

The Devniad

Book 54b

un zine de Bob Devney

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Playing Catchup

We're a tad light on features this month, folks. Call it an extended vacation ish. And hey, that's probably a relief for you as well ... Take the time you would have spent plowing through a major slug of *The Devniad* and put it into reading more De Lint or Silverberg or hell even Lovecraft for The World Fantasy Convention coming to Providence, RI, in early November.

Oh, well, just a few quick updates on stuff adumbrated here in previous ishes.

Cryptonomicon by Neal Stephenson — finally finished this 918-page monster, and it indeed stayed substantially superb all the way through. Definitely one of the great books of the year.

Ender's Shadow by Orson Scott Card — have to say this never quite lived up to the promise of its early chapters, posted in advance on the net. He just has to do too much writing around the fact of the previous views of these events in *Ender's Game*, and the seams are blown out in a good too many places. Just don't believe, for instance, that Bean could avoid meeting Ender for months when they're the two best students at the same orbiting training school. This thing was supposed to be the size of a Dyson Sphere? And we get a parallax view of Ender's character that's different without being fuller or more convincing. A decent read still, though, and in fact a must for any completist fan of its great predecessor.

A Civil Contract by Lois McMaster Bujold — what a relief! Had always thought Bujold's Miles Vorkosigan adventure series was great good fun. But several of the latest

shook my confidence. *Cetaganda* was a trifle, and *Memory* was a big, sour disappointment. This latest is quite fine, though. Be warned that it's out-and-out a romance novel; Miles courts (overenergetically, of course) Ekaterin Vorsoisson, who's looking like the love of his life. But gooey stuff is good with me. And the comic threads are divinely satisfying as well. Especially the stuff about the butter bugs and their absent-mindedly obsessed creator Enrique, neither of whom are huge hits at the big dinner party ... Was anyone else reminded here of the time Stephen Maturin brought all those live insect specimens aboard Jack Aubrey's man o' war?

Hearts in Atlantis, by Stephen King — Does anyone else get depressed reading a King novel? I always do. But it's a useful depression, really. The effect of an author who can make you identify with details in the life of his characters, enough so that they take you right with them down some dark corridors ... This series of loosely connected novelettes tries to point inward toward some great hidden truth about that vanished psychic continent that was America in the 1960s. Not all that successfully, really. But the section about a character's self-destructive card game obsession in his college dorm freshman year rang wholly true with me. I wasn't a card game fanatic, and I wasn't a joiner anyway. But I was certainly unformed and vulnerable enough at 18 to have slid down any number of similarly slippery slopes. And in the 60s, of course, waiting at the bottom was Vietnam.

"Bottom of the World, Ma!"

Everybody in fandom knows that David Langford, the Sage of Reading, completely nonunexpectedly, won the Hugo Award for Best Fan Writer this year of [insert date] in [insert name of worldcon city].

However, since you can never be absolutely sure, each Hugo nominee had to make up an advance acceptance speech. Mine was to be delivered by Ben Yalow, the only local NESFAn with the spine (and the spondulicks) to make it to Melbourne for the worldcon.

As I think Leslie Turek said at the last Other Meeting, maybe there's an anthology here. *Acceptance Speeches That Never Were*. Or *Alternate Worldcon Oratory*. Or *Beyond This Event Horizon: Leftovers from the Losers*.

A pretty pathetic anthology, to be sure. But maybe the editor that Darrell Schweitzer calls Bad Greenberg would be interested?

The opening sally below was a barefaced attempt to buy favor from the local audience at the ceremony. The reference is to a current Ozzie scandal involving a famous Sydney radio talk show host, who secretly proposed to lay off attacking the Australian Banking Association for a certain fee ... And we thought Geraldo Rivera was bad.

"Sorry I couldn't be here tonight. I told the con committee that for one point two million, I'd come over from Boston plus refrain from criticizing the convention in my fanzine *The Devniad*. But they said bloody John Laws had queered that lark for everybody.

"I'd like to thank Mark Hertel and Ken Knabbe, who got me *into* fanwriting. My wife Maureen, who keeps trying to get me *out* of it. And my family and friends, who stuffed all those ballots in the box for me. So to speak.

