

The Devniad

Book 41b

un zine de Bob Devney

25 Johnson Street, North Attleboro, MA 02760 U.S.A.

E-mail: bobdevney@aol.com

For APA:NESFA #339 August 1998

© 1998 by Robert Devney

Orbita Dicta
Heard in the halls of
Bucconeer
The 56th World
Science Fiction Convention
Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.
August 5-9, 1998

Someone once said a science fiction convention is a bunch of fat guys with glasses standing around talking. That definition is completely off base, of course. Sometimes we sit. It also ignores an important fan physiognomical subset, the pencil-necked geek. And there are girls around now too, so there.

But the "talking" part is right. And that's what's important to me. When I attend a con, I hear voices. Which I write down (with an accuracy that over the years many have questioned but none have litigated) and tell you about here.

So take the following as the buzzing, frazzled, slightly hallucinatory record of one man's worldcon. Told via overheard jokes, speeches, remarks, asides, whines, animadversions, and rodomontades ... with my informative or at least snide comments preceding them in brackets.

As a job of reporting, of course, this thing ranks slightly below Mike Barnicle. First, I was more twitchy than usual because I'd been nominated as Best Fan Writer. And so would learn at this con whether I'd won a Hugo Award, the field's highest honor outside of having Mike Resnick announce an anthology to be entitled Alternate Devneys.

And then there's the all-too-familiar fact that, faced with the embarrassment of riches in a good con's multitrack programming, I immediately short out my judgment circuits and wander around in a frenzied fog. In this case,

once again I managed to miss every single appearance of the Writer Guest of Honor, the inimitable

C. J. Cherryh. Ditto the Editor Guest of Honor, Analog's invaluable Stanley Schmidt; and the Artist Guest of Honor, the awe-inspiring Michael Whalen. Oh, and I never quite found my way to the Art Show — are they any good at worldcons?

Plus I couldn't seem to find the Special Guest of Honor, that Babylon 5 guy Straczynski, anywhere.

But I somehow heard lots of good stuff anyway. Like this ...

[NESFAns Laurie and Jim Mann pay for my Dionsysian dinner of Pepsi and cheese fries the night I arrive, because, as Laurie explains]

You're a Hugo nominee. Let people buy you drinks this week. Next year, they won't know your name.

[At breakfast, Michael Devney, brother and constant con companion, observes]

I always feel safer in cities where there's an SF con going on. If you get in trouble, you can yell something like "Hey Robert A. Heinlein!" and fans will come to your rescue.

They may not save you physically, but they'll argue your assailants to death.

[With a name like Bucconeer, the con was infested with piratical thematica; like this tee shirt seen opening day]

The floggings will continue until morale improves.

[In intros for the panel on Forgotten SF Authors, one writer really feels their pain]

I'm George R. R. Martin. Someday I'm going to be a forgotten science fiction author.

... Some of these authors are forgotten because they've had the very poor judgment to die ... Bantam is bringing out my new fantasy, and now also reissuing my first four novels — you need a locomotive to pull the caboose.

[Fan Moshe Feder thinks we're forgetting one of SF's First Men]

The one writer we all agreed should be mentioned in talking about this panel beforehand is Olaf Stapledon.

[Bowtied fanboy Ben Yalow brings up another astounding bit of forgotten history]

John Campbell also had a successful career as an author he and Doc Smith were in alternating competition to see who could blow up the bigger universe.

[Martin gets down to more sad cases]

Several years ago, John Brunner, at a con in England, gave the most heartbreaking guest of honor speech I've ever heard ... all his books were at that time out of print.

... And there's the best writer of the British New Wave, Keith Roberts. His well-known novel is *Pavane*, but he also wrote excellent short fiction ... He's still alive, but very sick — both of his legs have been amputated.

[Dr. John L. Flynn has a prescription to fix fan forgetfulness]

Go down to the dealer's room and take a copy home to a friend of Stapledon, or Kuttner, or Smith ...

[In the hall, my deadly fanwriter rival Evelyn Leeper displays the depths of her fiendishness]

I've got some great quotes already, but I'm not going to give you any.

[NESFAn Tony Lewis comforts my despair at the Sotheby's catalog that prices "a group of Archie comics" at a distinctly unfunny \$3,500]

If your mother hadn't thrown them away, they wouldn't have driven up the price.

[After husband Art tries to jumpstart a Peter Dickinson jones by giving me a free Dickinson paperback, Becky Henderson (that's Henderson's Books, Petersburg, VA; HendsnsBks@aol.com) ensures millions in free fanzine advertising, too, with another generous gesture]

Here, put it in one of our dinosaur bags. We'll lose forty cents and gain millions in

free advertising as you lug it around the con.

[NESFAn Priscilla Olson in the panel on Suppose They Gave a Worldcon, via Devniad spy Paula Lieberman]

Why would you come to a worldcon and not volunteer to work?

