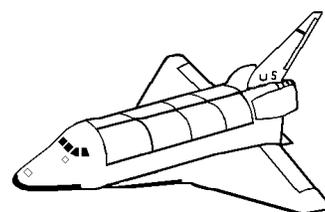


The



# SHUTTLE August 2007

*The Next NASFA Meeting will be 18 August 2007  
at the Regular Time and the New Regular Location*

*Stay Tuned for ConCom Announcements via Email*

## 🔔 Oyez, Oyez 🔔

The next NASFA meeting will be **Saturday 18 August 2007** at the **regular time** (6P) and the **NEW regular location**. Meetings are at the new BookMark location in the Huntington Shopping Center (2 miles south of their old location), at the corner of the Parkway and Meadowbrook Drive — 11220-J South Memorial Parkway.

Watch your email for an announcement of the next Con+Stellation concom meeting.

The August program and After-The-Meeting Meeting are TBD at press time.

The September meeting and ATMM will be replaced by the more-or-less-annual NASFA picnic/cookout — details in next month's *Shuttle*.

## 2008 TAFF Race Opens

The administrators of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund have announced the nominees for the 2008 TAFF race. The winner will travel from North America to the UK to attend Orbital, the 2008 Eastercon. The candidates are Chris Barkley, Linda Deneroff, Chris Garcia, and Christian McGuire.

The ballot form is available on the TAFF web site at <[taff.org.uk/ballots/taff2008.html](http://taff.org.uk/ballots/taff2008.html)>. Ballots will also be distributed at various fannish events. The deadline for voting is midnight PST Saturday 17 November 2007 (that's 8A GMT Sunday 18 November 2007).

Full instructions, including mailing addresses and PayPal information, are available on the ballot. All votes must include a donation to TAFF of not less than \$3 or £2.

## July Minutes

by Steve Sloan, Secretary

The July meeting of the North Alabama Science Fiction Association was called to order on Saturday, July 21, 2007 in the BookMark meeting room at 6:16:58P by President Mary Ortwerth. The crickets only worked when placed on their side.

### OLD BUSINESS

Mike Cothran asked who bought a *Flatland* DVD. The motion to buy it carried last month. We just never decided *who* should buy it. Mike C. was surprised to learn from Steve that the movie is now an hour and a half long. Doug asked if we wanted to delegate a person to buy it. A large group started chanting, "Sam! Sam!" Manda nominated Sam to buy *Flatland*, and Anita seconded. Mike K. nominated Mike C., and Doug seconded. Doug moved to amend the current motion to nominate Mike Cothran instead of Sam Smith. Mike K. seconded. In the vote to change the name from Sam to Mike C., 4 opposed, and 5 were in favor. After that, a vote was held for the motion to tell Mike C. to actually buy *Flatland* for the club. For that vote, only Doug opposed.

Sam went by Sam's Club to look at new chairs to buy for the club. Marie had looked there previously, and Sam confirmed that they have two types of stackable chairs for \$19

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**Deadline for the September 2007 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 31 August 2007.**

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each, one type with thick cushions. We want to prevent FBS (flat butt syndrome). Manda announced that she's voting for butt comfort. Manda then made an official motion that we authorize Sam to buy the butt-comfortable chairs, up to a total of \$200.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS, PART ONE

Pat McAdams is about to move, and he's looking for a job. He's now thinking of Tallahassee instead of here, because he knows one person there offering a job. Anita ordered Sam to give him a job. Sam is willing to offer Pat a job as web master for our club, and he's willing to offer Pat every penny they've ever paid Sam.

The ATMM will be held at Adam and Mia's house.

There were some members who hadn't paid their club dues.

Con Chair elections are coming up soon.

When will the picnic happen? September would be much better than August, but not on the fourth weekend, because September 24<sup>th</sup> is the day of Adam and Mia's Huntsville wedding reception. Doug will need to know the picnic date at least a month in advance, so he can notify the Huntsville Times that there won't be a meeting at BookMark on that date. Should the picnic be held the same day as the meeting? If it's on the same date, then Manda won't have to come up with a program for that month. Unsurprisingly, Manda likes the same date.

Mike C. volunteered to host, so the picnic will be held 9/15 at Mike and Marie's. If you get there at 10A, you're there to help set up. If you get there at noon, you're there to help cook. Arrive at 1P if you just want to eat.

### NEW BUSINESS

Doug moved that we viciously threaten members not present at the meeting, by nominating them for [2008] Con Chair that night. Anita seconded. Sam read the list of members who were not present. Doug moved that we nominate Bruce Butler, Sue Thorn, Jim and Tracy Kennedy, Jack Lundy, and Sunn Hayward for next year's Con Chair. Mike C. reminded us that each nomination requires individual seconds, unless you want to look like you're trying to railroad people. Sam quipped, "Don't you hear the train?"

Anita nominated Doug and Mary for joint Con Chairs, and Manda seconded. The previous nominations didn't get seconded, so they're off the hook for the time being.

### CONVENTION BUSINESS

Doug moved that, regardless of who might become next year's Con Chair, Doug and Mary be authorized to investigate possible guests for next year, up to and including giving invitations, at conventions coming up in the following month, which includes LibertyCon and NASFiC. In the vote, only Manda opposed.

Anita asked about the possibility of asking Jim Butcher. He hasn't been officially asked yet. Doug will delegate Mike K. to ask Jim Butcher via email Real Soon Now.

Note that the authorization for inviting guests runs out before Dragon\*Con. We will discuss extending the authorization at the next meeting.

ReadAssist finally cashed our check. That means Sam can finally close the books from last year's con. The total loss was \$665.82, an Approximation of the Beast.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS, PART TWO

Mike K. had a teaser for an upcoming *Shuttle*. Mike Resnick will be writing an article for the *Shuttle*! Without knowing what he was going to write about, he contacted Mike

K. via email about writing it, wrote the article, and sent it within about four hours of contacting Mike K. about it.

Mike K. has been exchanging emails with the Eaton Collection at U.C. Riverside. They have a partial collection of the *Shuttle*, which they got from Bruce Pelz's estate when he died, and Mike asked if they'd like to have it filled out. Unfortunately, Mike's archives need serious work first. Some time after the next few weeks of madness, he'll be looking for a volunteer to help him organize the *Shuttle* archives. Sunn and Mia volunteered to help. Mike already has electronic archives for the last five to seven years.

Jack announced that the Science Fiction Book Club at the Bailey Cove Public Library will be discussing *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, on the first Thursday in August.

Sam has a new laser printer that can automatically print double-sided, so he can help with printing things for the con.

Sam moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:46:50P.

The program was public relations for monsters, where we tried to come up with ways to improve the public image of various paranormal critters. We couldn't decide whether the "after" picture of Frankenstein's monster looked more like Huey Lewis or Al Franken. The After-the-Meeting Meeting was held at Adam and Mia's house.