"Also the lovely and talented Evelyn Leeper, Maureen Kincaid Speller, and Mike Glycer, who apparently believed that guff about not voting for yourselves. And the great Dave Langford, who'd better not use this as an excuse to give up *Ansible*.

"Finally, since my day job IS in advertising ... Get your FREE subscription to *The Devniad*! Just e-mail me at: bobdevney@aol.com. That's bobdevney@aol.com.

"Thanks, and the drinks are *still* on Langford!"

Just Shoot Us, Apparently

Caught the first part of the season premiere of the TV sitcom "Just Shoot Me" in mid-September.

Was mildly enjoying it until David Spade's character Finch realizes that, since he's newly married to a gorgeous supermodel, he'll have to give up "sci-fi conventions, chess tournaments, and playing the flute at the Renaissance Faire" lest she discover he's a "geek."

I'd say we have three possible courses of response, my friends. Mass protest marches, mass boycotts of every product advertised on the show, or mass suicide ...

And to think that "Just Shoot Me" is the lead-in for "3rd Rock from the Sun."

Our Man in Honduras

Our nephew Jarrod Ferrara has had two great breakthroughs in his life as a Peace Corps volunteer in a Honduran hill town. First, they electrified his section of town; and now he can even go a day's journey or so to the capital and access e-mail! If he can ford all the flooded rivers ...

Jarrod answers some earlier questions:

"About my location, La Florida is the town, de Opatoro refers to the *municipio* or municipality (I guess it would equate to a county) and La Paz is the *departamento* (state)."

Then he confirms our worse impressions about traveling south of the border:

"I came to Teguc yesterday for medical reasons. I've had serious diarrhea since

Sunday and I decided to not suffer anymore and just come and get it taken care of. I'm waiting for results of a stool sample at the moment. What a pleasant experience that is — getting it into the cup I mean. We'll see what's living in my stomach. It's a real pain in the ass."

Way to pun, Jarrod!

But the guy has got serious things on his mind as well. Chief among them, still, the unexpected cancer death of his father earlier this year:

"By the way, to respond to the quote you sent me from one of your readers [Elizabeth Stone], I agree that American culture poorly prepares us for death. I think rather than facing it and really looking into the mouth of the beast we tend to run and hide. That is, we don't talk about it enough. It's seen as something unnatural in America when really it's one of the most natural things in life. It's all around us and defines our existence. I love talking about my Dad. I feel I honor him every time I do it and it helps me as well. I look forward to some good crying at Christmas and talking about him.

"What's this about a hurricane? [That was our friend Floyd.] I had no idea. I just saw it this morning on CNN. Man, I'm out there. Also a shooting in a church in TX. As mad as life is here it continues to grow stranger everywhere apparently.

"Take care and of course my best to Maureen. *Hasta luego.*"

And *vaya con Dios*, guy ...

From "Deep Thoughts" by Jack Handey

(on TV's old *Saturday Night Live*)

"Instead of having 'answers' on a math test, they should just call them 'impressions' and if you got a different 'impression' so what, can't we all be brothers?"

Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

Constantly in search of something funny, Cambridge, Mass fan **Charley Sumner** finds something handy in *The Devniad's* use of stuff like the above humor filler.

"The whole 'Deep Thoughts by Jack Handey' became known by the use of his quotes on *SNL* starting in the early 90s. He is a real person, not a collaborative pseudonym. He was a member of the *SNL* writing staff and has written for a number of magazines like *The New Yorker*, *Omni* and *National Lampoon*, but I don't know much more about him. There are a couple of books of his material available. Do a search on Amazon for Jack Handey and you'll find a couple of his 'Deep Thoughts' collections. I've always liked his stuff, but never enough to buy a book of it.

"I thought you might get a kick out of some of these very early ones he did in a humor column for *Omni* magazine years ago...

"Love can sweep you off your feet and carry you along in a way you've never known before. But the ride always ends, and you end up feeling lonely and bitter. Wait. It's not love I'm describing. I'm thinking of a monorail."

"The difference between a man and a boy is, a boy wants to grow up to be a fireman, but a man wants to grow up to be a giant monster fireman."

From Virginia, great bookseller and good congoing friend **Art Henderson** (order today from HndrsnsBks@aol.com) responds to my question about whether he and wife Becky both have day jobs, or do the billions from bookselling keep them in caviar?

