

The Devniad Book 75b

un zine de Bob Devney
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Orbita Dicta
Heard in the Halls of
The Millennium Philcon
(The 59th Annual World Science Fiction
Convention/The 2001 Worldcon)
at the Pennsylvania Convention Center &
Philadelphia Marriott Hotel
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
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Return with me now to the thrilling days of yesteryear, or at least early September, when things all seemed just a little less serious ...

[At the office, my boss David Izzi offers the traditional clueless sci-fi send-off]

So what time does the shuttle have lift-off?

[At Logan Airport, as airline guy trundles by a blue two-wheeled rolling chair featuring straps and very high back; my brother Michael is freaked]

My God, *Lecter* must be coming with us!

[Day before the con, chance-met U. K. fan Brian Flatt grazes with us the wares at a Locust Street joint called More Than Just Ice Cream — and somehow this reminds him of Brit con food?]

At British conventions, there's a tradition of cooked mushrooms — breakfast is part of the all-in price at the hotel.

[Later that eve, a young black security guard on the 2nd floor of the convention center slams the gates in our faces as, though we halt at her command, two other couples slip her net and march to get early registration, promised to close at 8:00 p.m. though it's only 7:30 now]

Oh, I already had a migraine going, I can't take any more of this!

[In the longish registration line Thursday morn, editor David G. Hartwell proffers a good-natured joke about one of the truly giant figures of modern SF, long-time Asimov's editor Gardner Dozois]

I have a line for you: Did you hear we're roasting Gardner Dozois? Think he can feed the whole crowd?

[I like that one well enough to submit it to the convention newsletter, which will run it and several other quotes gathered under my byline throughout the con, boosting this reporter's already healthy ego ... and setting me up for the inevitable fall, of which more anon]

[Fan writer Mark Leeper shares my disgust when we see the tiny type on the convention's name badges, which after all will blight thousands of fannish social interactions per day; but he's not so wroth at the screwup he can't joke about it]

Hard for anyone to claim he's a BNF now ... Of course, the biggest name fan I ever knew was George Vokelsoveljevic.

[Fan Yuri Mironets offers a consolation badge]
This is the symbol of Vladivostok University, where I work.

[At the amazing — and yes, authentically Amish — Dutch Eating Place across the street in Reading Terminal Market, Chicago fan Bonnie Jones denies being a secret master of fandom]

I'm not a SMOF, I'm a SWOF: short woman of fandom ... To qualify, you have to be under 5'3".

[By the posting boards, writers Steve and Sharon Lee seem dazed]

We're still kind of in shock. Because Ace just bought all of the Liaden Universe books, to reissue in mass market. They'll be starting in February 2002.

[In the Marriott elevator, a maybe 11-year-old blonde fan badged Alexandra has her con-going priorities well in order, chanting excitedly]

Anime, anime, anime, anime, anime,
ANIME!

[In the fanzine lounge, German fan Thomas Recktenwald brings Euro info]

I live in a town about 20 miles north of Saarbrücken, near the Luxembourg border. You know that Luxembourg is the birthplace of Hugo Gernsback? But I'm afraid that Luxembourg has forgotten about Hugo. I didn't hear about him until I got to Eastercon.

[In the green room, writer and friend Steve Sawicki already finds this con quite dreamy]

I had a Worldcon nightmare last night. I was late for my panel, and the elevator was there, and then it *wasn't* there, and there were all these *people* in the way!

[I look all over for great fanzine writer Guy Lillian's reading, down in the 100s (CC105A) — finally come in about 8 minutes from the end of the half-hour; not the last problem I'd have with trying to make one of Guy's appearances; consider this a craven public apology, Guy]

[In the panel on space technology, apparently Mr. Steele Went to Washington]

During the House hearings I was a part of, there was a renewal of interest in going to the Moon ... The dreamers want to go to Mars as soon as possible; the realists are thinking about the Moon again.

[Guest of Honor Greg Bear's hard-headed about it]

The realists want to go to the Moon so they can personally set foot on the Moon before they die ... That's *not* a business plan.

[Writer Allen Steele on payload economics, finding valuable stuff in space, etc.]

The only thing I've seen that makes economic sense is if we could bring helium-3 back. It might pay to bring helium-3 back — if we could make helium fusion work.

You know, we could make ham and eggs, if we had ham and if we had eggs ...

[An objection from the audience —]

The exploration of the western territories from Europe operated at a loss also —

[— Is deflated by Steele]

— But when you went to the western territories, you could assume you'd find air and water when you got there.

[Aerospace consultant Jordin Kare gives asteroid mining the shaft]

Steve Gillette of U Nevada has done a thorough job of blasting apart the whole idea of asteroid mining. He's shown that if you have the technology to do that kind of mining in the asteroid belt, you can extract stuff much more cheaply on Earth.

[According to my spy at the Opening Ceremonies (fan Eleanor Pearlman), writer/toastmistress Esther Friesner really enjoyed having some guy kiss her hand]

I'm all aflutter. In fact, I'm verklempt.

[In the panel on Across the Commonwealth, northern star Robert J. Sawyer likes diversity]

It has been argued that SF, which often deals with different races and cultures and worlds all getting along together, has a particular resonance with the Canadian approach of multiculturalism.

[Writer Michael Swanwick girds his loins at Chris Logan Edwards's Tiger Eyes Books table]

Time to go to work: time for the Meet and Greet party. Time to be charming. Despite the fact that I already hate the sound of my own voice.

[My heroic brother Michael, who volunteered to get a few BARTLET VS. BUSH IN '04 buttons produced for my West Wing panel, then spent many thoroughly miserable hours trying to get them made, thrusts the results at me with a snarl!]

Here's your damn buttons!

[I forget what fellow panelists Dan Kimmel, Timothy Liebe, Terry McGarry, and Melinda Snodgrass said on The West Wing as a Political Fantasy, but I offered the following — with absolutely no reaction from the assembled throng]

Just to take the supposed topic seriously — let me channel John Clute, maybe the best critic in our field, for a minute. You could well make a case for *West Wing's* embodying some common fantasy motifs. You know: something's amiss in the land ... there's a longing to restore the vanished glory of a happier time ... and you've got the wounded king, with the secret flaw. *[I forget to mention Trent Lott and Tom DeLay, the Sauron brothers]*

[One woman in the audience does help prove that there are SF fans everywhere]

I've worked in the White House since 1978, and it amazes me how *right* they get it.

[At the Trivia for Chocolate event, I somehow manage to eke out second place with a score of 23, followed by Richard Friedman at 21 and my friend Chris Logan Edwards at 20 — all just slightly overshadowed by winner Leo Doroschenko with 67; this bodes ill for later, as we'll see]

[Again, being on the panel re Books Into Movies decimates my note-taking abilities; but editor Keith Olexa makes at least one memorable mot]

Clancy Brown, a good actor who played — was it Sergeant Zim? — in *Starship Troopers*, said what's wrong with trying to make a movie from a Heinlein book is "you can't film rhetoric."

[Plus somebody noted this about the genesis of a certain fine, strange 1983 Catherine Deneuve/Susan Sarandon lesbian vampire movie]

Yes, Whitley Strieber didn't just do those UFO things: he also wrote the book on which *The Hunger* is based ... He said he liked the movie better than his book!

[Artist Ctein mistakes my initials-only reference to a certain upcoming fantasy would-be-blockbuster]

When you said HP, I thought you meant H.P. Lovecraft ... you know there's a good new Lovecraft film? I saw it in the San Francisco area about 6 months ago. *[NOTE: Can't find whatever film he's talking about here; if you can, by all means let me know]*

[Believe writer and new friend Melinda Snodgrass said this about filming those Harry Potter books]

Chris Columbus was the only director willing to film one book at a time per movie. The others all wanted to smush parts of the books together.