[Famous fanwriter Mike Glicksohn in the Introduction to Fanzines panel]

At my first con, in the 1960s, I saw this stack of fanzines. My first reaction was, hey this looks like fun. Publish your own magazine about only the stuff that interests you!

My second reaction, pretty arrogant, was, I can do better than *that*.

It took me 3 years to get started, but turns out I was right — on both counts.

[TAFF delegate Maureen Kincaid Speller talks about the young author (fortunately, I didn't catch his name) of a new British fanzine winningly entitled something like Strange Delusions of a Drunken Fuckwit]

... And if you've ever met him, you'll know why that's appropriate. And he's now going to kill me.

[Speller still likes a paper fanzine best]

There's something satisfying about having it go clunk on the mat.

[But if you're going to go electronic, says fan Joyce Scrivner, for ghod sake's think]

Ted White had a terrible name for his latest ... *Don't* send out an e-zine 5,000 lines long ... as a *surprise* ... and call it *Spam!*

[Now we're getting down to real fannish gossip, as in this Brit tidbit from Speller]

Joseph Nicholas — meticulous? He takes a straightedge to line up his refrigerator magnets!

... He's also into wearing skirts at the moment. And very fetching he looks. He's got much better legs than I have.

[Speller seems to copy NESFAn's love affair with the irreproducible Mr. G]

I'm the English Gestetner Queen ... I have most of the English fannish Gestetners corralled in my living room.

[In the panel on Historical Research, Walter Jon Williams' been there, and is going again]

I just returned to the nautical genre ... My sea stories as Jon Williams have been out of print for 15 years.

... This one's based on the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes. But set in the Civil War on the Mississippi, with the *Argo* as a Confederate ironclad ... It's not sold yet.

[Comic queen Connie Willis knows the pitfalls of getting too stuck on your studies]

The attitude is, I did this research, by God, and now I'm going to *make* you read it. ... But good research cannot save a bad story.

... Like when your character is fleeing from something and you think this is a good time to describe life in a medieval village.

[Writer Susan Shwartz makes another mea culpa]

I am a compulsive over-researcher. Not because I'm insecure, that's another panel and much too much sharing for today ... but because I'm so wrapped up in the subject.

[Williams has researched some examples]

... Have you ever read *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo? There's a 50-page infodump in there on the Battle of Waterloo. Which none of his characters were at.

... And research shouldn't have too much of an agenda going in ... As Umberto Eco remarked, the way to tell the true nut is that sooner or later he will mention the Knights Templar. Because, you see, he *knows* the Knights Templar are behind it all ...

[Willis reminds us to spread the net wide]

If you're writing about 19th century England, you need to be reading books about Hollywood. You need to be reading books about Mars. Because it all connects.

... I don't surf the net. I surf books!

[In the panel on Campbell Award Nominees for Best New Writer, 1997 winner Michael Burstein indulges in fond reminiscence]

When I was up for the Campbell myself, I used to say to other nominees, Second-best of luck to you.

[Writer Richard Garfinkle, in response to a shamelessly leading question from Burstein]

We are the *least* qualified people to tell you why our work is so incredible —

[Susan Matthews keeps her eyes on the prize]
— But we're willing to give it a shot.

[Seems like Matthews is too modest to actually do so, though]

People ask me what my book is about and I say "three-hundred-fifty pages."

[My personal Campbell pick, Andy Duncan, says it's not easy being newish]

People who like the stuff I've published to date keep asking me, are there going to be other stories about these characters? And I don't know. Because so far, none of the people who have asked that are *editors* ...

... But I did just sell a new novella to *Asimov's*, called "The Executioners' Guild." About a traveling executioner in Mississippi in 1941.

[Burstein gets political]

By the way, Clarion East rules!

[But Duncan appeals to our sense of place]

— Where would you rather be all summer, Seattle or East Lansing, Michigan?

[Matthews, whose books (An Exchange of Hostages and Prisoners of Conscience) deal extensively with torture and depravity, says she didn't get that from home]

My mother wanted me to put a statement in the book: "Regardless of what you may think after you read this work, Susan was raised in a decent Christian household."

[The One-Hour Worldcon calls for panelists to flip through the Pocket Program and make one-

sentence comments on the titles of different items; long-time fan Jack Speer scores early]

"Introduction to Fanzines" — The first fanzines were on paper; we've gone downhill from there.

[Australian fan and young DUFFER Terry Frost is made for this kind of show]

“History of Boston Worldcons” — How the hell would I know?

... “Lost in Space: The Consultant’s View” — This guy’s showing his face?

[SF Chronicle editor Andrew I. Porter loses some long-time subscribers]

“Mass Extinctions and the Dinosaurs” — Obviously, it’s about First Fandom.

[Frost pauses to tell the con’s (indeed, perhaps science fiction history’s) most tasteless knock-knock joke — please send all comments and writs to Melbourne, Australia, attention T. Frost, at hlector@netspace.net.au]

Knock-knock. Who’s there? Little Boy Blue. Little Boy Blue who? Arthur C. Clarke.