"No [paying] day jobs any more. But Becky is a Captain in the USN, having retired from active duty 31 December 1995 after 33 years in the Nurse Corps, and her retirement pay is what keeps us sheltered,

fed, and clothed. (I had retired from doing much of anything remuneratively functional long ago, opting to be a supportive spouse and cat wrangler, albeit spending part of the last years of Becky's tour in DC apprenticing as a bookseller.) Bookselling mostly pays for our SF con habit, although we did record an actual profit last year."

But Art won't be taking up my recommendation on *Cryptonomicon* anytime soon.

"I rarely read novels when they're current (or even recent) unless they strike a chord of some kind; I usually wait for reliable friends and/or critics to recommend them. Becky, on the other hand, tries to read at least the putative better ones when they're relatively current (she always tries to read the Hugo nominees, if she hasn't already). Right now she's reading (and enjoying) *THE STONE WAR* by Madeline E. Robins, having just finished *THE CROOK FACTORY* by Dan Simmons (which she strongly recommends, but be aware that it is not SF). Based on your (and other's) comments, she (and maybe even I) will probably try *CRYPTONOMICON* soon. I'm presently reading [Philip Jose] Farmer's Tarzan novel (I'm a longtime Tarzan fan), but it is not really very good. He doesn't convey that juvenile enthusiasm that ERB (and, by extension, the reader) felt for the whole Lord of the Jungle shtick.

"Incidentally, Becky's major reading for the last six months has been the novels of George Chesbro. Chesbro was (surprisingly, to me) listed as a guest for last Lunacon (turns out he lives in Nyack), so we brought along several books of our own (plus a few sale titles) to be signed. Chesbro, if you do not know, is a mystery/suspense writer and the creator of Mongo: psychologist, private eye, and former circus performer — and the toughest dwarf detective in literature ...

"There are elements of SF (both science fiction and fantasy) in some of the stories, which, I guess, is why somebody invited him to Lunacon. At any rate, though they may not be to your taste (they're "different"), you could do worse than trying one or two. (You DO need to get hooked on

reading and collecting a new author, don't you?)"

Tried Chesbro years ago, Art. Not bad at all ... and I love the name Mongo. Perhaps because I always told Maureen that if we had kids, we could name the first boy after that great Irish explorer of Africa, Mungo Park ... Pretty effective birth control strategy, no?

Fan **Elizabeth Stone** can see Michael McWilliams' mention of William Shatner's horrible record and raise him considerably.

"With regard to unfortunate recordings by television personalities ... one of my junior-year-college-suitemates collected the most appalling schlock records (vinyl, I might add — I'm older than I look. Me and Schmendrick the Magician). Two, er, hits that I remember are Ted Knight (from *Mary Tyler Moore*) singing 'Who Put the Bop in the Bop-Shoo-Bop' (I can tell you from faint but horrific memory that it wasn't Mr. Knight), and Jack Klugman and Tony Randall (*The Odd Couple*), singing (cringe) 'You're So Vain.' Memorable, but for all the wrong reasons."

She also loved/hated one of my most gloriously gogonzolic wordplays, wherein I averred that my knowledge of the dead language Dalmatian was "a little spotty":

"Argggghhhh. If ever I see you when I am in company with another Balkan singer who knows Vrlichko Kolo, you may just find out what Dalmatian sounds like. Close seconds, my favorite interval. Can peel the paint right off the wall."

Not that Elizabeth's too bad in the wordplay department herself:

"My brother and I are twins (no, not identical — fratricidal), and our birthday is Sept. 2 (which was Labor Day the year we were born. Sigh. Entered the world as a bad pun, kept going ...)."

After encountering Harlan Ellison at Readercon and returning to Detroit not only unscathed but flattered, fabulous writer **Patrick O'Leary** was still game for more:

"...[T]he correspondence/phone call with Harlan (He's "Harlan" now, you'll

notice) was wonderful. Writers of good faith (both of you) struggling with the demons Intention and Misunderstanding. Harlan's facility with words, and that evanescent something, that crucial something that rises from the page when an artist is struggling to tell the truth and tell it well, the truth beyond words which no amount of workshoping and 5-steps-to-the-perfect-plot correspondence courses can teach anyone, was a great pleasure to share on another insomniac morning ..."

