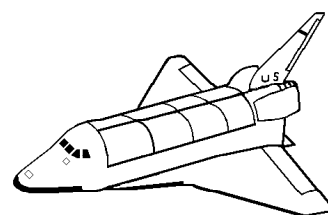


The



SHUTTLE
September 2005

*The Next NASFA Meeting on 17 September 2005 Will
Be the Annual Cookout at Mike & Marie's House*

Future Concom Meeting Schedule Listed Below

🔔 Oyez, Oyez 🔔

The next NASFA meeting will be **17 September 2005** — *not* at the **regular time or location**. The combined meeting, program, and after-the-meeting meeting will be the more-or-less annual NASFA cookout. This year's version will take place at Mike Cothran and Marie McCormack's house (210 Vincent Road in southeast Huntsville) starting at 1:00P and continuing until all concerned drop.

Concom Meetings Set

The last few concom meetings for Con†Stellation XXIV are set. Meetings will take place at Marie McCormack and Mike Cothran's house on Thursday 15 September and Thursday 29 September. Both of these will start at 7:00P. In addition, there will be a final meeting on Thursday 6 October at the convention hotel.

NASFA Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- 01 Concom Meeting: Marie McCormack's house.
- 01-05 Cascadia Con (8th NASFiC) — Seattle WA.
- 02 BD: David K. Robinson.
- 02-04 Mephit Furmeet 9 — Memphis TN.
- 02-05 Dragon*Con 2005 — Atlanta GA.
- 05 Labor Day.
- 09 BD: Mike Cothran.
- 09-11 Outside Con 18 — Dickson TN.
- 11 Grandparents' Day.
- 11 Patriot Day.
- 11 BD: Ray Pietruszka.
- 12 BD: Pat Butler.
- 15 Concom Meeting: Marie McCormack's house.
- 17 Citizenship Day.
- 17* NASFA Meeting — Cookout at Marie McCormack and Mike Cothran's house; start time 1:00P.

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Deadline for the October 2005 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Monday, 26 September 2005.

Our 25th Year of Publication!

be Guy Gordon, who is best known for helping Eric edit and compile the Baen Books reissues of the Telzey Amberdon stories. We have no Artist Guest of Honor at this time. There were several candidates under consideration, but for various reasons, none of them have worked out.

Anita is taking reservations for Lepus convention T-shirts.

Next year's Con†Stellation now has an official name, Cygnus the Swan. (Do I sense an "Ugly Duckling" theme coming up?) Guest of Honor will be David Drake. We'll have dates eventually.

Mike Cothran has just finalized the mass mailing for Lepus. He is working on the cover letter, and currently looking for blurbs and other submissions to add to it. The meeting adjourned at 6:36:09P.

For the program, Sam Smith gave a show and tell of what he did on his summer vacation. He gave a slideshow of pictures from last month's Worldcon in Glasgow, Scotland, and also from the rest of his British vacation. He brought con program books, badges, and assorted other knickknacks from the con. It was a great way for those of us who have never attended a Worldcon to live vicariously through Sam.

The After-the-Meeting Meeting was held at Mike Cothran and Marie McCormack's house.

What I Did on My End-of-Summer Vacation

a Convention Report

by Mike Kennedy

When Worldcon is held out of North America, the WSFS (World Science Fiction Society) constitution allows for a North American Science Fiction Convention, colloquially known as NASFiC. With Worldcon being in Glasgow this year (see the August *Shuttle* for coverage of that con) a NASFiC became a possibility. The voters in 2003 selected a Seattle committee to run the con, which became known as Cascadia Con. I've been to one NASFiC before and decided that since (1) I couldn't go to Worldcon this year, and (2) I like the Seattle area, then I'd go.

Cascadia Con, the 8th NASFiC, was held 1–5 September 2005 in Seatac WA at the Seattle Airport Hilton and Conference Center, and the Airport Radisson Hotel. Seatac is one of the cities in the greater Seattle-Tacoma area and is in fact the home of the main airport for the area. The two hotels are located on International Boulevard just outside the entrance to the airport.

Invited guests for Cascadia Con included Fred Saberhagen (Writer GoH), Kevin Standlee (Fan GoH), Liz Danforth, (Artist GoH), Marc Abrahams (Science GoH), Toni Weisskopf (Editor GoH), Uffington Horse (Filk GoH), and Hiroaki Inoue (Anime GoH). There was a massive list of other notables expected to attend. Mr. Saberhagen had to cancel due to ill health. Harry Harrison was later scheduled as a Special GoH but he also had to cancel due to health reasons. You may recall that Robert Sheckley, one of Worldcon's GoHs, also fell ill and had to cancel. This is clearly not the year to be a GoH at a WSFS-sanctioned convention — at least not if you wish to stay healthy!