[Absolute Magnitude editor Warren Lapine takes his shots]

“How Editors and Writers Cooperate” — I didn’t like your ending so I took it off, OK?

“Local SF Clubs” — Lots of people get together and don’t read.

“For Filkers Who Get Up Early” — SHUT UP!

[At a private writers’ reception (ha-ha-haaa, that’s what they thought but Devniad spy er reporter Nomi Burstein slept with a writer and got in), writer Brenda Clough deals with routine SF author logistics]

Before the Jack Williamson party, I have to remember to take that alien out of my briefcase ...

[At one — well, actually, all — of those fabulous (yet doomed) Orlando in 2001 parties, NESFAn Chip Hitchcock stands on a chair to trumpet the imminent demise of the fabled Fisher Flamingo]

The ... flamingo ... dies ... in ... five ... minutes!

[Sign at Info Desk is my first inkling all’s not well with Special GOH J. Michael Straczynski, who it seems has pneumonia and can’t attend, which, since about 1500 of the attendant tubeheads came expressly to see him, casts a

Shadow over the media side of things around here]

SIGN GET-WELL BOOK FOR JMS HERE.

[A mimosa is by no means an old-fashioned; as Richard Lynch, who later (with co-ed Nicki Lynch) will again win the Best Fanzine Hugo, makes clear by describing a good Mimosa story]

Something with a personal slant on science fiction fandom. It doesn’t have to be fan history, though. First person. Entertaining. And about 1,000 to 1,500 words.

[In the fanzine lounge (which I’d just like to moan was a long, hot, humid walk up the hill from the con center to the Hilton or I’d have spent more time there), Vicki Rosenzweig of that most serene zine Quipu answers my query on the current zine scene with my fave quote of the con, wonder why]

You’ve only been writing since 1995 and already you’re a Hugo nominee and you’re asking me who’s hot?

[How do zines get those crazy names, Vicki?]

To tell you the truth, I’ve never actually seen a quipu. I came up with the name by deciding it would be cool to have a title that started with the letters “qu.” So I just went through the dictionary ...

[At one of the con’s most fun-filled events, artist David Cherry is having enough challenges playing SF Pictionary when my sister Darcy hands him her entry to try to communicate visually: “A Canticle for Liebowitz”]

You’re a very cruel woman.

[Actually, they got it in 40 seconds, sketching menorahs and heads with haloes; Darcy’s verdict]

It was a hoot.

[Later, Darcy samples the budgetarily bitter fruit of the con center snack bar]

This is the most expensive banana I’ve ever eaten.

[On a sadder note, a former student of well-loved NESFAn and teacher Monty Wells inquires at

the NESFA Press table and is given the sad news that Monty died this spring]

Oh no ... He's the reason I'm at this con. He not only taught me science, he got me into science fiction.

[In his cool Coming Attractions TV/movie roundup, fandom's Hollywood liaison Jeff Walker previews a Henson Company show premiering in early 1999 on the WB network]

Brats of the Lost Nebula ... It's got puppets, CGI [computer graphics images], and stop motion animation, all blended into a new medium.

[Then there's Sinbad Beyond the Veil of Mist, also out early next year]

It's like *Toy Story*, only with human characters.

[Then there's the promising near-future thriller The Matrix, by those hot new visual geniuses The Wachowski Brothers (creators of 1996's great-looking kinkfest Bound); this sort-of-live-action-anime film has Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, and more kung-fu than a Hong Kong hoe-down, as the producer hints]

The second highest cost on this picture is medical bills.

[According to Walker, the studio's original idea to promote the serial-killer flick Urban Legend was shot down by shysters]

The PR department wanted to send Coca-Cola and Pop Rocks to everybody, but the legal department killed it — just in case the urban legend about them mixing and exploding in your stomach was true ...

[And the chilling Apt Pupil (perhaps Stephen King's best fiction, the one about an American kid tutored by an old Nazi) is being filmed by a very promising director]

It's Bryan Singer's first film since *The Usual Suspects*.

[My friend Andy Duncan, the hottest new short form talent around, delivers a workshop warning at his kaffeeklatsch]

My mentor John Kessel grilled me for 90 minutes before he said it was all right for

me to apply to Clarion. And it wasn't about my talent or potential talent, or my writing at all. It was about my ability to work under pressure, and how I got along with people, and other psychological stuff.

Basically, it was, would my head explode?

[Tyler Stewart of the Pandemonium bookstore in Cambridge, MA, who got into the Liars' Panel when I was turned away by the colossal crowd, liked writer Pat Cadigan's answer to the oft-asked query "How did you get into writing?"]

I was going to be a secretary, but I was cleaning my typewriter and it went off.

[Writer Joe Haldeman fields "What is your next book about, Sir or Madam?" with a reference sure to bewilder future fanhistorians who have long forgotten The Matter of Monica]

It's going to be called *Sir or Madam*, about a cross-dresser who can leave his own stain.