"Also resonate with your review of *The Sixth Sense* which I think a Motherfucker.

"I'm with those who think *The Blair Witch Project* sort of dull and dumb. It's like SF without a premise. A decent portrait of 3 minds breaking down, and a few moments of chills do not a movie make. See *The Sixth Sense* for contrast."

Patrick also hopes to have not one but two books out next year. (Not bad for a guy with a day job whose pen hand, according to Ellison, couldn't win a race with a glacier.) A collection of stories, poems and nonfiction called *Other Voices, Other Doors* could be out in early 2000. And his third novel *The Impossible Bird* could be out, with any luck, in fall 2000.

Boston movie reviewer and SF fan **Dan Kimmel** also makes a project out of piling on me about *Blair Witch*:

"In spite of the fact that your friends are right and you're wrong about *Blair Witch* (it would have been an interesting 20 minute student film but at 80 minutes was simply three unpleasant people whining in the woods), I wanted to share a story [re The Harlan Incident] about thinking you're writing one thing and having someone read it another way.

"A number of years ago (thirteen, to be exact) I had to review *Cobra*, an utterly odious Stallone film that was among the more violent and sadistic movies of the period ... I write this sarcastic pan noting just how exceedingly violent the film was, but said that thank goodness it was kept wholesome since the sex was limited to one chaste kiss with Brigitte Nielsen. The next

week there was a letter to the editor asking why their reviewer thought that extreme violence was okay at the movies but that love and romance was not.

"Some people are just humor impaired."

Now, now, Dan, shouldn't you have said "differently humored"?

Gracious (and deserving, darn it!) winner **Dave Langford** writes from Reading, UK, of his Hugo triumphs (both Best Fan Writer and Best Fanzine for *Ansible*) down under:

"I'd worked it out to my own satisfaction that the wheel must now have come full circle: the first worldcon ever to give me a Hugo was Aussiecon 2 in 1985, and clearly it was time for the black spot to pass to Evelyn C. Leeper or someone. I had to keep telling myself this to muster the courage to get to the ceremony. (Really.)

"For the previous week I'd been jokily suggesting that the 1999 Hugo bases would be lifelike models of Ayers Rock. This does not seem so funny when you're trying to get two lifelike models of Ayers Rock, plus sinister rocket shapes, past Melbourne Airport customs people who are giggling uncontrollably over their x-ray machine.

"It was a good con. I must write something about it when I've dealt with all the filthypro work needed to repair certain resulting holes in my finances. As for getting sloshed, tears came to my eyes at the discovery that every bar and restaurant offered fine local wines at significantly lower prices than one pays for 'cheap' semi-drinkable plonk in Britain."

FlimFan

Couldn't finish all my flick reviews this month, either. Sigh. But I've at least listed all the titles, in order of, you know, gooditude.

VERY GOOD:

The 13th Warrior — This stark, blunt-cut Viking fairy tale shows much more quality

than early word led me to believe. If it's still playing by the time you read this, by all means slather on some bear grease, grab the battleaxe, and go see it tonight. This is not camp like *Conan* or straight comedy like *Eric the Viking*. Turns out it's a very good-looking big-screen adventure story (directed by John McTiernan of *Predator*, *Die Hard*, and *The Hunt for Red October*) based on Michael Crichton's 1976 novel *Eaters of the Dead*. Which was itself an attempt at an historically plausible retelling of *Beowulf*. In 922 A.D., a small band of Northmen are summoned from their camp on the lower Volga to undertake a rescue mission back home in Scandinavia: saving a battered, half-ruined hill fortress — a settlement which has been periodically besieged for years by a terrible Enemy, and now looks ripe to fall in one last battle. The band is led by the big blond war chief Buliwyf (Vladimir Kulich), who turns out to be a lot smarter than he looks. This in the assessment of the only non-Nordic in the bunch, an actual historical figure: exiled Arab poet/diplomat/linguist/lover Ahmed Ibn Fahdlan (Antonio Banderas). Good visuals here. Scenery, mud, fur, waves, wood, mist. I like the little totem that's the Mother of the enemies: a little lumpy-breasted, potbellied, black rock statuette that's a dead ringer for the Venus of Willendorf. And manly music: a lot of drums and horns and trumpets. Good manly jokes here too: for instance, the Vikings think Ahmed's horse is a little small. "Only an Arab would bring a dog to war." Then they see what an Arabian stallion can do ... I've got no idea if the period details would look authentic to a knowledgeable eye, except — was that a Conquistador helmet? And obviously this becomes much like the stories of the white cowboys and the faceless painted Indians. But I like the way McTiernan delivers action stuff with style. As when a ring of men lay down in the creaking meadhall late at night, their feet pointed into a circle together, snoring loudly — but with measuring eyes open and looking up into the darkness, hands on hilts as they track the enemy ambush over the roof of the hall ...

