

# Littlebrook 6





# LITTLEBROOK 6

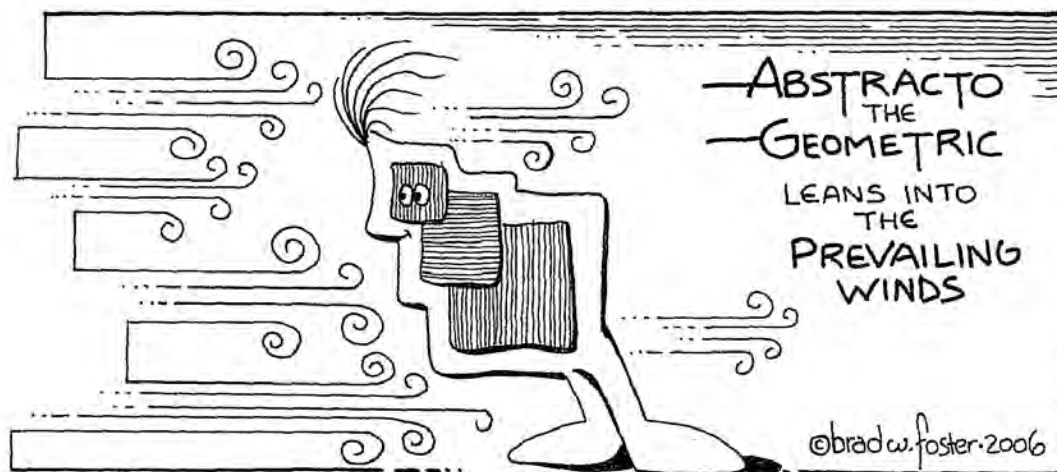
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# Bewitched, *Bothered* & Bemildred

**Jerry Kaufman**

**W**hen I read science fiction as a teenager, the stories that gave me the biggest shivers of awe and wonder were the ones that presented me with ideas I could barely grasp, and that hinted at immensities beyond my ken. Time travel stories, especially those with paradoxes, really set me reeling.

For instance, "All You Zombies," by Robert Heinlein, featured a person who was his own father, his own mother, and the older self that engineered this extraordinary situation, aided not only by time travel but also by the biological rarity of hermaphroditism. This person existed entirely outside any normal change of causality.

Another story, one I dimly remember but which I can't identify, involved another instance of something that couldn't exist but did. In this case the story involved a time traveler who visited a far future museum, stealing a knife on display there, and taking it to his own time. Scientists studied this object, cutting a slice from it for chemical analysis. Eventually the knife became the center of a museum exhibit, only to be stolen by the time traveler. Only now it had a little slice cut from it.... (Add exclamation marks to taste.)

Time travel stories came in many other flavors and forms, of course, all intriguing. I'm hardly the only reader to find them so, as evidenced by many anthologies devoted to time travel stories, many movies based on the idea, and many attempts to heighten the paradox effects, play with them, resolve them, or simply ignore them.

But why were these stories considered science fiction (dealing, broadly speaking, with the possible) and not fantasy? As far as I could tell, no scientists thought time travel was possible, and there was no theory to cover how it could work. There didn't seem to be any experimental or observational data that required time travel to explain them.

Oh, there was some suggestion that quantum physics might point to the creation of multiple universes as the result of multiple decision points being resolved in different ways, but this didn't seem to have much to do with traveling back and forth through that fourth dimension, time.

Or so I thought, until I saw a story in the *Seattle Post-Intelligence* headlined, "Public Donates to UW Scientist to Fund Backward-in-Time Research."

What I hadn't known (or perhaps hadn't remembered) was that there was something called the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox. Tom Paulson, author of the *P-I* article, writes,

"Two subatomic particles split from a single particle do somehow instantaneously communicate no matter how far apart they get in space and time. The phenomenon is described as "entanglement" and "non-local communication." For example, one high-energy photon split by a prism into two lower-energy photons could travel into space and separate by many light years. If one of the photons is somehow forced up, the other photon — even if impossibly distant — will instantly tilt down to compensate and balance out both trajectories."

([http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/319367\\_timeguy12.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/319367_timeguy12.html))

It turns out this paradox might be resolved if time travel exists. And a local physicist/science fiction writer was going to test that possibility. Furthermore, we know him.

That's John Cramer, University of Washington Physics Professor, author of *Twistor* and *Einstein's Bridge* and, along with his wife Pauline, sometime attendee at conventions, Vanguards, Clarion West Writers Workshop functions, etc. (I was even the best man at one of his daughters' weddings, but that's another story.)

John's theory, as I understand it, is that perhaps a signal from the particle that first changes goes backwards in time until it reaches the second particle. To the observer, the change would appear to be simultaneous. This is called "retrocausality," and John's theory using it is called the "transactional interpretation of quantum mechanics. (This makes it sound like the particles may be signaling, "I'm okay, you're okay.") In any case, a quick look at John's paper on the subject (at [http://www.npl.washington.edu/npl/int\\_rep/tiqm/TI\\_toc.html](http://www.npl.washington.edu/npl/int_rep/tiqm/TI_toc.html)) convinces me that the details are over my head.

What really caught my attention about this newspaper story was that it detailed how John could not find government or foundation money to finance a relatively inexpensive bench-top experiment he's devised to test his theory. No *Gedankenexperiment* here; it would involve an array of lasers, wires, power sources, and detection devices.

An earlier *P-I* story (one I haven't read) had reported John's funding difficulties. Because of that story, individuals started sending John small donations. According to the current story, he's received at least \$35,000.

I've donated to many charities and organizations over the years, but until now I'd never considered giving to basic physics research. However, the idea of contributing my mite to an experiment that could lead to proof or disproof of time travel really piqued my sense of wonder.

I sent in my donation, and received several appreciative letters, one from the University of Washington Foundation, and the other from John himself. John's letter made me go back to the *P-I* article. Sure enough, I had misunderstood the thrust of John's planned experiment. His letter explained, "The project aims to do a conceptually simple bench-top test seeking experimental evidence of whether or not quantum 'entanglement' can be used for non-local communication."

As my re-reading of the *Post-Intelligencer* made clearer, if the results of this experiment are positive, John will go on to further experiments that would test the parts of his theory regarding signaling backward in time. The story put a heavy and (I think) misleading emphasis on the time-travel angle.

But superluminal (a wonderful word) communication is in itself a popular science fiction dream (ansible, anyone?) and an exciting prospect. Could it lead to instantaneous reports from interstellar probes or deep space colonies? I hope so, though when I try to imagine how it would work, I can't get beyond the practical problem of maintaining one subatomic particle here on earth while its twin goes a-spacing.

In any case, if you're interested in donating, too, you can send a check made out to the University of Washington (mark the check "Non-Local Quantum Communication Experiment") to Jennifer Raines, Administrator, Department of Physics, University of Washington, Box 351560, Seattle, WA 98195-1560. Then sit back, knowing that you may have helped the future happen.

**A**s time has slipped inexorably from one year into the next, *Littlebrook* has taken shape as a journal of "popular culture," at least for this issue. Our contributors have given us article on Sherlock Holmes, Johnny Paycheck and magical movies.

Stu Shiffman's "ruminations" on Sherlock Holmes, William S. Hart (silent screen actor), and others, started as a talk for the Sound of the Baskervilles, a Puget Sound Scion society. (A different version of it was published in *Baker Street West One* in 2006.) William Breiding wrote about Johnny Paycheck in response to Andi Shechter's "It's a Proud

and Lonely Thang, er, Thing," way back in *Littlebrook* #4. Jim Young offered to write a review of one of the two movies he discusses in "Conjuring on the Silver Screen"; we persuaded him to cover both.

Andy Hooper's one-act play, "Avramania!," has a slightly more complex history. Andy originally wrote it for performance at the 2006 Potlatch. For those of you in the dark, here's a brief candle: Potlatch is a small science fiction convention that concentrates on written sf, has a Book of Honor rather than a Guest of Honor, and benefits the Clarion West Writers Workshop.

The Book of Honor that year was *The Avram Davidson Treasury*, and Andy wove strands from a number of Avram's best-loved stories into the play. However, during the Sunday banquet, only minutes before Andy's troupe of actors was to perform, we got word of Octavia Butler's sudden death. Octavia had become a Seattle resident a few years earlier and become a much-beloved part of our community. Our shock was great, and the play was cancelled.

Eventually we did perform the play, at another small Seattle convention, Foolscap (this time I was among the players). Since Suzle and I are fans of Andy's writing, and because I so enjoyed Andy's clever combination of Avram homage, satire of Seattle fandom (the characters in the play are not entirely unlike members of the Potlatch committee), and insights into the pleasures of friendship, I asked for permission to publish it.

Only John Berry's "Pant a Loon" seems to fall outside the PopCult box. Well, that's fine – despite himself, perhaps, John's become a Living Legend and our last link to the fabled days of Irish Fandom. (Just a hint to Peter Weston.) And "Pant a Loon" itself is a link to the cultural mores of a time before the editors of this publication were born. If that isn't Popular Culture, I don't know what is.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we did assembling it. ●●●

### LITTLEBROOK PSA's

A reminder that the **TAFF** Deadline is mid-November; if you haven't yet voted, go to <http://taff.org.uk/> – print out a ballot and vote!

**POTLATCH 17** is Feb. 29-March 2 at our new hotel, The Hotel Deca in Seattle's University District. We are celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Clarion West Writers Workshop, our book of honor is Octavia Butler's *The Parable of the Sower*. We have wonderful program items, a fine dealers room, a great auction that benefits Clarion West, an excellent brunch buffet, and much more, all crammed into a three-day con at our beautiful art deco-style high rise hotel! For more information, go to the Potlatch 17 website: <http://www.potlatch-sf.org/>.

# SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE WESTERN

## WITH SIDELIGHTS ON THE GREAT SILENT MOVIE COWBOY, WILLIAM S. HART, THE SHERLOCK WHO NEVER WAS

A RUMINATION BY STU SHIFFMAN

“**S**herlock Holmes and the Western”? You may already be thinking, “What kind of *meshuganeh* theme is that?” Of course, you probably used a different adjective in the question.

The Sherlock Holmes stories (and their film adaptations) have many links to the genre of the Western. The contests between lawman or the Good Bad-man (and his deputy or sidekick) against the powers of Corporate Rogues (whether railroad or banking interests), flimflam men, gangs of owlhoots and criminal masterminds or their tool, the Bad Bad-man, have a parallel with those of the consulting detective (and his amanuensis, the good doctor) with the Unworthy Class Oppressors (the corrupt aristocrat or man of wealth unworthy of his position), thieves, confidence tricksters and the Napoleon of Crime. There are differences, of course; The Western hero is the possessor of physical strength, stamina, and an innate sense of the right thing to do; he rejects eloquence, refinement, and superior intelligence as standards of measure. Sherlock Holmes possesses great strength (witness the case of the bent poker in the matter of “The Speckled Band”), stamina and an innate sense of the right thing to do (and when to be a law unto himself); but he epitomizes the peak of verbal eloquence, urban refinement (yet bohemian soul), and superior intelligence. Of course, Holmes has his blind spots, those areas of knowledge that he regards as superfluous to his needs. “What the deuce is it to me?” he says impatiently in *A Study in Scarlet*; “you say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of differ-

ence to me or to my work.”

The Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Show, Pawnee Bill’s Historic Wild West (later merged with Cody’s show) and Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders Show turned the real historical West into show business (and dime novel fiction), the way the real Victorian and Edwardian periods of Sherlock Holmes have become a secondary literary universe like Tolkien’s Middle Earth. The popularity of the “adult” western (as opposed to the dime novel adventures of Buffalo Bill and other frontier heroes) followed the publication of Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*, stage adaptations and the filming of the first early silent Westerns set the genre model for what was to come. In the same way, the publication of the first two Sherlock Holmes novels (*A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*) and the first series of

*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in the Strand, the success of the William Gillette drama and the first silent film adaptations set the tropes of the mystery into place. According to Andrew Bergman, in his study of 1930s film, *We’re In The Money: Depression America and its Films* (NYU Press, 1971), “Along with the renaissance of the western hero and the elevation of the federal government into a virtual leading man in Warner Bros.’ topical films, it brought that law and that government into a strong position in the culture. The grim policeman of the early thirties had become an expansive but watchful guardian



of everyone's interests. Hoodlums would turn craven at his approach, social problems would slink away like the villains of 'Perils of Pauline,' and bad men would be driven from the West." There is a strong parallel to the 1890s, when the stability of society in Great Britain, and in the civilized eastern United States, allowed for the parallel enthusiasms for the safe entertainments of frontier cowboy fiction and urban crime fiction. By 1893, as Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (delivered at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago) made clear, the frontier (at least, as imagined on the American mainland) could no longer provide such a site to articulate this national identity. It could only serve as the basis of myth. The active Victorian and Edwardian genres would continue into the new media.

"Der Untergang des Abendlandesmenschen," a very curious 1976 short story by science fiction author Howard Waldrop, has been described as a German Expressionist Sherlock Holmes vampire Western, in which silent film cowboys Broncho Billy Anderson and William S. Hart help Hermann Goering fight the vampire Nosferatu. "Der Untergang des Abendlandesmenschen" is inspired by Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918; translated and published in America as *The Decline of the West*, two volumes, 1922 and 1926). *Untergang* means "going under" or "setting" - much more than "declining". It means the *end* of the cycle of Western culture, which started at the end of the Greco-Roman era, and settled into the thinking pattern we know today during or after the sixteenth century, after taking that turn about halfway through its cycle. Waldrop renders his own title as "The Down-Going of the Men of the Sun-Setting Lands," or, loosely, "The Decline of the Cowboys". It was most recently reprinted by Wheatland Press in *Dream Factories and Radio Pictures*. In his introduction to the story as collected in *Strange Things in Close Up* (1989), Waldrop says that:

This story was written early in 1975 (it says here in my story log). I remember the exact genesis; a photo of William S. Hart in a stage production of *Ben-Hur* from 1908. I'd been reading a lot of Conan Doyle, and I looked at the picture and said, "The man was born to play Sherlock Holmes." One thing led to another — silent German Expressionist films, books about the Weimar Republic, the idea of a sky that flickers. All the things that fall together when a story idea gets hold of you.