## NASFA Calendar

### AUGUST

- 02-05 9<sup>th</sup> NASFiC/TuckerCon/Archon 31 — Collinsville IL (St. Louis area).
- 02 Bailey Cove Library Book Discussion: *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut.
- 03-05 Trinoc\*coN 8 — Raleigh NC.
- 08 BD: Jim Woosley.
- 08 Movie at the Main Library (6P): *The Time Machine* (1960).
- 10-12 ConGlomeration 2007 — Louisville KY.
- 10-12 Armadillocon 29 — Austin TX.
- 12 BD: Sue Thorn.
- 14 BD: Edward Kenny.
- 18\* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at BookMark. Program: TBD. ATMM: TBD.
- 19 BD: Khen Moore.
- 21 BD: Deborah Denton.
- 22 Movie at the Main Library (6P): *Andromeda Strain* (1971).
- 30-03 Nippon 2007 (65<sup>th</sup> Worldcon) — Yokohama Japan.
- 31-02 Mephit Fur Meet — Memphis TN.
- 31-03 Dragon\*Con 2007 — Atlanta GA.

### SEPTEMBER

- 03 BD: David K. Robinson.
- 03 Labor Day.
- 06 Bailey Cove Library Book Discussion: *The Sam Gun Omnibus*, Ben Bova.
- 07-09 DeepSouthCon 45/OutsideCon 20 — Burns TN.
- 09 BD: Mike Cothran.
- 09 Grandparents' Day.
- 11 BD: Ray Pietruszka.
- 12 BD: Pat Butler.
- 13 Rosh Hashanah.
- 14-16 Hub Con XV — Hattisburg MS.
- 15\* NASFA Cookout/Picnic (Replaces Meeting) — 1P at



# Letters of Comment

GCOC-GCOC-GCOC-GCOC-GCOC-GCOC-GCOC

Sheryl Birkhead  
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16 June 2007

Greetings — just a tad late...

I, just a minute ago, found the May ish sitting all forlorn on the floor. So, in case I really did neglect to respond...

Just sent *Pan's Labyrinth* back to Netflix (hmmm — looking at the original title it appears to be *Faun's Labyrinth* — unless faun translates to Pan... now I see why Pan never actually appeared. As far as special effects go, I would love to know how that “bug” was done — but I would not be one of those (and there seem to be quite a few) who would put it on my top 10 list.

I got the latest Nippon PR — so I have the new ballot and need to fill it out (along with the site selection) and get it sent — yeah RSN!!

Ah, I see *Locus* is reporting their award results today. I need to remember to go look at their site and see what's there.

It was nice to find out who bought Harry's (Warner) fanzines, but raises more questions than it answered. I read a possibility that the zines may end up available on line and that would be nice for fandom. I'd be interested to read about what the buyer has to say about the purchase and what his goals for the collection are.

Under the Ursa Major Awards — I see there is a fanzine listed (*Anthrolations*, Sofawolf Press) — I've never heard of the zine or the press. I need to make that another online search.

It sounds as if a convenient meeting location for NASFAn isn't going to show up soon. But, on the good side, you indicate that even an inconvenient location isn't a tremendous roadblock.

I knew there had been a philatelic brouhaha over the Star Wars stamps (going back to never having the likeness of a living person on a stamp). I presume that, since the stamps are now available, that a resolution showed up.

Agh — sorry to be so *very* late.

[To compound your late letter, I apparently misplaced it so now it's running out-of-sequence with your LoC that appeared in our last issue. Sigh. Per IMDB the original title of *Pan's Labyrinth* is *El laberinto del fauno* (literally “The labyrinth of the faun”). Many, but not all, of the translated titles in various countries invoked Pan's name. -ED]

EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC

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30 July 2007

I remember I used to get reminders to download the latest *Shuttle*, and I don't think I get them any more. I guess I needed them... I just plain forgot the June *Shuttle*, and now the July *Shuttle* is here, too. Here's a loc on both of them.

June... birthday celebrations were fun, but low key. I'm at an age where I don't care to attract too much attention to my

birthday, anyway. (So of course, I put it in the NASFA Calendar...)

The 15 geekiest vacations... there must have been a redefinition of the word “geek” when I wasn't looking. I always thought “geek” (and “nerd,” for that matter) had a very derisive and negative connotation, but it seems to have become much more neutral recently. I see Chris Garcia's Computer History Museum is in 15<sup>th</sup> place... got to pull up the geek factor, Chris, or the museum will never hit the top of the list. And, Worldcon's only in 13<sup>th</sup> place? I would have placed it above the Pennsic Wars, to be honest.

All the award news reminds me that the nomination period for this year's Aurora Awards finished up a short time ago, and the administrators report that a final ballot will appear near the end of August. As soon as I find it, I'll pass it along to you. (It's interesting, though, that you were informed of the Sunburst Award finalists, but I never heard anything about it here.)

As usual, it seems, I don't see anything of interest in the new SF shows this coming fall... however, in a short time is the limited four-part *Masters of Science Fiction* on ABC, and that I am looking forward to. I'd be happy to also see those four episodes on a DVD some time.

Hello, to PieEyed... I would imagine that it's not every day a god would take form to converse with a local king. Have you read the “latest” Tolkien book, *The Children of Húrin*? I finally found it in local bookstores, but the price is prohibitive.

My loc... we very much enjoyed the ISDC in Dallas, and found that while the programming came from the local space activists and the National Space Society, the conference was run by local fans in the Dallas area. We did meet Ben Bova, and found that he was the replacement for Larry Niven. We met Dr. Steven Squyers, the chief scientists in charge of the Martian rovers, and he received the NSS's highest award, the Werhner von Braun Award, for his achievements. Met with John Purcell, editor of the new zine *Askance*, traveled about a bit, bought a Kelly Freas print at the conference's art show (proof of its fannishness), and generally saw a lot of interesting things. We worked most of the conference, helping with registration, both on-site and pre-. Yvonne said it was a good conference, but a little dull compared to the previous ISDCs she'd been to. We may be going to the ISDC in Florida in 2009... Yvonne was one of the bidders to bring it to Toronto for 2009, but that was unsuccessful. The Embraer jet was a better jet than I expected, and I would certainly describe the trip as at least more luxurious than most trips I've taken.

July... To be honest, I don't know of many people from my area who are going to Nippon 2007. Those few I do know of are mostly anime fans with the best opportunity to go to Japan and live a little life there. I hope they have a good time, and that it's worth the money.

Many more awards... there's been some discussion online and in other fanzines about the glut of awards, and opinions on how many of them should be cut. Some say all, some say some, and some say they didn't know there was such a dearth of egoboo, and that there should be enough to go around.