PRE-CON SUNDAY

I hate to start a trip tired, but sometimes it seems inevi-

table. My mother went in the hospital on Friday afternoon before I was scheduled to leave town Sunday morning. Fortunately it was not *too* serious (and yes, she insisted I go ahead with my trip) but it did add a few items to my To Do list and rippled forward until I was late getting to bed the night before I was to leave. Such is life.

Sue Thorn was kind enough to volunteer to drive me to the airport so that part went smoothly. I called mom from the airport not long before departure and found that the adjustments being made to her meds seemed to be taking effect. She was, of course, eager to go home though that wouldn't happen until Monday afternoon. I was able to catch up on email and check the progress of Hurricane Katrina while waiting for boarding because (glorioskies) it turned out HSV has free wireless internet access. Ah the joys of modern technology!

The flight to Houston was fine, though it began with a longish hold on the tarmac. Maybe I should have checked the Houston weather rather than Katrina, though there were no bumps during the flight. The plane wasn't very full and the flight attendant was smart enough to move me to an empty 2-seat row — the most space available on the small jet. It was even a bulkhead row so I had a bit more knee room. I had a long connection in IAH (flying on frequent flyer miles does have some drawbacks) but on the bright side that gave me time to find a nice sit-down table-service restaurant (Pappadeaux) and have some shrimp étouffée and a decent dessert. Being in an airport, the price was moderately high and the food was nothing to write Michelin about, but it was a much nicer atmosphere and better food than I'd have found in any of the myriad fast-food places. The only real disappointment was the plastic fork. *Naturalment*, I found wireless access (at least 3 flavors) in the airport, but since it wasn't free (beyond a few news/weather links and airport info) I opted to wait until Seattle to resync to the world again.

In contrast to the first leg, the connecting flight to SEA was crammed full. I'd had the foresight to get an aisle seat, but that was about the only redeeming feature. I don't think there were any empty seats at all and there certainly weren't two empties together anywhere. The seating was absolute torture. The flight attendants were very understanding when I stood up for a good bit of the trip, even though the only places to stand blocked access to the lavs or the galley or both. Though it didn't look awful, I skipped the inflight snack lunch (basically a hot sandwich and a salad). The meal at Pappadeaux was quite enough.

The flight eventually ended (15 minutes late) and I eventually escaped the airport to pick up my rental car and check in to my hotel. I had decided to stay at a Holiday Inn near the Hilton which was the main con hotel (the HI is about halfway between the Hilton and the Radisson). This was enough cheaper that I could have rented a car the whole time for the difference in price, though in the end I decided to rent the car just for the pre-con touristy days.

I ventured out just before 19:00 local time in search of dinner and some supplies. Alas, I arrived at Southcenter Mall just in time for Ivar's Fish Bar to have closed. (In fact, the whole food court was closing.) This thwarted my plan to eat at a different type of Ivar's restaurant each of the first three nights. The fast-food IFB would have certainly been the cheapest of the three Ivars. Ah well, as Napoleon said, "*On s'engage l'ennemi, et puis, s'on vois*" — or as it's normally mistranslated "No plan of action survives contact with the enemy."

I ended up at Red Robin — a national chain, but one with no presence in Alabama or any of the surrounding states. I had

a nice bleu-cheese-accented burger with fries and some iced tea that was pretty darned good considering how far I was from the Deep South. Sam would have been disappointed, of course, as the concept of Sweet Tea hasn't made it to the Pacific Northwest — but I find Southern presweetened iced tea almost completely undrinkable.

With the help of the hostess at RR, I tracked down a Target where I laid in a few breakfast/drink/snack-type supplies. The Southcenter area is by far one of the largest shopping areas I've personally encountered, but apparently it dies early, at least on Sundays. As noted above, the food court in the namesake mall closed at around 19:00 and I discovered the Target rolled up their sidewalks at 21:00, so I barely escaped with my purchases. After that, it was back to the hotel to unpack, resync, and crash. It was way too late, though still before midnight local time, when I finally turned out the light.

PRE-CON MONDAY

The main order of touring on Monday was to be a visit to Pike Place Market. I'd been there once or twice before but I enjoyed the atmosphere and the eclectic shopping so I decided a return visit was in order. I got out of my hotel around 11:00 and — after the trip downtown and wandering a bit on the streets around the market — found the parking garage I had hoped to use. It took a few minutes to take an elevator, a sidewalk, another elevator, and a skywalk but by a little after 12:00 I was in the heart of the farmer's market part of PPM where I picked up a locally-grown Fuji apple to have with the imitation-processed-fake-cheese-substitute sandwiches I'd brought with me for lunch. And just as quickly I found a *relatively* quiet and shady corner to sit and eat my lunch while people watching.