Look at the pictures of William S. Hart; the

gaunt features and aquiline nose, the eyes full of glittering intelligence. What a Holmes he might have been!

In Waldrop's story, Bronco Billy and William S. ride two days and two nights across "the flickering landscape to the tune of organ music," approaching the darkly painted city of Bremen, Germany. "In Berlin, Cesare the somnambulist slept. His mentor Caligari lectured at the University, and waited for his chance to send the monster through the streets." Dr. Mabuse is dead too. Some other menace walks the night in Bremen.

"You must remember, my friend," said William S. after the waiter brought them beer, "that there can be no rest in the pursuit of evil."

"Yeah, but hell, William S., this is a long way from home."

William S. lit a match, put it to a briar pipe containing his favorite shag tobacco. He puffed on it a few moments, then regarded his companion across his tankard.

"My dear Bronco Billy," he said, "No place is too far to go in order to thwart the forces of darkness. This is something Dr. Helioglabulus could not handle by himself, else he should not have summoned us."

"Yeah, but William S., my butt's sore as a rizen after two days in the saddle. I think we should bunk down before we see this doctor fellow.

Ah, that's where you're wrong, my friend," said the tall, hawknosed cowboy. "Evil never sleeps. Men must."

Dr. Helioglabulus arrives in disguise (about as convincing as that of the King of Bohemia) and using the cover identity of "Dr. Eulenspiegel."

Bronco Billy rolled his eyes heavenward.

"Dr. Eulenspiegel, I'd like you to meet my associate and chronicler, Mr. Bronco Billy."

The game is —

"Then the game is afoot?" asked William S., his eyes more alight than ever.

"Game such as man has never before seen," said the doctor.





“I see,” said William S., his eyes arrowing as he drew on his pipe.

“Moriarty?”

“Much more evil.”

“More evil?” asked the cowboy, his fingers pressed together. “I cannot imagine such.”

It is apparent that the menace is *nosferatu*... the Undead...

“...er, ah, vampires...”

“You mean,” asked Billy, “like Theda Bara?”

(From there — but allow me to say that a coterie of “innocuous” crackpot revolutionaries in ragtag brown uniforms and “broken cross” insignia help them to destroy the menace; who the latter group tag with a yellow six-pointed star and soon the synagogues are burning.)

Waldrop also wrote “Adventures of the Grinder’s Whistle” (as told by Sir Edward Malone of Lost World fame, detailing an irregular childhood detail of Sherlock Holmes and the Ripper case)

So who were Broncho Billy (proper spelling) and William S. Hart? Only the first and greatest of the silent film cowboys.

The Western became a great film staple (just as the mystery and thriller would). The first feature-length film, *The Great Train Robbery*, was a classic “horse opera” that thrilled audiences with its chases and shoot-’em-ups. Porter’s film is widely considered to be the first American narrative film, and it is the point of departure for the flurry of Westerns that followed.

Gilbert M. “Broncho Billy” Anderson (AKA Max Aronson) appeared in several different roles in Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery*, and is generally credited with developing the cowboy persona in silent film, particularly with creating the “good badman” type of character. In numerous one-reel dramas from 1910 to 1916, Broncho Billy set the standards for Western cowboys: “shy with the ladies, good with a gun, fearless in the face of evil, and daring on a horse.” Essanay was best known for its silent “Broncho Billy Anderson” (starring Gilbert M. Anderson formerly Max Aronson 1884-1971) western series. From 1908 to 1915 Essanay in Chicago and in Niles, CA, cranked out 400 movies for a company of which he was the co-owner. Well over 100 of these little films — most just one reel in length — starred Anderson himself as Broncho Billy, which made him one of the first movie stars and certainly the very first western star. In this period his salary sometimes reached as much as \$120,000, about a million dollars annually in today’s dollars. Each year since 1998 he has been celebrated at a Broncho Billy Film Festival in Niles, California, where he once lived.

His company, Essanay Film Manufacturing Company, produced a silent film version of William Gillette’s stage play *Sherlock Holmes* in 1916, distributed by V-L-S-E, Incorporated (a joint distribution company for the producers Vitagraph, Lublin, Selig and Essanay). This now lost film starred Gillette in his famous role, his only appearance on film. . It has been estimated that only 10 to 15 percent of the films made during the silent era survive today, largely because of the fragile state of the film stock. The seven-reeler featured a scenario adapted by H. S. Sheldon from the Gillette script, and included many of the cast from the then-current revival of the stage play. The production was shot at Essanay’s studios in Chicago.

Another interesting Sherlockian link is that the old Chandler and Price letter-set printing press from the old Essanay Studios in Niles, where it was once used for printing tickets and as an occasional prop in a Charlie Chaplin or Broncho Billy Anderson film, now belongs to John Ruyle and his Pequod Press.

One of my favorite Sherlocks of the screen, Peter Cushing, said that his interest in the movies began when, as a child, he spent many happy hours in the Electric Palace watching the sundry adventures of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, William S. Hart and Tom Mix; all of whom fired his ambition to become a film star.

Ah, William Surrey Hart (1864—1946); a New York stage actor who is supposed to have brought the “real” cowboy to film. Hart grew up in a Victorian atmosphere that gave rise to the rigid morality prevalent in many of his films. Born in Newburgh, New York, his early youth was spent out West until his family returned to New York while he was in his



early teens. It was there that he developed an interest in the stage. At 19 he began acting onstage in New York, and made his name as a Shakespearean actor on touring the “provinces” and on Broadway.

By 1900, Hart had appeared in productions from New York to San Francisco to Montreal. He had received critical acclaim for his own production of *The Man in the Iron Mask* and his creation of the role of Messala in the Klaw & Erlanger’s 1899 stage extravaganza of *Ben Hur* (richly praised by Lew Wallace himself). Producer Charles Frohman, watching one of the final rehearsals, left the theater saying, “I’m afraid you’re up against it. The American public will never stand for Christ and a horse race in the same show.” This chariot race was an amazing stage spectacular, according to Ronald L. Davis in *William S. Hart: Projecting the American West* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2003): “The climactic chariot race was created with two horses, a white and a black, side by side on double treadmills, supplemented with a mass of wheels, steel cables, levers, the sound of cracking whips, and a panorama of the Circus Maximus racing past as the two finalists struggled for victory. Ben Hur’s and Messala’s horses alternated in front of one another until they reached stage center, whereupon Ben Hur’s chariot slowly pulled ahead and Messala’s collapsed. The sea rescue was achieved by stagehands in the wings shaking pieces of cloth to simulate waves. Audiences left the theater dazzled by the spectacle they had seen.” That might have been the height of Edwardian stage special effects.

When later tours with *The Christian* and *Hearts Courageous* ended with no other significant job offers, Hart got a job through his brother-in-law with a detective agency. He was still working as a detective when first cast in his first Western role; in 1902, he was cast as “Cash” Hawkins in *The Squaw Man*, which opened in 1905. In his mind, he began to inflate his childhood western experiences. His subsequent stage roles were primarily Western in nature and included the lead in an enormously successful production of Wister’s *The Virginian*, and good reviews by Bat Masterson in the *New York Morning Telegraph* for his performance in the 1910 *The Barrier*. Hart had found his essential genre.

Yet his career might have taken another turn. According to Ronald L. Davis: “Hart was hired at the beginning of the 1910-11 season by the distinguished producer Charles Frohman to play Sherlock Holmes in *The Speckled Band*, a melodrama by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that had been successful in London the year before. Hart rehearsed with the company for one week and then quit, sensing that the show was headed for disaster. Sure enough, *The Speckled Band* closed in Boston and never opened in New York.” Ah, what we might have missed! Instead, Hart appeared in an unsuccessful sequel to *The*

*Squaw Man*, called *These Are My People*, that closed and reformed into a successful revival of the original play on Broadway.

It was while touring with the company of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in 1914 that Hart decided to move to California to make Western films. He signed with Thomas Ince, an old theater friend and roommate, and the New York Motion Picture Company.

Hart insisted on the use of realistic costumes, locales, and situation in his scenarios and productions. He became one of Hollywood’s top actors and most successful directors. Hart was disgusted with the artificiality of most early Westerns, and strove to bring a real sense of the West to silent films. His costumes, in contrast to the florid artificiality of silver screen cowboys like Tom Mix, were more low key, and the plots of his films are generally strong and adult. For Hart, his films had to evoke the real West, or at least the West as was celebrated in the frontier culture that flourished in the age of Teddy Roosevelt. ● ● ●



# Conjuring on the Silver Screen

*review*

by Jim Young

**T**wo fine films appeared in 2006 that conjured up magical images of turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Europe — *The Illusionist* and *The Prestige*.

The former is a mystery masquerading as a story of the supernatural, while the latter is science fiction appearing in the guise of a crime-drama. Let me say at the outset that I'm going to discuss the plot twists that end the two films, so if you haven't seen them yet and don't want to have any surprises spoiled, stop here, dear reader.

*The Illusionist* is based on a short story by Steven Millhauser, which is, in turn, loosely inspired by the story of Archduke Rudolf of Austria-Hungary, who died in 1889. Rudolf was the heir to the throne, and his death remains something of a mystery. It appears that he killed his girl friend and then himself after his father forbade their marriage. Rumors have circulated ever since, however, suggesting that Rudolf was murdered because he was politically a liberal reformer who supported allying with France rather than Germany.

And with that in mind, *The Illusionist* creates a fictional "Crown Prince Leopold" who, while very bright, is a radical conservative and mentally unstable to boot. Rufus Sewell handles the role very well, playing the character as something of a predecessor to Hitler. Bearing in mind that Hitler was Austrian, and was not the only right-wing extremist in that milieu, it's clearly possible that such a person could have existed.

The story begins in the Austrian countryside somewhere around 1890, when a young man apprenticed as a carpenter meets and falls in love with a young woman who happens to be a member of the aristocracy, Countess Sophie von Tesch (played by Jessica Biel). Eventually their relationship is discovered and broken off by the young woman's protectors. Disheartened, the young man travels to China and eventually returns to Austria to launch a career as a stage magician known as Eisenheim the Illusionist (played by Edward Norton). Never mentioned overtly in the film, Eisenheim is traditionally a Jewish surname; and so anti-Semitism almost certainly played a role in the breaking up of Eisenheim's relationship with Sophie. Likewise, Crown Prince Leopold's antipathy to Eisenheim is clearly driven by anti-Jewish sentiment, although young viewers who

have never read about the history of the Nazis and World War II might miss this motivation, it is so understated.

Not long after his return to central Europe, Eisenheim meets up with his beloved Sophie once more. But now she is in the process of becoming betrothed to Crown Prince Leopold, and as Eisenheim and the countess realize that they love one another -- and will not be torn apart now that they're adults -- they hatch a plot that will allow them to be together.

Sophie breaks off her impending marriage with the crown prince, and in a nasty struggle, Leopold appears to wound her mortally. This soon unhinges Leopold to the point that he commits suicide.

Following these events, Eisenheim focuses his act on conjuring the shades of the dead. Soon a cult forms around him, made up of people seeking solace from grief and from the confining political system of the Empire. This in turn brings Eisenheim (and not for the first time) to the attention of the national police. Consequently police Inspector Uhl — wonderfully brought to life by Paul Giamatti — begins to investigate what really happened to Sophie. He realizes that she merely feigned death and that she has escaped with Eisenheim, who had used the new technology of moving pictures to project his illusions.

Neil Burger's direction is the key to this film's success. Other directors might have let Sewell go over the top in portraying Leopold's rages, but Burger managed to keep things convincing while letting Sewell go right up to edge without going over. Similarly, Burger appears to have helped Jessica Biel portray an intelligent woman of 1900, standing up for her rights even though she is inexperienced and vulnerable.

Engaging as it is, the film has an unusual flaw: its special effects are simply too much. Several of Eisenheim's early apparitions are admirably rendered, but a scene in which the (supposed) ghost of a young boy walks through a crowded theater, including through a man's out-stretched hand, is beyond the ability of film projectors of 1900. The quality is something like that of a hologram, and it's rendered so well that it makes the viewer believe the director has given up and decided to tell a ghost story after all. For that matter, a scene in which a projection of Eisenheim appears before the police inspector is

rendered by keeping the figure of Eisenheim slightly out of focus. I thought this trick detracted from the story.

*The Prestige*, based on Christopher Priest's award-winning novel, takes place primarily in London around 1901. It's the tale of an intense rivalry between two stage magicians, Robert Angier (played by Hugh Jackman) and Alfred Borden (played by Christian Bale). Angier is the more charismatic of the two, but Borden has developed an incredible illusion in which he seems to transport himself from one cabinet to another instantaneously.

Driven by rivalry, Angier travels to Colorado to ask Nikola Tesla, the discoverer of alternating current, to develop a teleportation machine for him so that he can top Borden's act. The sequence in Colorado provides the framework for an awe-inspiring scene in which Tesla demonstrates that electricity can be transmitted through the ground (which was in fact one of his main interests in his Colorado laboratory) — illuminating a meadow filled with light bulbs, with the Rockies as their backdrop.