PieEyed again... A treasure trove is nice to have, but it does you no good just sitting there looking twinkly and pretty. I suppose that if the locals have some assumptions to make about dragons and their hoards, it does no harm to cater to those assumptions. Also shows that perhaps it's been a while since you've had to deal with another dragon?

Locs... the two major manufacturers of small to medium passenger aircraft in the world are Bombardier of Canada, and Embraer of Brazil. There's a lot of competition between the

two... that's why it was a bit of a surprise to see that when we flew to Dallas, we flew an Embraer with Air Canada.

Done for now. August will be an extremely busy month for me... daytime work assignments, voice auditions, a movie shoot, and the usual evening job. I might even get to enjoy some of our hot summer, but that gets pushed back on the priority list. Take care, and see you next issue.

[The reminders you speak of go out on the NASFA mailing list, to which I think I successfully added your current email address. Yes, "geek" (though not necessarily "nerd") has changed a bit in connotation in the last few years. Partly that may be a recognition that there are many "geeks" among the richest people in the world. Mostly, though, I think it's because many "geeks" have embraced the title, thus removing any sting it may have for them. FYI, I didn't get notified of the Sunburst Awards news — I go actively searching for that kind of thing. It's interesting that you mention the Art Show at ISDC. The one in Huntsville many years ago may have been the first to have an Art Show — at least that's what I vaguely recall being told at the time. I'm sure that the organizers borrowed the panels for it from NASFA and that many NASFAns helped out at the con, er, conference. -ED]

## A Con Trip Considered as Music

In Two Movements,  
with Prelude, Interludes, and Coda

by Mike Kennedy

### PRELUDE (Adagietto)

When Worldcon is outside of North America there can be (and normally is) a North American Interim Science Fiction Convention — colloquially NASFiC. This year Worldcon will be in Japan (for the first time, I might add) and the NASFiC in St. Louis (actually Collinsville IL). The weekends worked out well so that I could go to LibertyCon (one of my perennial favorite conventions) and NASFiC on consecutive weekends, with some additional tourist stuff between and after. Coincidentally, both LibertyCon and the NASFiC were dedicated to the memory of the late beloved Wilson "Bob" Tucker.

### FIRST MOVEMENT (Tempo Commodo)

LibertyCon 20 <libertycon.org> was held 27–29 July 2007 at the Comfort Inn & Suites in East Ridge (Chattanooga area) TN. Headliner guests were Literary GoH Jack McDevitt, Artist GoH Vincent Di Fate, Special Guest Greg Matloff, MC Timothy Zahn, and Special 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Guest David Weber — with many other pros and sf notables in attendance. The final paid attendance was reported to be 387, which apparently didn't count the roughly 30 comped pros, scientists, etc. on programming.

The trip to the big 'Nooga started before noon on Thursday because I was traveling with Sue Thorn (we could pretty much synchronize our schedules for both cons and thus split expenses) and she's on the LibertyCon committee. That put us in Chattanooga by mid afternoon so Sue could start her guest liaison duties (about which more later). I'd normally have driven up Thursday evening or Friday morning, but the early start gave me time for more Killer Cutthroat Spades (about which more later).

Liberty is in the mold of a general-interest sf con, with

some extra emphasis on science programming and a bit more of a literary bent than perhaps the "typical" con. I wish that meant I could tell you I went to loads of programming (and indeed there were several I'd have like to have gone to) but other convention activities got in the way of most of that. In particular I'd like to have seen the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company's <artc.org> audio dramatizations of their *Rory Rammer*, *Space Marshal* serial and *All You Zombies*... (the latter from the story by Heinlein, of course). However, as I was leaving the Art Auction (about which more later) I got waylaid for a Spades game with David Weber, con-chair "Uncle Timmy" Bolgeo, and, well, I forget the other person — and missed the ARTC presentation. (That's not intended as name dropping, but to show how accessible the guests and staff are.) If you're interested in the other fine programming I missed, you can check out the full schedule online at <libertycon.org/lc20programming.pdf>

The aforementioned Art Auction was a big deal at the convention, but more because of the items auctioned for charity (the Special Olympics) than for the pieces from the Art Show — only about five pieces went to auction from the Art Show itself. The Auction ran well over its allotted time (and still some items spilled over to the Closing Ceremony) because of the large number of charity pieces — dominated by books (about which more later) and related items. I hear that the final total raised was around \$3000, with about \$250 of that a donation by the convention itself. The biggest ticket item at the Charity Auction was a Tuckerization donated by Weber. I bid on one autographed bookplate with an original illustration of Bob Tucker, signed by him. Sadly (for me, not for Special Olympics) someone else wanted it at least a bit more than I did.

There was enough good stuff in the modest-sized Art Show that it was a little surprising that so few pieces went to auction, but not *terribly* surprising since they had a three-bid-to-auction rule. Apparently over a quarter of the pieces in the show sold for immediate purchase, and several more sold to the high bidder with fewer than three bids. There were, of course, a lot of prints, but among the original works were a few smallish Di Fate monochromes and several larger color pieces. It was probably fortunate for my peace of mind that the color works were *Nor For Sale*. There was, of course, lots of fantasy but Liberty attracts a more sf/tech audience in the Art Show as much as in the con at large. Definitely *not* sf (but perhaps some people's idea of fantasy) were several bondage teddy bears and other stuffed animals. The Art Show (and probably the rest of the con) was bitten by the Sales Tax bug. I couldn't feel *too* much sympathy since Con†Stellation was given that infection years ago.

If one couldn't find a book to one's satisfaction in the Charity Auction, there were plenty to be had in the Dealers Alley. Liberty's hotel does not have enough space for a separate Dealers Room but they do cooperate with the con to block dealers in the set of rooms closest to the function space. While this makes it hard to peruse all the dealers — having to go from room to room to room — it has some minor compensating features such as each dealer being able to control their own hours. There were at least a half-dozen dealers specializing in books of one sort or another (from used paperbacks to current books to collectable hardbacks). One could also find comics, sf collectibles, jewelry, weapons, gaming supplies, and more — in various quantities.

It turned out there are consequences of traveling a con's guest liaison, some anticipated, some not. I'd told Sue ahead of time she could use my car in her duties as she needed to — so



I had to coordinate with her on the couple of occasions I needed to make a trip away from the hotel on my own. (One of the trips that Sue made was to take Roseanne Di Fate to a doc-in-a-box for help with what was probably a sinus infection — this kind of unanticipated trip certainly explains why a guest liaison needs a car available.) On the plus side, I was invited along on two delightful meals with the Di Fates, Friday lunch and Sunday dinner. The latter meant I missed pizza at the Dead Dog party (about which more later) but the prime rib I had more than made up for that. I was also invited along on a multi-guest breakfast trip Sunday, but that was to start just too early for my taste so I passed.