In addition to the fresh food, PPM has crafts, bookstores, jewelry, knickknacks, kitsch, flowers, gifts, and much, *much* more for sale. And of course food everywhere. More food — more *types* of food — than a tourist could eat in a lifetime. But... I was strong and resisted temptation. Well, I did buy a small piece of outrageously expensive cheese that was to be the largest part of Tuesday's breakfast. I kept it unrefrigerated and hoped for full flavor by the morning. If it wasn't for the cheese purchase, though, I'd have spent more on parking (\$12 for about 4 hours) than on all other purchases combined.

Oh, and in addition to food it turns out PPM had fans, too. I ran into a couple of fellows there who were discussing Cascadia Con and butted into their conversation. It turned out



that one of them was being published in *Northwest Passages*, an anthology from Fandom Press/Windstorm Creative being premiered at the con. This was a bit of *deja vu* to me, since I had run into Huntsville's Amy Herring on the flight to IAH — she also has a story appearing in *NP*. Amy bugged me to go to the premiere party Friday at the con, especially since she won't be there. (It's Thursday at NASFiC for her then back across the country to Dragon*Con.) Guess that sealed my fate about going to the party.

By 16:00, though, my stamina was gone and I decided to take an early dinner break then head back to the hotel. Finding my way to the restaurant was easy in principal — it was really only a few (long) blocks south and several stories down from the parking garage. (The hills are steep that near Seattle's waterfront.) I decided to drive so I wouldn't have a tiresome hike back to the car after dinner. That might have been a mistake. Finding parking along Alaskan Way (which runs right along Puget Sound in that part of the city) proved to be, um, let's just say tiresome. Yeah, tiresome sounds *so* much better than dangerous.

But eventually I was ensconced in Ivar's Acres of Clams, which sits on a pier jutting out into Puget Sound. The view was wonderful. The service was excellent. The clam chowder (white, if you're wondering — I'm no barbarian) and the sourdough rolls were absolutely heavenly. The entree was, well, less than I hoped for. The several varieties of fish and other seafood on my sampler platter were all good but the methods of preparation available on their menu were underwhelming. It made me look forward all the more to the alder-smoked salmon I planed to get at Ivar's Salmon House Tuesday night. I did snitch the last sourdough roll to eat with my expensive cheese for breakfast.

Fighting downtown Seattle traffic at rush hour to head back to the hotel was interesting. I found the right road quickly, but got a little distracted while playing *dodge'm* and ended up in the wrong lane to make it back onto I-5 southbound. Recognizing this, I made a two (long) block detour to loop around and come at it from a better angle. When a taxi tried to cut me off by making an illegal turn in front of me (well, we were *both* making illegal turns but his was arguably more illegal than mine as I was following the established traffic flow) I glared at him and shook my head. Since I was driving a minivan (an "upgrade" when they didn't have any full-size cars left) that considerably outmassed his taxi he apparently thought about discretion and valor, and chose to back off.

So it was a fairly early night for me — probably needed after the long day Sunday. I had stayed in touch with the news well enough to know that Katrina made a major mess of a large swath of the Gulf Coast and was headed north with plenty of wind and rain left. While the worst of the remnants were headed well west of Huntsville, it was comforting to know that family and friends could look after each other and that my house would be checked after the storm passed to see if any damage was sustained.

PRE-CON TUESDAY

The touring plan for Tuesday involved finding the Science Fiction Museum and meeting Amy there. She used to live in the Seattle area but moved out well before the SFM was founded. I used to travel a lot to Seattle (actually Kent, but who's counting) but that too was long before the SFM started. Amy was staying with a friend in Bellevue — across Lake Washington from Seattle — and would be traveling by bus; while I was headed there in the minivan from well south of town. The plan was to meet at noon, have lunch, and then do

the SFM.

That plan was to go somewhat awry. I made it to the Seattle Center (home of the Space Needle, the SFM, parkland, meeting halls, museums, and more), found good parking, and got to the SFM about 11:45, 15 minutes early. While I waited for Amy at what seemed to be the front entrance, she came in another way and looked for me inside. I gave up waiting about 12:30 and wandered off down the street to find lunch because I was getting very hungry. Lunch took place at a sports bar unimaginatively named Sports. The chicken tortilla soup and rueben sandwich were both very good. The sandwich was technically a half-sandwich, but it was piled so high with meat that it was nearly as thick as it was wide... kind of like eating a cube, albeit a delicious one.

While walking back from lunch around 13:15 Amy called my cell phone and we got back (somewhat) on track. She was off in another part of Seattle Center by then but we made plans that I would wait at a specific spot (near the SFM gift shop and admission counter) and she would find me. It took a while yet, but she did and we finally made it inside the SFM sometime before 14:00.