Tesla, ably played by David Bowie (in what may well be his best performance as an actor), eventually develops a matter duplicator that transports the duplicated material several yards' distance away from the original object. Angier subsequently uses the machine on himself, disposing of the original body through a trapdoor that opens beneath him, plunging him into a vat of water, which seals itself and drowns him.

Borden, whose career has crumbled as Angier has taken his teleportation trick to some of the grandest theaters of the day, sneaks in to learn exactly how Angier carries out his grand illusion. Borden stumbles on the drowning of one of Angier's duplicates, and is subsequently convicted and executed for the murder of his rival. Angier's surviving doppelganger manages to go underground to allow the law to destroy Borden.

Only at this point is it clear that the engineer who designed Angier's trick, portrayed in a finely understated performance by Michael Caine, has understood that murder was always going to be a constituent part of the enterprise. In a scene every bit as revealing as the fabulous vista of light bulbs glowing in a Colorado meadow, it becomes apparent that Angier has preserved the drowned bodies of his duplicates as a macabre memento.

There is one more trick up the sleeve of this film, however, and that

is that Borden was in actuality two people — identical twin brothers — thus revealing how he carried out his illusion of teleportation. Sadly, I found this the least satisfying element in the movie. Having read the book, I was watching carefully for Bale's handling of his dual role. Although Borden's wife says several times that he is not a constant lover, I found this to be more a matter of telling rather than showing that two men were involved here. A bit more differentiation between the Bordenes — perhaps through one man's use of a recurring (but appropriately subtle) gesture — might have done the trick for me. Christopher Nolan's direction of *The Prestige* was every bit as tight as you would expect from the man who created *Memento*, but in this instance, I wish he had urged Christian Bale to do a little more.

How is it that in 2006 we have such nostalgia for the troubled period that opened the 20th Century? Both these films conjure that time with great aplomb, blemishes and all, and both of them point to a sense of wonder as the source of our fondness for that era. The fear of technology that arose following the invention of the atomic bomb seems to have erased a good deal of the optimistic view of technology that these movies capture. Genuine cynicism about technology now appears to be so widespread that I suspect it's an element in the dramatic rise in the popularity of fantasy and the decline in sales of science fiction. Be that as it may, I found *The Prestige* better at actually invoking wonder than *The Illusionist*, although for my taste, the latter film told its story a bit more enjoyably. ●●●



# PATRON SAINT OF THE HONKY-TONKS

WM. BREIDING

“Don’t monkey with another monkey’s monkey,” Johnny Paycheck sings. You might amend this to say, especially if that monkey is Johnny Paycheck. Forget Waylon and Willie and The Boys. Johnny Paycheck was and remains one of the original “outlaws” of country music.

Paycheck, born Donald Lytle in 1938, was given his first guitar at age six. By the time he was thirteen he had a regular gig at a saloon in his hometown, Greenfield, Ohio. Already a honky-tonk maestro, he left home at fifteen, bumming freight trains around the country. At sixteen he found another regular gig which he eventually left to join the Navy. In 1956 he was court-martialed and sentenced to eighteen years at Portsmouth Naval Prison for allegedly fracturing an officer’s skull. After two escape attempts the Navy decided it might be easier to release rather than contain him. In 1958, at the age of 20, he walked. One of Paycheck’s neatest comments about his formative years is hearing Hank Williams for the first time on a 78 rpm: “[ He] was the first guy I guess I ever heard on record. . . I thought right then that I believe I’d like to do that myself.”

Paycheck, who has perhaps been overlooked as an instrumentalist by critics, was early on recognized as a talent by his luckier contemporaries. Through the very late 50s and into the mid-60s he traveled with Faron Young, Porter Wagner, Ray Price, and most notably, George Jones, touring with him off and on for six years as bassist, steel guitarist and harmony vocalist. It is hotly debated who exactly influenced who among these established stars and their unknown colleague. Paycheck is too much of a gentleman to say more than “we taught each other things back in those days,” while speaking of George Jones. Archival photographs reveal it all: here was a vibrant sideman and respected peer.

Paycheck moved to Nashville and drifted into writing songs for the still existing Tree Publishing. A demo tape came to producer Owen Bradley’s attention and he struck a four single deal with Paycheck on Decca, under the name of Donny Young. In 1962 he copped another brief recording deal on Mercury courtesy of George Jones. More importantly, 1962 was the year that Paycheck hooked up with Aubrey Mayhew. At an industry convention Mayhew was hawked a demo tape of several songs for \$200. But it was not the songs Mayhew wanted, it was the singer. Paycheck, who was sent to Vegas to be kept under wraps until a deal could be worked up, took Mayhew

for a \$30,000 ride before they even started recording. Undaunted by this blatant swindling the indulgent Mayhew reeled the singer in. He created two record labels to showcase Johnny Paycheck’s talent, acted as producer as well as co-authoring many of Paycheck’s best songs. They began recording some of the wildest country music of the era.

The Little Darlin’ sessions have become legendary. Long out of print, they were more a whispered hearsay and a record collector’s day dream. With this Country Music Foundation collection of 24 tracks from the Little Darlin’ and Hilltop sessions, these coveted recordings can now be enjoyed by a broad listenership. (Johnny Paycheck, *The Real Mr. Heartache: The Little Darlin’ Years*, Country Music Foundation Records.) A lot of hooley has been made about these sessions. They’ve been called weird, spooky, chilling, and alternative; so wacky and distasteful they probably could not have found a home on a major label in *any* era. The hooley in many respects is well deserved. Paycheck is in full command of his voice. By turns brash and cynical, nuanced and ironic, he holds the honky-tonk idiom in the palm of one hand and diddles it with the other. His back up boys, a cogent circle of intuitive session players, performed with an urgent sense of reprieve, at full tilt and experimental when needed, laid back and wry on the weepers. Lloyd Green, a veteran steel guitarist who performs on the majority of these tracks, said about these protean sessions: “They were usually one take. There wasn’t a lot of preparation like later we got into. Nowadays you might take all day in the studio to do one song and analyze it to death. By then you’ve squeezed all of the emotion out of it.” These songs are so pure and strong it’s tough to take them all in one sitting.

Such songs as “(Pardon Me) I Have Someone To Kill”, “(It’s A Mighty Fine Line) Between Love And Hate”, “(Like Me) You’ll Recover In Time”, and “It Won’t Be Long (Before I’ll Be Hating You)” do not appear spooky, weird or chilling, as much as they do tasteless, belligerent, mean spirited and funny, qualities that have long been associated with Paycheck’s confrontational hard-livin’ mystique. Historically, Paycheck and Mayhew (who insists on taking credit for the results of these tracks through production, mixing and instruction to the musicians) may have been “alternative” to the times, but now these recordings appear to be fully contemporary of those times. Aubrey Mayhew, a veteran industry insider, was savvy to the tectonic influences rock ‘n’

roll was having in the '60s. Paycheck chestnuts, "I'm Barely Hangin' On To Me" and "The Cave" are in their way as psychedelic as anything by The Chocolate Watchband from that same period. Paycheck was a consummate jukebox honky-tonker, however. He is best known from this period for the classic "Apartment #9" the song that launched Tammy Wynette. The tune's co-author, Bobby Austin, also enjoyed radio play with his own version of this ballad of loneliness.

Paycheck holds a distinct distaste for fame. During a period when he was commanding \$400.00 a night (remember, this was the mid-60s) Paycheck was known to disappear only to show up as a sideman playing steel guitar in some trashy hillbilly band. He was naturally inclined to be hard drinking and footloose. A life on the road since he was fifteen gave Paycheck's voice an old wisdom. Unfortunately it was a wisdom to which he remained largely inchoate.

The later singles from the Little Darlin' sessions were received with little fanfare. With 1968's final single, "If I'm Gonna Sink (I Might As Well Go To The Bottom)" it was clear Paycheck knew where he was headed. With increasing drug and alcohol use, Paycheck burned out and disappeared. This could have been the stale end of a

brief career had it not been for an insistent search by Billy Sherrill of Epic Records. In 1971 Paycheck was located in L. A.'s Skid Row coaxing drinks out of his steel guitar. Sherrill offered him a recording deal. A sobered up Paycheck recovered his old magic and went soaring even further up the charts with his #2 smash, "She's All I Got." By 1977 he was known the world over for his bellicose blue collar anthem, "Take This Job And Shove It" and touring as an official "Outlaw." But it was only a matter of time before Paycheck plunged to the depths again. He returned to prison for another two years in 1989 for a barroom brawl shooting (the guy lived) which was the icing on a series of continuing personal problems. In 1991 he was released to a heavy stint of community service. He began, and continues, a hectic tour schedule with bands like Confederate Railroad and his old pal Merle Haggard.

"The Real Mr. Heartache" is Johnny Paycheck all right, but he's not about to stand around and cry about it. He's more likely to belt you in the face. *The Little Darlin' Years* is a classic bit of country music recovery. Put all the arguments aside. Listen for yourself. Johnny Paycheck is the real hillbilly patron saint of juke joint honky-tonk.

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## PANT A LOON

JOHN BERRY

It is the start of 2005, and I am now a venerable gentleman in my 80<sup>th</sup> year, and I read with horror (and not a little envy) that today's youngsters are sexually active even before they are twelve years old; rampant they are, boys and girls; and it appears that none of them are remotely interested in the hobbies that pre-teen youngsters were fascinated by in my formative years...philately, fossil hunting, embroidery (for girls, I mean) and aeroplane spotting...ah, yes, aeroplane spotting....

In 1941 I was fifteen years old, and was apprehensive regarding girls. I had two sisters, admittedly, but pimply-faced, spectacled, straggly haired gym-slipped girls frightened me, and I always maintained an aura of aloofness when they spoke to me, hoping to camouflage my feelings of inferiority.

When I left school I commenced work as a clerk in an aircraft factory, and the office adjacent to mine was staffed entirely with a hundred or so

young ladies who worked the Hollerith card punch machines.

Before the factory hooter sounded at 5 pm, I sneaked out early and collected my bicycle from the shed at the far end of the Hollerith office. With a bewildered expression on my face, I ran alongside my bicycle for a few paces, then vaulted expertly on the saddle, pretending that I did not know that all the girls were looking at me as I cruised nonchalantly past them.

One day, feeling utterly exuberant, I tried to mount my bike via the extremely difficult double flip, which I immediately realized was not professionally performed in hobnail boots.

My bike had low hung curved handlebars and a very pointed saddle, and inadvertently my boots clanged in midair, and I misjudged my placement on the saddle. I was in absolute agony. Somehow I maintained my status quo as I freewheeled along the loooong roadway, past the wide-eyed visages, balanced precariously across my bike, crablike, one leg akimbo, gritting my teeth like a ventrilo-

quist's doll. When I reached the end of the office block, I could not move to take the right turn, and folded in a crumpled heap on the asphalt pavement.

That night, I ensconced myself in the bathroom for an hour, armed with my mother's well thumbed first aid book, trying to obliterate the pain by the application of cold water and a malleable sponge.

I crawled to my bedroom and lay on the bed, when I heard my mother shouting from the hall.

"Mabel wants to speak to you."

I staggered down the stairs.

"Hello, John," she smiled, then raised her eyebrows. "You look rather pale."

"It's nothing." I grimaced. "What do you want?"

You see, she lived nearby and was always trying to speak to me. My mother was pleased that a girl was interested in me.

"John," she said, "some of the girls missed your magnificent pedal cycle mounting exhibition this afternoon, and have asked if you will repeat the performance tomorrow?"

"Nunno," I stammered.

"Er...do you fancy going a cycle ride with me?" she cooed. I looked at her. She had uncontrollable bumps that perplexed me. Some of the lads in the office had tried to date her, but she hadn't responded. Suddenly an idea struck me.

"Mabel, I'm going aeroplane spotting on Sunday, cycling into the leafy Warwickshire countryside looking for a Beaufighter aerodrome. Would you like to accompany me?"

She blinked a couple of times, but nodded, and we arranged to meet outside my house at 10 am, with lemonade and sandwiches.

You see, I was extremely interested in the Beaufighter. It was on the secret list, only mentioned by name in my weekly bible, *The Aeroplane Spotter*. But friends in the Air Training Corps told me there was a squadron of them based a few miles south of Birmingham, and I knew where the aerodrome was. I had already drawn silhouettes of the Short Stirling, flying over my house from Elmdon aerodrome, and when it was removed from the secret list, my sketches were really accurate. I wanted to do the same thing with the Beaufighter.

I saw Mabel outside the house at the appointed time and joined her with my drawing equipment, lemonade and pilchard sandwiches.

We headed due south, left smoky Birmingham behind, cycling along deserted country roads, trees and hedges in glorious greenery.

I confess that she made most of the conversation, 'cos I was still shy, but gradually I unfroze and made a couple of feeble jokes to which she laughed politely.

"Mabel," I said, as we neared the aerodrome, "we'll leave our bikes here because we are going to crawl to that copse over there."

I pointed to a bunch of oak trees in the corner of a field.

She smiled, eye shining. Which surprised me, because she had not previously evinced any interest in the Beaufighter.

We dumped our bikes in a ditch inside the field, and I led the way surreptitiously along a high hedge to the copse. She tried to hold my hand, but I told her I needed both hands to carry my accoutrements.

She frowned.

I climbed a grassy bank, and saw a high fence. I parted a clump of ferns, to find a Beaufighter parked about thirty yards away.

My heart thumped wildly, and I turned to Mabel. She was sitting on the grass, the top two buttons of her blouse undone, white ankle-socked legs somewhat akimbo.

"Mabel, grab the pencil and paper and take some notes, please."

I turned back to the Beaufighter, and whispered my observations... "Nose level with the two radial engines, looks like four cannon under the nose, must be the nightfighter version, 'cos it's all black. Design obviously of Blenheim origin."

I was absolutely ecstatic.