[At the panel on The Role of Critical Magazines, editor F. Brett Cox outlines a formula for happiness]

Lew Shiner, a very fine writer, did a formula some years ago ... He estimated his life span, he estimated how many books he could read in a year, and he came up with a finite number of books he could read.

So life is too short to plow through books you don't like.

[Writer Elizabeth Anne Hull recalls an encounter with a writer famous for having joy in his heart]

When I explained why I didn't like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to Harlan Ellison, he said, "Oh Betty, you have no joy in your heart."

[Back at the convention center snack bar, as a caped fan relentlessly informs a weary waitress that all we SF people are weirdoes, huh? but that's OK because we're also superior beings, she rings up the wrong change, corrects her mistake, and moans to the colleague relieving her]

Please, Evelyn, you haven't been listening to this stuff all day long.

[The panel on getting SF authors on U.S. postage stamps was fan Fred Patten's idea, and he'd already licked his list into shape]

I wanted to have a sort of generational overview here. In science fiction at least, my dream team would be Hugo Gernsback, as the editor who started the pulp era; John Campbell, as our god in the editorial field; Robert A. Heinlein, as perhaps the classic SF writer; Philip K. Dick, as a more modern writer; and Alice Sheldon — James Tiptree, Jr. — as bordering on the mainstream.

[The vote actually ended up recommending Heinlein, Campbell, Lovecraft, E. R. Burroughs, and Sturgeon, with runner-ups C. L. Moore, Dick, Gernsback, Howard, Rod Serling, and Cordwainer Smith; anyway, artist Stephen Hickman explains why he thinks we stand a chance at all]

Never thought I'd live to see a Robert Johnson postage stamp, after all ...

And the Space Fantasy commemorative stamp booklet I did, that came out in 1992 and 93, was one of the top ten all-time best sellers. Really surprised the Post Office.

[Canadian critic and fan activist Paul Valcour has great news about my favorite SF TV show]

The Canadian equivalent of your SF Channel — it's called Space: The Imagination Station — is rebroadcasting all 5 years of Rick Green's interview show *Prisoners of Gravity*.

[At this point I'd like to publicly apologize to fanwriter Tom Jackson, who as we argued in a large group about where to go to dinner told fan Dan Reed and I that he was going to the bathroom and would be right back; as we arrived 20 minutes later at our final dining choice downtown, the horrid thought struck several more alert people simultaneously]

Hey, where's Tom?

[Standing around waiting for dinner at a Baltimore seafood joint gives British artist David Angus time to tell us what my dread nemesis, Fan-Writer-Hugo-Emperor-for-Life David Langford, is really like]

I live practically around the corner from him in Reading, but we rarely see each other there ...

I've gotten pissed with him at cons, of course. He's a very good sort for someone so well-educated.

[After decades of spaced-out shorter work, Puerto Rico's finest (well, only) SF writer Jim Stevens-Arce is already going Hollywood with his very first novel]

So *Soul Saver* is coming out from Harcourt-Brace next year ...

But it turns out the way to get a movie company interested in filming your book is to get them to find out some other movie company is interested in your work ... "Oh, so who at Fine Line is looking at it?"

[At some party or other — I remember there were lots of flamingoes — Stevens tries to impress by pulling out that tired old con cliché, the sea-urchin-spine injury skin-diving story]

You wouldn't believe how sharp that thing was. The spine went right through the heaviest part of my flipper rubber, at the heel, and zipped right up into my foot ...

[Fan Jeff Wendler tops that, telling how his sea-urchin-spine injury made him famous, sorta]

So at one point I call down to the insurance company about the paperwork. And I get some girl in their headquarters down in Texas, and I start to explain "I'm Jeff Wendler —" and she says just like that, "Oh, the sea-urchin-spine guy?"

Apparently they don't get many of those.

[After 11 straight hours as a registration troubleshooter, Darcy says never have so many owed So Much to So Few, and that's Not Good]

The con people are burning out their volunteers. I always see the same people at the same tables, hour after hour.

[South African fan Ian Jamieson enthuses about space flight historian Hugh Gregory's boffo presentation on Soviet Space Disasters]

When it turned out there was no VCR or anything for his visuals, he just acted

everything out and described things to us.
He was fantastic. One of those know-it-alls
that really *does* know it all.

*[Patrick O'Leary avers he was convulsed when
James Patrick O'Kelly said this Friday morning
at the SF Audio Drama panel; these writer
fellahs shure are recondite]*

One man's parody is another man's
postmodernism.

[At the kaffeeklatsch for TAFF delegate Maureen Kincaid Speller and DUFF delegate Terry Frost, Frost amuses us with a true story of Australia's all-time most hapless hit men]

So they just dumped the body in the bay and went home, job well done.

But then somebody caught a shark. And it vomits up a human arm — with a *tattoo* on it. And just from that, the cops were able to trace it all down and solve the crime ...