[Snodgrass also admires my favorite SF flick]

I think cyberpunk is the direct descendant of *Blade Runner*.

[And she knows how to stay sane in Hollywood]

Roger Zelazny had a very healthy attitude toward seeing Hollywood film his stuff. "They didn't ruin my book. My book is right here."

[Toward dinnertime, NESFAn Lisa Hertel makes my brother Michael an offer he can refuse]

Would you like to have dinner with a tired woman pulling a couple of screaming kids?

[Next morning (Friday) in the program participants' lair, longtime friend/film critic Dan Kimmel isn't that impressed with his free muffin]

Now, *Arisia* does a great green room. It's "Here, let me heat up the lasagna for you!"

[Kimmel and I skip to another topic; he recalls a classic collection]

I finally read *Dangerous Visions* and *Again Dangerous Visions* a few years ago, and did an essay for rec.arts.sf on it. Some stories were really dated, but a few held up very well —

[I follow so far]

— Like what?

[And my question is echoed by a short stranger with long hair and an intent gaze who suddenly sits down next to Kimmel]

— Like what? What are we asking?

[I politely fill the new guy in]

— Oh, which stories in the *Dangerous Visions* stuff still hold up —

[Guy, whom subsequent queries determine to be major net fanzine fan Lenny Bailes, proffers an immediate opinion]

— “Faith of Our Fathers.”

[Sounds familiar to me, but I’m not quite sure]

— Who by? —

[Kimmel’s on it, but he’s also eating]

Philip mumble mumble *[I can’t quite make out last name]*

[Me]

— Who? —

[Kimmel, laughing]

— Philip K. Dick. You’ve heard of him?

[Light dawns on Marblehead, then I immediately link this to a story covered in an earlier Devniad]

Oh, sorry. Hey, that’s like the time I heard a Polish illustrator *[Wojtek Siudmak]* talking about the world’s greatest SF writer, but he was speaking French and kept mentioning this guy named Cadique — Philippe Cadique, get it —

[Bailes breaks in, seeming quite upset]

— What’s THAT got to do with the conversation we were having?

[I’m nonplussed]

Uh, well, I just —

[Bailes, indignation still rising]

— You’re SITTING here eating BREAKFAST, and it’s PEPSI and a MUFFIN!

[Cowardly Kimmel breaks the subsequent unsocial little silence by looking at his watch and smoothly pivoting up from the table]

— Well, I gotta be going now ...

[Barely resisting the urge to clamp onto his leg lest I be dragged along whimpering, “For the love of Ghod, take me with you,” I suavely mutter]

— Mind if I join you?

[Somehow this slightly spiky encounter leaves me depressed about fans and fandom for a little while — but don’t worry, far worse is to follow later in the morning]

[In the panel on the Young Adult Perspective, YA Bryan Zubalsky supplies some, with a twist]

You can’t limit yourself to just one thing; look at the classics too. I love James Joyce. I’ve read *Ulysses* and I’m working on *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

[Young fan Haitham Jendoubi clicks onto his favorite magazine]

Cicada — a spinoff of *Cricket*? It’s really incredible. It’s got stuff from people like Neil Gaiman, Ursula K. Le Guin — lots of other writers you’ve heard about. Essays, articles, everything.

[Jared Dashoff is the son of this Worldcon’s chairman, though not exactly a son of the pioneers]

The reasons kids don’t like to read are one, they’re stuck in their TV and computer world ... and two, they don’t like to go out. In Philly here, the nearest library is at least a mile away.

[At one point, as Dashoff hogs the mike, young moderator Katherine Macdonald cracks the whip in a way we wish more pros would]

I’m madly in love with this topic, but unfortunately, it is not the subject of this panel.

[From the audience, writer Diane Turnshek brings some magical news]

I have some gossip. Warren Lapine has written to J. K. Rowling; he’s trying to

negotiate a magazine of fantasy for children called *The J. K. Rowling Fantasy Magazine*.

[Young Aussie Catherine McMullen vamps a bit]

Just a note, I've remembered another of my favorite authors: Laurell K. Hamilton.

[From the audience, writer Sean McMullen stands up to essay a spot of sadistic child abuse]

One thing my daughter reads a *lot* of that she's not telling us about is trashy romances.

[From the look in la McMullen's eyes, you're dead, Dad]

— I read everything, Dad!

[Next stop, the slide show of my good friend Ernest Lilley, editor of the great webzine SFRevu (that's www.sfrevu.com), who's just returned from traversing U. S. Route 66 with a digital camera and an active imagination; unfortunately, they moved Ernest's time in the program, so the total audience for most of the hour in the big, echoey hall is my brother Michael and me; even more unfortunately, Ernest suspected it would be like this so he partied all night and didn't preview his presentation, thus spending half our time rebooting his laptop ...]

[During one of many lulls in the Ernestathon, I slip into the busy main hall for a moment, and approach star SF/fantasy writer George R. R. Martin from behind — maybe I'll brace him for a cheery quote ... but I slow down as he stops short, quite annoyed at something]

I don't ... fucking ... believe this!

[The woman walking with him stops too]

— What?

[Martin angrily flicks the bottom corner of what I see from afar is today's con newsletter, and I realize something: my lighthearted quote from David Hartwell yesterday, about roasting big guy Gardner Dozois to feed the crowd? It's right where Martin's pointing. Uh-oh.]

— This.

[She reads it, gets instantly enraged herself]

— Who do we have to kill?

[Martin peers at the paper, deciphering the name of the scumbag responsible for this outrage]

— Bob Devney!

[Said scumbag decides not to bother the great man after all right now, and slinks quietly away ... It's the fat thing, I decide, sudden awareness mixing with frenzied self-loathing. Has to be. Although Dozois makes jokes about it himself every chance he gets, his writer friends like Martin must know that instead, secretly, it kills

him inside ... and every writer and half the fans at this convention are friends of Gardner Dozois ... So I've just become the most hated man in the history of fandom. Why did I ever decide to start quoting people as my fanac? Couldn't I pick something easy and fun, like Finnish filking or a Perry Rhodan concordance?]

[With a genuinely heavy heart, I drag myself back to the slide show for Ernest's sake; sounds like it might have been quite interesting after all for someone less suicidal, as he blithely continues]

This Web trip is off the Gibson story, “The Gernsback Continuum.” The story was written in the 80s, and I wanted to capture the world he saw before it's all gone. *[Shows photo of hot-dog-shaped hot dog stand]* There's this affection for gigantism along Route 66 ...

[There's no affection, though, in the eyes of the first person I see in the hall after the show: it's con-running stalwart Janice Gelb, usually the most attractive and congenial of fannish friends, who now tromps up to me with her hair on fire]

I'm going to kill you!

We've been trying for weeks to keep Gardner's roast a SECRET! We didn't tell anybody, for God's sakes. And you went and published it in the paper in front of five thousand people ... I just can't talk to you right now! *[She stalks away]*

[So she's dispelled one worry, but added another ... I didn't hurt Gardner's feelings, I just blithely ruined half the fun of his whole roast and spoiled things for Janice, whose acquaintance I really value. If I hurry, maybe the Marriott has an open elevator shaft I can catch ...]