The museum was fun, though for my money (literally) I'd have to say that they need to expand a bit to fully justify the \$12.95 ticket price. There are two floors of displays. The entrance is on the upper floor, part of which is taken up by the entryway and gift shop — so the lower floor has significantly more exhibit space. Everyone would pick out different highlights, of course. They put one of their most high profile pieces, the command chair from the *USS Enterprise* (original series), right by the entrance. That was interesting, and might well make my "top 10" list for the museum, but wouldn't be #1. In roughly the order I saw them, some of my personal highlights were:

- The aforementioned Kirk's chair
- Costumes from *Blade Runner* (didn't every man who saw it fall in love with Rachael?)
- Zines and other fannish publications (including an early issue of *Le Zombie* and the program booklet for Nycon, the first worldcon, 1939)
- Fory Ackerman's 1953 Hugo for being the #1 Fan Personality (this was before the rocket was standardized to the shape seen today)
- The Hall of Fame wall of etched-glass portraits (I got a bit choked up in front of Andre Norton's)
- The original typewritten manuscript of Doc Smith's *Sky-lark of Space*
- Lots of original artwork from artists too numerous to mention, including *beau coup* Bonestells
- The original B9 (*Lost in Space* robot) — alas their Robby (*Forbidden Planet*) was not the original, though it did seem to be a faithful reproduction

And yes, there were books everywhere. The books were used to set the context of much of the movie and other memorabilia on display. I also had fun with the interactive video display of fictional spaceships. I think I recognized over 75% of them and could actually name maybe 50%.

As usual when I visit a museum with someone else I went through things faster than Amy. She must have taken a dozen pages of notes to my two. But, this had the very great advantage of letting me sit for part of the time and take some load off my knees. After we left the museum we went in search of a snack for Amy to make up for her lack of lunch. She tracked down a place that sold ice cream and I chilled out while she ate her cold stuff. We then headed to my car and rushed — as much as one

can rush in downtown rush-hour traffic — to make it to a different Seattle pilgrimage spot, Archie McPhee & Co.

I don't think I've ever bought anything from an Archie McPhee catalog but when I found out that their actual physical store was in Seattle I put it on my to-do-if-possible list. Amy had never heard of them (and if you haven't then go look at <www.mcphee.com>) and I struggled to find a way to explain the type of lowbrow kitsch they sell. The closest I came before we got there is that if you needed plastic dog poop then AMcP would be the place to go — though in fact I may have slandered them since they don't list any such in their current inventory.

Anyway, we made it there about an hour before closing time and shopped (both buildings) until they pretty much kicked us out the door at 19:00. I bought a few things (for which I'll have to apologize later to the friends who receive them as souvenirs) but Amy was in heaven. She bought a medium-sized shopping bag full of stuff, including no less than 6 Hindi Bendys <www.mcphee.com/items/10468.html>.

Thence, it was off across town to Ivar's Salmon House, on Lake Union, in the University of Washington district, for dinner. We both enjoyed our meals. My Sockeye salmon (alder grilled, with portabello mushrooms) was very good — not rising to superb, but still quite enjoyable. The absolute hit of the meal, though, was the blueberry ice cream Amy had for dessert. My apple crisp dessert was good, but by no means the flavor explosion of that ice cream. It was intense!

After dinner I took Amy back to the condo in Bellevue where she was staying with a friend. While searching for a turn in the dark, I managed to scrape the bottom of the car on a concrete barrier. We halted for a little while in a nearby parking



lot to see if there was any obvious damage. The car was operating fine but there did seem to be drops of something coming from under the car. To cut to the chase, I called the car rental agency after dropping Amy

off and between us we determined it was safe to drive the car back to the agency to be checked out. They looked at it and the preliminary report is of no damage. In all likelihood the drips I saw were condensation from the air conditioner — something that occurred to me as a possibility while I was driving back.

Since I was going to return the car the next afternoon anyway, and since I was tired and would want to rest up before undertaking con setup duties, I decided to turn the car in that night. The rental agency gave me a ride back to the HI where I caught up on the awful news from Katrina. All fans that had reported in were safe, but the direct damage to the Gulf Coast and the ongoing flooding in New Orleans was really beginning

to add up. On that unhappy note I turned in, somewhat exhausted from the news and my own adventures of the late evening.

PRE-CON WEDNESDAY

Wednesday morning started too bloody early with a phone call at some unghodly hour like 07:00. Since I hadn't left a wake up call, I was particularly shocked to a semi-wakened state. It turned out that Uncle Timmy & Co. (Tim Bolgeo, Gary Shelton, Mike Townsend) were coming by to see if I wanted to go with them on an expedition to see the rain forest out on the Olympic Peninsula west of Seattle. I had had enough walking and driving the previous two-plus days and said no to their kind (if too-damned-early-in-the-damned-morning!) offer. I did get back to sleep awhile and thus started on my plan for the first half of the day — to rest up for the con.