Now what kind of bad luck is *that*?

[Frost's unfond of Anne Rice]

Vampires aren't erotic. Who gets a hard-on at a bloodbank?

[Fine fanzinisto Gary Farber reminisces about the bad old days in a previous job]

It was a typical large publishing company, which means there were about 12 people actually on staff to do all the work.

[In the panel on Designing the Ideal City, editor/writer/fan Teresa Nielsen Hayden brings it home to her 'hood]

I live in an ongoing experiment in getting lots of people into a small space. It's called Brooklyn ...

[Now where did artist Ctein get this? Interesting if true, though]

The average human being spends 1 to 2 hours a day traveling. This is a common figure throughout history, across the world.

[Writer Fred Pohl splits the difference]

We are reaching the problem of the convergence of travel time. It will take 90 minutes to get anywhere — Kuala Lumpur, or across the street.

[A city planning expert (named Tom, if that helps) is in the audience when he should obviously have been on the panel]

The biological metaphor for a city is a coral reef ...

Recall why Baron Haussmann designed the grand radial boulevards of Paris. Because they gave the government's cannon clear lines of fire at the *mobs* of Paris ...

[Quebecois Yves Menard, one of those amazing mecs who can write beautifully in two languages, has The Book of Knights, his first English-language novel, out from Tor; met in the hall, he still can't quite believe it]

I met Tom Doherty the other night, and I said, Thank you for publishing my book.

I almost genuflected, you know?

... Something else good may still happen to me here, in terms of making connections. It's only Friday.

[In the panel on whether literary hard SF is an oxymoron, writer Alexander Jablov explains why hard SF oft seems soft on characterization]

Why spend a lot of effort building subtle characters who are all going to be blown up?

[Roger MacBride Allen on a story structure we love to hate]

All of the refugees in the audience from my writing classes will recognize a phrase I've scribbled across many a page: "This is a HAITE story."

HAITE: Here's An Idea; The End ... Where you present a problem, rush right to the solution, and leave.

[I've always said Jablov was one of the most charming pros]

People say, this can't be hard science fiction, there's something charming about the prose ...

[Writer Maureen McHugh tries to make a point organic to the discussion]

I also have a biology background —

[Wiseass audience member]

— We all do.

[Being too soft on the science can lead to some hard words, as Allen recalls]

I won't mention the gentleman's name, it was Charles Sheffield, and he was spitting rivets that nothing in *The Sparrow* about the science, how they got to the planet and so forth, was even remotely scientific.

[The Gifted new writer Patrick O'Leary ends with further words we should live by]

Read for pleasure ...

[Prompting Jablovkov's lightning-fast redaction]

... Read about pleasure ...

[Which McHugh takes pleasure in capping]

... Forget reading, have pleasure.

[According to my brother Michael, writer S. M. Stirling enlivened the panel on Legal Systems of the Future with that most crowd-pleasing of literary forms, the lawyer joke]

I went to law school, but I didn't practice afterward. The fin graft on my back didn't take.

[Any con named Bucconeer must have a panel on Historical Pirates, where it's obvious artist Don Maitz has done much research on the subject]

You always read about pirates having a "brace of pistols" ... But they've found, in places like *The Widow* wreck in Boston harbor, the remains of pirate pistols that had silk tied around their butts.

The way it really was, you'd take two pistols and this long ribbon of silk, tie one on each end and throw it over your shoulder. So you'd have two shots handy.

I always wondered how they got around with these 18-inch cannons sticking out of their pants ... *[huge dirty laugh from audience]*

Well, they *were* rogues.

[Writer Katya Reimann smiles dreamily]

— He finds it easy himself.

[Fan Jamaica Rose has just the facts, ma'am]

You can go to Provincetown, where they have the stuff from *The Widow* in a museum ... You can still see the silk ribbon tied to that pistol butt ...

[A "chain napkin" is nervously passed along by fans at that indispensable dive, The Wharf Rat]

JMS failed to pass this on, and he failed to get nominated for a Hugo and NOW look what happened to him.

[At the Alien Artifact ID panel, writer Don Sakers serves one up deadpan]

I was very disappointed to learn that they do *not* serve cream at a crematorium —

[Which is topped by an audience member]

— So, wait, what did I have?

[At the pre-Hugo-ceremony reception, fellow Fan Writer nominee Ms. Evelyn Leeper works off our mutual nervousness by embarrassing the uxorious Mr. Leeper]

Mark had a suggestion for how I could ensure good luck tonight ... But I'd better not tell you what it was.

[Fan Jonie Knappensberger accepts her Big Heart Award with a full one, too]

Outside of finding fandom when I was a small child, I think this is the nicest thing that ever happened to me.

[Fan Guest of Honor Milt Rothman recalls his 1953 worldcon chairship, in those vanished days when cons were created by all-volunteer labor with many last-minute disasters and sudden saves]

I'd like to take credit for designing the Hugo, but I actually took the Chesley Bonestell design from the cover of Willy Ley's *The Conquest of Space*.