The literary bent of LibertyCon doesn't mean they neglect all other aspects of sf. Gaming, for instance, also has modest prominence. The main game room is pretty small and tucked into what is normally a service corridor, but it adjoins the hotel breakfast area (about which more later) and gaming spills out into that area as necessary. There is also a computer gaming room which had about a dozen computers. The LCD screens used this year had the advantage of lessening the significant heat issues that this room has had in the past.

Liberty is not a "party con" but the social scene is very important, and quite varied. The con itself has a nice Con Suite, down a short side corridor from the main function area. A lot of people hit the beer, of course, though that's no attraction for me. I ate quite a few things from the Con Suite, though it seemed there were more times than in the past when little or no "real" food was available. Maybe my luck was just running cold. They do get high marks for making salad fixings available several times during the con. The ghods know that fans as a whole could use more rabbit food and less fat and sugar in their diet. The con also had an Ice Cream Social Friday night and a large Dead Dog party Sunday evening. I didn't see the Dead Dog itself (see above) but I understand they cut back on the grilled food (which had been a *lot* of work at previous LibertyCons) and added pizza. I did get in on some of the desserts while playing Spades after I got back from dinner.

The hotel doesn't have a restaurant, but does put out a breakfast buffet (a "continental" breakfast plus passable scrambled eggs, sausage, biscuits, and make-your-own waffles) that becomes a social event in itself for the con. Plus, the breakfast tables get used for gaming, Spades, and socializing throughout the convention. That was challenged a bit this year by puppet shows. There were two shows Saturday (10A and 5P) that added another layer of bustle to the Breakfast area, and the "stage" stayed up for much of the con, crowding the tables closer together.

Parties provide another layer to the socializing. The Con†Stellation party was Friday night, running from 9P to after midnight. (I took extra time afterwards — with Sue lending a welcome hand — to clean stuff more thoroughly than normal since I was sending the equipment back via Mary and Doug Ortwerth rather than taking it home to wash on the day after the con. Thus I didn't get to bed until about 2A.) Around 60 people came to the party at one time or another, with many of them visiting multiple times. There was also a Xerps party that night and one or two others I didn't record before memory faded. There were two parties Saturday *afternoon*, a children's birthday party by the pool and a Chattacon party/book swap. There were 3–4 advertised parties Saturday night (including a

DSC/OutsideCon party and a Xerps redux) but I spent the majority of my time in the it's-not-a-Baen-party party, leaving around 2:30A. Separately, the Baen Barflies had a suite open the whole weekend. I didn't venture in because the atmosphere there is generally not fit for oxygen breathers. (Nicotine breathers, on the other hand, normally feel right at home in a Barflies suite.)

Having our party Friday night had a knock-on impact on one of my main social activities at LibertyCon. Our 9P start conflicted with the nominal time for the first round of the Killer Cutthroat Spades tournament. I'd been signed up for a table weeks before the con began, but my opponents chose to find a sub and play in the main area rather than to seek me out at the Con†Stellation party. I did sneak into the second round of the tournament — by accident — when a fill-in was needed to get a table going and some people who advanced in the first-round didn't show up in time. I came close to winning that game (though at least one opponent argued that I shouldn't advance to the finals if I did win since I was a sub), but fell short just a bit at the very end. In pickup games through the weekend I did reasonably well, winning more or less my share against some very good players.

Overall the con ran quite well. I do wish they could find a better place for registration. I understand why they use the prefunction area they do — there aren't many options in that hotel — but it does cause a significant choke point for travel flow as everyone going to the Con Suite must cross within a foot or two of the reg table. As a souvenir of the 20<sup>th</sup> Liberty-Con, everyone at the con got a nice stainless steel and plastic thermal cup.

Next year's LibertyCon is a little earlier, on the second rather than the last weekend of July. That's probably good for me since I plan to go to that year's Worldcon (Denvention 3, to be held Wednesday 6 August through Sunday 10 August 2008) and having one weekend between the two would make them too far apart to go to both without going back to work for a few days in between while having them closer (should Liberty have moved a week later) would make them too close together to get to both easily. So it looks like I'll probably be able to make it back to Chattanooga for Liberty's 21<sup>st</sup>. You should go too.

### INTERLUDE PART 1 (Ritenuo)

On Monday, the first day's travel after Liberty took me from Chattanooga to Benton IL. After hotel checkout, Sue and I caught breakfast/lunch (this was the one day I *didn't* get up in time for the hotel breakfast) and were on the road about noon (Eastern). Sue crashed pretty hard, even sleeping in the back seat for part of the uneventful trip. I guess being a guest liaison can really take it out of you. We rolled into Benton about 5P (Central).

Once I realized I'd have a couple of days between Liberty and NASFiC I looked for tourist stuff to do to fill the time. St. Louis has lots to offer, of course, but when I accidentally discovered the Hard Day's Nite Bed and Breakfast <[harddaysnitebnb.com](http://harddaysnitebnb.com)> in Benton — and since I didn't know beforehand how late on Monday I might have to wait for Sue to discharge her duties — I decided a stopover on the way to NASFiC was called for. (I'm not a *major* Beatles fan, but they are certainly part of my youth and cultural heritage.)

The HNDB&B is in the house where George Harrison (and his brother Peter) came to visit their sister Louise on a holiday



in the fall of 1963, just months before the British Invasion hit full stride when the Beatles appeared on The Ed Sullivan Show in February '64. The house was scheduled for demolition in 1994 but was saved when a local resident bought the house and remodeled it, opening the B&B in 1996. The house has a lot of Beatles memorabilia on display, including what is believed to be the turntable that first played a Beatles song on US radio.

The current owner/operator of the property is an attractive 20-something who learned her love of the Beatles at her mother's knee — and was visiting the property when she discovered the owner wanted to sell as he felt he was getting too old to run the place properly. She seems to be doing a very nice job so far and my night there was very pleasant and peaceful (no wi-fi, no phone, no worries). If you decide to check them out you should know that three of the four bedrooms are up a flight of steep stairs, in case accessibility is an issue for you. I wasn't bothered by the noise from the fairly nearby train tracks, but it does seem to be a main freight trunk so the trains come by frequently until late evening and starting early morning. Also, the property is directly across from a large high school, so there could be some noise issues when school is in session, depending on what activities go on closest to the B&B. The breakfast was good, but if you have a soy allergy be aware that the milk for the cereal is soy milk. I'm sure they could provide an alternative if you make prior arrangements.

