

And as year follows year, More old men disappear, Someday no one will march there at all.

Report by Joseph T Major

We regret to report the death of **Delfino Edmondo Borroni on October 24, 2008**, at the age of 110. Born **August 23, 1898**, he served in the elite 6^o Reggimento Bersaglieri a Bologna, participating in the battles of Valsugana and Caporetto, where he was taken prisoner. He was wounded in the Second World War, but he was a civilian tram driver then.

At the time of his death, he was the oldest man in Italy. He was the last survivor of the Alpine Front and the last Italian survivor of the Great War.

We regret to report the death of **Sydney Maurice "Syd" Lucas on November 4, 2008**, at the age of 108. Born **September 21, 1900** in Leicester, he was called up and assigned to the 45th Battalion, the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment), but did not get into action before the war ended. He emigrated to Australia in 1920, joined the 2nd Australian Imperial Force, thus making him a veteran of both world wars, and was discharged after an attack of appendicitis, before he could go into combat.

For many years he would lead the Anzac Day parade in his home town of Rosebud, Victoria, thus acting out Eric Bogle's song.

We regret to report the death of **Fernand Goux on November 16, 2008**. Born **December 31, 1899**, Goux was called up in 1918 for rear-area service and got to the front on November 3

of that year. He served in the 85th Infantry Regiment and the 82nd Infantry Regiment of the French Army.

We regret to report the death of **Pierre Picault** on **November 20, 2008**. Born **February 27, 1899**, he was called up in April 15, 1918 to serve in the 83e Régiment d'Artillerie Lourde. He was not registered as an official combatant in the war, all the same. At the time of his death, he was the oldest man in France, and apparently the last non-Anglophone veteran of the War.

The Remembrance Day Ninetieth Anniversary memorial service at the Centopath in London was honoured by the presence of **Henry William Allingham**, **Henry John "Harry" Patch**, and **William "Bill" Stone**, representing the three Services, probably for the last time ever. Also present was **Lance Corporal Johnson Gideon Beharry, V.C.** (Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment) most recent British recipient of the supreme award for valour.

"Maybe I was brave, I don't know. At the time I was just doing the job, I didn't have time for other thoughts."

— Johnson Beharry

John Carter couldn't have said it better.

For the interesting memoirs of Bill Stone, who served on the *Hood*, cut the hair of the last man to see Captain Scott alive, and had very welcoming American friends, see:

http://www.hmshood.com/crew/biography/wfstone_bio.htm

Remaining are:

Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (107) Royal Navy
John Campbell Ross (109) Australian Imperial Force

Finland

Aarne Armas "Arska" Arvonen* (111) Red Guards

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (108) 22 Pulk Ułanów

United Kingdom

Henry William Allingham (112) Royal Naval Air Service/Royal Air Force
Netherwood "Ned" Hughes (108), Manchester Regiment
Henry John "Harry" Patch (110) Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
William "Bill" Stone (108) Royal Navy

United States

John Henry Foster Babcock (108) 146th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force
Frank Woodruff Buckles (107) United States Army
Robley Henry Rex* (107) United States Army

* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

National totals: U.K. 5; U.S. 1+1; Australia,

Canada 1 each; Finland, Poland, 1 WWI-era each. British Empire 7.

FANZINES

Askance # 11

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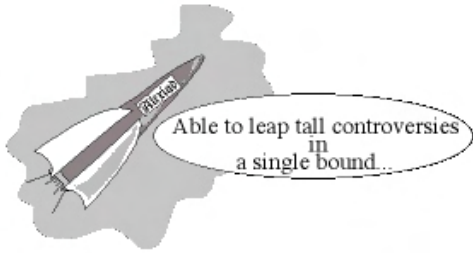
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AWARDS

Congratulations to **Taral Wayne** for winning the Rotsler Award for long-time artistic achievement in amateur publications of the science fiction community. The panel of judges consists of **Mike Glycer**, **John Hertz**, and **Claire Brialey**. The Award will be handed out at LosCon in Los Angeles on **November 29, 2008**. Best wishes to Taral and thanks to Mike for the announcement.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Sheryl Birkhead** October 4-7, 2008
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
20882-3422 USA
catsmeouch@yahoo.com

Greetings. With the ever “changing” (I refuse to commit to any other assessment!) economic clime, I have decided not to even consider getting a new computer. On the other, expenditure, hand, I have decided to see about getting DSL. My phone company (which rents the lines from Verizon) has sold off the regular phone service portion. I am waiting until I get my bill in October to decide exactly where I go about looking for the DSL. My company fouled up my service when they took over from Verizon and inadvertently forwarded my business line to a recording saying that number had been disconnected. Since I never called that number, I had no idea this had happened until a friend who is also a client called me on the home phone and clued me in. As a result, the company said they would not charge me for the identa-ring (second number on one line) and the caller ID. So- I wait to see if the new company will notice this lack and start charging. If so, then I may well go back to Verizon — which will give their own customers DSL for \$19.99 (if they decide I really can have it) — if not, it is \$31.99 as a standalone service. Either way, within the next month of so I should have made some progress in a serious trial for DSL. If it is the slowness of the dial-up that is my bottleneck, then even staying with this perfectly functional Mac things should get a “bit” better.

We’ll see. Just like everyone else, I need to cut expenditures and it seems a bit reckless to take on another (frill — despite what some people think) — but, when I will also have had to shell out over \$2000 for dental work — I figure — what the heck . . . just go ahead and spend . . . when you run out of money quit!

I was born in Washington, D.C. while the family was living in Prince Georges County, Maryland — and about 9 years later there was a move to the farm. Over the various years we lived in Switzerland for a year, I went off to college (and then graduate school for an M.S.) in Pennsylvania, and finally down to Virginia for veterinary school — then back to the farm. As I look at the cost of living around here, I can’t help but glance in other directions to see where I might be able to live a bit higher up than here. Right now the biggest drawback in my

veterinary license. There is, essentially, no reciprocity of licensure of veterinarians in the US. If I want to continue to practice, then I need that license — and there is no way I could pass the National Boards again. Based on all of that I have not looked even halfway seriously at moving, but the day may be coming when I need to look beyond the superficial and . . . By that I mean, some states offer a variation on license testing — I think it was Colorado that offered licensure — and I forget their term — in essence you had to pass their state board and have letters from your state showing you had been practicing for a minimum of years without any challenges to your license. That would still be a pain in the butt but much more possible than re-taking the Boards. Agh — this is turning into a personal tilting at economics! Sorry!

I keep meaning to take a minute, or hours and Google the term “candy bar” to see if I can get any historical information on them. I guess I need to first see if I can locate the etymology of “candy” and take it from there. My current thought is that what became candy probably started as a concentrated food such as a bar that contains enough calories to carry one for a meal or even a day. If this is the case and I had to guess, I’d guess the first such bars would not have been sweet, more like ground pressed meats — then offshoots that would have eventually used honey as a binder — and there we would have sweet. Of course I really don’t know, but . . . It would seem natural that one could press raisins and other dried fruits along with a touch of honey — but how it would get from there to here . . . honey to sugar . . . to things such as chocolate??? Well, at least it is a topic in which I have a lot of interest! Now to see if the information is easily accessible — or if I can just come up with the best search words!

Why does that make me think of Henry Morgan’s quip? After reading the ad line, “An O’Henry’s bar is a meal in itself,” he added, “Three meals of them and your teeth fall out.”

Ah yes, glaucoma . . . My brother was diagnosed with it many years ago — it was thought to have in response to high dose steroids he had as a child to treat asthma. As a result I have had my intraocular pressure monitored fairly regularly. Years ago my optometrist sent me to an ophthalmologist because I have consistently high normal pressure. He ran a battery of expensive tests and finally offered me the choice — wait and see if this damaged the optic nerve or treat now. I opted for treat now — even though the drops cost about \$1/drop! After three years of this he, last September, suggested I discontinue the drops and come in more often to see if the pressure just stayed there without any damage. So, I’m not sure if I spend less or not since I now see him more often for those tests. I had a heck of a time explaining to my insurance company that I took medications to prevent both osteoporosis and glaucoma but really did not have either condition. It got a lot easier when both

physicians said to stop both medications and just monitor to see what (if anything) would happen. So far everything has stayed about the same, but it just means periodic checks are more frequent than before. Sigh.

Oh yeah — the vegan thing. I am still dancing around it but after a bloodtest scare — all the cardiac markers were perfect, but . . . My potassium was in the dangerous zone — something that had never happened before. I was guessing that in trying out all sorts of packaged vegan things I ate too much — but . . . Supposedly it is only, essentially, in end-stage renal disease — and nothing else in the blood indicated that. This is a new lab for me. I read about other causes and one was a too tight tourniquet . . . and one was pumping your fist to get venous flow . . . so for a month I tried to lower intake of potassium. Um, reading showed that anything with roots has potassium — so it narrowed down to the idea that I could have sugars and fats . . . So, on the re-check everything seems fine — no idea if it was what I changed or the blood draw technique. Unfortunately, the cardiologist now wants bloodwork every four months — oh joy!

Only every four months? There was one day when I had to get two separate bloodworks.