[Somehow I drag myself to the next fun event, which I'd woken this morning ignorantly thinking would be my worst moment of the convention; coming in a (light-years-distant) second in Trivia for Chocolate earlier made me fodder I mean a contestant in Win Tom Galloway's Money, you see ... So I show up to be, yes, quite a surprise, completely humiliated by dread trivia monster Leo Doroschenko and, my ghod, even more formidable eventual winner

Juan Sanmiguel; my circling-the-drain brain and leaden reflexes produce a grand total of one winning answer in my entire round, which I'd like to kinda pitifully record here]

George O. Smith.

[But buck up, boyo: my misery aside, this is one fun, interesting event; for instance, a guy in Galloway's audience says that why Frau Blucher in Young Frankenstein frightens the horses is because "blucher" is German for "glue," and another audience member instantly responds]

Is not. That's a common myth. *[Hey, he's right; looking it up later, it seems German words and compounds for "glue" are all formed around the bases "kleber" or "leim"; another cherished factoid demolished]*

[And the whimsical SF trivia categories created by Tom Galloway and Keith R. A. DeCandido are in my opinion just as funny as those on the contest's source, the TV show Win Ben Stein's Money, and could cheer anyone up]

Gooder, Better, Bester ... Hi and Lois McMaster Bujold ... That's Why Delany Is a Tramp ... WWF Simakdown ... Tiptree Through the Tulips With Me ... The Moon Is Suing for Palimony ... I'm a Gaiman Fan — Not That There's Anything Wrong with That ... A Rage in Harlan ... A Hard Day's Nightfall ... Does Greg Bear Poop in the Woods ... Running with Edward Scissorhands ... Battlestar Ponderosa ... Hungry Like Gene Wolfe ... R U R or Have You Ever Been A Robot ... The Bar's My Destination.

[Meanwhile, at the Copy Editors panel, editor Teresa Nielsen Hayden ponders a career switch]

I'd take up writing if I could be edited by Jane Yolen!

[At the NESFA bookdealer's table, I tell writer Connie Willis about Galloway's trivia question concerning which famous movie actor she has a crush on; but apparently Connie and Harrison Ford are now an ex-item]

It's not true anymore. I'm really mad at him. He's getting a divorce, have you heard? Another middle-aged man leaving his perfectly good wife for a younger woman.

[In yet another stupid move, I attend the panel on Where Has the Future Gone while trying to balance a large bowl of Bassett's chocolate chip ice cream (yum) on one leg and my notebook (yuk) on the other; but the room is packed shoulder-to-shoulder, and once finished, I can't get the goddamned spoon to fit in the cup with the lid on, ending the struggle sheathed with ice cream to the elbows ... at least Sharon Foster of SFRevu, crammed next to me all this time, doesn't actually have to be rushed to the hospital with all those convulsions she's having while watching me]

[My ice-cream-stained notes have writer Jim Kelly referring to his new copy of Being Gardner Dozois]

You have to buy the book to sell a story to Asimov's —

[Editor Gardner Dozois is just, well, being himself]

— Buy the book or have sex with me, you have a choice ...

[Leering at panelist Judith Berman] About Judith, you draw your own conclusions.

[Writer John Kessel is wistful for a future that wasn't]

When I was 13, I couldn't wait to grow up, because I knew I'd have my own rocket belt. Now, I know I'll never have my own rocket belt.

[Dozois points ahead]

In the June Asimov's, read "Lobsters" by a new Scottish writer, Charles Stross. That's where the future is going in science fiction.

[Kelly concurs]

— That one kicks butt!

[Later, Kelly avers the future's still hot]

I've heard you say, Gardner, that the way to sell a new story to Asimov's is to write a rigorously extrapolated near future story.

[While Kessel looks back a bit]

... Bruce [*Sterling*] stopped writing the stuff he was writing back then, and started writing the more complex, interesting stuff he's writing now, about the time he had children ... He doesn't want his children to grow up in his old horribly dystopic cyberpunk world.

[To Kelly, we're at a crossroads]

We're in this moment that always happens at the turn of a century, when we're trying to decide what we should carry forward and what we should leave behind.

[A Berman article in David Hartwell's stellar sheet The New York Review of Science Fiction started this whole discussion, and he says there's more to come]

I'm about to publish a reply by Paul Kincaid saying, Oh, that's *American* science fiction ... The interesting British writers like Iain M. Banks have written much more about a far future, more optimistic works.

[F&SF editor Van Gelder recalls the Golden Age]

I often have someone telling me, Oh yes, science fiction was really great 25 years ago — and every time I know that I'm hearing about whatever he was reading when he was 13.

[The panel on how the newcoming Campbell Award nominees broke into the field is rife with tales of blood, sweat, and typing, as from writer Kristine C. Smith (who SPOILER WARNING will win the award Sunday night)]

It took me 6 years to finish the first one. That's a lot of evenings and weekends when your friends are out at the movie theater enjoying themselves and you're home staring at the computer screen.

[In a way, Thomas Harlan still lives in The Shadow of Ararat]

I went a decade thinking about this book, Oh, it would be nice to write a book. And then I got into a writer's circle and it was, Oh, what have you got? Show us. And you have to produce ... As I believe Fred Pohl said, just four pages a day every day will get a lot of books out.

[Writer Jo Walton notes that Roger Zelazny claimed he wrote a thousand words a day, even at Worldcon ...]

It's a lovely idea, but I can't do that. I do nothing for awhile, and then 20,000 words in 1 day.

[For writer Douglas Smith, naming the hard part is easy]

The hard part is getting what I call mindspace for writing. There's too much going on in your head about other things.

[At last, the big moment: guileless fan Janice Gelb (friends, we made up later; it seems Gardner never suspected) intros the so-called Liars' Panel]

... The title of this panel has been changed several times over the preceding weeks ... What has *not* been known until this minute is that the TRUE title of this panel has never changed. It is "The Secret Roast of Gardner Dozois!"

... Another task for the committee was to get a rubber mallet, and I'll use it any time Gardner interrupts —

[Gardner interrupts, with a fiendish and of course quite dirty laugh]

— You think rubber can stop me?!!

[My notes grow confused at this point, but I seem to remember a titanic struggle erupting on the dais; eventually a wrist emerges from the fray bearing Dozois's microphone and hands it to doughty protocyberpunk writer Pat Cadigan; Dozois's unamplified yet still stentorian bellow lifts from the heaving pile]

You think *that's* going to stop me? Hah hah ha—

[Cadigan bonks Dozois with the microphone, and an indecent order is restored]

[Writer George R. R. Martin recalls when he didn't have winter in his bones]

I first met Gardner Dozois in 1971 at Disclave. He was greeting people at registration with a red jelly bean up his nose.

"Gee," I said, "most people put those in their mouths."

He blew it out into his hand and said, "Be my guest!"

[Wearing a fetching full skirt that turns out to be adorned with little Robot Man comix figures, writer Connie Willis, in her usual sublime comic form, explains that the usual purpose of a roast is to embarrass the recipient, but]

You can't embarrass Gardner ... He takes a *[my notes seem to say whale's, which can't be right, can it?]* penis with him everywhere. Including to church ... He likes to shout out the word "smegma" everywhere ...

[Now, in a perfect tribute to the band camp girl from American Pie, her reminiscences take on a singsong tone]

Okay. This *one* time, at Worldcon? ... And this *other* time, at Worldcon? ...

[Writer Michael Swanwick begins his set in short order]

This won't take long. I'm going to talk about Gardner's virtues.