Benton itself had it's own charms. Dinner the night of arrival was in a local Italian restaurant — the food was good, the background music excellent, the service, well, adequate. Just. After breakfast it was laundry day. I'd scouted out a local coin-op laundry on the web. Taking the time to do that was *so* much better than packing enough clothes for the full trip. I skipped over antique shopping on the city square, but did drive up the road to the Southern Illinois Artisan Shop and Visitors Center, where Sue and I spent about 90 minutes shopping. Some cool stuff was to be had, and we both picked up at least one Christmas present. (Nope, I won't say for whom.) Lunch was late (around 2P) but we rolled into Collinsville in time to check in (to another Comfort Inn) and make it to dinner around 6P. Except we didn't go. Uncle Timmy and a host of others had preceded us and invited us to come along, but lunch had been too late and large. Snacks and early to bed to get ready for a big day doing St. Louis tourism were the order of the night.

#### INTERLUDE PART 2 (Accelerando)

The 'tween-con part of the trip picked up pace a lot on Wednesday, with the day devoted primarily to St. Louis tourism. I'd only been to the city once before (earlier this year for Costume-Con) and had never done any of the sites; and this was Sue's first trip to the city.

Tuesday night Sue and I made our final plans and decided to limit the day's adventure to the Gateway Arch and the St. Louis Zoo. Timmy and company went to the zoo but left much earlier than we were ready. It was a good thing we got a slow start, though, since Sue's rental mobie (electric scooter — at major cons she uses one to prevent part of the pain that would otherwise result from being on her feet so much) was delivered a day early and we had to pick it up at the convention center (about which more later) and get it to the Comfort Inn.

Even not counting *that* mobie, we used many different modes of transportation that day: automobile, train, elevator, walking, tram (about which more later), bus, and (in Sue's case) rental mobie (at the zoo).

The trip to, and up, and down, the Arch was interesting. It is, of course, an architectural and engineering wonder. We didn't have time to do *everything* at the museum, etc. that fills

the underground space between the legs of the arch. You may recall from a news story earlier this summer that the tram (it's *not* an elevator) in one of the legs broke down and shorted out the power system for the whole arch, stopping the other tram also. Well, the broken tram is still awaiting repairs so we were limited to taking the one on the north side. Each tram has eight *tiny* cars with five seats arranged in a horseshoe shape. On the ride up my head touched the ceiling (on the ride down it was worse — I had a max-headroom seat going up). If you're very claustrophobic don't bother trying.

The views from the top are great. One has to lean over (on inclined, carpeted ledges) to see out the small rectangular windows that look out the two bottom sides of the triangular cross section. (And I'm shocked, shocked, to find that gambling is going on in St. Louis. Or in any case on the river near



the Illinois bank — you can see the “riverboat” from the windows on the east side of the arch.) Just after we joined the line for the trip back

down (reported to be a 3-minute ride versus the 4-minute trip up) there was an announcement that the engineers wanted to inspect the mechanism before sending the car up. One suspects they are just being extra cautious (having no backup other than the 1000+ steps) but I'm sure some of the people waiting with us were nervous.

The St. Louis Zoo is located in Forest Park — one of the largest pieces of urban green space in the country (half again the size of Central Park). The zoo is pretty darn large, but takes up only one small corner of the park (which includes several golf courses, museums, outdoor recreation facilities, an 11,000 seat outdoor theater (The Muny), and much more). Even though Sue rented a mobie from the zoo we didn't have time (or endurance) to see all of it. I enjoyed what we did have time for (a little over half) and especially enjoyed the price — free.

The end of this long day was a late dinner at a barbecue restaurant next to the Comfort Inn, with Ron Larson. Ron is effectively Sue's employer at many of these larger cons; she gets books signed for his collectable-books business. No business was transacted that night, just a dinner all of us were more than ready for.

#### SECOND MOVEMENT (Allegro Moderato)

If the pace was picking up on Wednesday, it hit full stride on Thursday and stayed that way. The 9<sup>th</sup> Occasional NASFiC, aka TuckerCon, was held 2–5 August 2007 in conjunction with Archon 31 at the Gateway Center and nearby Holiday Inn in Collinsville IL. Headliner guests included Featured GoH Barbara Hambly, Artist GoH Darrell K. Sweet, Media GoHs Kevin Murphy and Bill Corbett, Gaming GoH James Ernest, Costuming GoH Elizabeth Covey, Filk GoHs Barry and Sally Childs-Helton, Fan GoH Nancy “Cleo” Hathaway, TM Roger Tener, Masquerade MC Vic Milán, Media/Workshop Guest Lani Tupu, and Last-Minute Special Guest Richard Hatch. The web site listed almost 180 other program participants (pros and fans); approximately 20–25 pros were listed in various at-con publications as not attending (still leaving a very lengthy list, of course).

I've already seen some online reports that commented that the con “didn't feel like a NASFiC” or was “mostly just an Archon with a few added features.” Before I get into the meat

of this movement I'd like to comment "Huh?" Just what does a NASFiC feel like? They happen only rarely (there was one two years ago but before that they'd happened only in 1975, 1979, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1995, and 1999.) That's nine events in over four decades, or roughly one every five years. Perhaps there was some sensitivity since most prior NASFiCs had been standalone cons (the major exception being 1995 when it was held in conjunction with Dragon\*Con). This is the first Archon I've attended so I can't speak much to TuckerCon compared to prior Archons, but I did think they tried to add at least some things. I thought their fandom-oriented programming was pretty good for instance, and they added a filk track for the first time as I understand it. I also heard it authoritatively stated that there were more tracks of programming than at a typical Archon (and that panel attendance was up even given the possible dilution of having a large number of tracks). Leaving off the Fannish Inquisition (about which more later) *was* a mistake speaking of a lack of full cluefulness, but they added the program once that was pointed out. Too, they certainly made facilities available for upcoming Worldcons and bids. Not all such took advantage of that (about which more later). To summarize: I don't think there's any such *thing* as a "normal" NASFiC and I think Archon did try (albeit not with 100% success) to address issues important to NASFiC (versus Archon) attendees.

I now return you to your regularly-scheduled convention report.

The facilities at Archon were adequate, if awkward in some ways. There is more than enough function space in the two venues for the 1900 or so people at this con (though one wonders how well it suited last year's 2800 when Archon was on it's normal early-October dates). The GC expanded fairly recently; Archon reportedly used all of their function space for the first time last year as a "dry run" to see how they might use it for NASFiC.

The HI and the GC are on adjacent parcels, but are separated by a dual-berm flood-control ditch. There's a direct walking connection (steps/bridge up-and-over the berms) such that it's a few minute's walk for the able-bodied. Mobies (much in evidence at the con) have a much more circuitous route — there are sidewalks all the way and, except for some slightly-too-canted ramps was reportedly a reasonable route, if not terribly fast. In rainy weather it would be a major issue, of course. This year it was sunny (albeit *very* hot and somewhat humid — about which more later) so the worst of the potential weather issues were avoided.