— JTM

Hmm, I need to give the ultimate candy bar some thought. I suspect this will be a very subjective creation. The 3 Musketeers Mint bar size is probably about the size a candy bar “ought” to be. I have seen bags of the minis (which are the same size as those minis of the regular bars), but have not seen the “regular sized bar” at many check out stations in various stores. I have had several of the bars some time ago. I even went so far as to freeze the little bar and then carefully shave off rather miniscule slices each of which still gave the refreshing minty taste of the bar, but somehow was not as satisfying since I could not bite off a nice mouthful to chew. It is tasty.

Ah, now Brad (Foster) ‘s address (as noted in *Alexiad*) can drop the “nominee” — so it reads Best Fan Artist Hugo . . . at least until next year’s go-round!

After the utter fiasco at the dealership and my recall for the driver’s side window — I have another call in to them — to let them know their repair did not. I waited a few months before deciding to call them back. The klunk which signifies something is not right only happens when the window is lowered while the door is open. Since this is not something I do all that often, I had not checked to see if their ministrations had addressed the recall notice. Obviously not. I called. They have not called back. I did learn my lesson if/when the car goes back I will turn down any other care, no matter how important they say it is. I may be slow, but I do learn.

Jim Stumm — the digital converter boxes — in general, yes. You will only be able to record one channel while you are away. BUT — wait a sec — I have one right here in its box . . .

DTVPal allows for both analog pass through and recording more than one channel. I have been tardy in installing it to see how it works, but I suspect one will have to program the VCR to record as usual — except the channel will be set at “3” which is where you leave it (similar to what you did with the TV when you added in the VCR). Then you will have to go to the digital programming and that is where you would program in the actual stations. So — it would appear (again, I have not yet tried it and a lot of the local stations are already broadcasting in digital, so I should be able to see ...) you will be able to tape from multiple channels — but they are not making it easy. I am already irritated at the digital aspect since I spend a lot of time looking at a silent screen that is pixelated since the signal is not as strong (apparently) as the analog signal — not pleasant at all and a rather large step backwards. With analog I might have had a grainy image and shaky sound — but it would not be silent and frozen. When it’s good it’s very very good, but when it’s bad (most of the time so far!) it’s horrid.

Sorry this ran on for so long. I am still trying to figure out the laptop and its battery — which will neither run for very long nor recharge — so I am presuming that means I need to replace it. In the group that works with these older laptops they listed a reset freeware for the battery, so I managed to download it and am now trying to see if that actually solved the problem.

Such fun! Thanks for this!

From: **Robert Lichtman** October 15, 2008
11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA
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A few comments on the October *Alexiad*:

You write, “Speaking of someone who has a Facebook page, I wonder about the community feeling the users have.” And, “It is possible to use them as an auxiliary to connections.” I have one, just this year, and use it exclusively as a means to maintain contact with my sons. One of them traveled for four months in SE Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) and posted gobs of photos on Facebook. I know a lot of fans are on Facebook, too, but I haven’t gone the route of linking up since there are so many other (more satisfying and less annoying) ways of communication.

I enjoyed your Denvention/travel account, especially that unlike many fans’ vacation/convention reports you didn’t go into huge detail about every last thing you ate. Sounds like you had a good time. And I was gripped by your Hurricane Ike account. “Wednesday morning I braced myself and emptied the refrigerator.” That has to have been one of the most traumatic parts of the whole experience. We have a double-door refrigerator/freezer and a separate large freezer, and the prospect of having all the food in them go bad—especially with no electricity to cook/warm it—creeps me out.

Marty Helgesen’s reference to what Oliver J. Dragon used to say brought back memories of

how much I disliked the “Kukla Fran & Ollie” show when I was a kid and it was one of the shows aimed at my age group. Even “Howdy Doody” was better than that, though over time one tired of Clarabelle’s seltzer bottle antics. He also writes, “I don’t recall ever finding a way to do quasiquotes on a computer.” I did—back in the days of DOS WordPerfect I had a macro that used the “ and the - and advance left, advance right. It worked just fine in a fixed-size font like Courier, but was somewhat problematic in others. I don’t have it anymore, and although I think I could re-create it for Times New Roman I would have to do a different one for each point size.

WordPerfect for Windows has an overstrike feature, so I can compose a quasiquote, thus: “

Milt Stevens writes, “Robert Lichtman is almost certain to mention that Jack Speer wasn’t the only surviving founding member of FAPA. He was the only founding member who was still a member and had been a member continuously from the beginning. Forry Ackerman and Frederik Pohl were also charter members, but they both dropped years ago.” There are a couple schools of thought about who qualifies as a charter member. Some say that everyone who joined up to the point where the original membership limit of fifty, while others restrict “charter” to the 21 who’d been on the roster in the first mailing. By the stricter standard, Pohl does qualify—but so do Dave Kyle and Robert Madle, both of whom are still alive. But Ackerman wouldn’t, having been the 43rd member to sign up.

As if we need another reminder that we are coming to the inevitable time when our foundations will be but history.

— JTM

From: **John Thiel** October 15, 2008
30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904-
2950 USA

I can appreciate Lisa’s comment about believing something won’t happen because of one’s geographical location. I have never expected tornados and earth tremors in the middle of Indiana. The first is said to originate in conflicts of the elements on broad open prairies such as have existed in Kansas, whose tornados were brought to prominence in *The Wizard of Oz*. The second is attributed to geological shifts in mountainous regions near the ocean. But we’ve been having both here in recent years, as if dwellers in more troubled regions were willing their traditional woes upon us. Not so long back we had a typhoon. The Wabash River flooded some regions here too, and it is not a very big river. Also some tropical plants have been growing here, as if we were in Florida. So I can see why there is much talk about geological shifts.

I see Alexis Gilliland is bemoaning high winds some. Perhaps he is thinking back to

safer land, but if he’d been in town when the typhoon I mentioned happened, it’d have blown about him some.

E. B. Frohvet departs from Fandom! I’m surprised to see that. Busy with other matters, no doubt. Can no one prevent his departure?

The creativity on the back page shows a true parodist’s spirit. I found the reference to the maidservant’s style of speaking in *The Sound and the Fury* especially amusing. Is is a top secret who wrote these pieces?

The Faulkner one was the weakest one because I couldn’t pick up his style, so I had to copy a scene from the book, changing the names. The others I could do more originally.

— JTM

From: **Nancy Martsch** October 17, 2008
Post Office Box 55372, Sherman Oaks,
CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com



I received the latest issue of *Alexiad*. I enjoyed your reports on WorldCon, and the Heinlein Centennial. And the hurricane! A week without power! And I thought we had it bad when our power was out for two and a half days after the 1994 Northridge Earthquake. No electricity means

no lights, no refrigeration, no heat (electric thermostat), no vacuum cleaner (or sump pump), no streetlights or traffic signals, no gasoline (electric pump). No stove, either, if it was electric. (Ours was gas.) Electric gate openers won’t work, security systems are out. Oddly enough, the land-line telephones still functioned. But you know all this.

For us, life quickly reverted to ancestral patterns: early to bed and early to rise — take advantage of the daylight! Cook the main meal at midday, when it’s light enough to see to cook — and, more importantly, light enough to see to wash up. Eat the leftovers for supper. Rediscover canned and preserved foods. Buy ice.

“In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit,” just like that.

— JTM

One major difference between 1994 and today: in 1994 cell phones and laptops didn’t exist. How fast technology changes.

We had no ideal that Louisville, KY, was hit so hard. I’m glad you are unhurt and didn’t suffer major damage. Make sure your roof

doesn't leak after the apple bombardment.

From: **Evelyn Leeper** October 17, 2008
80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ
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Pity the poor guy at "History & Alternate History" (page 9, column 2). He was not asking a very rude and stupid question; he was trying to lead into a joke. However, the build-up *sounded* rude and stupid, and he got cut off before he could finish the punchline.

That is, he started by saying that many people say that Turtledove could not possibly do all the research and writing for his many books himself . . .

. . . which was followed by the question: so did Turtledove get help from other versions of himself in other timelines?

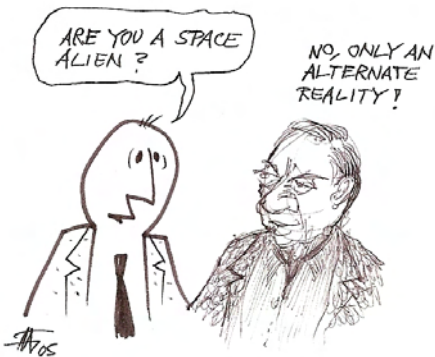
Unfortunately, few people heard the last part, because of Turtledove's fervent response.

Poorly phrased, yes, and obviously touching a sore point, but he was not trying to be rude.

Oh.

If he'd done that right, it **would** have been a hoot.

— JTM



From: **John Purcell** October 19, 2008
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Good morning, Joe and Lisa! I hope this day finds the two of you hale and hearty.

Like you two, Val and I survived Hurricane Ike with minimal damage. Our backyard fence did not blow down like we suspected it would; that would have given us the chance to use insurance money to replace it with better material. Oh, well. I hammered the few loosened slats back into place, and now it looks "normal" again, such as an old fence can appear to be normal. Some year that sucker will be replaced, though.