[Somewhere in here, a musical interlude: after each stanza by a quartet of floozies composed of some of the finest female writers and editors of our generation, crooning soft pleas for editorial intercession at Dozois (stuff like "Won't you help / Improve our text,") writer Walter Jon Williams thrusts his head forward and sings the response (did I mention this was all to the tune of "Barnacle Bill the Sailor"?) in a raspy, perfectly salacious baritone snarl]

"To hell with your text / We'll have some sex / Said Gardner Dozois / the Editor."
[or, later]

"Pull down your pants / We'll have romance / Said Gardner Dozois / the Editor."

[Writer Joe Haldeman knows where all the jelly beans are buried]

Gardner is this generation's John W. Campbell. We know that Campbell smoked unfiltered Camels in this little ivory holder. That's about the only vice Gardner doesn't have ...

Gardner bought an artificial vagina once for Jack Dann, who had claimed to be the world champion's masturbator ... But Jack

wouldn't demonstrate it, chicken that he was. So he took it home.

[Writer Ellen Klages makes the obligatory proffer of a hardwarming er heartwarming gift]

We bought Gardner an artificial penis warmer. *[Waves this big fuzzy sock-like thing around.]* And if you wash it in hot water, it'll shrink to Gardner's size.

[My notes of Melinda Snodgrass's remarks are somewhat blurred by tears-of-laughter stains, but two remain legible]

Gardner offered to stir my coffee with his knob. And Susan *[Casper, Gardner's poor wife]* said, "I want to see you do that!" ... You see, it was this party, and there was this doorknob Gardner put down his pants ... I tried, but I could never find it.

[Pat Cadigan invokes the true potency of narrative]

Whenever you wake up from a story like that, your goldfish is pregnant.

... He taught me that it wasn't pronounced ANE-uh-log.

[Finally, Gardner Dozois gets his chance to make a serious, heartfelt response]

George says that I had a red jelly bean up my nose. No, I was actively hemorrhaging.

[Naturally, this segment of the evening concludes with Gardner's demonstrating the red jelly bean trick to hundreds of rapt attendees. Scores of whom may have been injured fleeing the front rows when he blew it out at them ...]

[In the sky tunnel to the Marriott, Ohio fan LondaKay Beyer rests with me when no one else will]

I'm a volunteer ... When no one shows up for an artist or writer at a kaffeeklatsch, I sit with them ... It's always nice, because I like to meet new people.

[Writer Greg Bear says it for all of us at his guest of honor speech]

This con has been, as usual, full of far too many interesting people to talk to.

[Bear recalls his first SF Worldcon: Baycon, in Oakland, California, 1968]

I was 16. And I went into the lobby, and there was Lin Carter on a circular couch, holding forth ... Ray Bradbury ... John Brunner ...

We were creating spies, that went out and infiltrated and changed the course of the world.

[Not necessarily very Bondish spies]

Very few fans are cool.

[Though one guy comes from Russia with love]

Everytime Gorbachev comes to Los Angeles, he wants to meet Ray Bradbury.

[Bear talks simply and movingly about the home office of his recently deceased friend and father-in-law, writer Poul Anderson]

It was a very pleasant, small study — out of which sprang starships! And aliens. And elves.

[Friday night at the Marriott, a guy rushes into our elevator just before the doors close, and breathlessly announces what we realize are some results of the Retro Hugos (for best novel, movie, and short story respectively) to his close-packed audience]

A Heinlein three-fer!

Farmer in the Sky, *Destination Moon*, and "The Man Who Sold the Moon"!

[In the hall outside the SFWA party, editor John Douglas sums up new flick The Musketeer, featuring fight scenes choreographed by a hot new Chinese martial arts expert]

It's kind of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Musketeer*.

[Writer/fan/friend Fred Lerner drily satirizes con-going ribbons with his own nifty cream-colored number]

THIRD PRIZE Vermont Bicentennial Milking Contest Winner 1977

[In the fanzine lounge, longtime fan Art Widner recently got the galleys of White Mars by noted physicist Roger Penrose and SF vet Brian Aldiss; but]

It was terrible. It was like Penrose wrote the literary parts and Aldiss wrote the science stuff.

[As Saturday morning begins, convention newspaper The Kessel Run runs a gentle reminder to overenthusiastic congoers]

Remember the fannish rule about getting at least two real meals and six hours of sleep a day (and no, you cannot reverse those).

[Near registration, friend Marlin May's friend Vicki Smith discusses Blade Runner]

I prefer the director's cut — well, actually, I've seen three director's cuts — the one with the 8-second unicorn scene. That ties it all together.

[I recall another Ridley Scott unicorn tribute] — Kind of a homage to Legend?

[Sean McMullen delivers a great talk on Writing Action Scenes that's really more about the history of armor and arms, from a medieval German ms. called the Manessa Codex up to quite recently]

The last tournament with knights in armor under royal patronage was held in England in 1906.

... You need a heavy helmet, full stop. Because you need the inertia of the weight. Because the inertia of the sword can be as dangerous as the edge ... People talk about the mighty sword of Conan. It must have been the mighty armor of Conan as well.

... I think the statistic is one in three U. S. Marines shat themselves going into battle ... It's not necessarily fear ... just everything the body has is going instead into heart and arms and especially eyes.

[McMullen answers an audience question about whether the head-to-face butt we see so much in movies nowadays has any use in a real fight]

Oh yes. The top of your head doesn't have any nerve endings, but the bridge of your nose does.

[Fan and friend Marian Walke, on an earlier panel re the works of noted SF satirist William Tenn]

William Tenn was there, sitting in the first row. And he said, "Too few men is it given the privilege of attending your own wake."

[In the panel on Iain M. Banks's Culture: Utopia or Dystopia, NESFAn Mark Olson stakes out his position early]

I consider his work among the most dystopian stuff around. I find the Culture profoundly depressing ... Basically, in the Culture, the people are pets. The Minds, whatever they are doing, have achieved the Vingean Singularity. We cannot possibly imagine what their internal life is like.

[Writer Derryl Murphy is of another mind]

My take on how the Minds think of humans is less as pets and more as children who are never going to grow up. I love my dog, but I wouldn't sacrifice my life for him. Yet although I hate to give endings away, that sacrifice is made by a Mind in his most recent novel, *Look to Windward*.

[U. K. fan Andrew Adams has intoxicating inside info]

Having debated this on many drunken evenings with Iain: Iain was drunk, I was not because I don't drink, so I can remember the conversations ... Until *Excession*, he had concentrated on characters who were not part of the mainstream of the Culture and its so-called perfect Minds ... It's in *Excession* that you first get a hint that the Minds are not perhaps these perfect, omnipresent creatures.

[Olson has a great theory about those names]

In *Excession*, the Minds were revealed as just like us — in fact, not remotely even as bright as the brightest of us.

... I think Banks is spiritually still a fan. Fans can't resist playing around. His ship names are a perfect case in point. As much fun as they are, they break the frame.

[For Adams, all writing is politics]

The Culture in my view was developed in many ways as a reaction to the American idea of right-wing, militaristic dictatorships' becoming the core of a galactic empire ... In British terms, Banks is personally moderately left-wing. In American terms, rabidly left-wing.

He worked to create a socialist empire, not a right-wing empire ... When asked if he would like to *live* in the Culture, the answer is always yes.

[Olson demurs]

A lot of American galactic empires are not so much right-wing dictatorships as medieval monarchies scaled up to absurdity.

[Writer Tim Esaias adds some native guidance]

Iain Banks and Ken McLeod — they live on opposite ends of the Firth of Forth Bridge — one of the most dramatic engineering constructions in the world. This had to have an effect on the engineering work in their books. And Iain's end has this huge shipyard. And some of those British ships have very silly names. The *Irresolute* ... Or how'd you like to serve on a ship named the *Terrible*?