The HI has good function space, but it's 225+ sleeping rooms aren't nearly enough for the con. A half-dozen other hotels (including the Comfort Inn I was in) are at varying, walkable, distances in the vicinity. (The CI is one of the less close of these — I'd estimate about a third of a mile walk door-to-door from the CI to the GC and a bit more beyond that to the HI. One can nip off some of that, getting it down to maybe a quarter of a mile, by cutting through parking lots rather than sticking to the sidewalks.) Those seven hotels were *still* not enough for TuckerCon (and one presumes for a normal Archon, though I think there is a much higher percentage of commuters there). I had originally been booked in a hotel on the other side of the Interstate — not walkable — but squeezed into the CI when a room opened up just a couple of weeks before the con. At least a few people were staying miles away in one or more of the next groups of hotels. The con provided a shuttle bus service to the nearby hotels (including the one I would have been in had I not moved) but not to the next groups out.

Perhaps because their attendance was less than a typical Archon, or perhaps because there were fewer commuters, there was never a parking issue at either the HI or the GC. One could usually find quite a good parking spot. If a good spot wasn't available, there was plenty of parking on "the back 40" behind the GC.

If my records are correct I made it to 15 panels over the four days of the con. That's out of almost 750 items listed in the convention schedule (though deducting for gaming events, children's, and young adult programming it would be more like 500). The programming was impressive but there were glitches due, apparently, to too many tracks being organized independently. The preliminary program published a few weeks before the con had *lots* of scheduling conflicts for program participants. Most or all of those were ironed out before the final at-con schedule, but there were still issues of people being on several (I heard rumor of up to 5) program items in succession. This last-second maneuvering may have contributed to the program participants often not knowing who was moderating, or even the details of what the program was intended to be about.

I was worried about making it to the first program item I wanted to attend (at noon Thursday) since con registration was officially scheduled to open at noon. As I suspected, though, it actually opened earlier than that. I was able to walk up to pre-reg at about 11:30A with no line at all, get my badge, pocket program (about which more later), and other materials and find my way to the right program room with plenty of time to spare. Reg was, in fact, open the evening before (as it should be for a con of this size) even though that wasn't advertised, either.

Ah, what were those program items you ask? In order they were:

- Fast and Stupid is Still Stupid (AI versus CPU speed versus software bloat)
- As God Is My Witness, I Thought Turkeys Could Fly! (con programs that *should* have worked)
- Wink, Wink, Nudge, Nudge — Tell Me a Story Uncle Bob (Bob Tucker tribute)
- Opening Ceremony
- Where is Everyone? (is fandom shrinking?)
- Hey, Kids; Let's Put on a Show! (starting/running cons)
- Fannish Inquisition (future Worldcons/bids)
- The Field of Dreams (baseball and fandom)
- The Destruction of Non-Professional Conventions (pressures from facilities, taxes, etc.)
- All Tuckered Out — More Stories About Bob (another Tucker tribute)
- Wither Fandom? (fandom has been in lettercols, zines, club meetings, ezines, and more; what next?)
- Masquerade (see winners list elsewhere)
- Filk Concert: The Great Luke Ski (think of filk crossed with prop comedy)
- Worst Movie Ever (exactly what it sounds like)
- Closing Ceremony

There were at *least* a dozen other programs I would have liked to go to but couldn't because of a conflict (another panel, a meal, whatever) or because there was so much else to do (con functions, Spades, whatever) or just because I was too bloody tired to make it to everything. The panels I did go to were — of course — of variable quality. Just a few talking points I took away from various panels include:

- PA systems are needed in most function rooms
- Smooth (and tears)
- *Billy the Kid versus Dracula*

# Archon/NASFiC Costuming and Masquerade

Hall costuming was much in evidence at NASFiC. The convention recognized this with Hall Costume Awards as follows:

Historical.....*Two of Tarts*  
Original.....*Quasi-Wolf*  
Re-Creation.....*Lelu*  
Best of Show.....*Two of Tarts*

Archon is widely recognized for their Masquerade. Reportedly the number of entries in this year's event was off (26 plus one scratch) but the quality was very high. The competition is in divisions (Junior/Novice/Journeyman/Master) per the International Costumers Guild guidelines. Awards are given for Workmanship and Presentation.

In addition to the official Masquerade Awards below, several other awards were given by various ICG chapters or the crew of the Masquerade. These included the Slatern Award (St. Louis chapter) and the Spazzie (New York/New Jersey chapter) to *Puff I'm Draggin'*; the Cement Overshoes Award (Chicago chapter) to *One World, Many Treasures*; the crew favorite award (costume) to *Once Upon a Time*; and the crew favorite award (other) to Green Room "mom" Michelle Neubauer.

## MASQUERADE WORKMANSHIP AWARDS

Honorable Mention, Junior.....*Shadow Beast*  
Honorable Mention, Journeyman.....*Monty Python & the Life of Bill Murray*  
Best in Class, Junior.....*X-Babies Trade Paperback*  
Best in Class, Novice.....*Mana and Thief Bakura*  
Best Execution of Concept...*The Quantum Mechanic*  
Excellence in Craftsmanship.....*Jedi Outfit*  
Best Infrastructure.....*Once Upon a Time*  
Best Recreation from Media, Detail...*Setzer and Gogo (Final Fantasy 6)*  
Outstanding Ensemble Workmanship.....*One World, Many Treasures*  
Best Use of Innovative Techniques.....*Take That, Earle K. Bergey*  
Best Detail Work.....*Mirkwood Jedi*  
Best Use of Found Materials.....*Save the Penguins, Save the World*  
Best in Show, Workmanship.....*Does Beauty Count*

## MASQUERADE PRESENTATION AWARDS

Honorable Mention.....*Ink and Paint Club*  
Honorable Mention.....*Queen Solitaire*  
Most Impressive Light Show.....*Shadow Beast*  
Smooth Tucker Award.....*The Quantum Mechanic*  
Best Movie Adaptation.....*Save the Penguins, Save the World*  
Most Cosmic Superhero.....*Saturn Girl of the Legion of Superheroes*  
Best Original Concept.....*Puff I'm Draggin'*  
People's Choice Award.....*Monty Python & the Life of Bill Murray*

- BBQ Crawl
- ASCAP
- *One Fried Concom* sung to the tune of *The Banana Boat Song*

Matching the above to the panel(s) involved is left as an exercise for the reader. I will match up a couple of things for you, though. At the Closing Ceremony, I was a little bit disappointed that the various media guests were given pride-of-place by being introduced last, but that was leavened by one of them whirling about during his moment in the (setting) sun and calling most of the other guests babies for complaining about the humidity. (Being used to DC weather he found 90–100°F and 50–60% humidity a pleasant day.) Personally I agree with him. The 80–80 (80+°F and 80+% humidity) or 90–90 weather we sometimes get around here is *much* worse. At the Fannish Inquisition there were representatives from only the two 2009 Worldcon bids (Kansas City and Montreal). It's a bit scary how well those two bids seem to get along. I know who I'm pulling for (my site selection vote is in) but I came away feeling happier about the other city, should it win.