"Let's have our snack," I sighed.

I sat opposite her and munched my pilchard sandwiches and gulped the lemonade.

"Mabel, isn't this a wonderful afternoon?" I asked, but her brow was furrowed.

"John, would you like a toffee?" she responded in a husky voice.

"Yes," I panted. Anything to absorb the bland taste of pilchard.

Listen. I was somewhat conversant with girls' undergarments, because at least twice a week my mother ironed sundry items on the kitchen table, with her top-of-the-range equipment – a thick iron ring on the table and a heavy flatiron that she heated on the gas oven. However, my observations were purely academic, and therefore I was somewhat surprised at Mabel's demeanour, no less than lifting her skirt, reaching to her black knickers and removing two toffees from a little pocket.

I pretended I hadn't noticed the abstraction, but chewed the warm toffee.

"I suppose we'd better start back home," I said, and she snorted, brown eyes flashing.

We reached our respective houses in Roydon Road.

"A wonderful day, Mabel," I preened. "Listen. There is an aerodrome outside Birmingham at Hockley Heath, on the road to Stratford-on-Avon, and I am told the new Hotspur glider flies from it. How do you fancy cycling there next Sunday and assisting me to spot the Hotspur?"

She said she'd think about it... 000

# Avramania!

A Reader's Theater Production for Foolscap, September 23rd, 2006

Andrew Hooper

**D**ramatis Personae:  
**James Barkenhorst:** Longtime fan, sometimes con-runner, fan publisher, a bit loud-mouthed, skeptical.

**Violet Bick:** Lipstick Librarian. Married, then divorced, then remarried to Duke Ovechkin.

**Molly Molders:** In charge of convention hospitality for nine years. Also offers her house for meetings and potlux. Won the Idaho state spelling bee in 1978.

**Duke Ovechkin:** Gearhead, robot designer, one time blinky wrangler to the Worldcon. Married to Violet, and frequently faithful.

**Dana Saylor:** Bass player of mystery. Since high school there have been rumors that Dana's Father was the real-life basis for Magnus Robot-Fighter, but since few people now remember Gold Key Comics, this helps us little.

**NARRATION:** In the beginning, a man named Cyrus Pyewacket founded the neighborhood later known as Wallingmont when he bribed the Captain of the Latona steam packet to call at the 36<sup>th</sup> Street piling where Pyewacket's trolley cars terminated. At the top of the ridge that bears his name, Pyewacket opened a tiny amusement park, with a carousel, a calliope, and a pair of steam-powered llamas from Peru. Many years later, a house standing on one quarter of the original Pyewacket plat became the frequent headquarters of the Wallingmont Group, a tight band of loose friends who have now acquired the habit of hosting a science fiction convention every two or three years. Let us now be drawn like pilgrims to a flame as the central convention committee of Nootka Nine meets to consider the question of The Book of Honor....

**James Barkenhorst:** Okay, before we eat dinner and lose the power of cognitive reasoning, everybody should sign the minute sheet. Like so - - (*writes*) James V. Barkenhorst.

**Violet Bick:** (*also as if writing*) Violet Bick

**Duke Ovechkin:** (*scribbles fast*) Duke Ovechkin

**Dana Saylor:** Dana Saylor

**Molly Molders:** Molly Molders. I mean, I live here!

**Violet:** Thanks for hosting us again, Molly. Our place is half blue tarps right now.

**Duke:** That's just for cosmetic purposes. Nothing's actually leaking any more.

**Dana:** And thanks for making supper again, the chicken smells wonderful.

**James:** Which we can eat, as soon as we deal with the one piece of old business still before us: The final choice for the Book of Honor for Nootka Nine.

**Violet:** Right. And I'm still in favor of *The Dispossessed*, by Ursula Le Guin

**Duke:** But that would violate the tradition of choosing a work by an author who isn't still living.

**Violet:** That's why I want to choose it. I know Ursula would still find it fun if we chose her book, whereas Alfred Bester won't get a whole lot out of your choice.

**Duke:** But *The Demolished Man* is one of the most important and influential novels in SF history.

**Molly:** So it doesn't really NEED us to name it as the Book of Honor for Nootka Nine. Plenty of people have and will still read it without any help from us.

**Duke:** Are you still pushing for Andre Norton?

**Molly:** *Daybreak 2250 AD* had an intense affect on me when I read it in the eighth grade. I think it's a landmark achievement in accessible young adult post holocaust literature.

**Dana:** At least there are plenty of copies of *Daybreak* and *Demolished Man* around; I tried to find copies of *Crown of Stars* by James Tiptree Jr. so the rest of the committee could read it, and all I could find was a first edition that some *huckster* wanted to charge me \$20 for!

**James:** Hey, it was completely mint in bag. No eyetracks, guaranteed.

**Dana:** I think you're just bitter because we won't pick some enormous poem by H.P. Lovecraft.

**James:** *The Dreamquest of Unknown Kadath* is as influential as *The Demolished Man* within a significant school of genre fiction.

**Duke:** And that genre is horror, Jim, not science fiction. I mean, you could get me to agree if



you suggested *At the Mountains of Madness* or *The Color out of Space*. But if you try to build a major program item out of a block of gothic-mannerist poetry, people will all go shopping at Archie McPhee instead.

**Violet:** So no one's position has changed since last month.

**Duke:** So then we're decided: It's *The Avram Davidson Treasury*, edited by Robert Silverberg and Grania Davis.

**James:** I don't remember who suggested it...

**Violet:** Me!

**Duke:** I thought it was Molly.

**Molly:** I thought it was you!

**James:** ...But anyway, it's the perfect compromise. Everyone likes Avram's stories, but ask them when was the last time they read one?

**Dana:** And people can read the whole collection or just a few key stories, and still be able to get something out of the program.

**Violet:** I think it's worth it just to remind people who actually wrote "And All the Seas With Oysters."

**Duke:** Yeah, I heard another sideways variation. Little guy, played by Burgess Meredith, trapped in the public library when the bomb drops. Finally, he has all the time in the world to read; then he finds that his glasses have turned into a coat hanger.

**Molly:** Maybe we can do a *Fahrenheit 451* thing, where everyone can memorize a different Avram Davidson story and recite them at the con. (A Beat of Embarrassed Silence)

**Duke:** I don't know, Molly; what happens when someone asks me how to spell Cincinnello?

**James:** Oh, I bet we got lots of gags like that to look forward to. Everybody should try to read Avram's collection; anybody needs help laying hands on a copy, let me know. And in the meantime, can we eat?

**Dana:** Oh man, I'm starving. But did you know that a standard cinematic device to indicate the passage of time involves the use of a wavy dissolve accompanied by dream-like harp music? You can create the same effect by passing your fingers in front of your eyes and singing: "Doodle-e-doo, doodle-e-doo, doodle-e-doo, doodle-e-doo...."

**NARRATION:** Another way to illustrate the passage of time is to allow a well-modulated and omniscient narrative voice to explain that a number of months have passed, copies of *The Avram Davidson Treasury* have been distributed within the committee, which is meeting again as we join them. Sprawled in comfortable positions, they are startled when Violet Bick enters the room and slams the door behind her, a wild look in her eyes.

**Violet:** Dana, is that you?

**Dana:** Who else would I be?

**Violet:** Open your mouth!

**Dana:** Gaaaahhhh...

**Violet:** Okay, so your mouth's not blue. You must be human. That's good news, but I'm still seriously weirded out here!

**Molly:** Weirded out by what, Violet?

**Violet:** By the phone calls. E-mails. Little junk mail packages with cellophane windows and the American Dental Association logo in the corner. And I'm not positive, but I think there have been... transmissions.

**James:** Transmissions from the Horsehead Nebula?

**Violet:** Are you MOCKING me?

**James:** No, no, I'm not...wait, yes I am. I am mocking you. I mean, are you mocking US? We all read the same story, you know.

**Violet:** Who can blame you? They haven't been calling YOU. Yes, I did read the short story titled "Help! I am Dr. Morris Goldpepper," by Avram Davidson, in which the famous inventor of the Goldpepper semi-retractable clamp is taken to meet the dental needs of a distant alien race. I thought it was just an interesting read, kind of like an early Philip K. Dick story, but then these *things* started to happen. A man with no eyebrows asked my neighbors questions about us. Duke saw a black town car with no license plates sitting across the road from our house several times, but whenever he came out of the house, the car drove away! And when I went in for my six-month checkup with Dr. Bostick, I swear that the man in the chair next to mine had a *blue mouth!*

**Dana:** Wow. Just like the story. That's some coincidence.

**Violet:** If only I could hear the transmissions from Dr. Goldpepper myself! But here is the twist of fate...I have perfect teeth! Not one filling! My mom was always so proud! And try finding an orthodontist to fit you with braces or headgear in the interest of improving your radio reception....

**Molly:** Violet, that's so...weird. Duke, how long has she been talking like this?

**Duke:** Since the middle of the Reagan administration. I blame Babylon 5.

**Violet:** Open your mouth!

**Duke:** Mwaaaaaaaah!

**Violet:** Oh my God, it's BLUE!

**Molly:** Not it isn't, it's purple!

**Duke:** Yeah, I just had a grape popsicle. You should know, you stopped at a 7-11 and made me buy a grape popsicle. Then you drove off raving about the dangers of gingivitis and made me walk here myself.

**Violet:** That was not a grape popsicle. It was just a piece of paper with the words "grape popsicle" written on it.

**James:** And in reality, The American Dental Association isn't anything to reckon with. Everyone knows it is the BRITISH Dental Association that

pursues naughty dentists and promotes composite surface bonding.

**Violet:** I said something like that dozens of times myself. But the phone calls kept coming. The poor wretches can't turn the signal off, it pounds into their heads 24 hours a day. They beg for death, sometimes. Sometimes I HATE the American Dental Association and the terrible things they make me do. But what girl could resist them? Big hairy Dan-bourge, or trim little McAllister? Even Smith, the quiet silver fox, always knowing. A nod. A smile. It makes you melt.

**James:** Violet, "Help! I am Dr. Morris Goldpepper" is a very cool little story, but it does not have the power to alter objective reality.

**Duke:** Right, you need Jorge Luis Borges for that.

**James:** Besides, if one of Avram's stories were to suddenly impinge on the real world, everyone knows it would be "And All the Seas With Oysters." That story is so well known and soaked into the consciousness of literature that people plagiarize it without ever having read it.

**Violet:** But Jim, you can't be serious – "Oysters" hasn't a fraction of the pure sexual magnetism of the American Dental Association.

**Dana:** This is quite a committee meeting! Are we going to record this in the progress report?

**James:** I was prepared for this eventuality. I've got a box in my car. I'll go get it.

**Violet:** Before you go...

**James:** Aaaaaahhhh! There, pink as a human.

**Violet:** You have a piece of mushroom or something stuck to your teeth.

**Molly:** While we're waiting, can I offer anyone else some celery tonic?

**Dana:** See, I think I understand what Jim means about the question of attribution. I'm watching TV and there is the advertisement for nuts that creates weird acronyms out of the letters in the name of their company? You know the ones I mean. Anyway, they had this one commercial that showed this dwarf in a brown hood, and they referred to him as "A Little Druid Networking Under the Stairs." And I mean this guy looks more like a Jawa than a bronze age Celtic priest. Now, from source material does this image of druidry arise? I'll tell you what: "This is Spinal Tap," the scene where they make the tiny Stonehenge by mistake and the midgets in hoods dance around it on stage. That's where these people first heard the word "Druid" spoken aloud.

**Duke:** Plus, Druids do very little networking in a contemporary business definition of the word.

**James:** I'm back! (*SFX: Many small safety pins being dropped on the tabletop*) Here we go. There they are. Safety. Pins.

**Violet:** You know, Jim, when the light of obsessive zeal is in your eyes, you're very nearly an attrac-

tive man.

**James:** Just pins. Everyone knows the story. They come from nowhere, filling up your drawers and tabletops. And when you aren't looking, or at least forget what you're supposed to be looking for, they turn into coat hangers.

**Molly:** Just try to keep them off the floor.

**Duke:** I find this all very impressive. The most any of Avram's stories has inspired in me is a tendency to talk funny for a while after reading them.

**Dana:** I know, I have to read some sentences three or four times to figure out his passages in dialect.

**Molly:** Duke, it was really nice of you to help in the kitchen. But. What sort of mushrooms did you put in the Golden Mushroom soup?

**Duke:** Uhhh... Golden Mushrooms?

**Molly:** Now, were they the dried mushrooms in the baggie with the yellow twisty in the cupboard over the sink? It might be kind of important.

**Duke:** I don't know, I'll go look. If I don't come back soon, put on a white-t-shirt and follow me into the dark with nothing but a flashlight for protection.

**Violet:** My husband, the flirt! But I don't blame you for trying to hurt me – I know a passion like Dr. Morris Goldpepper's can be intimidating to lesser men.

**Molly:** Jim, do you want me to put those hangers in a closet?

**James:** What? (*SFX: A bunch of wire hangers hitting a tabletop*) Now, see, you distracted me. I was thinking about Jamie Lee Curtis in a white T-shirt, and you made me miss the transformation. God-Dang, I hate when that happens. Well, at least I have control group B linked up in a little chain on my dashboard.

**Dana:** DO you, Jim? Or do you have a bunch of wire coat hangers all over the dash and down in the foot well of the passenger side?

**James:** (A beat) God-dang it.

**Molly:** I just read "Oysters" myself, and I was surprised to find I'd never read it before. I don't retain every single detail of everything I read like some of you do. But I know that was the first time I ever read it.

**Dana:** I didn't remember the way the pupal stage turned into a larval stage – which is not the way biology works. Was he just playing around with words, or was it a way to suggest an alien life cycle? Tricky guy, that Avram.