What surprises the bejeezus out of me is how you folks, much further inland than College Station, Texas, lost power for almost two weeks and we didn't lose any. The answer obviously lies in the track that Ike took. After it leveled

Galveston (one of our neighbors has been going back and forth to repair the TAMU branch of the fire school located there), Ike decided to travel literally straight up I-45 out of Houston, then veered slightly eastward as it encountered Arkansas. Can't say I blame it, either. That explains why the winds here topped out at 70 mph, while yours hit 85 mph; your area actually received more of a direct hit from the body of the storm, whereas our region of Texas, while still hit hard, received an outer arm blow. Kind of like a left roundhouse to the body, to keep the boxing analogy going. In any event, it was indeed a humbling experience, and taught us also to be prepared for future events like this.

Lessee . . . Joe muses on the first page about how Internet connections will affect families and friendships. A good question. My family is quite dispersed across America, and our primary means of connection are the telephone and Internet. All of my life I have never had cousins close by; dad got transferred to Minneapolis in late 1953, leaving his brother and parents in New York City. My mom's family likewise was centered in the New York area for years, until the Seventies when they started drifting across country. Now they're spread out fairly well, with a solid enclave focused in the Provo-American Fork area of Utah. My wife's family has pretty much stayed rooted to Iowa, so she grew up knowing grandparents and cousins on both parental sides all of her life. I never had that, and sometimes wish I did. I am positive the experience would have changed my concept of family quite differently from what it became.

A few years ago, I met a group of my relatives; two brothers and their eldest sons. They had never lived near any relative that they were aware of. And here Lisa and I had always had kin to hand. The comparison was mindboggling.

— JTM

Speaking of families, Here's a happy birthday wish in advance to Lisa and it's way cool to see that your wedding anniversary is 3 days before ours! Valerie and I will be marking our 19th anniversary on November 25th. Congratulations, you newlyweds. Enjoy your day!

I have been skimming through the book reviews in thisish, noting the two Harry Turtledove books you've read, both on your cross country jaunt to Denvention 3. I have been reading Turtledove's *Opening Atlantis* recently, but I'm taking it easy since doctoral and teaching work consume so much of my time. It is an enjoyable book, but not super-exciting or mind-blowing in terms of alternate history concepts and all. Still, he tells an entertaining story, so I am enjoying it on that level. Other than that, *Opening Atlantis* — the first book in a trilogy — is not one of those "gotta read" books. It's not bad, but not great.

Since I just mentioned Denvention3, your trip and con report were most enjoyable, too. It sure makes me wish I had been able to attend, but so it goes. You folks had a good time, and it

certainly sounds like overall it was a decent worldcon. I would also like to know how you can read so many books so quickly, even while driving! Oh — Lisa drives, too. Still, you must be a very fast reader.

I see a couple loccers made comments to me, so allow me to comment back at them. Taras Wolansky said that we can thank Mikhail Gorbachev for the downfall of the USSR similar to how Hitler caused the the Third Reich to fall. I disagree; Hitler over-extended his reach, tried to do much more than the resources of his country could handle. Gorbachev — whom I admire and respect for acknowledging the need of his country to interact with the West on many levels — was no Hitler, which Taras notes. Gorbachev was not an inept leader, nor a psychopath like Hitler. Both did, though, mismanage their resources and underestimated the resistance they would encounter; in that, they do share similarities. I still think Gorbachev was one of the most misunderstood Soviet leaders, both by the West and his own people. Of all the Soviet leaders, I think he was perhaps the most level-headed of them all. Putin is perhaps the fellow we need to be watching more closely, IMHO.

And then Jeffrey Allan Boman informs me that the Steven Brust incident at Con*Cept (I think) happened in 1992, and that he has never been invited back since. Well, I will admit that Steven can be brusque and rude when he wants to be, and probably was more that way back then than he is now. Age seems to have mellowed him out a bit — and he's a year younger than I am! Sheesh . . . At any rate, consider this topic closed.

A fine, fine issue, folks. So far I have been enjoying it (still reading it, in bits and pieces), and I'm almost done. If I think of anything else to add, I will probably fire off an addendum loc to you. In the meantime, enjoy yourselves, and let's hope no other big, nasty storms cause any more problems for any of us!

From: **Rod E. Smith** October 24, 2008
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In re. power outages, I'm a long-time "survivalist" and often urge friends and family members to prepare for these sorts of problems. A couple of years back I gave appropriate Christmas stocking-stuffers: large pillar candles in heat-resistant plastic trays with wax poured in for stability and to hold the candle. My sister had opportunity to use hers not long after.

Lowes — at least the one here in Frankfort — sells a Red Cross approved emergency gadget for around \$40 which is very handy. It's an AM/FM radio, light and siren, with a battery chargeable from multiple sources, including a built-in crank. You can find similar devices online or at other stores. Some come with solar panels, or you can find those separately. The Freeplay gadgets are about the top quality in this field.

My neighborhood is old, and we used to have power off for over three hours at least once

a year. So when I saw a semi-portable (it's on a two-wheel cart with an extendable handle, so you can haul it around) generator on sale a couple of years back I snatched it up. It's big enough to run at least one large appliance (refrigerator, chest freezer) and several medium and small ones at once, which is actually more than I need. Running a modern refrigerator or chest freezer for about an hour a day is enough to keep the frozen stuff frozen and the non-frozen stuff cool enough to last. Naturally, we've had fewer and shorter outages ever since. (The work of the local utility company to replace old lines and transformers may have something to do with that. :-)

As Lisa noted, running a generator inside is bad. If you do get one, make certain you have an extension cord which is long enough and heavy enough. Likewise, be very careful with flame heating and illuminating devices. If something isn't specifically rated for indoor use, don't use it indoors for more than long enough to get it going.

And make sure you have fuel for your generator. On the way to TorCon, we stayed with my cousin Kathy and her husband, Paul, in West Bloomfield. They had been hit by the great blackout. They had planned ahead and bought a generator. Paul told me how he had joined several thousand greater Detroitians in a vain quest for fuel.

— JTM

September was National Emergency Preparedness Month. I took the opportunity to dump all my emergency kits (one medium-sized one for the car, a couple of small ones in different pieces of luggage, and a big, multi-component one in the basement) and replace anything worn or expired, as well as add some stuff not previously in them. This sort of thing isn't particularly expensive, especially if you're not in a hurry. Buy stuff on sale as you encounter it.

I don't like to preach, but this is important. *Everyone* should have as a minimum a seventy-two hour kit for their home. That is, enough food, water, heat and light, plus medical supplies, for everyone to last for three days without outside assistance.

From: **Lloyd Penney** October 24, 2008
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Thank you for *Alexiad* WN 41. It is actually early in the morning as I type this, but when it will actually get to you, I am not sure. Such is typing this up on the road. Time to respond with something intelligent.

Given its location on the continent, you wouldn't think that a hurricane would ever hit Toronto, but it has. Hurricane Hazel hit Toronto in October 1954, and caused a lot of damage

and death as it crossed the continent and drove right up the Humber River in the west end of the city. It's 54 years this month, but who knows if it may happen again? This city learned the hard way that the unlikely may yet happen. I have a dynamo flashlight and radio, and when we've had storms here, and the power goes out, they've been vital to getting around and finding out what's happening.

There has been discussion here and there about how unfannish or non-fannish blogs and other social networking sites are...well, computers aren't inherently fannish, but we use them to do the things we like to do. LiveJournal acts as an online diary; I use it as an archive. I do have a Facebook page, and while it can be a terrible time-waster, it has been handy in finding old friends, those I first enjoyed fandom with, and even those I went to high school with. It has not found any other members of my family, though. A smart consumer of these products used them to their own ends only, and does not change his own habits to suit the product. If either LJ or Facebook fails to fulfill a need of mine, it's gone. Life is busy enough as it is.

How many consumers possess such wisdom? What I've seen is that the Fannish blogger becomes drawn into blogging, and away from the give-and-take of general fandom; and indeed, there is a tendency to become detached from fannish interests per se. I've seen a number of Fannish personalities vanish into the blogosphere.



I've been enjoying Denvention trip reports over the last couple of months. In some ways, I wish I'd been able to go, but only a lottery win would have gotten us there. By the time you receive this loc, we will have gone to Montréal's annual convention, Con*cept, to see what the Palais de Congres is like. It is mostly likely that Montréal will be our last Worldcon, although Yvonne likes the idea of going to Reno, and I like Seattle.

A Worldcon always has so much to go and see, and I always miss too many events. Yet, there's that feeling of belonging that seems so comfortable and affirming.

David Gilmour is mentioned as the author of

The Film Club. He was a film reviewer and broadcaster at the CBC for many years, and over the past decade or so, has concentrated on writing novels. Jesse is his son, so I guess that makes David the father figure. He used to be very visible locally on television.

Usually, the candy bar variations are not available here, so I don't pay much attention to something I won't be able to sample. However, here is Fry's Turkish Delight. This is a bar I've had before, and I used to get it sent to me from my grandparents. An older version of Turkish delight is a confection cut into cubes and dusted with icing sugar to keep it from sticking everywhere. However, I do like the chocolate-covered version.