... We found out that the person who was supposed to be in charge of producing the awards never even started. Jack McKnight came to the rescue ... He spent all of our 11th Worldcon, Philcon II, turning out those first Hugo statuettes in his own machine shop for the ceremony. He missed practically the whole convention ... And it turns out that Jack McKnight was the father of Peggy Rae Pavlat, who's the chair of this convention!

[Presenting the fan artist and writer awards, Terry Frost reminds us fanziners do it for love]

Everybody else who's been up here made a buck out of science fiction. But it's cost us money.

[In the audience, me braw bro Michael gives parting advice in case I unjustly usufruct a Hugo]

Remember, talk a little slower and pitch your voice low. You don't want to sound like you've just swallowed helium.

[Apparently nice-but-not-quite-talented-enough guys finish fourth (the list ran David Langford, Mike Glycer, Evelyn Leeper, me, Andy Hooper, Joseph T. Major); the absent Langford's acceptance speech for his billionth Fan Writer Hugo was fresh and funny, damn the brilliant bastard, with usual mouthpiece Martin Hoare mouthing the piece]

Some people have complained that after all these years I know Dave's acceptance speech back to front. So I'd just like to say briefly: "Award Hugo this for much very all you thanks Langford Dave. surprise complete a as came It. A. M. four at me telephone to going is Hoare bastard that suppose I Now. Maybe year next anagrams."

[Joe Haldeman won a Hugo for Forever Peace, his "thematic sequel" to that masterpiece The Forever War]

Every 22 years like clockwork I write a novel with "Forever" in the title and pick up this award. In the year 2020, I hope I can find my way to a Xerox and make a copy of *Forever Amber*.

[Film critic Dan Kimmel, loyally miffed that Boston boys like Michael Burstein and me came away Hugoless, quotes a consoling line from Citizen Kane]

My lead is, "Fraud at polls!"

[Apparently NESFAN Tim Szczesuil has just heard the news that Boston's Orlando in 2001 bid has gone down to defeat, flamingo feathers aflame, at the predatory claws of Philadelphia's Millennium Philcon bid]

Fandom gets the worldcon it deserves.

[At the post-Hugo party, Tomasz Kolodziejczak of Egmont Polska's publishing empire in Warsaw has the look, intensity — and apparently the accomplishments — of a real sf star; plus English that's certainly better than my Polish]

I win prize, like your Nebula — Polish Nebula — for novel ...you would say cyberpunk?

But also, I am editing for Egmont comic magazines ...

You know comics? ... Ah yes, *Uncle Scrooge*. Carl Barks, a very great man!

... Ask Michael Kandel about Polish science fiction. He has the words, and he knows everything.

[Fan Charley Sumner recalls a frustrating Friday night, entirely too much of it spent on the Hilton elevators]

You couldn't use the stairs, because you couldn't get back out except at the bottom ... That's right, the fire doors lock automatically. It's a — *safety* feature?

[At his Saturday kaffeeklatsch, writer John Kessel discusses a work in progress]

It's more serious than *Corrupting Doctor Nice* — a story set on the Moon in the 21st century, about a separatist colony of feminists.

I'm intrigued how the social structure might be different ... Do you know about bonobos? They're primates that look like chimpanzees, live in the Congo — but we're realizing recently they have a completely different social structure than chimps.

Chimps have male domination, a hierarchy of brute force, war, and infanticide. Bonobos have female domination, no infanticide, fighting but no war. If a male threatens, the females gang up on him.

... They have sex all the time. Which means that a male can't pick out other males' offspring and kill them; they might be his.

... Thinking about bonobo society has influenced my moon colony ...

The working title is *Soft Upset*. You know, like when cosmic ray particles hit a microchip? You can get a software upset that causes the thrusters to fire ...

[Simultaneously, in an alternate time line (well, another program track anyway), Darcy records some calculated quips as writer Michael F. Flynn discusses How to Lie With Statistics]

... Of course, that *does* raise the question of how a deviant can be standard.

... There is, for example, a positive correlation between the size of the universe

and the size of my suits. Both are expanding
... I don't dare diet.

[Fan Kurt C. Siegel starts the panel on accurate medical descriptions (Maim 'em Right) by observing]

Many diseases are spread in an aerosol form. By people coughing, laughing, or even just talking in a crowded room with poor air handling, kinda ... like ... this ...

[Tor editor Patrick Nielsen Hayden in the panel on What Every Pro Should Know About Fandom]

I find that fandom is full of people who are interesting and perhaps more successful in some interesting field than is true of many pros.

None of whom I will name.

[Fan Gay Haldeman says we stack up pretty well]

Lecture organizers who have hosted mainstream authors are always pleasantly surprised and pleased with SF writers, they're so articulate —

[Remember, Nielsen Hayden works with SF writers every day]

— "Articulate" being the nice word for "won't shut up."