By the early afternoon, though, I had eaten a light meal in my room and was ready to face some work, so I walked over to the Hilton to see if I could find something useful to do. It took a few minutes to track down someone to start the process, but once I did there was certainly stuff to do. I spent some time helping unload a truck and schlepping stuff where it (hopefully) belonged, then joined a crew putting up a curtain wall dividing the exhibit room in two. The display of past Hugo awards was already out on a table right next to where the wall was to go. It occurred to me that an “oops, sorry-I-broke-your-Hugo-when-that-metal-pipe-fell” excuse would probably not cut much mustard.

By the time that was done (and I determined that the truck with the Art Show hangings would not be back for an hour or two) I decided it was time for a real meal. The fake-cheese sandwiches from the late morning were long gone. So I signed out and started walking back to the HI where I might be able to eat without bankrupting myself, unlike at the restaurant in the Hilton lobby. On the way I ran into Gary and asked if he or the others in his group were interested in joining me. Thus four of us ended up at Denny's (located between the HI and the Radisson and practically next door to Timmy & Co.'s hotel) where I pigged out on a cheap but huge breakfast platter. Actually two platters — it took one for the pancakes and another for the eggs, country-fried steak, and biscuits. I probably ate more at that one meal than I've had in many individual days. As much as I enjoyed the nice meals from the last few days, this high-fat, high-sugar, gut-buster was a gastronomic wonder in its own way.

Then the four of us walked back to the Hilton — with a stop at their hotel to pick up cards “just in case.” They were going to check out the lay of the land and I was going to see if the truck was back with the Art Show stuff. It wasn't, so after a quick reconnoiter we settled near the Hilton's lobby bar and played a game of Killer Cutthroat Spades. Timmy had all the luck early (bids of 7, 5, 5, 5...) but toward the end of the game I managed to set him once and the group conspired to give him all the extra tricks once. He still won, but by golly we made him work for it. Ah well, more KCS would follow later.

Then the truck was back and there was work to be done. Not being as silly as me, the other three soon disappeared while I helped empty that truck of Art Show panels and miscellaneous other stuff. The panels were a sandwich construction, with two 4'x6' pieces of pegboard being the bread and a wooden frame of 2x2s being the filling. I later saw how they set up ABS pipe frames and suspended the panel sandwiches in the opening with cable ties. That night, however, I didn't stick around long enough to see how it worked. I put in 3+ hours before dinner and almost an hour after. Four hours of manual labor



was about as much as I thought I should do for the day. I didn't envy those who would doubtless be working long into the evening to finish setup... but I had to treat the con as a marathon, not a sprint.

So, I was back to my room at the HI around 20:20 and planned to make a relatively early evening of it. Not counting the educator's conference associated with the con, most things on Thursday seemed to be slated for a noon start. Presumably registration would be open long before that. I'd need to contact Tom Veal to find out what I would need to do as I'd volunteered to help him out at Site Selection voting for the 2007 NASFiC. Meanwhile, the news from Katrina was no better than the previous day and in many ways worse.

THURSDAY, THE CON BEGINS

Getting to bed at a semi-reasonable hour Wednesday had the advantage of letting me get out the door at a semi-early hour Tuesday, around 10:00. It would have been earlier, but I can't seem to escape checking and responding to email no matter where I am these days. Before I left the room I called Tom and found out the lets-organize-this-puppy meeting for Site Selection was to be at noon. Plenty of time before that, then, to walk to the Hilton, get registered, and see what devilment I could get into.

Or so I thought. When I got there, the con had posted a sign saying pre-reg was open only for program participants, staff, dealers, and artists — with general pre-reg to open at noon. So... I did the sensible thing and called Timmy & Co. to let them know about the reg situation and to see if they wanted to get up a game of KCS. The answer was (duh!) yes, the only decision was where it was to be. We ended up meeting in the Hilton lobby again and playing at the same table as we did Wednesday. I lost again, to Gary this time.

There were rumors of problems with badge printing, but in the end pre-reg opened at least 15 minutes before the promised noon. I got in the line while it was still relatively short, but by the time I got my badge (a little after noon) the line (yes, one line) stretched all the way down the rather long hall it was in and threatened to spill into the hotel lobby. By 12:30-ish they trebled the number of pre-reg lines as more workers were available and the line(s) dwindled quickly.