I have gotten Kristina Kopnisky's newest *Consonant Enigma*, and she admits that it is a little fluffy, especially after a move from California to Oregon.

Employment so far . . . Tri-Ad/SGS is still keeping me, and I've been here about seven weeks now. I seem to be picking it up, and I am still hoping they decide to keep me. I won't know until early December. Americans have had to deal with an impending election for about two years now, but in Canada, our current federal election has a campaign period of 37 days, and as always, this election solved and changed nothing.

I may try to find that fan-ed's dinner next year. I saw Cathy Palmer-Lister at Con*cept, usually at the registration desk.

We will strive to draw you in.
(Insert scene of Guy and me
dragging you down the street to
the restaurant.)

— JTM

Why do I want to understand evil? I want to understand why these things were done, and what the motives were of those who committed those acts. Once there is some understanding, we have conquered our enemies by knowing why they did what they did. Perhaps they may have felt justified in what they did; let's find out why. I can't understand why anyone wouldn't want to know all the reasons for 9/11.

Scratch my head, and fold it up. This week, I have odd hours and a convention to go to. All I can say is that this loc will get to you eventually. Take care, always looking forward to the next issue.

From: **Milt Stevens** October 26, 2008
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In *Alexiad* V7#5, Lisa talks about the revelations that can come from having a hurricane in your neighborhood. I suppose it's true that a disaster that usually doesn't happen in your area may happen anyway. I did see some of those stories about much of the Midwest being under water. That was a surprising. It's California that's supposed to fall into the ocean. Of course, there was a Kansas-Nebraska Sea a few thousand years ago, so I guess having a

bunch of water in the middle of the continent must be possible. Look on the bright side. A new Midwestern Sea would create some great real estate opportunities.

In general, I just expect the usual disasters. Where I live we have earthquakes. At 900 feet above sea level, my area isn't very likely for flooding. A Tsunami probably won't get us either. We do have some really big fires. We had a couple of them about a month ago. I had the symptoms of having a really bad cold for about a week without really having a cold. It took about another week for all the ash to get out of my lungs. I've always suspected Southern California was more likely to have a visit from space aliens than just about anyplace else on earth. I think they would feel more at home around here.

Before reading Johnny Carruthers's review of "The Mentalist," I didn't really know anything about it. I suspected it was about crime, and I usually avoid things about crime. Crime is OK for a business, but I don't find it particularly entertaining. The review makes it sound like "The Mentalist" is pretty much the same idea as another current show, "Psych." In "Psych", a guy is pretending to be a psychic while actually doing Sherlockian observation and deduction. He does his investigations accompanied by a Black Watsonlike character. I don't recall why I watched a couple of episodes of the show. I thought the premise was interesting, but the actor who played the lead character was annoying. If I don't like the characters in a TV show, I won't watch it for long.

By now, Denvention seems like a long time ago. The convention I attended and the convention you attended intersected at a few points. I attended the "Pub Your Ish" panel and the faneds luncheon. I also hung around the fanzine lounge some. It seemed conveniently located between hither and yon, and the last place, and the next place.

I was on a total of six panels at Denvention. The strangest one was a 10 pm cannibalism in SF panel at the Sheraton. That panel was the first time I made it to the Sheraton. After I arrived at the Sheraton, it started raining in buckets, and I wondered how I was going to get back to the Hyatt Regency where I was staying. The panel had three people on it and an attendance of eight. By the end of the panel, it had stopped raining and I did make it back to my hotel.

They put me on one of the pre-Opening Ceremonies panels, and while a number of people showed up, I have to wonder if we made any impression. It also did things to our travel plans.

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** October 22, 2008
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CANADA

It's pouring down rain, same as it did when

Ike reached here. That's all that happened to us; you folks were affected rather worse.

Much confusing things in this issue such as why Lisa's odyssey to find power to reach the modern day magic land . . .

And whether your cousin is named Rives or Reeves; presumably a typo on one side or another. Don't you edit these things?

Rives.

I was intrigued that no one apparently objects to *File 770* winning the Best Fanzine Hugo for the 7th or so time while there was such a kerfuffle about *Ansible* winning that it was placed in another category. But although I never received either directly, based on the 7 or 8 copies of the former and the dozen or so copies of the latter that various folks sent me, there is not much difference. Yes, *File 770* is based in the U.S. and is much thicker and appears much less often. Aren't they much the same, otherwise?

I haven't seen "kerfuffle" spelled "curfuffle"; my first encounter with the word was 45 or 50 years ago when my grandmother, God be good to her, used it. I have encountered it from time to time, here and there. Can't recall where I first saw it in print but I think it was in a pro wrestling fanzine. I seem to remember seeing or hearing it in college which was, oh, 25 years before I had any idea there was such a thing as sf fandom. More like 30 years.

Foofaraw is a politician's word, is it not?

The radio cost \$5 and the batteries cost \$10???? Sheesh.



Hey, would you consider listing paper fanzines separate from ezines? Why, you wonder. Well . . . probably it doesn't matter. I spent about 5 minutes awhile ago pondering the possibilities of trying to resurrect *The Leighton Look* as a pure reviewzine and later on, well, I have a copy or two left of my last zine like thing and I have been contemplating mailing it off to someone and see what if anything comes back. So if I hope to get a fanzine back, send it to a publisher. Well, who or which. Some of your listings are obvious: *Plokta* is apparently now ezine only which is rather ironic considering it began as a fanzine poking fun at superfluous technology; *Opuntia* is obviously still on paper only. Actually I guess it is fairly obvious. Bob

Sabella makes paper copies for those he wants to; I have no idea if Guy Lillian makes paper copies still or not; I have heard that John Purcell is strictly electronic and also that he does some paper copies. I suspect a person who was unaware of these folks and had no history would find some listings confusing but most are obvious and I don't suppose it would be worthwhile to split them up.

Plokta still sends out paper copies, but apparently on a delayed schedule. Challenger has a few paper copies.

— JTM

From: **Jerry Kaufman** October 29, 2008
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Am I really in the
Alexiad lettercol...?



Thanks for the issue of *Alexiad* — I found some interesting stuff in there. Your reading interests don't seem to overlap with mine very much — I only read minimally in alternate history, for instance. And our tastes are different — I enjoyed *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* although I couldn't say if it deserved its Hugo, since I didn't read any of the other nominated novels. I read it shortly after I finished another novel called *The Damascus Gate*, by Robert Stone. This takes place in Jerusalem, and concerns a hapless journalist's almost accidental involvement with apocalyptic plotters hoping to bring the Messiah by blowing up the Dome on the Rock. The two books seemed to partake of the same mental space.

I read your Worldcon report with the greatest attention, Joe, because Suzle and I were unable to attend. (We'd made all our plans, but my mother's health took a serious turn for the worse, and we stayed home.) I made a few tick marks in your tiny margins.

You thought Fred Lerner was Robert Lichtman? How strange — they look nothing alike.

That's not the half of it. I saw Fred, and my mind clicked, "Robert Lichtman" — whom I don't believe I've ever even seen!

What was the rude and stupid question the audience member asked of Harry Turtledove? You intrigued me.

I wish especially that we could have been there for the "Pubbing Your Ish" panel and the Faneds Feast. The lack of new faces you noticed is nothing new. We've had very few new fan publishers in the US for many years now; for

some reason, the UK has a steady, if small, trickle of neos that keep things a little fresher there. The question of why, and how to attract new faneds, has been chewed on at every con I've attended where two or three gather.

Perhaps we'll manage to get to Montreal and eat with you all. Meanwhile, I'll have to be satisfied with Corflu, which will take place here in Seattle in March. Thanks to the economy, it may be a small one, but so far we have word of at least a handful of Brits who will attend.

Guy and I may have our hands full of Penneys, but we may be able to spare some time for you.

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** October 30, 2008
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 7.5, which was waiting for us when we got back from Albacon, held up in — where else, Albany, NY. The trip north was graced with some early peak autumn foliage, but it remains a long, long drive. Were it not for Lee's enthusiasm I'd likely have given it a miss, but we had a good time, even though to some extent I was trailing along in her wake. Coming home we stopped at Borden Town for dinner and filled the tank at \$2.89/gal. vs \$3.18 on the Jersey Turnpike. As time goes by the price of gas continues to go down, so two weeks later the local Shell station is offering at \$2.75.

On the way back from Lisa's Great-Aunt Marjie's funeral, I filled up in Henderson for \$1.74, and then on Thanksgiving there it was \$1.49 (but it went up again).

Lisa mentions Hurricane Ike unexpectedly sweeping through the Louisville and doing considerable damage. Hurricane Hanna came up the east coast, and while there was wind damage to the north, locally we got some serious rain, here in South Arlington 8.5 inches in 12 hours. I had mentioned the work we had done in the driveway, in order to make the basement more water resistant. We rolled the rug up anyway, and while there was a minor incursion of water, it was gone the next day. So it isn't perfect, it's still a whole lot better than what we had.