Also present at the con, but not at the Fannish Inquisition, were representatives of next year's Worldcon (Denver) and one 2011 bid (Seattle). Each of the three bids present threw a party on either Friday or Saturday night (about which more later) but Denvention did not to my knowledge. There was only minor presence for either this year's Worldcon (but I expect that both the Japanese committee and their North American representatives were really ramping up for running the con by then) or the 2010 bid for Australia.

Onsite convention publications were good, with one significant exception. The souvenir book (*not* the exception) ran to 72 8.5x11 inch pages (counting the sweet Darrell Sweet cover, about which more later) and included all the stuff you'd expect. The *TuckerCon Smooth* was the newsletter, with six issues, one each Thursday and Sunday, two each Friday and Saturday. Among other things, it served to supplement the list of programming changes handed out in the registration packet. Those changes in turn supplemented the Pocket Program, wherein lay the rub. My copy of that was defective (missing eight pages in the schedule-grid section) but that wasn't the issue. The layout had a *lot* of unproductive white space coupled



with tiny type. A more efficient layout could have packed more information in fewer pages with more-readable type. What was there was good, it must be said, except for the minority of events that were affected by a database glitch that chopped off titles and descriptions at about half the planned maximum

Best Anime, Costume.....*Tokyo Mew Mew — Ichingo and Restasu Mew*  
Best Anime, Presentation.....*So, You Think You Can Dance*  
Best in Class, Junior.....*X-Babies Trade Paperback*  
Best in Class, Novice.....*Take That, Earle K. Bergey*  
Best in Class, Journeyman.....*Setzer and Gogo (Final Fantasy 6)*  
Best in Class, Master.....*Once Upon a Time*  
Best in Show, Presentation.....*One World, Many Treasures*

length. Since most items didn't push that max, only some items were affected but the truncation was an obvious-to-all defect. That and the bad-layout-plus-tiny-type issue led to some, probably justified, grouching.

The Art Show was large, though not nearly as big those I've see at Worldcons. Panels were (mostly) 4' wide by 7' high and set in zig-zag rows with aisles that were wide enough (though another foot or two would have been better). The panels were a mixture of pegboard and gridwall. I found that the gridwall worked better than I thought it would — the visual clutter of looking through the panel to the art and people in the next aisle wasn't particularly distracting. The room was dominated by fantasy art (as most con art shows are) and had a high print-to-original ratio (ditto). The two long walls of the room were given over to tables for 3-D art. Artist GoH Darrell Sweet had a *wonderful* and *large* layout. I was quite tempted by the cover art for the convention souvenir book, but the low-to-medium four-digit price was just a bit excessive for my current means. The Art Show/Auction did commit one major No-No when they changed (reportedly about an hour before the Auction) from four bids to auction to only two.

The Dealers Room was also fairly large, though again not "Worldcon sized." I estimated almost 50 individual dealers and just north of 100 tables. I saw — in no particular order — costumes and costuming items, other clothing (including but not limited to tee shirts), jewelry, sf/f/h collectibles, movies, music (filk and other), weapons, art (prints and 3-D), promotional tables, comics, a modest amount of games and gaming supplies, books, books, and books. That last is not a typo. Most types of items showed up at two or more dealers, but books were pretty much everywhere.

Now to the social scene at the con. The Con Suite (or to use Archon's preferred terminology, Hospitality) was in one ballroom at the Holiday Inn. That made it convenient for the dances (about which more later) and the program items (a minority) that were in the HI but somewhat awkward for people at the Gateway Center. I've seen a few complaints that it was impossible to get to the Con Suite between GC program items, and that's true. But it's basically inevitable since running any sort of hospitality in a convention center gets financially ruinous quite quickly — so I have no issue with the arrangement. In any case, the situation was mitigated by food service run by the GC, though that contributed to another issue (about which more later).

I can't give the con full marks for the Con Suite itself, however. On the plus side they had seating/tables and a good selection of soft drinks (including bottled water). On the plus side (not for me, but for many people) they served beer in the evenings. On the strongly minus side the food was, well not quite pitiful but at the least mediocre and scant. Some of the time there was only an odd selection of prepackaged commercial snacks (mostly sweets). At other times they had veggies or other food available, in pre-portioned ziplock bags. Once I ran into a small selection of pre-portioned slices of hoagie-style sandwiches. The amount of food out was no more than what I'd seen the weekend before at LibertyCon, for a fifth as many people. The Con Suite was mostly semi-deserted during the day but I didn't even *try* to squeeze in during the dances. At that time the whole area was hopping, including the prefunction area



## Archon/NASFiC Awards

### ARCHON AMATEUR WRITER'S CONTEST

The winner of Archon's 3rd Annual contest, announced at the con's Opening Ceremony, was Teresa Schnellmann for "The Fourth Treatment." All finalists received a medal and other recognition.

### ART SHOW AWARDS

- Best 3-D** ..... *Tiny Dancer*, Sunshine  
**Best Concept or Idea** ..... *Season of the Wolf*,  
 Theresa Mather  
**Best Use of Humor** ..... *Joy Ride*, Sarah Clemens  
**Best Non-Pro** ..... *Blue Butterflies*, Karen DeGuire  
**Best by Pro** ..... *The Red Horn*, John Kaufmann  
**Fan's Choice** ..... *The Red Horn*, John Kaufmann  
**Artist's Choice** ..... *The Red Horn*, John Kaufmann  
**Director's Choice** ..... *Season of the Wolf*,  
 Theresa Mather  
**Best of Show** ..... *The Wizard*, Darrell K. Sweet

### GOLDEN DUCK AWARDS

The 2006 Golden Duck Awards <goldenduck.org>, for Excellence in Children's Science Fiction Literature, are sponsored by Super-Con-Duck-Tivity, Inc. The awards are selected by a jury. The winners for 2006 were announced at the Archon Banquet Friday evening 3 August 2007. The winners are:

- Picture Book Award** ..... *Night of the Homework Zombies*, Scott Nickel,  
 Illustrated by Steve Harpster  
**Eleanor Cameron Award** (Middle Grades) .... *Apers*,  
 Mark Jansen with Barbara Day Zinicola  
**Hal Clement Award** (Young Adult) ..... *Rash*,  
 Pete Hautman  
**Special Award Winner** ..... *Write Your Own Science Fiction Story*, Tish Farrell

### SIDELINE AWARDS

The 2007 Sidewise Awards <uchronia.net/sidewise> for Alternate History (for works from 2006) were announced and presented at the Archon Banquet Friday evening 3 August 2007. The judges for this year's award were Nicholas Gevers, Evelyn Leeper, Jim Rittenhouse, Stuart Shiffman, Kurt Sidaway, and Steven Silver. The winners are:

- Short-Form Alternate History** ..... "Counterfactual," Gardner Dozois (*F&SF*, June 2006)  
**Long-Form Alternate History** ..... **Merchant Princes**, volumes 1-3 (*The Family Trade*, *The Hidden Family*, and *The Clan Corporate*),  
 Charles Stross (Tor, 2004-2006)

### TUCKER AWARD

Archon presents the Bob Tucker Award for excellence in partying. This year they awarded two, in fan and pro categories. Neither recipient was present at the Banquet where the awards were announced. By happenstance, I was present when both recipients were finally tracked down. They tagged Uncle Timmy at one of his program events and Toni Weisskopf at the Baen Party. In addition to a plaque, the award includes a bottle of Beam's Choice which by tradition must be emptied before leaving Archon. I did my small bit to make that happen by participating in a "smooth" both times.

between the ballroom with the dances and the ballroom with the Con Suite. I expect the beer (dance fuel) drew most of the crowd to the Con Suite but I don't know what they did in terms of food then.

The party scene was oddly quiet for a NASFiC. I recall one advertised party on Thursday evening, though I didn't record who the host was. There were three advertised parties on each of Friday and Saturday nights, with perhaps the most significant being the KC 2009 Worldcon bid (Friday), the Montreal 2009 Worldcon bid (Saturday), and the Seattle 2011 Worldcon (Saturday). I admit to being disappointed with the lack of barbecue in the KC party but they at least partially made up for it with a wide assortment of homemade cookies (all good, some superior) and some killer homemade fudge. A Victorian Tea was advertised for the Con Suite Friday (or was it Saturday?) afternoon. And that's it for the advertised parties. The private/semiprivate social events I knew about included hospitality suites by both SFWA and ASFA and parties hosted by Tor and Baen.

Other social events included a banquet (extra cost, of course) hosted by the convention, a public artists reception Friday evening in the Art Show hosted by ASFA, and the Dead Dog party hosted by the con. For me, the other main category of social event was Spades. With a number of players from Huntsville, Chattanooga, and other points of the globe in attendance, it was inevitable that NASFiC would be "corrupted" by Killer Cutthroat Spades. We played in the Dealers Room (at Kerry Gilley's table). We played in the CI atrium (since a number of us were staying there). We played on any empty table we could find in the GC. And doubtless games broke out in places I don't know about.

I'm nearing the end of this movement but find there are a number of notes that still need to be squeezed in — so I'll resort to "one liners."

- I've barely mentioned gaming, but it was a big deal at the con — both in the GC and the HI.
- I didn't mention at all the multiple video rooms or the many specialty program items (anime/manga, furry, Trek/other specific media, etc.) or the Heinlein blood drive
- The podcast workshops reportedly captured many hours of good stuff, links to which are promised for the Archon web site
- Various con staff attributed the reduction in membership (2800 last year versus 1900 as a NASFiC this year) to the higher membership rate they charged; one wonders if they could have made out just as well financially with a lower rate but more members
- There was a much higher rate of hall/casual costuming than I recall seeing at other cons in recent memory; it was prevalent enough that it caught the eye of some bikers staying at the HI on the way back from a rally and they posted their photos online at <[hdforums.com/m\\_2015140/tm.htm](http://hdforums.com/m_2015140/tm.htm)>
- And speaking of photos, there's a good selection at the MidAmerican Fan Photo Archive <[www.midamerican.org/photoarchive/07tuckercon00.htm](http://www.midamerican.org/photoarchive/07tuckercon00.htm)>

Two of these last-minute items do deserve full paragraphs. Earlier this year people had become understandably leery of reserving a room at the HI when they demanded full prepayment and required that one stay at least the two "core nights" (Friday and Saturday) of the con. It turned out that the owners weren't just *acting* like crooks, they actually *were* crooks (or at least have been indicted as such) and the hotel is now in receivership. This was a *good* thing for the con and those

staying at the hotel. Hotel policies moderated somewhat once the new management took over and I heard a number of good things about how helpful the hotel staff was during the convention.

On the other hand there's nothing that one could do to make better the bad design of the convention center. Virtually all the large spaces open off only one side of a very long corridor. As the GC has expanded and the number of people going back and forth down that corridor has increased, the corridor has gotten to be too narrow. The convention (and the GC) did manage to find a way to make the situation significantly *worse* by putting tables (bid tables, artist's alley, etc.) down *both* sides of the prefunction corridor, narrowing it to where any group that stopped for conversation immediately caused a traffic jam. Then, at the busiest part of the corridor, they made it even narrower by placing the GC food service on one side in place of the aforementioned tables, narrowing the passage to just about enough for one person.

Next year there is no NASFiC since Denver (last I checked) is in North America. Archon will return to their normal early-October dates. That alone is probably a killer for me making my way back to Archon, since it's normally only a week or three before Con†Stellation. That said, I wouldn't mind going back some year though I doubt it could ever become a regular thing for me. St. Louis is close enough to drive to, but it's far enough to require an additional travel day on both ends of the con. Too, other than Worldcons and NASFiCs, I generally prefer cons a bit more intimate than the multi-thousand range. But, if you live within a day's drive of St. Louis and if you like the multi-ring-circus type of con (but perhaps not the behemoth that Dragon\*Con has become) then you should give Archon a try. It just might hit the right note for you.

#### CODA (Allargando)

Even after the Closing Ceremony late Sunday afternoon, my multipart trip was not over. Sue wanted to be back in Huntsville to go to work Tuesday, so we hit the road Sunday headed to our last stop on the tour, Metropolis.

In case you've never heard, the small town of Metropolis IL (across the river from Paducah KY) is the "official" home of Superman. The drive to Metropolis was fairly uneventful, though I was certainly tired. We stayed overnight at a Holiday Inn Express at the interstate exit and in the morning drove into Metropolis itself, maybe 5 miles from I-24. The main features we were seeking were easy to find, the giant statue of Superman in the town square and the nearby Superman Museum and shop. I read comics, including Superman, as a child and of course The Big Guy is a big part of our cultural history both within sf and in mainstream culture. I was happy to take advantage of this opportunity to see artifacts of that history. Don't go to the museum expecting a big-city-quality museum but this is way more than a "tourist trap" and I recommend it to any sf fan traveling in that neck of the woods.



After waving goodbye to Supe and Metropolis, we completed the drive back home to Huntsville. Sue was so tired she had me drop her at her house in Madison and planned to come get her car (left at my house) another day. I got home in the early evening Monday. After checking email I gratefully collapsed into my own bed for the first time in the better part of two weeks. Sue may have wanted to work Tuesday but I had (wisely, I think) planned to take that day off.



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