I had spotted Tom while in line and he indicated our meeting could wait until I got badged. As it turned out, just about nothing was ready for Site Selection — no tables or chairs, no signs, no ballot box, no cash box, etc. Tom had his part ready (ballots, etc.) but the rest depended on the hotel or the con. It actually did all come together — though some people expressed skepticism it would — in time to open at just about exactly the promised-in-the-pocket-program 14:00. Well,

all but the signage, which lagged behind due to computer problems in the Con Office. Much of the signage, in fact, was of underwhelming quality and quantity for the entire con. No sign was larger than 8.5"x11", some were handwritten and unreadable from any distance at all, and even the printed ones seemed to be in smaller fonts than could have been accommodated. On the plus side, all the function rooms in the Hilton (both the hotel itself and the Conference Center) had electronic signs which were used to display the program title.

I stayed at Site Selection from just after noon through the opening at 14:00 and all the way until it closed for the day at 18:00. The plan for the next day was for Tom to open it by himself at 10:00, I'd join him at 12:00 (after a panel I wanted to attend), and Tom would leave it with me from 16:00–18:00 when we'd close for the day.

We were not swamped with voters on this first day (though there was a mini-rush the first hour) so I had lots of time to people watch and greet friends. Mark Paulk stopped by to say hello; he was joining Timmy & Co. at their hotel (which sadly for me meant they had four for KCS without me — but I figured I'd weasel in on a game or two somehow ;-). I saw a number of other friends, who I'll not try to name lest I inadvertently omit anyone.

After being released from bondage, I made a trip to the Con Suite to rehydrate and consume a few quick bites of fried salt (aka chips). The Hilton is laid out as a series of separate buildings (most only 2–3 stories) surrounding a nice courtyard. The buildings are connected by glassed-in corridors, and the rooms numbered consecutively — for the most part. One of the buildings, however, uses room numbers in the 1XZZ series (where X indicates the floor) and the others in the 2XZZ series. It would take a while before I could find any particular room reliably.

The Opening Ceremony was scheduled for 19:00, which gave me a half hour or so to kill after wandering the corridors of the Hilton for a little while trying to get the lay of the land. So, I headed to the Conference Center to look at the Exhibits area where I'd helped set up the curtain wall the day before — only to discover that those and the Dealers Room closed at 18:00. It seemed it might be Sunday before I could see either of those or the Art Show. I did watch Chaz Boston Baden working to finish setting up a reduced version of the Fan Gallery he's known for — reduced because many of the photos were still enroute via ship from Worldcon.

So, I headed just a bit early to the far-too-large room for the OC and snagged a prime seat (second row on the center aisle). They were about 15 minutes late starting, due in part to the tech crew finishing their work — but there may have been other backstage delays. The OC entertainment was a group of Japanese-style drummers who performed six lively numbers. All of the women in the group (or I should say girls) were startlingly beautiful — but they were *so* young. Sigh. I suppose at least a couple of the guys were good looking too, but really it was hard for me to notice that. *All* of them did possess



remarkable stamina as well as a bunch of talent.

The rest of the OC was much more mundane. A formal welcome and miscellaneous announcements were made. Then they called the guests up to the stage one at a time to receive an "instant costume" consisting of a convention shirt and assorted deely boppers. Toni (who was seated next to me) was the second one called to the stage and the first to actually wear her DBs. That set the trend for the rest of the guests who all put them on, at least briefly. There were some moments of humor as the DBs didn't stay well on everyone's head. One fellow wore his like the visor Geordi had on the Next Gen Star Trek. The antenna toppers looked for all the world like something shooting from his prosthetic eyes.

Mostly the OC worked reasonably well but I was more than a bit annoyed that they called numerous people from the anime series *Robotech* to the stage one at a time and *after* almost all the GoHs. Yes, the 20th anniversary of *Robotech* and the upcoming sequel was being celebrated at the con, but I felt the sheer number of their people detracted from the honor presumably due to a Guest of *Honor*.

After the OC, I was in fairly dire need of a real meal, having had cereal for breakfast and fake-cheese sandwiches for lunch. So, I hoofed it back to the HI and had a pretty decent Cobb salad in the lobby bar. I should have remembered to tell them to hold the olives but was able to pick out the large majority of them. Thence it was back to the Hilton to go to a reading from *Northwest Passages*. Amy had told me about it and asked me to come, but the panel was not to be found. There was something else going on in the room listed in the pocket program and none of the signs outside the Hilton function rooms were for that event. Perhaps it was moved to the Radisson, but there was no way I could make it there in time and that would have been just too much walking anyway.

I did go in search of parties and found just one (St. Louis) open. I think there were one or two others somewhere but I was too tired to look hard. Most of the party signs around the con were for parties on Friday or subsequent nights.

Back in my room, the news from Katrina seemed rather grim. A number of New Orleans area fans had not been heard from yet though the ones that had reported in were uninjured (in some cases only by luck). The situation in that city, though — and along a wide swath of the Gulf Coast — was nasty to say the least. There had been a fair amount of email chatter among Con†Stellation's concom during the day about the possibility of designating a hurricane-relief charity as our official charity for this year's con. If it happens, it'll be a tiny drop in a huge ocean, of course. But drops do add up eventually if all keep giving them.