[In the dealer's room, bookseller Art Henderson is still mad about the tiny type on people's name badges]

I always say, we don't keep reinventing the wheel. We keep *losing* the wheel, and dragging around on skids.

[In the panel on How to Review a Book or Movie, as one of the panelists my notes are again scanty, especially since Algis Budrys and Michael Dirda ditched us, leaving Daniel Kimmel, Janice Eisen, Lisa DuMond, and me to supply all the brilliance; but I do recall pro reviewer Kimmel's saying]

The difference between reviews and criticism is that criticism is for people who have already seen the movie.

[In the Crossing Genres panel, Lillian Stewart Carl does it all]

I write fantasy and mystery and romance and science fiction — often all in the same book.

[Robert J. Sawyer has done the math]

I was lucky enough to earn one year the Arthur Ellis Award for best Canadian mystery short story and the Aurora Award

for best science fiction short story — that was “Just Like Old Times” for Mike Resnick’s *Dinosaur Fantastic*.

... When you write cross-genre, you’d think the goal was to get the union set of people who read science fiction and those who read mystery. What I got was the intersection set ... It’s at least semi-true that crossing genres means smaller sales.

[For Kristine C. Smith, some things remain a mystery]

I’ll never forget the Amazon review of my *Code of Conduct*, which is science fiction and mystery. It complained there were all these details and these mysteries that were meant to mislead the reader!

[Writer Catherine Asaro says money talks]

The only way to avoid having your book categorized in the bookstore is to have your publisher pay thousands of dollars to have your book on the end of the aisles, like Tom Clancy or J. K. Rowling.

[Asaro shows off the whole series of covers for her first novel, Primary Inversion, which after many printings now has strongly romance-oriented visuals]

They started me out as literary SF, which is probably the smallest market there is — although the most prestigious.

[Sawyer tells a new one on me]

The first SF joke I ever heard was “Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy builds new girl.”

[In the hall, is NESFAn Claire Anderson skewering my panel selection?]

The SF Romance panel had at least 50% men — they weren’t afraid to go.

[At the con’s favorite Italian place, Maggiano’s, writer/friend Jim Stevens-Arce serves up a story about his friend who was a production manager at a Puerto Rico ad agency (I think)]

My friend never learned much English. I remember him on the phone to an American client, trying to get across the concept of “the day after tomorrow” when he couldn’t

remember the words. He kept gesturing at the phone, swooping his hands forward and saying, “No, no, not tomorrow. Tomooooorrrrow! Tomooooorrrrow!”

[Had a lot of fun as a panelist on the SF version of The Match Game, although mostly what I remember afterwards is that the British contestants got fixated on the word “lunchbox,” apparently referring to the male genitalia ... Anyway, afterward, when I congratulate MC Kevin Standlee with my usual adroit grace, he thinks he’s flattered]

Uh, nobody’s ever called me “slick and oily” as a compliment before.

[At Sunday brunch, fan/friend Bonnie-Ann Black is curious about my weird drinking habits]
No juice at all?

[I get serious, for once]

— It doesn’t agree with me.

[Which is a mistake when Bonnie-Ann’s around]
— But that’s true of so many people!

[So I try to keep up]

— Yes, and when they don’t, I make absolutely sure to —

[Until our friend Mary-Ann Johanson administers the coup de brunch]

— Quote them maliciously?

[Later, I greet Leah Zeldes Smith and Dick Smith in the hall with delight]

Hey, I hadn’t seen you guys. You’re here!

[Leah points out drily]

— It’s less surprising that we’re here than that you are.

[Dan Kimmel mongers a good rumor]

Say that I heard around the convention that Michael A. Burstein should be the Hugo Administrator for Boston in 2004. That way, he can’t be nominated himself ...

[I wait in the hall for the fanzine lounge's noon opening so I can help collate WOOF, not that I've got anything to contribute; nor does fan and fellow hall loafer Michael Dobson, lately]

I published some fanzines years ago, but haven't done any since.

However, in my last issue, in 1971, I promised to have my next issue out by the Minnesota in 73 Worldcon. And since that hasn't happened yet in *this* universe ...

[At the panel on Writing for the Screen, Isaac Szpindel calibrates the most important media metric]

One hundred twenty pages of script makes about an hour of screen time.

[Steve Sawicki talks process]

Once you finish a novel, it goes to the publisher and the editor kind of cleans it up a bit. With a screenplay, you hand it over and it goes somewhere and undergoes this, this —

[Melinda Snodgrass puts it delicately]

— One of my producer friends referred to the process as "a series of suggestions."

[Snodgrass reminds us: show, don't say]

You see novelists sometimes who try to write screenplays, and it's, "He looks at her and we know that he's thinking back to the death of his mother, who —"

I want to *see* the actor who can play that.

[A woman in audience gets practical]

How do you get an agent?

[Zicree begins with the basics]

— Well, first, of course, you have to sleep with them.

[Snodgrass, who as former senior writer on Star Trek: The Next Generation has actually seen the elephant, tells us what showbiz success is like]

A wise old producer once told me, "The sexiest word in Hollywood is 'No.'" If you have something truly great, say no I won't do that, no you can't see that yet ... They will come after you —

[Next to me, Jim Stevens-Arce has been stepped on by that elephant, and murmurs]

— But then eventually, you say yes. And they drop you.

[Marc Zicree reveals the age gap]

The higher you rise, the older you can be. They want to hire young writers, especially single young writers, who have no life. And they can work them to death, and they'll be grateful. They will squeeze them like, like — like something you can squeeze.

[After I leave, Jim Stevens-Arce tells me Zicree quoted a choice quip from Michael Cassut, about the perfect studio pitchline]

"He's the Pope. She's a chimp. They're cops!"

[In the panel on The Phlogiston Belt: Changing Science and the Hard SF Writer, editor Stanley Schmidt begins at his beginning]

One of the first thing I did as editor of *Analog* was buy a big story from Bob Buckley, involving life in the clouds of Venus. Right about that time, we started to get lots of data back from U.S. and Russian space probes about what Venus was really like. And so about every week or so I'd get a big brown envelope from Bob Buckley containing another set of replacement pages ...

[Writer Jack McDevitt has a flash]

For those who didn't get the news last week, it now appears that light-speed is made of rubber.

[Writer Stephen Baxter gives an overview]

The hole in most people's predictive power is not thinking it through to the end. Someone two centuries ago might have imagined a car, but probably not what happens when everyone has a car — and you get traffic jams, and fast food.

Like when Larry *[Niven]* wrote a story about when everybody has teleportation, he thought it through and came up with the idea of a movable riot: the flash crowd ...

My book *The Time Ships* is about what happens when everyone has a time machine.

[McDevitt reminds us even the greats fall short]

H. G. Wells had a story about a fighting flying machine, but it threw spears.

[Speaking of stuff that needs updating, star SF writer Larry Niven has a general idea]

What needs updating in my work are general things. Like the solar system. We're getting wild new ideas about how the solar system is made up.

[Niven fires up a helluva literary allusion]

Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso: the first science fiction trilogy. The science Dante dealt with was the queen science of his day.

[In the dealer's room, writer Jack Chalker responds when I recall his photograph in Patti Perret's 1984's classic The Faces of Science Fiction]

That little kid playing in the sandpile there is running around the convention now, and he's 6 foot 4. My son David ...

If you have a copy of that book, look at me and my dog, and Bob Tucker and his dog. Then tell me again that every dog and his owner look alike.