[Gay Haldeman has to agree that]

...There are some professionals who would sell a lot more books if they just stayed home.

[But she says hubris isn't confined to writers alone]

I saw an airline lady once trying to help out a long line, and some guy strode up and demanded, "Do you know who I am?"

And she got on the intercom and announced, "We have a gentleman here who doesn't know who he is ..."

[Joe Haldeman, from the audience]

— And he said "Fuck you!" And she said, "You'll have to stand in line for that too."

[Fan Fred Lerner at the panel on Are Fanzines Obsolete— I'm sure Fred wouldn't have to remind all you erudite Devniad readers that his zine's title below is Old English, pronounced by modern English speakers as "lof-YOR-nost" and meaning "most desirous of renown"]

One of the frank purposes of *Lofgeornost* is to jump-start conversations with friends who I only see once or twice a year at conventions. Instead of spending the first few minutes hemming and hawing at each other, we can jump right in.

[Fred is frank again]

I produce my paper fanzine on a computer and so on ... I'm not addicted to slipsheets and the smell of mimeo ink —

[Mike Glicksohn, grinning]

— Fakefan!

[British fan Paul Kincaid catches the spirit]

When we produced the latest run of *Banana Wings*, we put a little glass jar under our hand-cranked duplicator. To catch some of the air, to send to Andy Hooper in his enthusiasm for the smell of mimeo ...

[In the dealer's room, editor Warren Lapine of Absolute Magnitude complains that the editor of Locus put him on, well, the shitlist]

So Charlie Brown listed our publication schedule as "irregular."

I showed him that since I took over, we've come out pretty much on schedule: Winter, Spring, Summer, and so on.

He said, "I didn't mean your magazine."

[At the panel on Rereading Books, critic John Clute lays out well-considered baselines]

If we took physiological measurements of our physical responses to the act of rereading, they would be similar to those for the original reading. Perhaps not as sharp, but much the same.

[Later, an audience member presses panelist John F. Hertz on a point]

Well, just exclude matters of form and say what is it for you that makes a book a good reread.

[Hertz ripostes]

I won't. Because I can't.

The form is an inseparable part of what I enjoy about any book I reread.

[NESFAn Mark Olson knows quality when he rereads it]

I can't reread fiction unless I found it satisfying the first time, emotionally satisfying. I don't have to necessarily agree with it, but it's got to be *right*.

Gormenghast is a book I should reread, but I hated so many of the characters that I can't go back.

[Hertz brings the panel to poetic closure]

Of course, revisiting pleasures may not always be wise. Another Sylvester Stallone movie, another Chicago worldcon ...

The Japanese haiku writer Basho said, "Do not follow in the footsteps of the ancients. Seek what they've sought."

[It's pretty late in the con before Darcy and I discover the pretty good yuppie Italian restaurant just out the con center front door and over left toward the Marriott, but we know we've come to the right place when we ask the waiter what the joint's name, Strapazza, means in English]

Extra crazy.

[A lone voice from the crowd at the Masquerade — after a series of disasters including a toppling MC, recalcitrant robots, and a comprehensive crash of the entire lightboard computer system with consequent cascade of catastrophically crooked cues, so that Entry #12 for example features interesting lights, thrilling narration, but no actual contestants]

Damn that Windows 98!

[Meanwhile, it's a purple and prosy night at the Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition, an import from Readercon wherein panelists have written fake endings for a para of really rotten prose and the audience tries to sniff out

the real thing; writer Craig Shaw Gardner begins]

This is Round One —

[Twenty or thirty people from the audience chorus in unison]

— Ding!

[Gardner, a tad warily]

We've got some regulars here.

[Let's just run all together a bunch of the best worst lines read by various panelists, shall we?]

"The deadly alien language has claimed another victim ..."

"A world where rich and poor alike can get the best medical care they can afford ..."

"Suddenly, his awareness was all within his nose ..."

"Almost against my will, I reached for a chocolate cupcake ... I felt I would die if I did not sample those Twinkies of Terror, those Ho-Hos from Hell ..."

[Moderator Eric Van on the discovery of a sacred relic from the career of the patron saint of putrid, smelly, awful, terrible, stenchful, and did I mention really repetitive prose, Lionel Fanthorpe]

Geary Gravel has testified he found the edition of the thesaurus that Fanthorpe used. Because the words were in exactly the same order as in sentences he wrote.

[Before announcing the night's scoring results, Van indulges in his patented audience flattery]

I don't know whether to go for the drama of who won or the drama of how stupid you were.

[In the hall just after Kirk Poland, spotting writer/publisher Celia Tan holding my Readercon quotes zine issue, I swagger up to introduce myself; only to be deflated when she looks at it blankly]

I guess somebody just handed me this thing.

[At our nightly post-mortem confab, my brother Michael recounts his epic pilgrimage to the Baltimore Museum of Public Works]

... The joy of my visit to the sewage museum was overshadowed when the guy at the door offered me the *senior citizen's* discount!