Mumford — This extremely quiet, quirky, 1940s style little fable about a new arrival in a small town who's hung out his psychologist's shingle and surprised everybody by actually seeming to *help* people with their problems is not to everyone's taste. Let's admit that Queen Maureen fell asleep halfway through. But for moviegoers who are prepared to stay alert, to really look and listen, this thing has got charm. That's young Doc Mumford's secret, actually, in a fun performance by clean-cut, polite Loren Dean (*Billy Bathgate*, the cop in *Gattaca*): he listens. And he's got a personal interest in people's secret lives; says he knows himself what it's like to want to run away from a problem. Or roll away, like his patient the loner/skateboarding fanatic (Jason Lee), who also owns a big chunk of the word's modem market, employs almost everybody in town, and is building something weird in the basement. I also really like the lady with the mail-order-catalog-shopping jones (Mary McDonnell), who eventually takes delivery of about six epiphanies in one three-minute orgy of self-realization. And Doc himself likes the girl with chronic fatigue syndrome (Hope Davis), who at first resists treatment: "It's almost too exhausting to tell you about my exhaustion." Writer/director Lawrence Kasdan kickstarted his career as cowriter (with our own Leigh Brackett) of 1980's *The Empire Strikes Back*; since then, he's directed interesting stuff like *The Big Chill*, *The Accidental Tourist*, and *Grand Canyon*. He's got a real gift for letting ensemble pieces play out without seeming hurry, while getting in a whole bunch of interesting character moments. Kasdan's latest also has that edge of appealing weirdness that son Jake displayed in his own film about another poker into people's secret lives, 1998's *The Zero Effect*. (Primo rental there.) This one — it isn't *Son of Explosion Man*, folks. So it won't be around long. But try to catch it and tell me what you think.

GOOD:

Run Lola Run

A NOBLE FAILURE:

The Imposters (video)

DECENT:

The Muse — A mildly amusing comedy by writer/director Albert Brooks, with a number of slow spots. A screenwriter (Brooks) seeks help from an actual living Muse (Sharon Stone) who turns out to have provided inspiration to most of the top creative minds in Hollywood. Great cameos by Martin Scorsese and Rob Reiner here. Best insider line: when the screenwriter's little daughter pipes up in the car. "Can I star in the movie, Daddy? "Yes darling, as soon as you're an older man." Some reviewers have said Brooks lost his edge here. Lost his edge? Albert Brooks never *had* much of an edge. But he's good at the sly gentle stuff. Compared to his earlier films, this one is about like *Mom*; not as good as *Real Life* or *Lost in America* or my favorite, *Defending Your Life*. As my friend Stephen Kennedy puts it: "Albert Brooks is like Woody Allen, only less so."

Blue Streak — I've explained the premise of this movie to three or four people, and got an actual laugh out of all of them. So let's try you. This burglar steals a big diamond from a safe in this office building, but then the cops close in. So he hides the rock in the building. They catch him, and he goes to prison for 2 years. When he gets out, he naturally goes back for his loot — but the building has meantime become a police station ... So he masquerades as a cop. I thought Lawrence's performance was way too frantic, and nothing that Eddie Murphy or now Chris Tucker haven't done better. But I did like his line of protest when his girlfriend, unhappy he turns out to be a professional thief, throws him out: "I never robbed *you!*"

ALSO DECENT:

Love Stinks

Backchat

on previous APA:NEFAs

To all

Well, I *started out* with good intentions of replying to every article in every contribution I neglected for the last several months. But as you can see, resolve flagged as the deadline loomed, and by the end it was strictly last-ish stuff ... This will teach everybody to get collated toward the *front* of the issue.