FRIDAY, THE CON CONTINUES

Since I planned to be at a panel or at Site Selection from 11:00–18:00 Friday, I had thought I would start the day with another gut-buster breakfast at Denny's, skip lunch, and go in search of a decent dinner later. When the time came, though, I just wasn't *nearly* hungry enough to face such a large breakfast so I ate in the room, though I did eat somewhat more than my typical bowl of cereal on the theory that I might well still miss lunch.

Skipping the Denny's trip had the advantage of getting me ahead of schedule. I used the time to make a trip through the Exhibits area (which seemed still a bit in flux). I also talked to Gary and Mark about going out to dinner — gotta look ahead! Mike and Timmy were on a trip to Vancouver and thus out of touch at that time.

I went to Kevin Standlee's FGoH speech at 11:00. Atten-

dance was sparse (20-some) which was a shame since the rest of the con missed a very good 50-minute hour. His topic was “Fandom is My Way of Life” which he demonstrated most effectively as he gave a précis of his fannish life so far, including many funny and illustrative stories.

After that I headed to the Site Selection table again. It sounded like Tom had been at least a bit busy 10:00–12:00 but things calmed down almost as soon as I showed up. Sometime in the early afternoon Tom took a break to go get a meal. While he was gone, Chaz showed up wanting to talk to him about filing paperwork for a 2007 NASFiC write-in bid for San Jose. Not too long after Tom got back Chaz showed up again and they discussed what would be needed. Chaz filed the necessary papers in the mid-to-late afternoon and suddenly we had an officially contested race.

The San Jose bid was for a 3-day con versus Archon’s 4-day bid and the 5-day NASFiC this year. It would be held the weekend of 24–26 August 2007 as a relaxicon the weekend before the Yokohama Worldcon. And yes, they had all the necessary-per-the-rules arrangements, including a fax from the San Jose Doubletree agreeing to be the facility and quoting a \$109+tax room rate.

Also sometime that afternoon, I took a break and got some sandwich fixings from the Con Suite, so I didn’t miss lunch after all.

From 16:00–18:00 (when we closed) I was left in charge of Site Selection while Tom went off to run a panel for the bidders and take care of other business. During that time — and at several other times during the day — the St. Louis bid provided a worker for the Site Selection table. It was a bit odd working with a presumably-partisan person at the table and no representation from the other side, but they were scrupulously fair and San Jose could have provided a helper too. (Except of course for the fact that their bid committee was just a handful of people and they wanted to get ready for the one party they would be able to throw before the voting ended Saturday at 19:00.)

The Friday afternoon edition of the con zine, *Fax Cascadia*, reported a membership count of 1714. It wasn’t clear if this counted no-show attending members and/or supporting members as well as actual warm bodies on site — or how day members were counted. Nonetheless it was clear my pre-con estimate of 1500 would be low.

After Site Selection closed and the St. Louis people helped me move the various supplies to the Con Office/Ops, I gave Mark a call and arranged where to be picked up for our dinner run — after which we headed toward the Southcenter area. By then all four of the Timmy & Co. were available and it proved to be a tight-but-doable fit to get us all in Timmy’s rental car. Mike & Tim opted out of the planned visit to Newport Bay, with a plan of their own to go to Olive Garden. We were to later learn that they had abandoned that plan due to crowding and ended up at Sizzler.

But Gary, Mark, and I enjoyed our various seafood. My halibut was quite good. The sourdough bread and the other accompaniments were delish too. After dinner, the crowd dropped me off back at the Hilton where I wanted to put in an appearance at the launch party for *Northwest Passages* which was to start at 19:30. They had a fairly lavish spread of food, including sushi for those so inclined. (Not I — I don’t even fish so what use do I have for bait?) The smoked cheddar was particularly nice and the assortment of cookies was good too. The drink selection was a bit spartan given the other aspects of the food. I did not win in the first door prize drawing at 20:15

and not too long after decided to make my exit.

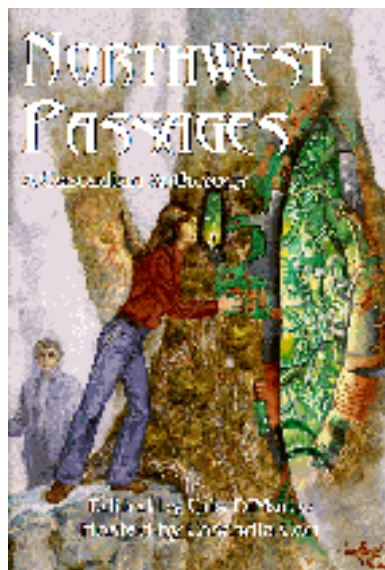
Most of the other parties weren’t scheduled to start until 21:00 so I decided to chill awhile in the Con Suite. It turned out that part of that had been taken over by the Writers/Illustrators of the Future for a party. I crashed in the other part of the suite where *Star Wars Episode 2* was playing on the tube. While far from a favorite movie, it did provide a suitably sf ambiance and I eventually found myself pulled into it. The movie was far along and in fact ended about 10–15 minutes before the other parties were to start. I wandered out in the possibly-forlorn hope that one would be open early and found that the San Jose bid party indeed was.