The economy is perplexing, an enigma wrapped in a riddle wrapped in an incomprehensible mathematical theory designed to separate the customers from their money. Having a genuine crisis coming to a head in the middle of a presidential election campaign is new in my experience, although there was plenty of notice given by the various economic indicators, not to mention a few unheeded voices warning of impending trouble. Certainly one of the problems is that the economy has a number of institutions that were regarded as too big to fail, but which, upon closer inspection, also turn out to be too big to bail out. The turbo-economy, fuelled by too many years in which both government and the consumer were

spending above net disposable income, (i.e. going into debt) peaked at a Dow Jones Index of about 14,000. Paying down both public and private debt, as the American consumer goes back to saving will mean a whole lot less consumption, which in turn means a whole lot smaller economy. What the bottom of the market will be when Joe Six-Pack is obliged to become a net saver is a question only the market can answer.

For the last two weeks Lee has been ready to put the old website up, as www.alexisgilliland.com or also .net. Alas, the problem(s) being those early errors of commission made as she went up the learning curve that first have to be rectified. Yes, there may be a great fanzine article here, but both of us could have done without the aggravation. October 31st, with a little help from her friends, what she has been working on is now up as www.alexisgilliland.org. In time, we will no doubt get the .com up as well, since the mills of customer service grind slowly, if maybe less fine than one might hope. A second letter will likely follow after the election, but for now I've copied some cartoons for your contemplation and possible use. What else? Up at Albacon, Lee bought volume seven of Phil and Kaja Foglio's "Girl Genius," which I looked over. Very nicely done, yes, so when we got home, I dug up volumes one through six and read them. Hard to categorize except maybe as a serialized graphic novel coming out in annual installments, but GG is well written, beautifully drawn, and includes a lot of funny stuff. I'd call it first rate entertainment, adapting the old pulp style to contemporary sensibilities. Which is to say I liked it a lot. That should do for now.

It's "Q.E.D." for the modern sensibility, such as what the protagonist can be.

— JTM



November 13, 2008

The celebration of the 40th anniversary of hosting science fiction in my house provided an excuse to have the maids come in and the rugs steam cleaned (Q. why the rugs? A. they needed cleaning, and if not now, when?) Lee also had a good time putting up the decorations, most of which went out with the trash on Wednesday, though we still have three mylar balloons with 40 on them in place. I also got a little trophy, inscribed with:

40 YEARS OF
PUTTING UP WITH
SF FANS
November 7, 2008

We had a small party Friday, a big party Saturday, and on Sunday — the second Sunday of the month, we had a dozen people in for the meetup group, the largest turnout so far. So that all in all we had a very successful weekend. We went through seven bottles of Asti Spumante, with five left over for future consumption, and associated other stuff. On Monday it was suggested that we might use the remains of the party for a celebration at Philcon. I said, no thanks, I had had quite enough of anniversary celebrations. The whole thing felt a bit like a convention, actually. That should do for now.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Nov. 6, 2008
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Happy belated birthday to Lisa. Congratulations on your upcoming 12th anniversary. Mike and I have been married for nine and a half years.

Sorry to hear you weren't able to find a suitable place to eat in Abilene. We ate at the Kirby House Restaurant and were so pleased with the place that we went back. I just called them to make sure they're still in business, and they are. They advise reservations.

Your accounts of a hurricane that far inland were very interesting. Times are changing. Even better for emergencies than a battery-powered radio is a crank radio. There are no batteries to have to worry about. If you keep a battery-powered radio for emergencies, you need to keep fresh batteries with them at all times; remove the batteries when you're not using the radio.

We have lots of batteries.

We are being kept very busy with home-building activities. The frame is mostly up now, and windows and French doors are being ordered next Monday (6 November) and are expected to be delivered in two weeks.

From: **Jim Stumm** November 1, 2008
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Richard Dengrove: You ask about my sources. I read a lot of books about the Roman Empire. I'm reading 3 at the moment about various aspects of Rome. And I have many others on my shelves that I have already read. I also get some relevant information from the internet, particularly from: allempires.net and roman-empire.net.

My position on the Fall of the Roman Empire is that it was the result of several factors, and it's useless to try to narrow it down to one single main cause. But in all my reading about it, I have never seen anyone else claim that a

change to a colder climate was the cause. And since you can't give us any particular source for your opinion, I'll take it for what it's worth.

I have also read in passing something about that 6th century volcano causing cold summers and crop failures. I'd like to find out more about that. Googling "6th century volcano" I find the date is 535 AD give or take a year. But that would have been a century too late to have anything to do with the Fall of Rome. It may perhaps be the cause of the Dark Ages, roughly 500 to 800 AD, called "dark" because of the scarcity of historical records for that time.

You say that this is the volcano that produced the cold you're talking about. And you add you would have thought that the cold had begun earlier. Why would you think that? Apparently you have no evidence to support such a supposition. The effects of a volcanic eruption don't occur in the century before the volcano erupts.

There are traces of an eruption in AD 535 CE at Krakatau, but no written records. On the other hand, there are written records of an eruption in AD 416 CE, but no physical traces.

I don't recall reading anything that suggests there was a decline in population among barbarians before the Fall of Rome. There was depopulation within the Roman Empire. And Romans frequently allowed barbarians to come in and settle on depopulated lands inside the Empire. I get the impression of endless hordes of barbarians pressing against the borders of the Empire.

George W. Price: There are 3 operative clauses in the 14th Amendment, which I will somewhat condense here: No state shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens; nor deprive any person of life, liberty, or property; nor deny any person the equal protection of the laws. Your reading, that the Amendment means that states could not treat blacks and whites differently, would seem to be covered by the "equal protection of the laws" clause, which suggests that the privileges or immunities clause must mean something in addition to that.

The "life, liberty, or property" clause is a new restriction placed on what states may do. It is, in fact, the same language we find in the 5th Amendment where it applies only to the Federal Government. So here we have an explicit instance of incorporation.

You note that the incorporation doctrine, relating to the First Amendment, was not promulgated until after the authors of the 14th were safely dead, so they could not object. But the same thing could be said of the equal treatment of whites and blacks doctrine which was not promulgated by the Supreme Court until "Brown vs. Board of Education" (1954). Before that, many states did discriminate against blacks without any objection from the Supreme Court.

Alexis A. Gilliland: You refer to the long duration of space travel. This is a problem with today's chemical rockets that coast unpowered for most of the trip. But a nuclear-thermal or

nuclear-electric propulsion system would make a dramatic difference. Such propulsion would make possible continuous thrust throughout an interplanetary voyage. The spaceship would accelerate to the midpoint of the trip, then flip over and decelerate at the same rate to the destination. How much time would this save? In a letter in *Living Free* 129, Oct 2004, George W. Price presents a formula for how long such a trip would take. Using his formula, I calculate that at a constant acceleration of just 1% of G (gravity at surface of Earth) a trip from Earth to Mars would take from 19 to 46 days depending on whether Mars is closest to, or farthest from, Earth at the time, a huge improvement over the 8 months or so it would take with a chemical rocket.

I also calculated that the 1% of G constant boost system would cut the trip to the Moon down from 3 days to 1 1/2 days. Saving 1 1/2 days normally would hardly matter. The constant boost nuclear spaceship makes a real difference only over long distances where it has time to build up a high velocity.

What I have in mind is a nuclear spaceship that begins and ends interplanetary journeys in Earth orbit, built in space and never landing on Earth. Or it might operate from a base on the Moon. Building such a ship requires engineering development but no new scientific breakthroughs. The obstacles to nuclear power in space are political, not technical, but it may indeed be fantasy to imagine that such political barriers can be surmounted.

Them's mighty big words for one little loc!



From: **Richard Dengrove** Nov. 9, 2008
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Enjoyed *Alexiad* October 2008. Of course, there is going to be a plethora of comments.

Staked. In your comment on this book you mention Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's hero, Count Saint-Germain. This gives me an excuse to expound on the real Saint-Germain. I am taking a lot of this from A.E. Waite's account in *The Brothers of the Rosy Cross* (1924).

Apparently, he really existed. He lived in 18th Century France (died 1784). In addition, he actually was very accomplished at alchemy, painting and music. That part of the legend was true. However, his alchemy was more practical chemistry than the search for the philosopher stone. It certainly didn't amount to finding the philosopher stone.

Another of his talents was being able to rub people the right way. Both men and women

sung his praises. It was two women of the French court who laid the foundation for his reputation as a godman.

On the other hand, he was a ninny when it came to some things. Apparently he couldn't lie worth a damn. That did not hold him in good stead when he tried to make peace between France and England, and he had no diplomatic credentials. In fact, he courted big trouble.

August 13, 2008. Joe, you talk about the John Birch Society, which claimed that Eisenhower was a puppet of his brother, Milton, and Milton was a Communist. I hear later on the Birch Society decided that the conspiracy behind the Communists was the Illuminati. Do you know anything about this?

Sometime along the eighties or so the intellectual theorists of the Birchers decided that the Communists were themselves a front, for a group they called the Insiders.

August 16th. You were tempted by a long dagger in the huckster room but didn't buy it. I had a more extended adventure with a dagger. A friend of mine bought one at a thrift store, and figured it was a military ceremonial dagger. But from where and for whom?

Somehow I took a fancy to his quest. We tried everything. I started with reference books, but I couldn't find any on the subject. Among the leads was the Italian company that made it; but when I called, no one there spoke English.