[One of the con's most interesting panels, About the Rediscovery Award, features Rosana Linebarger Hart — recognize the name?]

I'm one of Cordwainer Smith's daughters. About a year ago, I finished some shopping on Amazon and thought I'd see what people said about my father, so I looked up the comments on his books.

One said he'd learned to read in order to read Cordwainer Smith. Another said he'd cried the day he learned Cordwainer Smith died ... I couldn't sleep that night. The next day I started a Web site: www.cordwainersmith.com.

[Grandmaster Robert Silverberg speaks of the award's origins and deliberations]

Sometimes Writer X or Y is still remembered by name, but no one's reading the books. We hope to remedy that.

... I did of course propose myself as first winner, but Edelman beat me over the head with Gardner.

[Gardner Dozois distills Smith's essential gift]

Cordwainer Smith helped us to understand that the future would *not* be like the present — not just us in funny chrome hats.

[James Patrick Kelly has his own initial candidate]

Cordwainer Smith should be the first one to be rediscovered. I teach at Clarion sometimes, and I tell them people they should read and when I come to Cordwainer Smith, they say, "Oh, yeah, the guy with the *name*" ... He was perhaps the ultimate far-future writer.

[Remember, Dozois remains ever a fan at heart]

One reason to go to the Web site is to see a collection of extraordinary pictures I'd never seen before. Including a really cool photo of the cat on whom the cat-person C'mell is based.

[Silverberg recalls the man's early impact]

After seven or eight Cordwainer Smith stories had appeared, I suggested that he was a time traveler stranded in the 20th century. And that he didn't bother to explain the background to the stories because it was all fresh and clear to him.

[Even for writer and NESFAn Tony Lewis, who knows his way around Alpha Ralpa Boulevard, Smith can be a demanding read]

In order to understand *this* story, you have to know about this *other* story that he's going to write 5 years from now ...

[Self-described "Republican political operative" Ralph Benko, an award trustee, gives us a surprising perspective]

If politics had taken a slightly different turn — if Senator Taft had beaten Truman — Cordwainer Smith would probably have been U. S. Secretary of State ... He was Taft's chief international affairs advisor ... Smith was definitely a man of the right.

... Cordwainer Smith was the author of the first solar sail ship story: "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul." It will be part of the payload, along with Arthur C. Clarke's "Wind from the Sun," of Cosmos I, the first real such spacecraft, now being built by The Planetary Society.

[Daughter Rosana had a challenging childhood, parented by that mind]

I remember going to Mexico in 1962 when I was 10 and learning more about the tortures the Spaniards had inflicted on the Mexicans than most kids would have ... I've come to appreciate the enormous amount of information that was dumped on me.

I'm not a fan, you know. It's the waters the fish swims in ...

[In the hall, California fan Tom Becker talks about helping fans shape up]

Yes, the walk this morning went great. The weather was just perfect, and we went down to Independence Hall; some of that area is quite nice. About 40 people showed up.

Which was quite surprising, because, after all *[pauses and looks and me significantly]*, no one expects the fannish in condition.

[But Mark Mandel just missed that walk]

I got to bed last night about 8:00 this morning.

[When I finally find the room for the panel on History and Fantasy, it's hugely overcrowded and I get wedged in a corner on the floor behind people standing, can't actually see the speakers; so I think it's Esther Friesner who remarks]

I find a very good filter is, I read what I've written and if it's boring, I'm bored.

[Incredibly popular writer Lois McMaster Bujold shares a worldbuilding tip]

One of the things about magic in your fantasy world is that it should make a difference ... and that the story should explore the consequences of that difference.

[But be careful]

Fans will write gleeful letters pointing out every little error. You almost think about putting some in on purpose.

[In the pre-Hugo Reception, Evelyn Leeper seems to think some guy named Langford already has the rocket in his pocket, and thus determines to keep her invitation to the event]

Fan writers should keep this, because it's the only souvenir we're gonna get.

[Flashed on the screen during the Hugo Awards, as Connie Willis, in what's now a firmly established Hugo tradition, launches yet another digression from announcing the Best Short Story award while anguished candidates writhe in the audience]

CONNIE WILLIS KNOWS WE'RE AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

[Somewhere in here, not-very-hopefuls Leeper, Glycer, Silver, and Devney lose the Best Fan Writer Hugo to David Langford, the Eternal Champion]

[Greg Bear announces the Best Novel winner]

This is the big one. This is the one I've never won.

[After a bit featuring her impression of a hip-hop singer named Rapmaster Toast, Toastmistress Esther Friesner admonishes the audience]

... And now, let's never speak of this again.

[Sean McMullen drops a few hints about SF's Aussie Mystery Man]

I am quite possibly the only person in this auditorium who's ever seen Greg Egan ... He's lean, has a crew cut — he's shorter than me.

[Waiting for the Hugo party elevator, SMOF Joe Siclari talks about the house he and Edie Stern have moved into in New York state]

We're just calling it FanHi Hall.

[At the Hugo Losers' party, Melinda Snodgrass picks out a future winner]

The young writer to watch in this room is standing over there in the dark suit and blueberry shirt. His name is Daniel Abraham. He's in my writing group in New Mexico, is a dear friend of mine, and has just sold a bunch of stories to Gardner for Asimov's.

[You meet the most interesting people at these parties: like fan Marilee J. Layman]

I run a group home for mentally ill cats. No, really. Here *[pulls out digital camera]*, this is Smudge ... and Spirit ... and Giorgio.

Oh, if you want to know about my friend Sue Mason, search on the Web for "freshly shagged milkmaid."

[At the Boston party, fan Taras Wolansky talks about his con reporting; hope he won't be embarrassed if I put this right in]

But if something embarrassing happens, Evelyn Leeper probably won't include it in her con report. I put it right in!

[Evelyn Leeper boasts a cool button]

Raseffarian

[Janice Gelb fears the narrowness of the Marriott's party-floor hallways ... especially considering the size of many SF fans]

Stephen Boucher says he's surprised we haven't had to use the jaws of life where two fans tried to pass each other in this corridor.

[Del Rey Online Writer's Groupie Kathleen Ward must be a Warren Zevon fan]

The big quote from this con: "I'll sleep when I'm dead."

[In some labyrinthine hallway, well-known California fan Tom Whitmore talks about next year's Worldcon in Con Jose, and why people work hard at it]

You help run a con for the fun of it, not the glory. For instance, how many average non-conrunner fans can name any Worldcon chairs?

[I vaguely agree]

— Know what you mean. Well, for instance, who's the chairperson of *your* Worldcon next year?

[Whitmore regards this reporter for a moment, searching for irony, but no, the cluelessness really is that capacious]

— Well, actually, I am.

[At the NESFA sales table, Press Czar Tony Lewis opens another front on the agewar]

At the Kansas City bid table, I noticed something about their list of previous KC

cons, and asked the young guy there, "Why don't you have MidAmericon on your list?"

He said, "Oh, that was 1976! Almost anyone who might have been there is dead."

I looked at Bob Silverberg, and he said, "Well, not quite."

[Writer Alexei Panshin's son — I think his name is Adam, but damn those badge names are miniscule — visits the NESFA table and talks about Life with Father, who hasn't published fiction in years, but]

He's been writing song lyrics, he's working on a Web site — www.panshin.com — and he's feeling out other options ... He's out there, he's alive.

Yes, he still gets lots of questions about the Anthony Villiers stories. In fact, that's our license plate, Pennsylvania plates: THURB.