**James:** Nothing. No pins, no hangers. So you sent Ovechkin out to steal them by going out through the kitchen door.

**Duke:** No, the kitchen door is blocked on the outside by the recycling bins. See, I found the package of mushrooms. They were just chantarelles. They might be pretentious but they aren't psychoactive.

**James:** Well, even if you didn't steal my safety



pins – or the coat hangers they transformed into -- , that still doesn't mean that they are some form of invading alien that wants to take over the earth by covering it with bicycles.

*(SFX: A loud bicycle bell)*

**James:** Okay, I'm going home now. If there are a bunch of alien bicycles lined up in my driveway, I'm going to sell them on eBay.

**Duke:** Wait! You've got the mailing labels

**Violet:** I'm sorry, Molly, but I've got to follow up on this grape popsicle thing. You understand.

**Molly:** That's all right. The meeting was probably over. I always find I prefer the solitude of...The Jungle... anyway.

**Dana:** Hey, I'm still here.

**Molly:** That's right, Dana, you're still here. My only friend in the solitary vastness...

**Dana:** ...of The Jungle?

**Molly:** That's right...The Jungle.

**Dana:** So I take it you're responding to one of Avram's primate stories? Like "Now Let Us Sleep," or "The Hills Behind Hollywood High"?

**Molly:** Maybe – but I'm never more than a few moments away from...The Jungle. Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to live there – to be like Sheena, the Queen of the Jungle, or maybe find an ape-man to date like Jane found Tarzan.

**Dana:** Right – there's nothing like being the only other human being available for miles.

**Molly:** And it doesn't matter where you go, or how many baths you take in the jungle pools...I'll still be able to SMELL you. And in a matter of minutes, I will FIND you. The Jungle is My Domain!

**Dana:** And if we are menaced by white hunters or catering directors?

**Molly:** Then the canopy will shiver with the force of my Jungle Roar! My huge canine teeth will bury themselves in their white, yielding throats, and the red flower of their blood will cover me from head to foot!

**Dana:** They'll never overcharge us for pasta salad again!

**Molly:** And even if they hunt me...like the Wild Animal I am...I'm more comfortable just being in The Jungle. Close your eyes, Dana. Just do it. Relax, and things will start to come into the room with us. Can you smell the wet earth, the Jasmine and Bougainvillea in the air? And something else, something with scales and coils and cold, black eyes?

**Dana:** Wow...a tropical paradise. Can we go to Tierra Del Fuego too?

**Molly:** You should be respectful in the presence of the tribal ancestors.

**Dana:** I didn't know the ancestors

were coming...I would have brought coffee cake.

**Molly:** Avram's stories are full of warm places. Belize. Lahore. And just a few alien worlds with what I imagine are hot pink suns. Setting is all-important. The time of day is another character. Sometimes he starts and stops telling the story three times before he really gets to the plot.. You can groan and call it a shaggy dog story if you want, but that's the way he's going to tell it. Like some one else gave it to him, and he has to tell it their way out of respect to their memory.

**Dana:** Yeah, it is kind of funny how Avram stories become part of an oral tradition, and preserve someone's way of speaking.

**Molly:** Reading Avram's story "The Hills Behind Hollywood High" made me realize that I was always a gorilla girl, just trying to find My Jungle.

**Dana:** And that's a good thing, because drinking buckets of celery tonic alone isn't likely to make that transformation happen. According to Avram, anyway. You need to run into a wizened little half-Javanese Docktor of Philosophy along the way.

**Molly:** I know it's probably only make-believe. I won't really ever be hairy and simian with inch-long fangs. But just in case I end up making a physical transformation, I bought another hair trap for the bathtub drain.

**Dana:** I found it exciting to read his reference to the rare Sumatran Gorilla – there really are rumors of a Sumatran Gorilla, and an unknown red-furred ape, smaller and more intelligent, known as the Orang-Pendak. No one has been able to find proof of their existence. But in the world of cryptozoology, a reference in a fictional account is nearly as good as eyewitness testimony.

**Molly:** That's true...and if I think and behave as if I were a powerful forest-dwelling primate, then it will be much the same as if I really *were* a glowering gorilla girl!

**Dana:** Well, that's a very positive attitude to take. But I must say, even though things here in The Jungle seem to be in good order, I'm worried about what may be happening over at Duke and Violet's house.

**Molly:** What's to worry about?

**Dana:** If Violet is obsessed with "Help, I am Dr. Morris Goldpepper," and Jim Barkenhorst has somehow become *involved* in "And All the Seas With Oysters," which Avram Davidson story is *Duke* going to, um, *come down with*?

**Molly:** Perhaps you should investigate the question.

**Dana:** I think I will. Thank you for the food and company. (*Trailing off a bit*) I only hope I can find my way out of The Jungle in time....

NARRATION: Meanwhile, at the Queen Anne Valley home of Violet Bick and Duke Ovechkin:

**Duke:** Okay, I think we're all settled in now. We've established that neither Jimmy nor I have naturally blue mouths, and that no one absent of eyebrows is watching us from across the road. Plus, we're convinced that the only bicycle in the vicinity is a three-speed Raleigh with flat tires in the garage. So, if we've no more *tsuris* for the moment, I plan to sit and read the paper.

**Violet:** I'm going to go floss.

**Duke:** Good idea, it's been at least an hour.

**James:** I appreciate the two of you letting me come over. I'm worried about going home.

**Duke:** Please, don't mention it. But I admit I'm curious what you plan to do.

**James:** I read through "And All The Seas With Oysters" several times. I didn't find any reference to any lights on the bicycles in the story. So I figure if I wait until after dark I should be safe.

**Duke:** Safe, he says. And then what happens in a few hours when the sun comes up again?

**James:** I'm really taking the line that I don't intend the bicycles any harm. Maybe if I just leave the garage door open, they'll escape.

**Duke:** Or maybe someone will simply steal them.

**James:** Works for me. (A beat) And you thought people would find H.P. Lovecraft's poetry too creepy.

**Duke:** Yeah, I guess I lack the imagination you and Violet have.

**James:** Uh huh. What about that, Duke? What do you make of Avram Davidson's stories?

**Duke:** Some of them actually annoy me – he gets away with things that I never could in a writing workshop. But I like the way nothing surprises him. The Sense of Wonder, we got. (A Beat) Pardon me,

Jim, are you all right? You look a krenklech all of a sudden....

**James:** (Altered) If I explain, Ovechkin, then you will surely quake with fear...

**Duke:** Oy vey iz mir, here we go.

**James:** It's true. I have rendered all mankind superfluous.

**Duke:** A golem. This we don't need.

**Violet:** Honey, have you seen my gum stimulator? What's going on? Did you write on Jim's forehead when he fell asleep again?

**Duke:** Hardly. That was the *revi* of Prague, almost 400 years ago.

**Violet:** Wonderful. A *golem*. Oh, but I have a little thing with the American Dental Association, and you think I'm out of my mind...

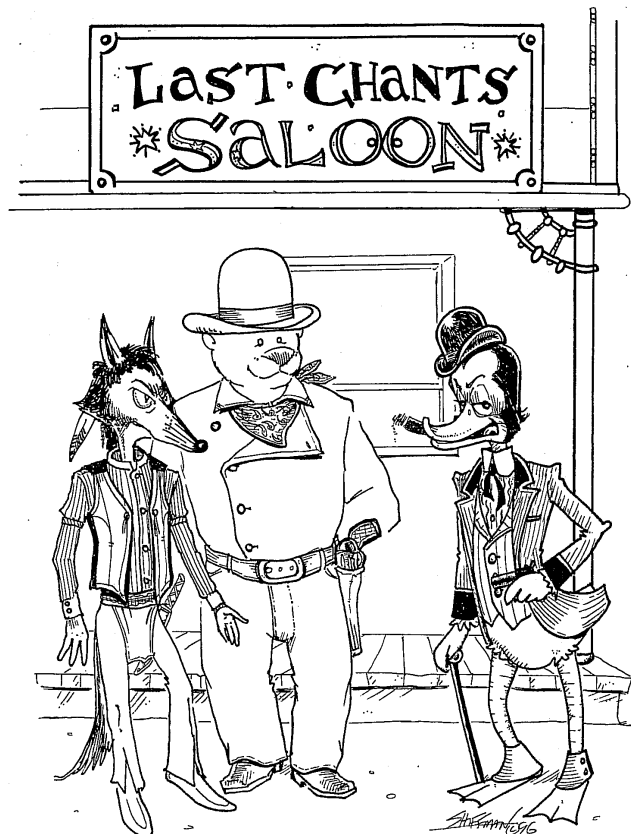
**James:** Foolish humans....

**Duke:** The difference is so difficult to see? I don't mumble the golem's name while I'm sleeping and sigh like a maidel when the golem walks by!

**Violet:** Oh, you should be ashamed! How many hundreds of times have you flirted with Molly Molders right in front of me? You always compliment her cooking, the way she looks...I know you're dreaming about her, too!

**James:** I am not one of you!

**Duke:** Now cut that out, Jim, if you can. I know – bicycles! Alien bicycles are pedaling this



way, Jim!

**James:** The inevitable enmity between human beings and their mechanical simulacra dictates that I go on a rampage all over you.

**Duke:** This is a really complicated hallucination. I don't know how to fix this. Is Jim supposed to be a robot I can wrangle or an honest-injun *golem* from the ancient Prague ghetto? 'Cause I don't think I know what to do with a golem.

**Violet:** Why not?

**Duke:** Because I'm not a 17<sup>th</sup> Century rabbi! I'm not even Jewish already! I'm from Hawaii!

**Violet:** What are you talking? You could be Gene Wilder with that accent.

**James:** It's FRAHN-kenshteen.

**Duke:** I don't how to write the name of the Lord on his forehead. I have trouble writing my own name on his forehead, even though I've had practice. I don't know how to make him fall down like one of the dead.

**James:** My capabilities are such that mankind must inevitably try to destroy me – and pay for the attempt with their very existence!

**Violet:** Duke, you're forgetting one thing.

**Duke:** What's that?

**Violet:** The Barken-golem doesn't know any of that.

**Duke:** Get me a wet sponge.

**James:** I have the strength of ten men under six feet in height. My computational capabilities exceed that of a gymnasium full of punch cards. I am the jackal of the east, the wolf at the door, the Dingo of despair.

**Duke:** Just hold still for a second.

**James:** UNHAPPY Macnam....

**Duke:** There you go. Thoroughly reprogrammed. Now you must do Ms. Bick's bidding, God help you.

**Violet:** You bet! Have I got some weeds for you to pull! But why don't you start by answering the door, I can see someone coming up the walk.

**James:** (No longer altered) Yes, Mistress Bick. (A beat) Molly! What are you doing here?

**Molly:** After you all left, I felt guilty enjoying myself in The Jungle when you were so agitated. I used my forepaws to perform some Internet searches, and I think I know what's wrong with us.

**Violet:** It -- It's periodontal disease, isn't it?

**Molly:** No Violet. We're suffering from an imaginary virus known as Avramania Fanaticus. It's brought on by persistent, unprotected immersion in the fiction of Avram Davidson.

**Duke:** Unprotected immersion?

**Molly:** Right, 4 out of 5 editors recommend... using brief prophylactic applications of Reader's Digest Condensed Books or "Moneyline with Lou Dobbs" in order to keep from overstimulating the human sense of wonder.

**Duke:** Of course. It's a fancy way to call us all meshugge, but we're fans. By now we're used to it.

**Violet:** Is there a cure?

**Molly:** Yes. It's painful, but brief.

**James:** No needles, I hope.

**Molly:** No, it's taken optically. Two to three paragraphs of Stephen R. Donaldson, applied two times per day, have proven to prevent persistent hallucinations and behavioral changes in laboratory bison.

**Violet:** Laboratory Bison?

**Molly:** Yes, a dangerous breed, but they too are the subjects of Tantor the elephant. Tantor is master of all the animals of the forest. Duke, do you happen to *have* any Stephen R. Donaldson that I could borrow?

**Duke:** Yeah, here, I think I have one of the first Thomas Covenant books around. I keep it to kill bison.

**Molly:** I'll just open to a random page: "The Roynish Ur-viles clackered their delight as the rapist-leper choked in self-loathing." Oh, that ought to do it.

**James:** I certainly feel depressingly normal.

**Violet:** Yeah, I'm...sorry about the popsicle thing, Duke. And the compulsive dentistry.

**Duke:** It's okay, I'm sorry for all the hysterical Judaica. We can have ham and cheese sandwiches again whenever you want.

**Molly:** Nobody needs to be embarrassed. This syndrome has been known to affect even big name fans. But what happened to Dana Sayler? I know the plan was to stop here after leaving my place.

**James:** We never saw her. And we've got to find her before the convention...otherwise, there's no telling what she may believe. She might be a goldfish in a bowl in China...a book merchant of Bhutan...or a purveyor of perpetual motion disguised as a Slovakian housewife.

**Violet:** This book should have a warning label. Won't someone please think of the children?

**NARRATION:** On that note, we'll let Dana Sayler take up the story of the story

**Dana:** After a lifetime spent reading fiction, you feel like you've read every story before, even when you haven't. And if you pay attention, you find that life starts to obey the same plots and patterns, with few surprises in the succession of births, deaths, graduations, marriages and convictions. The happy moments never last long enough, and the miseries go on forever.

I feel like Mrs. Gummitch in Avram Davidson's story "The Woman Who Thought She Could Read." I'm just trying to find the way to read the future from the whorls and blemishes of common dry beans, something so simple that no one remembers how to do it. But I've been stumped by basic details: Do you have to make soup out of each lash of beans after

you've read them, or can they issue multiple predictions? If I see a future filled with dread, even death, am I obliged to share this with the doomed? Wouldn't it be best to let them enjoy their last hours on Earth? But perhaps the beans will pull your card if you don't use their gifts to inflict ironic disruptions on the lives of others.