Finally, I called an office of the Department of Defense which dealt with museums. In turn, I got referred to some expert on ceremonial gear. I emailed him pictures of the dagger, and he had someone else analyze them. That person concluded it was bestowed by a Italian naval academy that he named.

Because we found the Where, I don't think we did badly. It really would have been exceptional, however, if we had found out Who it had been bestowed upon and How it ended up in a thrift store.

Henry Welch. I forgot what Joe wrote about Peter Ustinov. I have comments nonetheless. Apparently, his father was Ion Baron von Ustinov, known informally as Klop. He was descended from German nobility.

Peter's father wasn't a purebred German, however. The Wikipedia article on Peter says the father was also descended from Russian and Ethiopian nobility. In addition, he had Jewish blood.

On the other hand, Peter's mother had French and Italian blood.

Even that may have understated Peter's bloodlines. I looked up his lineage because I remembered an article in an old hardcover *Horizon* magazine in the '50s. My parents subscribed to it. The issue had a much longer list of the nationalities in Peter's heritage. Unfortunately, I have forgotten nearly all of the rest, except Spanish.

And now we have the Turk in London, Iskender Boris Kemal Bey

— Boris Johnson, that is, whose great-great-grandmother was a Circassian slave girl, whose great-grandmother had a Swiss father and a British mother (that's where the "Johnson" came from), whose mother is Jewish, and whose mother-in-law is a Hindu Sikh. Oh, and he's descended from George II. "Sir Boris Johnson, K.G."?

— JTM

Lloyd Penney. Once again I have to tell Lloyd I hope a job, this time at Tri-Ad, ends in permanent employment. Also I hope he can end the worst job most people have, job hunting.

Robert S. Kennedy. I have read where people call Rosslyn Chapel The Rose Chapel. That is probably why I used the name. After some research, however, I found the Chapel's website calls it the Rosslyn Chapel, and infers that the name The Rose Chapel was probably inspired by the *DaVinci Code*.

George W. Price. About the current financial crises, did the government start the speculation by printing up money, or did the speculators pressure the government into doing that so they could speculate? Which came first: the chicken or the egg? I gather Greenspan admitted he loosened up money to help the speculators because he believed their pie-in-the sky ideas.

Taras Wolansky. If the wages go up too much, will it discourage enterprise and make for unemployment? Of course. As to whether doubling the minimum wage will do it, I don't know.

From: **John Hertz** November 10, 2008
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Thanks for *Alexiad* 7/5.

Allow me to join those who suggest that, although the Air Force Academy Library may lack *Heinlein's Children*, it may hold cadets inspired by the "juveniles" and thus in some sense Heinlein's children.

One hopes; but they had to take down the sign on the door that said, "StarGate Command" because someone Didn't Get It.

— JTM

With due respect, the thought of "Turkish Delight" covered in chocolate still boggles my mind. In Japan I tried a green-tea flavored Kit Kat.

Wasn't it smokeless powder that brought an end to bright-colored combat uniforms?

Marty Helgesen has seen quasiquotes in *Vanamonde*.

From: **George W. Price** November 14, 2008
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690-3228 USA
price4418@comcast.net

October *Alexiad*:

Joe's Denvention trip report mentions

Denver having at least one intersection where red lights stop auto traffic on *both* streets and pedestrians then cross in all directions, including diagonally. This is called the "Barnes Dance," after Henry Barnes who popularized it around 1951. He was traffic commissioner in Denver, and later in Baltimore and New York. I believe the Barnes Dance was also used for a while in Evanston, next door to Chicago. It appears to be one of those seemingly good ideas which has never really caught on. Perhaps that's because big-city downtowns have become less crowded with pedestrians as outlying malls have taken away shoppers, so it is less necessary to favor pedestrian traffic.

Denver, like Louisville, has a downtown pedestrian mall. In fact, Louisville has a number of places in the central city where there are shops and other pedestrian-attracting facilities; but we don't have the "Barnes Dance".

— JTM

* * * * *

Marty Helgesen discusses how the meaning of "celibate" has changed in recent times. I am one of those who had always understood it to mean "refraining from sexual activity"; I had never heard of the older original meaning of "unmarried." But my dictionaries confirm Marty. However, I plan to keep right on using it in the modern sense.

* * * * *

Henry Welch notes that even if (as Jim Stumm said) there is no federal power regarding education, Congress can still act in that area by requiring the states to obey its wishes or forfeit certain federal subsidies. Very true, alas; that's how the buggers evade the Constitution. A properly strict interpretation would forbid those subsidies — or any other activity — outside of areas where Congress has enumerated powers.

* * * * *



In my continuing argument with Jim Stumm, we are agreed that the First Amendment properly limits only the federal government, not the states. The question is to what extent, if any, was the First originally intended to prevent the feds from prosecuting obscenity, pornography, libel, etc., in those territories where the feds had

primary jurisdiction (Mr. Stumm's "Federal Zone"). He says that he doesn't think there was any federal law against publishing obscenity "before the middle of the 19th century" and challenges me to cite a case from back then. Well, I can't do that without a lot of legal research that I don't have the time or skill for, so he may be right.

However, I am a little dubious about his statement that obscenity "wasn't much of a concern as long as dirty books were expensive and so available only to the upper classes. It was only when cheaper volumes became available to the lower classes in the late 19th century that the pornography panic (Comstockery) ensued." Against this I will cite *Fanny Hill*, which was published in 1749 but was not allowed to be imported into this country until around 1960. Presumably there were federal laws requiring customs inspectors to seize any such imports, and I never heard of anybody evading such a law by citing the First Amendment. And when did federal law begin prohibiting sending obscenity and pornography through the mail? Though I suppose that could be rationalized by saying that the government owned the postal system and could therefore choose what it would carry.

We might also suspect that social opposition to the publication of pornography, etc., was so strong that no one would try to defend it, even if it might technically be legal. And as Mr. Stumm notes, "When the issue has been raised, the controversy has always been: what is obscenity? What constitutes libel?" Now I would take that to mean that it was always accepted that obscenity and libel, etc., could be prohibited and prosecuted, so the only possible defense was to claim that a particular publication was not really obscene or libelous.

I also note that the Constitution (Art. I, Sect. 6) says that Congressmen "shall not be questioned in any other place" for statements made in Congress. This implies that without this exemption, they could be "questioned" — i.e., sued for libel or slander. Is there reason to doubt that "any other place" means everywhere except Congress, including Mr. Stumm's "Federal Zone"? That is, the Founders anticipated that there would be laws against libel and slander everywhere, including the "Federal Zone," and therefore felt the need to specifically exempt speeches in Congress.

On the question of whether the 14th Amendment applied to the states the same limitations regarding free speech and press, etc., that the Bill of Rights imposed on the federal government, Mr. Stumm cites the *Slaughterhouse Cases* decision of 1873: "The Supreme Court in effect nullified the privileges and immunities clause of the 14th. It was only in the mid-20th century that the Supreme Court . . . in effect [restored] the original meaning of the 14th as a pro-freedom limitation on the powers of the states." I looked up the *Slaughterhouse Cases* online, and a quick perusal persuades me that the 1873 decision was right; the "original meaning of the 14th" was only to protect the rights of former slaves as citizens of the U.S.; it was not intended to limit the powers of states

over other matters. (The Slaughterhouse Cases adjudicated claims that the 14th pre-empted the right of Louisiana to regulate slaughterhouses in certain ways, not involving race.) The Supreme Court did not nullify "the privileges and immunities clause of the 14th," because that clause referred only to the privileges and immunities conferred by national citizenship, not state citizenship. And the differences between national and state citizenship were much more clearly drawn back then; the very idea of such a difference has now practically disappeared.

By the way, Mr. Stumm mentions "the dubious way" the 14th Amendment was ratified, as a precondition for the Southern states to be readmitted to the Union. True. Even more dubious was the whole idea of "readmitting" the rebellious states. A key point of the Civil War (or the War of Southern Independence, if you prefer) was that the federal government claimed that states *could not legally secede*. Legally then, they did *not* secede, they only *claimed* to have seceded, and traitorously behaved as if they had seceded. So legally they did not need to be readmitted, since they had never left the Union; they had only *tried* to leave. (Never mind that it took four years of brutal warfare to convince them of that.) All that should have been necessary was for Congress to seat the senators and representatives of the formerly rebellious states as soon as they presented themselves, after ascertaining that each individual was not disqualified as a traitor for fighting in the late rebellion.

Looked at from a different angle, if the rebellious states had really seceded and were thus no longer part of the Union, then repossessing them was an act of conquest against a foreign nation. Further, their approval of the 14th Amendment would not have been necessary, because it needed only to be confirmed by three-fourths of the states of the Union, and they were no longer in the Union. And once the 14th was approved by the states of the truncated Union, it would go into effect at once and not need to be ratified by the rebellious states not yet readmitted. (When Hawaii and Alaska were admitted to the Union, I don't think they had to individually ratify the already existing constitutional amendments.)

In sum, from a legal point of view the treatment of the former Confederacy was highly illogical, not to say self-contradictory. But then, logicity has never been a defining characteristic of politicians.