[NESFAn Michael Benveniste is looking forward to the next years of kamikaze committee work preparing for the Boston Worldcon in 2004 — or is he?]

My wife is the con chairperson. I just inherited 47 in-laws.

[Believe it's also Benveniste who, chatting with Lois McMaster Bujold, notes with pride that the Boston in 2004 committee boasts no less than six Worldcon chairs — whereupon Bujold goes all Minnesota on his ass]

Slow learners, are they?

[Funny what disgusting sins people will admit to a friendly face behind a dealer's table; right, British fan and fantasy writer Jo Walton?]

I stole Zenna Henderson's *The Anything Box* from my local library when I was 12 ... I've been making up for it ever since, though. I give old review copies to my local branch.

[Don't make the mistake of asking bibliobabe Becky Henderson of Henderson's Books, even on Monday afternoon, "Is it late enough to haggle?"]

We buy good books and price them fairly. If we wanted to haggle, we'd put question marks after the price tags.

[Great fanzine writer (I mean it: see Emerald City at www.emcit.com) Cheryl Morgan is high on China Mieville's recent bigly-buzzed fantasy, Perdido Street Station]

The campaign to SEND A HUGO TO CHINA begins here!

[At the panel on The Field Since World War II, Gardner Dozois has heard it before]

Do we really need the "kids don't read" argument after Harry Potter?

[Apparently Greg Bear still thinks so]

Do you know why Johnny can't read? His parents can't read.

[Humorous fantasy writer Esther Friesner unpacks the pecking order]

You get that nasty human nature, where the mainstream reader says, "I wouldn't read science fiction." And the hard science fiction reader says, "At least I don't read *fantasy*." And the fantasy reader says, "At least I don't read *humorous fantasy*" ... And they all go out and beat up on the media types.

[At the Closing Ceremonies, totally tired MilPhil chair Tod Dashoff abases himself before us]

All the people who worked so hard on this: if you had a good time, it's due to them. If you had a bad time, it's my fault.

[Tom Whitmore announces the stellar lineup of the 2002 Worldcon — do you know the way to San Jose?]

Our Guests of Honor Vernor Vinge ... David Cherry ... John and Bjo Trimble ... Tad Williams as Toastmaster ... and Ferdinand Feghoot as our Imaginary Guest of Honor.

[On a commuter train (we're visiting friends in Bryn Mawr), persistent publisher Darrel Benvenuto pulls flyers out of his 100-lb pack, astonished Michael and I could care less about the gaming milieu that's all the world to him]

You know, Paul Kidd — the Australian author? He's a TSR guy? We publish him? Vision Books?

[Back at Maggiano's for lunch the day after the con (Tuesday 9/4), fellow leftover Walter Jon Williams talks about writer Fred Saberhagen]

His output has been all over the map, which makes it hard to build a career. He has the Berserker stuff most people know about, and horror like *The Holmes-Dracula*

File. But then there's *The Veils of Azlaroc* — one of the top 10 *weirdest* SF novels ever written.

[After his friend George R. R. Martin's Hugo loss for Best Novel this weekend to J. K. Rowling, Williams plans his own special kind of consolation]

George is the one who came up to me on Hugo night last year and informed me that I'd lost the Hugo *[for the novelette "Argonautica"]* by one vote. And that was the year I'd missed the deadline for sending in my vote ...

George reminds me of this from time to time. So whenever I see George for the next 20 years, I'll be whispering, "Harry Potter!"

[Williams recalls the bad old days]

I was once so poor, I mooched off Howard Waldrop.

[After he leaves us, Williams joins a table with the ubiquitous Gardner Dozois and others; I go over, get everyone's attention, look from Williams to Dozois, and burst into raspy melody]

"I've got a hunch / You're paying for lunch / Says Gardner Dozois / The Editor."

Favorite Actual Book Title of the Month (No, Really)

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Numerology

Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

*[From editor **Gordon Van Gelder**, reaction to my comment that he was too modest in saying NESFA will do the collected William Tenn better than Gordon could've]*

Nope, not too modest. Just realistic. St. Martin's wouldn't have let me publish that long a book — I would have had to keep it to 288 pages or so.

[From fan **Leah Zeldes Smith**, a comment about making the Fancyclopedia widely available in the Palm format she uses]

Alas, Dick Eney has not answered my request for permission to do so. However, anyone can download and convert it for their own use -- you can find the link via www.fanac.org.

Bob, if you would like to promote fannish exchange, you should include in your lettercol the addresses of your correspondents, so that others may send them their zines. — Leah Zeldes Smith, 410 W. Willow Road, Prospect Heights, IL 60070-1250.

[Leah, I'm shy about doing that, both because of space and because this is an e-zine, and somehow it feels more intrusive to hand out someone's e-mail address without their specific permission]

[From fan **Gary L. Dryfoos**, a fond wish anent Priscilla Olson's poetic little bit from an old science text, "In isolated desert streams, fish tend to lose their pelvic fins"]

That's the kind of thing that makes you miss Asimov, isn't it? He'd take that hint over a Friday night dinner, and by the time the Saturday banquet came along, he'd have five verses (plus a chorus and two pairs of pants) on the subject, all in perfect Gilbert & Sullivan meter sung in that light tenor; it'd be damn funny; and you'd learn more about fish anatomy and evolution from the song than from your salmon entree.

Time marches on, but it steps on so many of the good things, doesn't it?

[From fellow Fan Writer Hugo loser **Evelyn C. Leeper**, a plan (sent before Worldcon) that boded ill for Dave Langford's over-accepting friend Martin Hoare]

See you in Philly. We can mug Martin for the rocket. :-)

[From Ontario fan **Murray Moore**, some delightful onomastic burble]

You report fan rich tan told you something at Corflu ... surely you refer to fan wealthy brown.

Further on names: Moshe Feder says people used to have trouble with his first name. Maybe Moshe should switch to Milton, his middle name. And Cy Chauvin's first name being Cyrus never occurred to me. (Obviously I had too much time on my hands, sitting behind the Torcon 3 table last Sunday during a comics/anime/media SF convention. I resisted paying big bucks for a William Shatner autograph and instead read the Torcon 3 membership list. I saw your name, Bob. Excellent!

In the most recent *Devniad* I reported my anomalous behaviour of having paid full hard cover price for *Think Like A Dinosaur*. My recent reading is back to typical: *Seven*, a \$2.95-when-new John D. MacDonald Fawcett Gold Medal pb, and *Nebula Awards 28*, first ed. hardcover, as new, remaindered at 99 cents.

[From fan **Vicki Rosenzweig**, more on a neat John Clute phrase from Readercon]

This is a classics term — a "hapax legomenon" is a word that only appears once in the surviving Greek (or other language) literature, making translation somewhat problematic. Not much of an issue with Plato, but a real problem for Homer.

I just ran across a Web site that commented that modern Bible translators have an advantage of King James's committee: we've found more ancient Greek and Hebrew texts, so have a better idea of what some words meant.

[From Murray Moore's provincemate **Lloyd Penney**, much interesting stuff as usual — great to finally meet you and Yvonne at MilPhil, Lloyd!]

... I am also a last-minute addition to one [Worldcon] panel, on Modern Fanzine Fandom. Steve Stiles asked me to be on it ... I offered my services to Milly Philly for

panels, but was ignored, so I hope this single panel makes up for it. For once, I will be able to roam the convention, hit a few panels and take it in at my leisure, instead of rushing about to run bid parties or sit at bid tables. This weekend is ours. I intend to take in as much fanzine programming as I can handle.