Avram's creative use of unfamiliar words is particularly challenging for someone with dyslexia like me. But when Mrs. Gummitch told the story of the girl who wanted to read, and learned to divine the future from beans instead, I knew immediately that it was *my* story. For all the years I struggled to perceive writing and numbers as intended, I secretly suspected that the jumbles my brain and eyes made of language were trying to tell me something as well. That important information had been lodged deep in the language, to be revealed only to the one person with the combination of brain defects to see them. And among these messages are warnings, signs and predictions, as common and uncountable as rain.

The thing is, clairvoyance is almost always tempered with an inability to change the events foretold. If events were not predestined, and your predictions allowed people to change the future, how would people ever know that you had been right? Even the oracle of Delphi had a public relations expert to spin the veracity of her predictions. Then there are all the things we see coming, but do nothing about anyway. I had a friend, and she became very sick, and there was nothing anyone could do to prevent her dying. I miss her a lot. And when she died, I was just furious with myself. I should have known that was going to happen years before, and it was only my own laziness that led me to drift off through all those happy chapters before the end of the story was in sight.

Now I have a feeling of foreboding about the convention. Remember the convention, Nootka Nine? The one we had to read *The Avram Davidson Treasury* for? I'm certain that Nootka Eight was the last convention in the series, and when I receive rumors of the future, there simply is no Nootka Nine.

I wonder what disaster could wipe the convention from the Earth? I looked for answers between the lines of The Tacoma News Tribune, which always features such strong coverage of alien intelligence, but there was nothing. No buses are about to plunge into canals, Mt. Rainier is not about to erupt. It's barely even drizzling.

So I went deeper. I read bones, and birds, and drops on my bedroom window. The unpopped kernels in the bottom of a small popcorn from the Neptune Cinema. I counted buttons, badges, tattoos and t-shirts outside a show at the Paramount. But nothing emerged from the swirl. It reached the point where I began to contemplate ending the story. My latest plan is to walk into the bulk foods aisle at the Cooperative and start counting lentils until I sponta-

neously combust.

**James:** But there's no need for any of that now.

**Dana:** There isn't?

**Molly:** No, Dana. After all, we're at the convention. We're all safe.

**Dana:** But I'm positive that there was never any convention called Nootka Nine!

**Duke:** Of course not, we changed the name of the convention. You'd know that if you had come to the past two committee meetings instead of lying at home trying to count static!

**Violet:** That Avramania Fanaticus is one merciless imaginary disease. Here you go. Start reading from the word "Clenched."

**Dana:** (Wait a beat, then mutter some words under your breath, like "violate," "leprosy," "despair," and "deathguard") Oh. Oh my goodness. It's just a story isn't it? It's just a story.

**Violet:** Yeah, but what a story! I went through half a box of tissues when I read it.

**Dana:** So all you did was change the name of the convention?

**James:** Right. Turns out that the name "Nootka" is an English mispronunciation of the word "Yuquot," which wasn't what those people called themselves anyway. They prefer to be known as the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, and we decided that would never fit on a T-shirt.

**Molly:** So we changed the name to Potlatch.

**Violet:** We wanted to call it "NookSack"

**Duke:** (Snorts with laughter)

**James:** But some people can't stop giggling every time we say it.

**Molly:** Besides, a Potlatch is a Native American feast of gifts and political intrigue. It seems like the perfect name for our convention.

**Dana:** I feel so embarrassed – I promised to do Progress Report #4 months ago!

**James:** That's all right. By now, everyone understands the hypnotic power of Avram Davidson's short fiction. At first it's just quizzical style and eccentric characters, and then fiction starts to seem more real than truth, and then you're trapped. Avramania Fanaticus...the Scourge of American Youth. It could happen to anyone – to me...to her...(points at audience) or to YOU! (OOO)



# BACKWATERS: *THE READERS*

**Hal Davis, 22 Oxford Ave., Dayton OH 45402**

I enjoyed Bruce Townley's gentle romp through the Mechanics' Institute Library of San Francisco.

His sister's technique of serendipitous shelf discovery works for me, too. I've found many an enchanting volume next to one I was familiar with.

He ends by noting the MIL includes a work by Nicholas A. Basbanes. *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*.

I came across another Basbanes volume at a freebie sale. The newspaper where I work was selling review copies (proceeds to charity), and I found his *A Splendor of Letters: The Permanence of Books in an Impermanent World*. A fine work, with great nuggets like this:

For the first time in the history of human communication, access to huge reserves of stored information required the use of a mechanical interface, not just knowledge of the language being used or the ability of people to understand it. Anyone who wants to see micro-filmed data, in other words, has to employ the services of a device euphemistically known as a reader. Because very few individuals have these machines in their homes, the use of microfilm is confined for the most part to the audiovisual rooms of libraries and research centers. (p. 20)

...for centuries the Jews had been known as "the People of the Book," a designation derivatively given them by the Prophet Muhammad for their reliance on scriptures, but one they proudly embraced. (p. 100)

...when the legal scholar Raphael Lemkin coined the word *genocide* in 1944, he cited the wholesale massacre of Armenians in 1915 as the defining example of the phenomenon in the twentieth century. (p. 152)

So far, Jerry, I've found nothing missing in the current issue, unless you misplaced *The History of the World, Part 1*. {February 13, 2006}

**Brad Foster, P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016**

I'd like to apply for that free lifetime subscription you offered to whoever finds the material missing in this issue. You made it so easy, though. I'm probably not the first. I mean, immediately after you make the offer, there is a short piece about a wondrous photo in your possession, and yet... and yet... *it is nowhere to be seen in my copy of this issue!*

And surely in this age of digital images and printing and scanning and whatnot, there is no reason it would not be included as part of that little article. The Waldo Wall has gone missing! {February 20, 2006}

{Why didn't we include the photo of the Great Wall of Scotland/China? 1) It would have made Jim's article slop over to the next page. 2) Its wondrousness consisted not of what it showed, but that it was mixed in with our photos of Scotland but wasn't one we took. 3) Most importantly, we didn't think of it. If you didn't already have a "lifetime subscription," we'd certainly give you one. Jerry}}

**Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611**

I guess I should count myself lucky that I'm getting the on-paper version of *Littlebrook*, since my copy of No. 4 is absent any disappeared lines -- unless, that is, you've cleverly blended them into the overall layout so that even a veteran fan like me wouldn't notice. Anyway, thanks for No. 5, which turned up in the mail a little over a week ago and has now been read. First, let me say that I like the allusion to mimeography implicit in the font you used for all your headings.

Not only are fans from other regions "still exotic beings," but some of the perks they enjoy are pretty exotic, too. Jukka Halme is living in a world of fantasy from the standpoint of us American fans when he reports that in Finland "the major convention is supported by government grants and corporate sponsorships."

Luke McGuff's reference in "Emptying an Apartment" to "photographs of people no one recognizes" reminds me of going through my parents' stuff back in 1995 after they were both moved from their home of many years into nursing homes. I came away with thousands of photographs dating back as far as the late '20s. While for the most part I recognize everyone -- and one of these days I've got to take some time to label them so my sons will know who their ancestors are! -- there's a group that my parents got when \*they\* cleared out my grandmother's apartment (she being the last of that generation to go) that are totally unknown to me. That is, a few of them look vaguely familiar -- maybe I met them once or twice visiting her and her husband in Cleveland when my age was in single digits -- but I have no names to go with them. Still, they're part of family history and I can't just throw them out.

Although I've never been to the Mechanics Institute Library, I feel like I know it. Even before Bruce



Townley began mentioning his own connections to it on various lists and now here in *Littlebrook*, my old friend Cynthia Goldstone and her late husband Lou used to bring it up all the time – and Cynthia still does. She goes there to check out books and, these days, DVDs of movies she wants to see. I really ought to go there sometime myself, but unfortunately its hours (with the exception of Sunday when it's open from 1 to 5 p.m.) don't correlate well with the availability of parking (other than expensive garages) in its neighborhood.

Because I'm a member of SAPS (and have been since 1983, and before that 1959–65) I didn't think much of your mention in *Littlebrook* No. 4 of the Morocco trip report issue of Mark Manning's *Jupiter Jump*. But Jan Stinson's, Claire Brialey's and Mog Decarnin's mentions of it in "Backwaters" reminded me of how much I enjoyed it when I read it as part of the mailing in which it was included. Mark is still very much active in SAPS, and for anyone interested in the leisurely pace of a quarterly on-paper apa (fandom's second oldest) as a counterpoint to fast-paced 21st century on-line fandom (where you get LoCs on your weekly fanzine less than an hour after posting it, per Chris Garcia) there are available slots on the SAPS roster. Dues are only \$5/year, minimum activity is 6 pages every other mailing, and you must have 6 pages in your first mailing of membership. Apply to the EOOE, Burnett Toskey, at [DrTosk@comcast.net](mailto:DrTosk@comcast.net).

I agree with Rich Coad's mention of Cheryl Cline's country music fanzine, *Twangin'*, that it was a terrific zine. I have seven issues put out between 1993 and 1996, and it's unclear as to whether it's still going. Googling for "cline twangin'" I came up with <http://www.steamiron.com/twangin/info.html> but I'm not sure how up to date it is. Cheryl writes, "Subscriptions for *Twangin'* are no longer available. After months of trying to get #8 out this weekend, and failing, I have suspended the print publication. I will be either refunding subscriptions or filling them out with reprints from this page. I may revive the print 'zine in the future, but if so, it will be a limited-circulation newsletter sent out on request and at whim. I am not planning to take further subscriptions." Her mention of not being able to get an 8<sup>th</sup> issue out corresponds with my having the first seven. She also mentions that some back issues are available. There's another site that implies an on-line version might be happening: <http://www.steamiron.com/twangin/index.html>, and yet another where two e-versions are available: <http://www.etxt.org/Zines/ASCII/Twangin/>

{{As of May 2007 all the above URLs are still active. Jerry}}

Milt Stevens writes, "Andy Hooper mentions the belief that paper fanzines are moribund. For things that may be moribund, they certainly have a ten-

dency to stack up all over the place." Yeah, tell me about it. I just got a new file cabinet to cope with that.

Milt also writes about grits, "I would describe grits as a thin version of hot cereal." If they were thin, Milt, they weren't properly prepared. Grits can have significant body if allowed to cook a little longer than they apparently were wherever you ordered them.

Eric Mayer doesn't "know when Craig Smith started appearing and I'm sure I don't remember his work from the zines I used to get way back when." I first met Craig at the 1988 Corflu in Seattle, and his earliest appearances in *Trap Door* were in No. 11, back in 1992. I don't recall if Eric was still on my list at that point. {February 21, 2006} {{We first met Craig when he wandered into the Fan Lounge that we had at those early Norwescons and started looking at fanzines. We loaned him some others and have been receiving his fine artwork ever since. svt}}

### **Jeanne Mealy, 1595 East Hoyt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55106**

Thanks for *Littlebrook* 5. T'was an enjoyable smattering of various topics. I noticed that many contained an element of mystery.

Jerry, I'm not surprised that you remember people most from your trip. Fans are memorable, even in a different country. That's no mystery!

I passed the proofreading quiz and note that Jim Young's article was actually titled "The Mystery of the Great Wall of Scotland," not China as the ToC says. I appreciated hearing Jim's theory about the photo that showed up on Suzle's disc of digital photos: that the Wee Folk visited China and even produced a souvenir of the Great Wall. I can easily hear his sideshow patter throughout the article. However, I have yet to find the Woo-Woo Channel in order to get more details about this mystery. Perhaps it's lurking on the flip side of the Sci Fi Channel.

Luke's observations about death and possessions had me in a melancholy mood for awhile. He brought up mysteries involved in not knowing why people did what they did, collected what they had. I'd like to hear about his trips to the Burning Man festival.

John Berry began by describing the echo of the Big Bang, making readers wonder how he would tie this into his own life. We heard about his relationship with his father, and that there was an outside toilet. Then John described the process of his ingenious father creating a mysterious contraption in the mid-30s. The homemade radio first produced an odd sound, like frying bacon, rather than voices and music. Aha! Was there something special about this receiver, or did all radios back then pick up the sound of the Big Bang? Another mystery.

Bruce Townley told us about two libraries in his life, particularly the Mechanics' Institute Library and its interesting patrons. Why was a former Cossack there one day? I loved his line "Sometimes you *can* tell a book by its cover, particular if it has a photo of a snarling gecko on it."

I appreciated the LoCs on paper vs. electronic zines. I vote for paper zines, though ideally they'd be available in

both formats. Do follow up with Kate Yule about her intriguing visit to New York. Her asides were chock-full of mysterious references I'd love to hear more about.

Country music, eeesh. Granted, some of the more-recent stuff is more palatable. Less twang, please.

Suzle, congrats on winning TAFF. Sorry to hear about the travel hassles. I know how hard it is to keep up with travel notes. I remember more than once taking an extra minute while in the bathroom to jot down more notes on a busy trip (like one of the Aussiecons)!

Potlatch 15. Wow. Hope it was great. \*envy\*

Thanks for the illos sparingly scattered through the issue (more, more!). I savored each, having seen the artists' work for many years. {February 24, 2006}

### **Milt Stevens, 6325 Keystone St., Simi Valley, CA 93063**

In the editorial in *Littlebrook* #5, Jerry discusses the Mundane SF Manifesto. I've read that manifesto. If I hadn't been certain of it before, I would now be certain that people who issue manifestos are absolutely no fun whatsoever. It's as if the people who endorse that manifesto expect us to grow up. Fortunately, I'm much too old to grow up. I expect to make it to second childhood without ever entirely leaving first childhood. There is a much older principle of art which applies here. Reality is no excuse for art. It never has been, and it never will be.