Another matter: my young friend the great SF artist Chris Sullivan is trying to recall the author and title of an SF book some years ago whose introduction stated it was inspired or based on the work of Erich Van Daniken. Anybody have any guesses? Tom?

To Tom Endrey

AUG ISH. About the theory you shared re the government's hushing up the fact that we actually maintain a working Moonbase today with 150+ personnel: that's some security blackout they've got. But those government censors better hope we never have a *school shooting* on the Moon, or as far as the media goes, all bets are off.

About your debate with Tony Lewis about finding alternatives to the Framingham Tara as a Boskone hotel, all's fair to suspect that conrunners who live in nearby towns aren't working too hard on finding distant replacement venues. However, I fear you've gone too far this time, sir! Mentioning Tony's disinclination to get off his "plushy tushy" is hitting around in back of the belt.

JULY ISH. So given the layout of your place in Flushing, one malfunctioning car alarm that screams all night denies sleep to most everybody in two 27-story buildings ... A scene from *Die Hard* occurs to me, where a guy in a high rise fires a shoulder-launched missile out the window from 6 stories up and blows a truck apart. But remember, kid, don't try this at home.

JUNE ISH. Yes, as you saw in this same June issue, I did get to attend *The Mummy* and agreed it was a decent amount of fun. Brendan Fraser is carving out a career for

himself in good middlebrow entertaining movies, from *Encino Man* to *George of the Jungle* to this. (Still haven't seen *Gods and Monsters*, which I hear is a top-quality biopic of *Frankenstein* director James Whale with Fraser playing the old man's last gay crush.)

Like you, Tom, I often catch John C. Dvorak's harsh, bullying, attack-dog columns in the PC mags. Definitely a good, fun read.

To Anna Hillier

AUG ISH. My brother Michael sends his regards, plus thanks for the kind words about meeting him.

Interesting reaction you had to finally meeting Paul Giguere: "Ghod: Are you handsome and such a quiet disposition too." Just thought I'd print it again so NESFA's answer to Leonardo DiCaprio could be mortally embarrassed two issues in a row.

Anna, sorry I didn't have more time to talk at Readercon. With this run-to-the-next-panel-and-get-the-next-quote thing, I'm dangerously close to doing as my brother says: taking a hobby and making it into a job. Nice to finally meet your daughter, though. Say, isn't she unmarried? I know this handsome, quiet bachelor...

As you indicate, grabbing shared meals at cons can be worse than filling out Scarlett O'Hara's dance card. Lots of missed opportunities and hurt feelings. Whom do we invite? Who invites us? Why, or why not? Can we add so-and-so we just met in the lobby? If X invited us, is it kosher for us to add an invite to Y at the last minute? What if X and Y hate each other? Who's the most fascinating of my friends attending today? Social Darwinism in the dining room ... At a weekend con, usually you're pressed for time and the restaurant is pressed for space. A table for two or four may be less of a problem, but add one person more and suddenly you have to wait another 45 minutes ... I don't have a solution for you, Anna. Just sympathy.

JULY ISH. Liked your list of all the new stuff that's come up in our lifetimes, from inventions to social changes to catch phrases. Speaking of which, when are we all

going to get around to agreeing on what we'll call the decade ahead — you know, after The Nineties. Looking back to the 1900s, can't recall any commonly accepted tag.

For the upcoming decade, think I've encountered The Oughts and The Zeroes and the Hundreds. How about, let's make up a new one, The Ohohs? Other ideas? Anyone?

JUNE ISH. Alas, like almost everyone else in local NESFA, had no chance to put your guide to the stars visible over the Melbourne Worldcon into practice. But thanks anyway. Sigh.

To George Flynn

AUG ISH. About that delightful *Plokta* article suggesting NESFA buy those old hundred-tonne circular bookshelves on offer from the British Library round reading room: Love your thought that we put them up inside a crater ringwall on NESFA's Moon. Although there'll come a tricky moment in the middle of the move. As we actually start lugging books into the crater — considering the lower Lunar gravity we may well have to make a rare (almost unprecedented) adjustment to the value of NESFA's traditional unit of moving difficulty. You know, once in a Drew Moon?