Mention of Hawaiian shirts ... I will be wearing my tackiest/loudest shirts at the Worldcon, if only to blend in with a good portion of the population, and offset all those who Must Wear Black all the time. S.M. Stirling comes immediately to mind ... David Hartwell has commented favorably on my fashion sense, or lack thereof, and on Yvonne's willingness to continue to make those shirts for me. I blame John Varley, myself ...

Janice Gelb might like to know that many of the engineers that NASA hired in the 60s were Canadians originally from the A.V. Roe Company outside of Toronto. When A.V. Roe created the Avro Arrow back then, it was the best jet fighter the Allied countries had, and the United States couldn't handle that. So, John Kennedy put great pressure upon the prime minister of the time, John Diefenbaker, to cancel the Arrow project, which he did. There are some amazing stories that came out of this part of Canadian history, including an excellent TV movie starring Dan Ackroyd. In fact, one story will be resolved this fall when a cornfield will be dug up to see if the last remaining Arrow has been hidden beneath its surface.

... I think I would enjoy Readercon, but only for a while. I am a literate fan, but I am also a social fan, and will go to a con for friends rather than the More-Literate-Than-Thou people, those who can recite from one or thousands of SF novels they've stored in what I suspect is a relatively empty head. So many books, so little time, so I spend that time with friends, and read what I can when I can ...

[From fan and friend **Sharon Foster**, large consolation]

So sorry that you lost the Hugo. Do you think that maybe the voting fans are confused between David Langford's professional work and his amateur work? I know I was confused to see his name in the two different categories.

[Sharon: if only the voting fans would get confused between Dave's work and my work, now, maybe that would help ...]

FlimFan

BARELY DECENT:

American Pie 2

The Musketeer — In a fine fight film, the action scenes are like dialog. They entertain, always: but also establish and enrich character as you catch the emotions in the combatants' eyes. For instance, given yet another cinematic retelling of *The Three Musketeers*, we might enjoy watching young D'Artagnan's countenance clock his cocky progress from untried prodigy to full fighting mastery. In *The Musketeer*, about the zillionth movie made from Alexandre Dumas's 1844 plotboiler, we see none of this. Because dim lighting and big floppy hats must hide everybody's faces as they duel, so we won't notice they're all Chinese stuntmen ... Importing Hong Kong fight choreographer Xix-Xin Xiong certainly brings a new look for Musketeer movies. The action here is so fast we can't quite keep up, providing a nice kinetic sizzle. But it feels curiously soulless too; again, maybe we'd take more joy in all the flurrying swordfight stuntsravaganzas with barrels, shutters, ladders if we could see people's faces. There are also stupid fight locations like the round wall of a Rumpelstiltskinian tower, where people cut and riposte while rappelling. (You want to yell at the hero, or, by this point, perhaps the villain: "Cut the ropes! Cut the ropes and it's all over!") ...

On to the acting, such as it is. The always-watchable Tim Roth does what he can with the villainous Febre, establishing his *mala fides* early via kicking a 10-year-old in the face, then committing the swiftest, most offhand double murder of the cinematic year. All without relinquishing his seat on horseback or his evil smirk. Newcomer Justin Chambers plays D'Artagnan like Ethan Hawke with one expression instead of two. Somebody must have told him early on that musketeer boots swagger well, because that's the chief note of his performance: the thud of his feet. Mena Suvari (of *American Beauty* and, more her style, the *American Pie* flicks) plays (badly) Bigfoot's love interest Francesca, another of those liberated Burbank babes Hollywood feels have flourished without remark in all times and cultures. I've loved Stephen Rea (Cardinal Richelieu) and Catherine Deneuve (the Queen) in other rolls, but love turns to pity early here ... The thing is not a complete disaster. Some of the dialog has the right snap, and there are great dark, dirty interiors, and a few beautifully composed shots with the right 1628 feel: a magnificent candlelit banquet, a chaotic chateau kitchen, a golden country road, an untroubled river. But director/ cinematographer Peter Hyams perhaps peaked early, with *2010* (1984), and has been arcing down ever since, from *Timecop* (1995) to *End of Days* (1999) to this ... A remake of *The Count of Monte Cristo* with Guy Pearce, Jim Caviezel, and Richard Harris opens next February, and the previews look striking. Let's hope it does Dumas better.

NAKEDLY BAD:

Jay & Silent Bob Strike Back

Ghosts of Mars

Backchat

**on APA:NESFA #375,
August 2001**

To Tom Endrey

I love your 5-second review of *Planet of the Apes*: "too much thunder and trampolines." To help the apes make those giant leaps, right?

Tom, I can't pretend buying a newer, more powerful PC and jumping onto the Internet and the Web won't cost some money, take time and effort to climb the learning curve, and provide a fair share of aggravation. But an intelligent man with wide-ranging interests like you just *can't* miss out on the Cyber Age, guy! If nothing else —

I almost hate to be the one to tell you this — you'll find that every single person other than you who believes in the Mars Face, ancient astronauts, and other outsider science themes is already *on* the net and has built Web sites you'll just love to tell us all about ...

To Lis Carey

Enjoyed the mini-memoir about your formidable Aunt Alice, who now lives on in all *our* memories too.

Your scathing review of Thomas Fleming's *Duel: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and the Future of America* hit something that's familiar but not always articulated: the biographer's double standard. When my guy does it, it's admirable; when the other guy does it, reprehensible. As you put it: "Hamilton is an adulterer; Burr loves women." This is why I'm a total misanthrope myself.

To Tony Lewis

So NESFA Press is thinking of issuing an omnibus of Cordwainer Smith's (actually Paul Linebarger's) non-SF writings, with *Atomsk*, *Ria*, and *Carola* in one volume. That's exciting, because as you know (you were on the panel with her), at Worldcon, Linebarger's daughter Rosana Hart said *Atomsk* had always been her personal

favorite of her father's writings. Now I won't have to pay \$75 for it on the Internet.

Tony, you were the only news outlet that alerted me to the death of Brazilian fantasist Jorge Amado. Thanks. His *Dona Flor and her Two Husbands* was indeed an interesting novel, and in 1978 made an even better movie — introducing a few score thousand lucky Americans to the unforgettable charms of Sonia Braga. So thanks and goodbye, Jorge.

To Art Henderson

Great to see you (well, Becky, anyway) at two cons recently ... You're right, we simply must pull ourselves away from the mad social whirl and have dinner. Hey, next Boskone the banquet will probably go back to Italian! See you guys (and Chris and Lorna, natch) at the loud table, as in olden days?

Funny you should mention Will Eisner. I just read Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, wherein Eisner is invoked several times. It's a novel that, at its start anyway, is about two 20-year-olds in New York trying to break into the comics business. A quite literary but eminently readable book almost everyone scanning this paragraph will really enjoy.

To Mark Olson

Great to see you, albeit briefly, at Worldcon! And Priscilla for about a fraction of a second ... Her lecture on the Pleistocene, was it? counts as one of the many must-sees I still contrived to miss.

Mostly agree with your assessment of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. Thought it began with wonderful promise, which it almost lived up to by the end. Must admit, though, that I've never seen a dream sequence I like, and this had a long one. Also, not sure the new American gods like TV and Fashion were that well-made. Certainly seemed a lot less vivid and substantial than at least a handful of the old gods — and don't tell me that's because our values have thinned.

To Anna Hillier

About Ellis Island, I seem to recall Tony Lewis wrote about its new ancestor lookup Web site a few months back, if you save your issues. And even if he didn't, bet he can tell you all about it.

Doesn't Hershey's Chocolate World melt in the summer?