Bob, I'm 42. I guess I'll be joining a health club when I get back home.

[At a party wherein fan and teacher Priscilla Olson is demonstrating how she sets young minds onto the austere path of the quest for scientific truth by miming microorganisms, only I penetrate to the hidden meaning of her crouching over, putting one hand on the top of her head, and spinning that hand like a helicopter in heat]

Rotifer!

[After the party, wherein Michael regaled everyone with further filthy tales of his Visit to The Sewage Museum, Dan Kimmel breaks it to me gently]

I don't know why everyone says you're the witty one. Your brother is a RIOT!

[At his kaffeeklatsch, British hard SFer Stephen Baxter cuts to the heart of the writing trade]

I do like to overwrite, then cut. Makes it seem economical even if it wasn't. *Titan* started at 300,000 words; I cut it to 200,000.

[Baxter has done some work for television, as for the British series Space Island One]

An SF story is driven by the idea. But these media people, when you're preparing the work — they know what the look and feel are going to be, but not what the idea is. They try to just pitch it in later.

[Baxter on NASA, where's he spent tons of research time]

You get this feeling of great age. It's an engineering culture, yes, but there's great inertia.

[On The Dolphin Club, a rumored fraternity (and, one hopes, sorority) of astronauts who have had sex in space]

I can't get the details. But there is one interesting thing — apparently, in the sea anyway, you need a third dolphin to give you some traction ...

[On whether he'll keep his Xeelee series going]

That universe is getting constrained. And the ideas do age. The Great Attractor — the evidence for *that* isn't quite as strong as it used to be ...

But the series itself — the Germans and the Japanese really really like it.

[On the Moon Rocks]

Half of those crates are still unopened, you know. We can't be absolutely sure what's in there ...

[On his themes nowadays]

Um, near-future space and the cosmic destiny of mankind.

[Standing in the one-hour-plus line waiting on Sunday to mail home con loot via two game but overworked U.S. Postal Service people, fan Judd Cohen analyzes his SF art collection back in El Monte, CA — and incidentally proves once more that there will always be a fandom]

It's very well rounded. Violent femmes in the bedroom ... spacescapes in the computer room ... dragons in the living room.

[At the panel on Forgotten Horror Writers, writer/editor Jack Chalker seizes the chance to talk about his and Mark Owings' big history of The Science-Fantasy Publishers]

The latest take is so up-to-date, it covers news of Martin H. Greenberg's scheduled appearance at this very convention ...

It's a little bit controversial, in that we insist on telling *all* the stories —

[Editor David Hartwell apparently has read it]

— True or not!

[Writer Darrell Schweitzer gets back to basics]

If you want a fundamental introduction to horror's roots, read a little essay called *Supernatural Horror in Literature* by someone named H. P. Lovecraft. Also David Hartwell's anthology *The Dark Descent* ...

And all will be revealed to you.

[In the panel where our favorite authors talk about theirs, George R. R. Martin gets right to it]

In my mind, the greatest living science fiction writer without a doubt is Jack Vance.

He is literally the writer I cannot put down ... One of science fiction's greatest stylists, his prose unfailingly magical, poetic ... His Dragon Princes novels alone are incomparable ...

[Harry Turtledove has his hero too]

One of the biggest influences on me was L. Sprague De Camp. If I hadn't read *Lest Darkness Fall* ... I wouldn't have taken the degree I have, married the lady I married, had the kids I have ... Other than that, he was of no consequence in my life.

[Rosemary Edghill touches on a personal favorite of mine]

And there's John M. Ford ... His fine book *The Dragon Waiting* — alternate Ricardian history, would we call that?

[Martin remembers it well; ouch]

I call it the book that beat me for the World Fantasy Award.

[Edghill answers an audience question]

Obscure books we really like? Well, there's Chester Anderson: *The Butterfly Kid*.

[Turtledove's a fan, too]

— I thought I was the only one on earth who'd read that! Very interesting book.

[Dozois gets serious, for just a minute]

One of our best short story writers is living in poverty in upstate New York ... So buy his new collection *Going Home Again* and get Howard Waldrop some well-deserved money.

[At the Fannish Feud Sunday afternoon, they announce the leading survey response to the question, "What's the number of your former lovers attending the convention?"]

"Zero" is the number one answer —

[Audience member (who perhaps identifies more with the survey's highest recorded single answer, "twenty-three")]

— Boy, fandom has changed.

[Let's end with one of the major lessons of a convention: that all pros are fans, as Elspeth Kovar Burgess finds when she meets an idol, artist Michael Whelan, at the volunteer party Sunday night, and tells him she's trying not to babble incoherently; Whelan understands]

That's all right, I know just what you mean. I just got to meet Greg Bear ...
ABRUPT END OF ISSUE DUE TO
DEADLINE'S PASSING 2 HOURS AGO.
SEE YOU NEXT TIME ...