About my misspelling marathon in the Readercon report: yes, blowing 10 names was awful. Of course, that's out of, what, 250-300 names total in 16 pages? As is getting worrisomely usual, that ish was vroomed to the copy shop without a final overall spell check — to scape arriving at the collation party whence all had long since fled. Believe I caught 8 or 9 typo'd names on my own before it got to the e-mail version. Apologies to all!

But no fairies, George, if you're counting dead *Playboy* Editor Victoria Chen Haider, since the text states explicitly I couldn't find a source for her spelling. Other than calling Harlan Ellison and waking the kraken ...

JULY ISH. Great item you dredged up from the Honduras This Week Web site re my nephew's location, about the legendary

goatsucking monster lurking in what is indeed his town's vicinity ... Will send to Jarrod forthwith.

I read dictionaries for pleasure *too!* Paisan! Have you seen the new *Encarta World English Dictionary*? I'm suspicious of the Microsoft involvement, but like the editor, Anne Soukhanov, so I took a flyer on the book. More later on this as I get to know it.

To Tony Lewis

Whipping past your quick review of Philip Jose Farmer's *The Dark Heart of Time*, I was arrested by your phrase "It's darker and grittier than the Burroughs version." Who, I thought, could overdarken or outgrit the author of *Naked Lunch*? Then I realized the comparison was to Edgar Rice, not William Seward ...

Loved your nice long list of entertainment world namedroppers. Greatest surprises: Gerald Silberman (Gene Wilder), Joyce Penelope Frankenburg (Jane Seymour), Ivo Levi (Yves Montand).

If a *probang* is a whalebone rod used to ram stuff stuck in your throat down into your stomach, what's an *antibang*? No, maybe I don't want to know.

Thanks for the report on the Providence, RI, relaxacon (is it Lexiclave or Lexicon?) held on the site-to-be of November's World Fantasy Convention. Because I live 20 minutes away, guess I won't get to stay in a hotel. Since Lexiclave, they've partially opened the big new multilevel shopping mall, Providence Place, adjacent to your site, the new Rhode Island Convention Center. Haven't gone down yet, but seems about 50 stores have already opened. (Not Borders yet, but Lindt Chocolate, Nordstrom, William Sonoma, etc.) For updates, try their Web site. It's actually at www.oso.com/partners/ppm/, but you can just type in www.providenceplace.com

To Leslie Turek

Enjoyed the look back at your Lexicon idyll. You know, I've passed under that big hangdown sculpture in Providence's Italian Federal Hill section a dozen times, always

thought it was a pineapple. Thanks for the revelation that it's a pine cone (*pignoli*).

Your thoughts on Harlan Ellison at Readercon seem to me the most interesting and least knee-jerk, pro or con, of anyone's. Including mine.

As I mentioned, thanks for including the net address with your Slovakia trip reports. I ignored the paper ish and happily read the net version via my fast connection during lunch at work. In scalable type *and* with glorious living color photos. Might not want to read a novel that way, but it beats several pages of dim photocopy.

About your photo of the graveyard of old MIG jet fighters sitting on the grass: there must be some pretty happy kids in those houses behind the site. Talk about a great playground idea!

Clear, pensive, interesting trip report, as usual. So your family belongs to Slovakia's Carpatho-Rusyn ethnic group. Well, there may be advantages to its relative obscurity over here. For instance, ethnic jokes:

"How many Carpatho-Rusyns does it take to change a light bulb?"

"No one knows."

"OK, did you hear about the Carpatho-Rusyn who slept with a goat?"

"No."

"Neither did I."

To Mark Olson

OK, you got me. If even *you* are going to join the Hallelujah Harry Chorus, I'll go out and buy a Harry Potter book.

Your retro-review of E. E. Smith's *The Spacehounds of IPC*, which I haven't read for about 35 years, has one particularly fabulously line, about a hero who pulls something called "ultrawave" out of thin ether: "[H]e didn't exactly invent it, but he was sure that some of his super-scientist friends were working in that direction and would have invented a receiver by the time he was able to invent a transmitter." You unerringly put your finger on the kind of thing about Smith's writing that maddens adults and cruises right by kids, who are just hot for pure story excitement and anyway think the world simpler than it is.