Luke McGuff writes about cleaning out the apartment of a deceased relative. I had one experience like that. I helped my father clean out my grandmother's mobile home when she had finally reached the point she had to go to a retirement home. It turned out to be a good thing my father and I both had police background. We found we had to give the place a very thorough search. My grandmother had hidden money EVERYWHERE. There

was money under the carpets, in books, rolled in socks, in the drop ceiling, taped to the bottom of drawers, in light fixtures, in plastic bags in the toilet tank... We started making a pile of bills in the middle of the kitchen table. It got to be a fair sized pile, since we found a bit over \$15,000 in the course of the afternoon. I don't think she remembered any of it.

John Berry's description of his early experience with radio reminded me of my mother's description of a similar experience. My mother was born in 1905. Her experience was at about the beginning of WWI. The man who was my grandmother's long time companion (but not her husband) built a crystal set. You could hear birds chirping, and my mother was quite impressed by that. The man who built the crystal set was named Thomas Hussey. He was something of a profan. I still have his copy of the complete H. G. Wells short stories. He also had books on technocracy, eugenics, and Esperanto. Since he died in 1943, I don't remember him, but maybe his books had some sort of a subliminal influence on my early development.

During the late sixties, I spent part of each year in San Francisco, but I never heard of the library Bruce Townley mentions. Of course, I was in the Navy at the time, and libraries weren't exactly on the top of my list of things to visit. With 45 day line periods, I had plenty of time to read, so I didn't waste any in port time on reading. I was younger and more vitamin packed in those days. {February 27, 2006}

### **Richard Brandt, 835 Musket Drive #L-303, Colorado Springs CO 80906**

I can't presume to read the minds of On Montreal, but I've always assumed their name is a sly reference to the Denys Arcand film, *Jesus of Montreal*.

I'm rather fond of some country music myself, although not of the variety that has become increasingly pop-ified over the years. (As Cledus T. Judd memorably sang: "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Pop.") It was bad enough that Alan Jackson added a few twangs to Steve Miller's "Mercury Blues" and tried to pass it off as country music, but it was simply insane when it was further adapted to a Ford Truck commercial!

When I was in high school one of local Top 40 AM stations launched an FM subsidiary whose DJs began playing all kinds of neat alternative stuff that their AM counterpart would never have touched. Some of this was what came to be known as "progressive country," so I was introduced to all kinds of neat singers and songwriters; Emmylou Harris was a particular favorite, as well as the slightly twangy John Prine, and I still am extremely fond of Jerry Jeff Walker's rendition of "Jaded Lover." (I finally got to see Emmylou and John live in the last couple of years!) When I went to college in



Fort Worth I heard even more of this stuff, as lots of the Austin musicians would pass through town.

More recently, I was listening to a folk music show a friend of mine back in El Paso runs on the college station, and heard a song by Austin songwriter Slaid Cleaves called "Broke Down" that so impressed me I went out to Amazon and ordered the CD on the spot.

Little did I know that the song was available on Amazon as a free download. Actually, not a bad place to check out country or other forms of music. That's where I found the New Lost City Ramblers' version of "Then It Won't Hurt No More" (sounds like one of those racy numbers from the 1920s full of innuendo...woman visits the dentist, you can guess the rest), as well as the best album title I have ever heard: bluegrass singer Hazel Dickens' "Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People."

My most interesting recent fortune cookie said "You have an unusual equipment / for success. Use it wisely." Hardly needed anything appended to make it racy enough for government use.

Thanks again, and my regards to the enigmatic Moonhead. {March 12, 2006}

**Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd.,  
Etobicoke, ON, Canada M9C 2B2**

Got *Littlebrook 5* here, and many thanks. Our big litcon is about to happen here, so this loc might be a little small and rushed; there's still lots to do to get ready. The badges are done, the restaurant and services guide is done...the con itself may be an anticlimax. We'll see soon enough.

Klingons in kilts? Seen them here at the local Trekcon. They were from Scotland, and to be honest, they looked like they had Melton Mowbray pies on their heads. We now have mundane SF? Sensawunda's hard enough to come by; I think I'd like SF not mundane at all.

Luke McGuff's entries remind me of what's to come for me. Both of my parents are still alive, and are in their 70s. I know I'm going to have lean on Yvonne when one or both go, for I am the oldest child, and handling the estate will likely fall to me, unless they have someone in mind in their wills. Dividing the estate won't be difficult, but liquidating the property might be. This is something I may have to learn about soon.

Paper fanzines are great. Electronic fanzines are, too. I prefer paper, but understand that electronic will bypass a lot of the expenses that keep some people from publishing. The communication itself is far more important than its medium. {March 28, 2006}

**William Breiding, P.O. Box 1448, Morgantown, WV 26507**

You all probably weren't expecting to have an on



going discussion of country music!

I think Alex Slate has his decades a little mixed up. Country music started commercializing strongly in the late 1950s and 1960s, and that era was called "Countrypolitan"; the trend continued on into the 1970s, when began being referred to as "NashVegas". From there it morphed to what commercial Top 40 Country Radio is today. It was somewhere in the mid-1980s that the punk rock-like reaction among newer, younger country music fans and musicians happened towards Top 40 Country. The "alternative" scene began evolving. (Of course, there were roots bands happening the entire time, like The Cache Valley Drifters, a great string band from the late 70s.) Cheryl Cline's *Twangin'* was on the forefront of reportage on that scene. She received in trade the first issue of this "cool little zine" (as Cheryl described it!), *No Depression*, now the very serious and thick as a bible zine of non-Top 40 Country and classic country artists from the past.

The one thing that remains really valuable about Top 40 Country is that it's pretty much the only venue for Pop Vocals, a much neglected genre that thrived from the 1940s through the 1960s and then died an unceremonious death. (I'm dated, as I stopped listening to country music about ten years ago, but I'm thinking of people like Wynonna, Hal Ketchum, and a lot of album cuts by bands like the Mavericks, and, of course, k.d. lang. . .)

It occurred to me while reading Eric Mayer's loc that he views fan publishing like I do writing: I love having written, but hate the process. Eric seems to have loved having published, but... and of course, those who continue to publish fanzines probably love the process of it, or they wouldn't do it. I love it myself and am always fantasizing about doing another zine (like, *Real Soon Now!*). {April 8, 2006}

**Dave Rowe, 8288 W. Shelby State Road  
44, Franklin, IN 46131-9211**

As for going through dead people's belongings: Once purchased a cassette recorder that had been

given to a lady who was dying of cancer. The idea was for her to record her life and thoughts on the cassettes as therapy. A cassette remained in the recorder. It just had her first entry: name date and place of birth, present address and nothing more. Nothing whatsoever but silence. Which begs the question did she just give up on the therapy or did the cancer take over before she could make another entry.

Once helped at a house sale of the belongings of a couple who lived in Indianapolis. The husband had had a successful career in the USAF but had died in the early 1970s. His record collection consisted almost entirely of the Beatles, John Coltrane, and the Mothers of Invention. His wife was Japanese and all the books from then on were solely in Japanese, including cookbooks produced in comic-strip form. It almost seemed she spent her last 30 years in a one woman Japanese ghetto in Indianapolis.

Guess you know Cheryl Wheeler's song about going through dead people's houses.

{{We do now – it's called "Estate Sale." Jerry}}

Enjoyed Bruce Townley's piece about the MIL and rare books. Once tried to track down a book called *Sidney Reilly* by George Alexander Hill. Remember the *Mystery!* series, *Reilly: Ace of Spies*, on TV? Hill was one of Reilly's colleagues and a 1930s bibliography listed his book as published in 1936, with both the U.K. and U.S. publishers, book sizes (different on either side of the Atlantic) and page counts. Spent eight years searching for this volume. It was like it never existed. Wrote to the U.S. publishers (who had moved to Canada) and the London publishers (who had moved to Edinburgh). The latter were not only kind enough to reply but also attached the first page of a legal agreement between authors. It turns out Hill never completed the manuscript and book was never published but in 1966 he sold the incomplete manuscript and rights to the son of a fellow espionage agent who was writing a book on Reilly. For this, Hill received 12.5% of that book's net proceeds. It was that book that became the basis of the TV series. {June 14, 2006}

{{Funny – in a recent issue of Fred Lerner's zine *Lofgeornost* (May 2007), he describes finding a catalog listing for a John Myers Myers novel he knew had never been published, and how he solved the mystery. I myself found a listing in a film book for a movie about Lawrence of Arabia supposedly released the year after Lawrence's death in 1936 – something neither Suzle nor I had ever heard of. In *Charmed Lives* by Michael Korda, a memoir of the Korda brothers – Alexander, Vincent & Zoltan, he revealed that his uncle Alexander had planned and announced such a film but never pulled it together. Jerry & Suzle}}

## **Eric Mayer, maywrite2@epix.net**

This is certainly an interesting issue. Weirdly enough, so far as I recall, all the contributors, yourselves, Luke McGuff, John Berry and Bruce Townley were on my zine's very small mailing list back in the seventies and fans whose stuff has interested me for a long time. Actually, if I substituted myself for you and Suzanne (as editor) and reproduced the articles in unreadable hecto, this would be very like what *Groggy* might've been if it had been a genzine. For what that's worth....

I've never been in the sort of private library Bruce Townley writes about in part of his article. In fact, I didn't realize they still existed. So far as libraries, generally, are concerned, he's right, the most peculiar (and I'd say "most interesting" stuff is often in the stacks). When I lived in Rochester, NY, before they replaced the old library building with a modern one, the majority of the collection seemed to be stored in the stacks in the basement. Although the books were available, there was the problem that you couldn't browse the shelves in an appropriate area until something you would never have thought of struck your eye. Theoretically, you could browse the card catalog, but somehow that just wasn't the same. And, of course, all you'd get from a card would be a bare description. You couldn't take a mysterious volume of potential interest off the shelf to inspect it further. Some of the material relegated to the stacks boggled the mind. For instance, except for one, fairly new reprint of his work, all the Robert Benchley collections had been banished to the basement. I left Rochester shortly after the new library opened. I wasn't much impressed with the building, which was bright and open and airy and had the general ambience of the food court at the mall. To me a library is supposed to be a bit dim and dusty and crowded with shelves.

So John Berry heard the Big Bang back in 1935, before he knew what he was hearing! I'm wondering though if he's still a bit in the dark. He said those voices he finally heard above the static sounded funny. Were they human? Maybe his father had succeeded where SETI has thus far failed. I always enjoy John's yarns and he seems to have an inexhaustible supply of them.

Luke McGuff's account of the mysteriously empty safe deposit box was fascinating as well. One really would expect almost anything more than nothing. His aunt didn't have a strange sense of humor did she? {August 7, 2006}

## **John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845**

Thank you so much for posting your latest zine on efanazines; even though I'm slowly starting to get dead-tree zines in my mailbox; most of my current

fanac is via the Internet. That being said, I thought I'd mention that in the next issue of *In A Prior Lifetime* (under production; should be done by the end of the week) the plan is to review *Littlebrook #5* along with *No Award #16*; the theme - if there is one - is The Old Guard Strikes Back, or something like that. I really don't like the idea of it sounding like you folks and Marty are getting on in years, but I enjoyed both zines so much that I felt like they'd complement each other in a review column. Thought you'd like to know. Now, onward to locating your zine.

Jerry, you mentioned some really good bands; I had the chance to see Franz Ferdinand on Austin City Limits not so long ago, and really enjoyed them. Gorillaz is a wonderful band, too; my kids like them a lot! It certainly sounds like your trip was both enjoyable and productive on many levels.

Jim Young is once again plumbing the nether reaches of the obscure. Ah, the lure of the unknown, the thrill of discovery... Where else shall we find traces of the Wee Folk? Thank you, Jim, for your keen eyesight.

There is one paragraph in Luke McGuff's article that really struck a chord with me: "Children move fast because they have no such weight [memories]. Everything is in the future, life is an eternal summer of can't wait can't wait can't wait. Old people move slowly because they have nothing but the vast weight of memories." This is really beautiful! My ten year-old son is zooming through his life like a runaway express train, and my girls are rapidly becoming young women before my eyes. I think I'd better get the batteries for my memory banks recharged; there's a lot of memory running before my eyes that I don't want to miss. Thank you, Luke, for such an insightful comment.

I really enjoyed John Berry's "The Sound of Silence." Ah, yes. Science marches on - and has a tendency to ignore the landscape it's tearing up in the process. "Sizzling bacon?" Now I'm wondering if the Big Bang we've never heard was a cosmic potato exploding in eternity's microwave. Or something like that.

Libraries are fun. I love them. Yes, there a lot of loonies that one can run into in a library. For instance, when my wife was the evening supervisor in Course Reserves and Periodicals - CRAP, for short - she used to come home and tell me that "Irv was there again tonight."

"Who's that?" I asked.

"Oh, just our resident pedophile. Every Wednesday night he comes to our area and sits for hours at a table staring out the window."

"Oh." No snappy rejoinder came to my mind.

Even so, I love libraries.