The editors note that they had trouble getting a mortgage, because they wanted to pay 50% down, which was too much. You mean they wanted you to borrow more, so they would collect more interest? My experience was the opposite. When we bought our house in 1999, our down payment was a bit over 25% (\$50,000 out of \$195,000). This helped us win the bidding against another buyer who also offered \$195,000, but with a smaller down payment.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 17, 2008
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
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robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 7, No. 5.

Southern California is burning down. Numerous terrible fires with temperatures in the 90's and extremely high winds. No doubt you have seen this on TV and in newspapers. It's horrible. There is suspicion that some of the fires may have been set. My attitude is that anyone who is convicted of setting fires like these should go to prison for life. If anyone dies as a result of fires like these the person(s) should be executed.

You have heard about the guy
who got hit with a \$101 million fine
for starting one of those fires?
As a capper, he's homeless!

— JTM

In your review of *Destroyermen: Into the Storm* (p. 5-7) you make mention of Edward L. Beach and his book *Run Silent, Run Deep* (1955). Captain Beach was also the author of the outstanding *SCAPEGOATS: A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor* (1995).

Your getting hit by the remnants of Hurricane Ike and having your power off for what looks like a week was terrible. As a result of various earthquakes and one incredible lightning storm, the longest my power has been off has been eleven or twelve hours.

I would like to highly recommend *By Schism Rent Asunder* by David Weber (2008). It is by far the best that I have read in some time. It kept me fully engrossed. If you haven't read *Off Armageddon Reef* (2007) that was reviewed by Joe in April 2008 (p. 6) as yet, then that should be done before reading his newest in the series.

The death of Michael Crichton at age 66 is truly a tragedy.

Jim Sullivan: Thank you for your review and recommendation (June 2007) of *The Making of the Fittest: DNA and the Ultimate Forensic Record of Evolution* by Sean B. Carroll (2006). I finally obtained the book from the library and found it to be all you said.

Rodford Edmiston Smith: Excellent article on "Terminal Effects" (p. 15-17). I sent a copy to a friend. Also, enjoyed was your review of *Oval Office Oddities: An Irreverent Collection of Presidential Facts, Follies and Foibles* (p. 17). I'm going to obtain a copy.

Johnny Carruthers: My thanks for your review of *The Mentalist*. I had seen some reviews of the show and didn't think much of it so didn't watch. After reading your positive review I decided to watch. Since it comes on right after one of my favorite shows (*NCIS*) I taped them both. You are right about *The Mentalist* and I will now have to keep watching it.

AL du Pisani: I add my support to Joe's "welcome to modern America" in response to your comments about the education system in South Africa.

Sue Burke: Thank you for your commentary

on Silvio Berlusconi in Italy and your explanation.

From: **Henry Welch** November 23, 2008
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CA 95033-9562 USA
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Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. Your zine contained the first Denvention report I'd seen.

John Purcell should eat his candy bars in California where cellphone use is now required to be hands-free. I have not noticed any change in overall driving habits.

I installed XP service pack 3 on an ancient laptop (at least 5 years old) and another not so old. I did not have any problems, but then I did wait a number of weeks to see if any problems would be reported as I recall the grief associated with service pack 2 a number of year ago.



From: **Dainis Bisenieks** November 21, 2008
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA

Please! When I write "Hilary" and "he", who are you to edit my words? My late wife's brother had been one Jim among many, and took to calling himself Hilary — or Hilaria among Latin Americans. After his death in 1986, there was really no other namesake for our son, born 1987. Mrs. Clinton (with double L) was then a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. When that version first split off, I have no idea. I have been alert for occurrences of the name Hilary in 20th c. English literature; the one female comes quite early, in *The Nine Tailors*. And there is still Hilary Knight, who did the art for the "Eloise" books. It's Hilary of Poitiers whose feast say is January 13, when Hilary Term begins.

Sometimes the type is rawther
hard to read, as Eloise would put it.

As the library did not have it, I went and bought a new tp of *Medicus* by Ruth Downie. I'm sure I would have spotted its identity with the book reviewed in *TLS* even without your

reminder. I'm about halfway through the book, quite okay so far. Its depiction of army life leads me to wonder what the Latin was for snafu and fubar. Even the soldiers of King Eannatum of Lagash, marching in orderly ranks over the tastefully arranged bodies of slain enemies as depicted on the Stele of the Vultures, must have experienced their share of disorder.

The sequel, *Terra Incognita*, (like the other, a more dignified title than the U.K. edition's) did show up at the library. I have a way of flitting from book to book; owning a book means not having to read it at once.

In my reading and proofreading, I have become aware of the use of "sung" for "sang" and several others of that ilk; somehow these things had not obtruded themselves before. But then I acquired, as library discards, a comple of volumes of Boswell on the Grand Tour, and that is exactly his usage, 250 years ago. And Shakespeare, as we know, is full of irregularities, and who are we to say they are wrong? As between "lie" and "lay", I sometimes incline to preserve the idiom. Play it like it lays.

Otherwise in recent proofreading, I raised the question of journals. In the ordinary way, first-person narration does not cause us to ask how and when the narration is effected. But in the novel recently at hand, three characters in alternation carry the story forward, and at least two of them are writing it in journals; how they find the time is an interesting question. But late in the story they suffer shipwreck, and a bunch of the journals are lost! It would be best, I remarked, to downplay the journal-writing bit.

See also Vandenberg: A Novel (1971) [alternative title; Defiance: An American Novel (1984)] by "Oliver Lange" [John Wadleigh], where the often-referenced journals of the eponymous protagonist are being burned at the end of the book.

— JTM

In one of the whodunits by Sarah Caudwell, a narrator reported to home base by Telex, going on and on in full narrative mode. I had my doubts about the plausibility of this. By the way, I read recently that some Telex machines are still in use. Something about the document as received being treatable as an original. But I can imagine the discrepancy between composing speed, transmitting speed, and receiving-and-typing speed.

Well, I still use this Stone Age typewriter; I've never had that much use for e-mail, much less a cell phone and text messaging. When I get a letter, I reply at leisure, often writing increments over the span of a week or more.

Philcon impends, but I thought I'd get this off; I may write and send another installment if anything interesting happens.

From: **Sue Burke** November 29, 2008
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mount.oregano.livejournal.com

On Nov. 5, Spaniards realized that none of their politicians could aspire to the eloquence and, especially, the graciousness of McCain and Obama in their concession and victory speeches. In fact, few if any could equal the speaking skills of Sarah Palin on the stump. Political speeches here are usually gruff and nasty, at best well reasoned but never compelling.

What gives American politicians such eloquence? According to experts: long experience with democracy that imparts respect both for opponents and for the moral basis of democracy; campaigns that require knowing how to present oneself on television; a political system that focuses on candidates rather than parties; experience with public speaking that starts in grade school; awareness of the elements of good political discourse; attention to speech-writing skills; and a willingness to rehearse exhaustively.

Spanish politicians now want to be like American politicians. But they would have to work much harder, even put in a full day's work. And it would kill them be as gracious as Bush has been to Obama. I don't think this fad will last.

Meanwhile, Spain's economy teeters toward recession. Among other things, that means fewer municipal Christmas decorations this year: only 6.8 million lights, compared to 8.9 million last year. That's still 2 pretty bulbs per person.



As for Moisés Maimónides, or Musa Ibn Maymun in the Arabic version of his name, he was born in 1135 in Córdoba, Spain. These days there's a nice statue of him just outside the old city walls in a lovely park. He fell afoul of the hard-line religious politics of the Almohades, the new Berber dynasty that had wrested control of al-Andalus, and fled to Cairo to enjoy more freedom. The Omeya caliphate, 929-1031, had been much easier-going on Jews and Christians: the "shiny, happy caliphate," though it wasn't totally utopia. (Some of the Christian kings were also happily tolerant of Jews and Muslims, such as Alfonso X "the Wise," 1221-1284.) There were four major epochs in the Moorish rule of

Spain, and each had distinct policies — to say nothing of the divisions in the Islamic world outside of Spain and over the course of the centuries, including considerable differences among Muslims today.

Bostom cites a pogrom in Cordoba on April 19, 1013 (The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism, Page 100) as part of the general submission of the dhimmi communities [Pages 97-105].

— JTM

As for *Amadis of Gaul*, I have the 1508 version in Spanish as a paperback (two fat paperbacks, really). The most recent translation into English by Edwin B. Place and Herbert C. Behm, in 1974, which I also have, is okay, but stultifyingly literal. More on that in the next LOC.

From: **AL du Pisani** November 30, 2008
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I am still fine. And to some extent I mean it. I am slowly getting out of a general depression, a depression that had lasted years, and of which I was not aware, except when it got worse. Changing jobs had been one large event that have changed me, another had been to do some introspection, and see if I had the life I wanted to lead. The answer was "No", but I could see a way out of it, and towards the life that would interest me more.

As part of it I am starting to get rid of some of the clutter in my life. And it is surprising what I had stored for a rainy day, and now cannot find any earthly use for. And I cannot even think of an unearthly use for so much of what I had kept.