About your two ways of doing an e-zine *Proper Boskonian*, either with defined separate issues (like stuffy old paper zines) or via some sort of incremental release of articles over time (like Webhead wow, man). Maybe the problem you mention with the second method — getting people to come back again over and over, checking for new stuff — is more of a dealbreaker than you think.

Were we to go incremental, I'd suggest adding a really prominent "What's New?" box high on the site, with posting dates for each new item. (Or something like *Locus Online* at www.locusmag.com, which is worth a good look re this discussion. The other even more purely incremental model obviously being *Event Horizon*, at www.eventhorizon.com/sfzine/index.html) And perhaps, if our method is, say, punctuated incrementalism, an easy electronic form visitors could fill out to get an automatic e-mail whenever we add a new bunch of stuff.

To Ann Broomhead and Tim Szczesuil

Greatly enjoyed your report on the trip to England and Wales. Why do I suspect from the personality that shines through the writing that Ann wrote most of it? Except the stuff about her abysmal navigational skills.

Some random comments:

What is a "‘pay-and-display’ car park"? You have to put coins in the meter AND flash mating plumage?

Perhaps George and Tony will gig you for writing, of leaving Wales: "We bid our hosts goodbye, and drove back into Britain." But it's obvious to me that you two were so enchanted with Wales that you joined a Welsh separatist group.

Are you Nero Wolfe fans? I ask because your highest compliment seems to be "most satisfactory."

So Lord Tim very much wants to own a tapestry, like the ones at Blenheim Palace. Why not commission, say, Bob Eggleton for the design, then have the NESFA vestmaking mafia execute it. I suggest a suitably grand yet relevant subject would be

something vaguely Iwo Jima-ish, like "Heroic Art Show Crew Erects Kee Klamp/IMC Pipe Assemblage Despite Advancing Age."

I like your idea of doing one big tourist thing (like Blenheim) and one little tourist thing (like Sezincote Gardens) per day. Most satisfactory.

The metal detector at Gatwick pinged at "Anne's jackknives"? Plural? Whaddya carry, the full katana, wakizashi, tanto?

To Paul Giguere

See my remarks to your fan Anna above.

Looking forward to your reviews (this month?) of the new Bujold, Card, and Harris, since for once I've actually read all three myself already. Usually you're months ahead of me: a most unattractive quality in one so young.

Thanks also for the continuing inspiration about weight loss and finding one's own individualized diet plan. Though at the moment — in fact, as I sit here finding the inner strength to write this, honestly — my immediate diet plan is to eat this new Russell Stover Peanut Butter & Welch's Grape Jelly Cup sitting on my desk. The one with the cute yellow-and-red-on-purple foil cover that further assures me its contents are Covered In Milk Chocolate? Guess I've got some hard work to mffggllurbllllmmmmmmmmmlp.

To Ed Meskys

Glad to have you in the APA, if only for one ish!

Fred Lerner is right about Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* — it's a wonderful postmodernist study of a man who disappears into his own obsession, a kind of board or card game (can't remember which) that simulates a homegrown baseball universe. Magic card fans, beware.

You've already mentioned many of the SF baseball/sports stories that come to my mind offhand, except for two. There's that nice at least semi-famous hidden-superman story by Algis Budrys from 1955, "Nobody Bothers Gus," wherein the hero is a retired

baseball superstar that nobody ever notices or remembers. Hey, in just looking up the date in the Clute/Nicholls encyclopedia, I discover there was another "Gus" story, 1957's "And Then She Found Him." Must look that one up. Oh, and the second one about SF sports is a juvenile I read in 1960, Milton Lesser's *Stadium Beyond the Stars*. Curious, the crap one remembers ...

To Joe Ross

Like your quote about the young baseball fan at Fenway Park who wondered who Fenway was. Actually, there's a book out right now generating a good buzz about the man who made a park — the so-called "Emerald Necklace" — out of Boston's brackish little Fens. (First there were the Fens, then the Fenway or Emerald Necklace, then your Fenway Park.) It's *A Clearing in the Distance : Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* by Witold Rybczynski. (Who wrote an earlier little gem of architectural and social narrative called *Home: A Short History of an Idea*.) Olmsted, as you may recall, later tossed off another little landscaping project south of here called Central Park. Wonder what he would have thought of Garth Brooks?