Well, there's a lot of talk about country music in your lettercolumn. That's refreshing! I'm still good

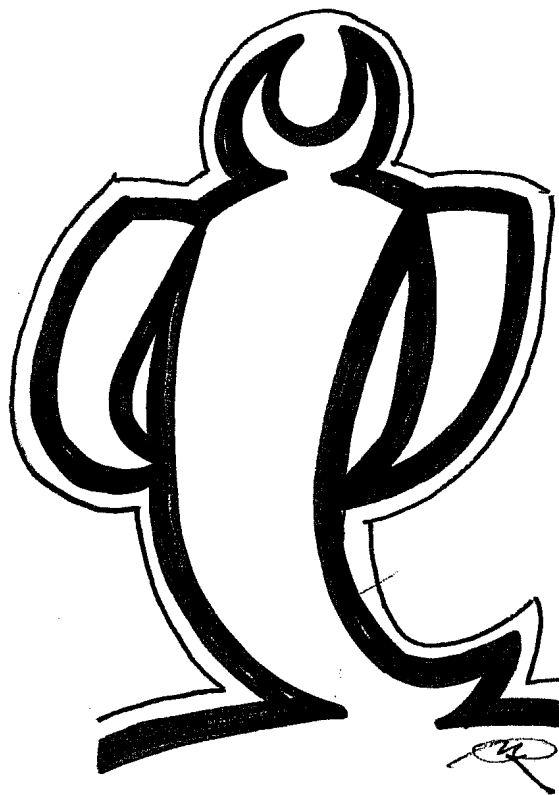
old fashioned rock and roll at heart, but I have a love for blues and jazz. However, when I heard Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, I fell in love with the music. Now we have a couple CD compilations of Texas Swing.

This also reminds me that now that the summer is coming to an end, just five minutes down the road in Wellborn the once-a-Saturday-night bluegrass sessions will be starting up again in September. This year I'm getting there a couple hours early and bringing my guitar; I hear tell the jam sessions are a blast. The shows are wonderful, too. If you're ever around this neck of the woods, check it out. Fun music. Which reminds me, Alex Slate would love it.

Reading Alex's loc also makes me pine for the olden days when I'd be able to curl up with one of the two or three fanzines that would plop into my mailbox back in the late 70's and early 80's. Now I'm waxing nostalgic again. No wonder my memories keep slipping out of my mind.

Thanks for the zine. I greatly enjoyed it. Look for the review in about a week. Now that I'm getting some paychecks again I'll be able to afford mailing paper copies out to folks. Whow! Snail-mailed fanzines. What a concept. (August 15, 2006)

**WAHF:** Sheryl Birkhead, Mog Decarnin, Murray Moore, Bruce Townley, Henry Welch ○○○



### NATURAL DISASTERS

This is not a variation on the Why This Issue is Late theme. But, come to think of it, in a way it is.

Aside from the Doong Kong Lau, which I mentioned last ish as our favorite large-fannish-group-with-out-of-town-visitors Hakka Chinese restaurant, closing suddenly and unexpectedly, leaving the Seattle fannish community bereft of a focal-point gathering place, last Fall through Spring here in the PNW, were, uhm, interesting and time-consuming to say the least.

You know that it's bad when there's a contest to name-the-devastating-storm. Hurricanes come with their own built-in naming convention, but your run of the mill blizzards, windstorms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, massive flooding do not. If you are a native of a region, or have lived there long enough (30 years in Seattle- Nov. for Jerry; Feb. '08 for me! Eeek!), you will always remember, or at least be acquainted with, past major weather events/disasters. In the Seattle/Puget Sound area, the Columbus Day storm (1962 – called Washington's worst weather disaster of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century) and the Inaugural Day storm (1993 – 94 mph winds; 600,000 without power) loom large, right up there with the Great Alaska Earthquake (1964) and the Nisqually Quake (1991 – \$2 billion damage).

Last November (2006) brought a series of major storms to the region– wind, snow, record flooding, mud/rock slides, power outages, and more than 15 inches of rain – what damage you sustained or just inconvenience you endured depended upon where you lived in Western Washington. So the region was ready for a break by December, but a series of increasingly-stronger windstorms hit the Pacific NW and southern British Columbia the week of Dec. 11, culminating the night of Thurs., Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> with arguably the most powerful windstorm since that Columbus Day storm. Over 1.8 million people lost power as hurricane force winds gusted (the official wind gauge at Sea-Tac registered around 70 mph before it broke).

Trees and power transmission lines came down like matchsticks; the entire energy grid was affected. Some outages lasted for weeks, some for only half a day. Jerry and I lost power in the evening and I was up most of the night, listening to the wind howling,

“lightning” – some of which was real, some transformers blowing out – crackling and flashing continuously, and watching nearby tall trees swaying wildly and dangerously. The next morning, I drove down a major neighborhood street, spotting about one tree down per block; those that hadn't fallen into the street and been removed were still leaning on the houses and buildings they had smashed into. Some were there for weeks; tree removal services were overwhelmed for months.

We were lucky – our power was back on when we returned from Saturday morning breakfast in the neighborhood directly to our south that was never without power. We hadn't asked to stay overnight with friends, but Marilyn Holt and Cliff Wind had given us dinner and a warm place to hang out and recharge our cell phones on Friday evening. It had, of course, become very cold. (Within the week, 300 people were hospitalized and 14 people died, many due to improper use of generators, language being a barrier in many cases).

After that 2<sup>nd</sup> freezing night, we were planning to contact non-cat owning friends for shelter, but didn't have to. And we and many others here learned just how good and bad our earthquake-preparedness supplies were.

This was the Hanukkah Eve Storm of 2006 (yes, the National Weather Service held a contest) and I'll never feel the same during a windstorm again.

A few days later we found out that Andy Hooper and Carrie Root, who live about 15 blocks from us, had been without power for only a short time. They have a great guest room and they told us we could have stayed there. Quite luckily we didn't have to bother them then, but we would need to, as it turned out, later on....

The evening of March 9, 2007 found us getting ready to leave for Portland and Potlatch 16 early the next morning. I hadn't planned on doing any laundry but discovered that a few things I needed really had to be washed. This change in plans was a Good Thing.

About a year after buying this house, we had a sewer backup problem which resulted in a flooded basement, roofer work, discovery that we share our sewer line with the house directly behind ours, treatment for the raw sewage (ours and our neighbors!),

removal of old/installation of new flooring in the laundry area, and news that there was “something” partially blocking our sewer line near the street. 13 feet down. Potential \$12,000 repair job. Since the line seemed to be cleared out and the folks who were to bid on the job never came back, we have been making do for about 10 years with putting root killer down the drain several times a year. We also told our “new” neighbors this fascinating fact when they moved in several years ago.

That Thursday night, as I was working, I happened to glance at the floor drain and it was full of water.... This was Not a Good Thing. We couldn't do much that night, but did alert our neighbors (Tom and Marcy Spencer, a very nice couple with two young daughters) – we all needed to be very careful about water use until we could get it fixed.

The next morning, we finished packing, wondering alternatively if we could actually go to Potlatch and what the newly arrived plumbing company would find. They found unidentified blockage in about the same area that the roter company had found it years before and gave us an \$18,000 estimate to fix it. (Our front yard and house are actually about 6 feet down from the street level; we live on a sloping piece of land with a drop off into a ravine/brook (Littlebrook!) on one side. Digging would have to be from the street level parking pad and down to the main pipe 13 feet below.) As they could do nothing until the next week, we left for Potlatch clutching our estimate and praying that our basement would not be filled with sewage when we returned.

Well, there was only some sewage and it didn't get into the carpeting this time, or under the makeshift barricaded door into our office (I have a home-based business which was truly swell when we were without water for days on end). Talking further with other cul de sac neighbors revealed that we had contacted a very expensive plumber, and discussions with the affected neighbors caused us to get a second opinion on Monday. The rest all seems rather dream-like in retrospect.

And too amazingly complex and potentially boring to you for me to go into the excruciating detail that it really deserves. During the ensuing 3 weeks, we (both households, we were in this together!) found a plumber who dug a mid-yard hole, deeper than he safely should have, only missing the actual sewer pipe by less than a foot the first time (and realizing that this job was too big for him); a company that runs a camera down your line to find blockage, tapes it, and gives it to you along with microwave popcorn for that dinner-and-a-movie event; and a plumbing/excavation company who had to dig a 20 foot long trench, sloping down to 13 feet deep, across our entire yard to both clear the blockage (which was thank ghod tree roots!) and rerun the entire sewer

line so that it no longer was running uphill.... Any area of the yard that wasn't a massively-shored-up trench was covered in the dirt that had come out of the trench. They had to remove part of the retaining wall and three small hazel trees. Believe me, the above is simplified – there were more companies (like the pipe liner folks) involved, many pictures taken, lots of rain and, of course, mud, a backhoe parked in the yard for weeks when there was a delay, the return of the camera guy, many consultations with Tom and Marcy, cleaning up the basement sewage ourselves since we now knew what to do, and did I mention no running water for days at a time. And the insurance issue!

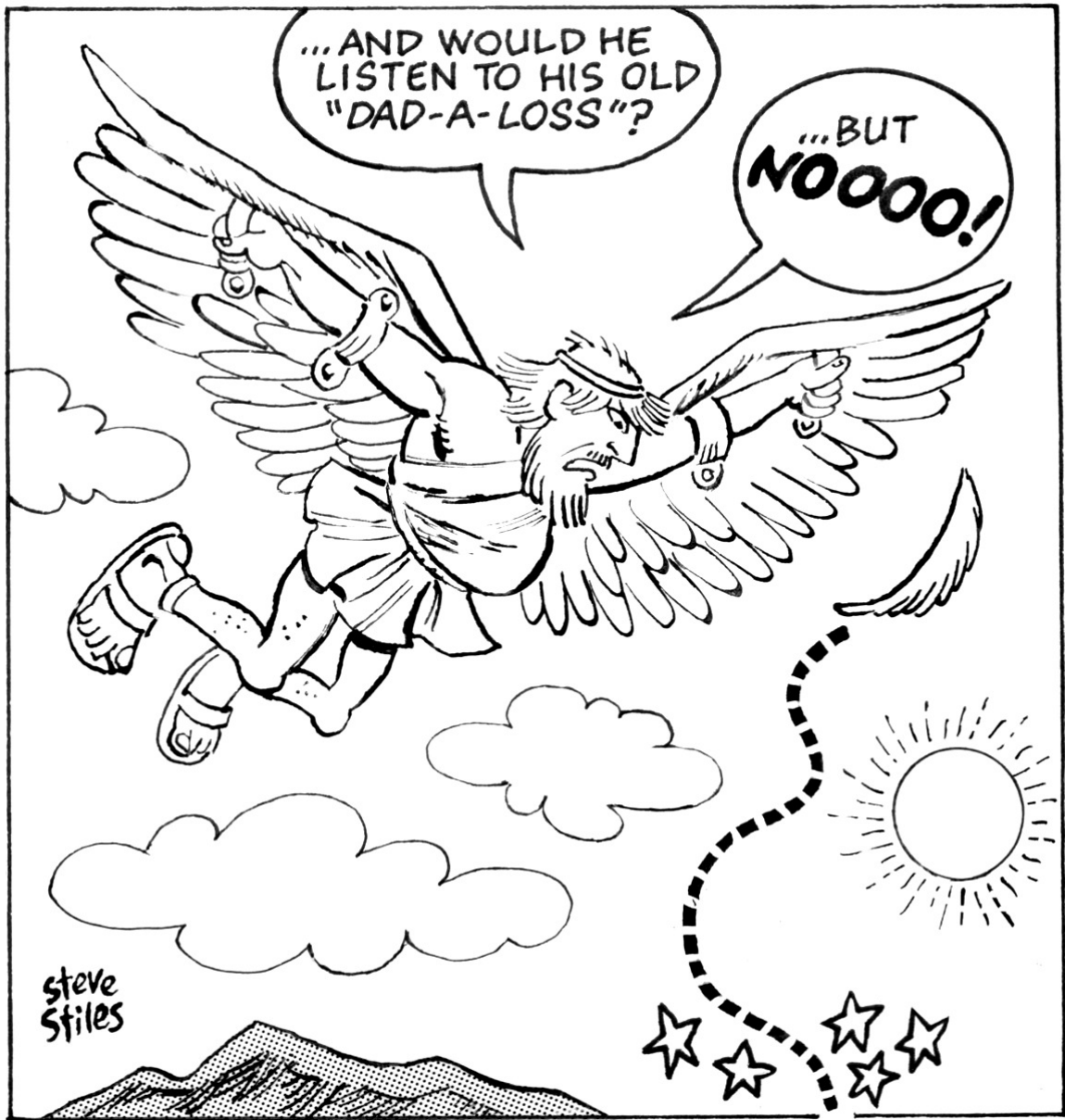
The final cost of everything except replacing our “missing” yard was \$26,000. Both households had, of course, contacted our insurance companies when this all started. We were told that damage from tree roots might be covered, but wear and tear, etc. would not be. Tom and Marcy were told that they had no coverage as it was not on their property. So we were all writing a series of increasingly larger checks to the various companies, not knowing what would be covered, if anything. Then we realized that we both had Pemco as our insurance carrier. A claims adjuster came a few days after our contractor had found and documented the roots as the cause. He looked at the scene, the photos, the saved piece of pipe, and told me that we WERE covered and advised the Spencers that they, too, were covered no matter what they had been told. And they paid off!

During this time we relied on the kindness of friends and neighbors. Carrie and Andy put us up for three nights as the saga continued. Thank you both so much, again! And also thank you to our other cul de sac neighbors, Cynthia and Marilyn, who let us spend the night and gave us a way to get into their downstairs bathroom during the day and evening, which was also a lifesaver. We are lucky to have friends and neighbors who came to our aid when we needed them.

The yard is more or less back together, the trees replanted (we hope they revive this Spring; they didn't continue to bloom after the replant), the plastic pipe outlet installed mid-yard covered with a lovely fake rock. Of course we are still awaiting the Excavator finishing the sewer-reroute paperwork and sending the final bill for asphaltting our parking pad above the hole out at the street level....

And now it's nearly November again and the region has already had a wind storm, early start to our rainy season, some minor flooding.... ☹☹☹





# Littlebrook