A while ago I read that you should expect to divide your day into three equal parts: For eight hours you work, for eight hours you are at leisure, and for eight yours you rest. Of course, this is only a guideline, and does not prescribe how you should go about it. The problem was that I found that work and related activities was taking up to thirteen hours of my day, and that quite often I was spending a further two hours on other activities, that was not focussed on myself. I suddenly realised why I had no time to do all the things I wanted to do: I had no time for myself. And I intended to do a lot more than I could accommodate, in any case. It became time to start planning my life. And not just in the big things, like going to a Worldcon in another couple of year's time.

All of this is taking time, and one of the areas which I had to cut back on, has been reading Science Fiction. I have been aided and abetted in this by my local book shops, who had cut down on keeping the books, authors and publishers I like, and concentrated on publishers, books and authors I could care less about. I had also managed to dig up some uplifting books I bought a long time ago, and never got around to reading, and started reading

them. Such as Gillomee's biography of the Afrikaners: A fascinating book, teaching me much, but which seemed to have been written from the point of view that every bad stereotype of the Afrikaner is true, and that the remarkable thing is that they managed to crawl up from there.

After having had a choice at Larry Smith's (one of the declining number of dealers at conventions who sells books) of a vast spread of Sexy Vampire novels, I can see your point.

SFSA is still going along. We keep on losing members, especially people who come to meetings. Some of them die, some of them move overseas, and some of them just fade away. Every now and again we pick up somebody new, and have been continuing slowly. Next year we will have been going for 40 years. I have been aware of the club for about 20 years, but only joined 16 years ago. And for a very long time it has kept me going, when not much else was going my way.

When I first got into fandom, thirty-five years ago, the Big Names were Cliff Amos here in Louisville and Ken Moore down in Nashville. Today, Cliff (whose girlfriend goes to Lisa's church) is very ill, and Khen has utterly wrecked his health. And in other bad news, apparently ConGlomeration (the new Louisville convention) seems to be having some problems.

— JTM

The great soap opera which is South African politics is thundering along. I seemed to have missed watching a critical week, and are a bit lost as to what has happened. In any case, it seems as if the long anticipated split has come to the ANC, and the machine-gun swingers have taken control of the party, and the other guys have broken off. If this is going to lead to a change in the political landscape, after next year's elections? (Next general election has to be held before April next year. We do not yet know the date.) I do not know, but am not hopeful. Why? During the previous general election, we had people rioting in the streets, burning down the houses of ANC councillors who had not delivered on previous election promises. And then they elected the same people back into power.

Too many times in South Africa things happen that are tragic. And farcical. And you laugh between the tears.

In the end you can only hope. Luckily enough, the brand of SF that I am attracted to, believes that there is always hope. That you can change things for the better.

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** Dec. 1, 2008
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Quebec, H4V 2Y9 CANADA

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Hi Joe and the LOC gallery!

This will be a very short letter with no LOC replies or my normal opening fanfare. I was busy with NaNoWriMo 2008 right up until last night. My results this year: close but no cigar at 48,605 words. I was looking like I'd make it — then with less than an hour and a half to go I crashed at my computer desk, only waking up about 15 minutes too late.

I've also been in a funk since Remembrance Day this year: my good friend Emru Townsend died from leukemia. He was fortunate to get a bone marrow transplant, his body accepted it weeks sooner than anticipated . . . unfortunately he didn't go into remission. The cancer hit very aggressively then.

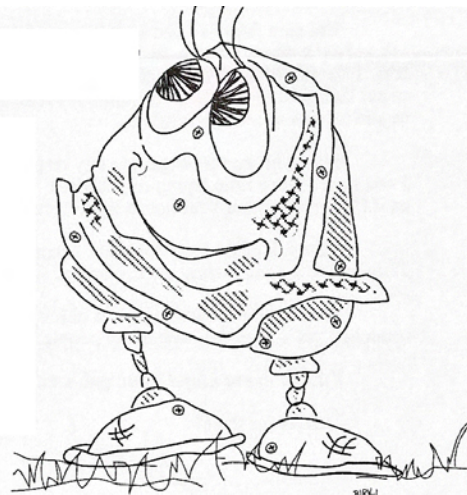
Emru and I first met in University over 20 years ago. He was like my kid brother. Losing him has hit me hard. I just take small comfort that he lived long enough to see an African American win the Presidency. It's not much, but I hope it gave him a smile.

Read you all soon.

Our condolences.

— JTM

WAHF:
Lloyd Daub, with items of interest.



**Egoboo is the currency of fandom ...
be a Bhig Spender!**

We hope to go to ConCave, if we can get sufficient advance notice. We hope to go to ConGlomeration, if there is one. We hope to go to the Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium, which will be in more clement weather. And then there is WorldCon/Congrès Mondial . . .

If you will be at any of these, we ought to get together.

GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM

by Joe

When the Welches came to Louisville on their way home from Chattanooga, it took an incredible number of cell-phone calls to direct them in to my place, so we could all go to Lynn's Paradise Café for dinner.

On the other hand, when R-Laurraine Tutihasi and Mike Weasner came to Louisville, they drove straight to the place. Between the two trips, Global Positioning System technology had developed to the point where they could get directions and know where they were.

If you've ever read Sir Arthur C. Clarke's essay "How to Dig Space" (available in *The View from Serendip* (1977)) you may remember his prediction of a navigation system. Well, it isn't quite the inertial system Ego anticipated, but it's close enough, and it even uses satellites. I'm sure he was proud.

When Circuit City had its Columbus Day sale, and offered two years no interest on a large sale, we went shopping there, naturally, and one of the things I got was a GPS, a Garmin 205w. (I also got a UPS, so I wouldn't have a file stuck on my system if another hurricane wiped out the power here for a week, but that's another story.)

One thing I've discovered is that it thinks that just going home is good enough. I have been directed to park on the wrong side of the street a time or two. (They can't tell about the Water Company's digging up the street to replace all the lead pipe with copper pipe, or the power company's grinding up the wood debris from the storm, but that's another story.)

Since we've got it, so far we've been to Lexington and Henderson, back and forth on Interstate 64, and down to Cadiz for Lisa's great-aunt's funeral. The real test will come next year, when we go to Montréal. There's also the laptop GPS, but that's a bit bulky.

I've used it in town for various purposes, including finding the Liberty for Louisville meeting on Payne Street and the St. Matthews Baptist Church for the Christmas Pageant and Banquet. Not having to guess, "okay, where's that street?" has been a big reassurance.

Now that prices have fallen, one can get a decent system and always have it. There is the technogeek ultimate that my co-worker has. He bought a copy of the monitoring program for his car's electronic systems, and so can monitor his car moment to moment while driving along. I wonder how it deals with a crash?

My favorite nanny state item was when the British Parliament banned "death stars". Not shuriken, death stars. Now Mr Brown has to explain that to Palpatine. Or his deputy:

**YOU HAVE FAILED ME FOR
THE LAST TIME**

[Sounds of strangling]

HISTORICAL NOTE

Well, I remember when I was a little boy in school reading *The Short History of the Federalist Party* and learning how the Great Hamilton wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, devised the strategy by which the Patriots won the Revolutionary War, and succeeded to the Presidency after Washington's death, working diligently to bring about a Washingtonian-Hamiltonian US.

When I was older, they taught us about the Trial of the Bloc of Jeffersonites and Tories. After Judas Jefferson fled to France when unmasked by the Great Hamilton's revolutionary vigilance, he plotted to restore monarchism in the US. His first blow was the murder of Hamilton's loyal compatriot DeWitt Clinton. However, this tipped the hand of the Jeffersonites. In the Great Purge Trial, such counterrevolutionaries as Sam and John Adams, James Madison, Patrick Henry, and John Hancock were unmasked as traitors, Jeffersonites, and Tories, and after confessing their errors were shot.

Other purges were done in camera, including the trial and execution of Generals Knox, Greene, Lincoln, Wayne, and Clark. Particularly noteworthy was the use of one Jeffersonite traitor, John Paul Jones, to entrap another, the so-called "Marquis" de Lafayette, both of whom confessed to having plotted to overthrow Washington and Hamilton and restore Jefferson and the monarchy, and were shot.

The famous Lustral Plan of 1795-1799 laid the foundations for the industrial strength of Washingtonian-Hamiltonian America. Under the wise leadership of the Great Hamilton, American industry grew by forty-three percentum. The building of the industrial city of Hamilton Mills at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, was a heroic triumph of the toiling masses.

The heroic events of the Great Patriotic War of 1812 are too famous to bear repetition. Think only of the valorous conflict of the USS *Chesapeake* against an entire fleet of English battleships led by Hornblower, and of Captain Lawrence's stirring last words, "Hurrah, Hurrah for the Great Hamilton, the Great Admiral of All the Oceans, the Great Leader and Teacher!"

The defeat of the counterrevolutionary armies by General Jackson at the heroic town of Hamilton (so named because of his having been stationed there during the final phases of the Revolutionary War; fragmentary records seem to indicate that it had been named after one of the feudal-reactionary tyrants of England) was the climax of the war, unfortunately marred by the uprising by Jeffersonite and Tory factions (wearing their uniform red coats) that burned down Washington City.

Other Jeffersonites had got into the Census Bureau and generated false, malicious, and misleading figures, which entailed correcting the 1810 Census to show how much the US had grown in population through following the correct Washingtonian-Hamiltonian Line.

Long Live Hamilton!

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Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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