There were few people at the party yet which meant I got a comfy chair. I had a few nibbles, though I can’t remember just what. They did have mac and cheese and if I hadn’t been to dinner I would have tucked into it big time, despite it not being warm through yet. They also had two varieties of cauliflower — just your basic orange and your basic purple. Odd looking stuff. Someone assured me that it tasted the same as the normal color, which is a shame since if it had tasted different there would have been at least a chance it was edible.

The Chicago 2008 Worldcon bid party was next on my list — where I was christened “Gowanized” on my “Hello my name is” sticker. As Grant Kruger mentioned in his Worldcon review last month, that bid is into random names as a party icebreaker. Embrace the chaos. I turned down a hot dog but promised I might be back Sunday night if the banquet food was as disappointing as such fare sometimes is. (Later I realized they had said they’d be open Saturday night but not Sunday.) I did have a flavorful fizzy-fruity alcoholic punch. The nice lady serving it said she was *supposed* to card me but let it slide. She did stamp my hand with a huge blue stamp that later took several vigorous applications of soap and water to remove.

My last party stop of the evening was the St. Louis NASFiC bid party where I got another Archon pin to add to the one I received the night before (this one was for a different year). I did nibble on a number of things here and in the other parties above — way too much really. The sharp cheese was good but I found myself beginning to zone out so I reluctantly headed back to the HI.

Between and after the parties mentioned above I passed a wide variety of others going on. Bid parties, con parties, special-interest-group parties, and just-for-the-hell-of-it parties. The social scene was certainly more active than the



previous night — though nothing particularly raucous. Perhaps that was going on at the Elegant Gothic Court Ball in the Conference Center. I suspect I shall never know.

Back in the room, news from Katrina was not much better and in some ways worse. Food and water was just reaching many people, too late for some. The only good news I found was that additional New Orleans fans had been heard from and were safe. Others were still unaccounted

for, though. It may be quite a while yet before all is known there.

SATURDAY, CON-TINUITY

The plan for Saturday morning and afternoon was much the same as what had happened Friday. I had breakfast in my room then headed over to an 11:00 panel — this time the Science GoH discussing “Improbable Research and the Ig Nobel Prizes.” Dr. Abrahams is the editor of the, er, prestigious journal *Annals of Improbable Research* and the prime mover behind the Ig Nobel Prizes. If you haven’t heard of those then shame on you. His talk was hilarious *and* he used a Mac to run the accompanying presentation.

On the minus side, the convention-supplied AV setup was not well thought out and improvisation was needed. Presenters could not see the screen (which was to one side) from the stage and it was impractical if not impossible to hook up a computer on the stage to the projector. As a result, Dr. A ended up standing at floor level, just to one side of the screen. But *this* arrangement put him in *front* of the speakers which meant he couldn’t use amplified sound. Fortunately, his lecture-honed voice and a very cooperative audience (which was actually quiet for a change — except when laughing uproariously) made him audible. For those looking to do something to get in a good mood right before Con†Stellation this year, the Ig Nobel Prize ceremony will be webcast <www.improbable.com/ig/2005/2005-details.html> live on Thursday 6 October.

The panel ran a bit over (though not into the next hour) so I was a few minutes late getting to my scheduled 12:00 arrival at Site Selection. I took a couple of 10–15 minute breaks during the day but basically stayed there until the polls closed at 19:00. The pasta I had from the Con Suite during one of those breaks was probably the most nourishing thing I had to eat after breakfast — well I did nibble on veggies both from the Con Suite and, later, parties.



Tom and I had help at Site Selection from one or another of the St. Louis people a fair amount of the day and Lynn Boston Baden sat in to represent San Jose for a while on at least two occasions. When 19:00 arrived and the last voter subsequently finished (he was grandfathered in because he had started the vote process seconds before time expired) the count itself began pretty promptly. Representatives from the two bids did all the actual counting while Tom observed and recorded the results. I mostly just hung around. Not too surprisingly, St. Louis/Archon won, with the final tally being 115–27, with 11 votes for None of the Above and 8 No Preference. (The NP total counted 1 blank ballot and 1 vote for San Diego. At least it wasn’t for San Digeo.) The results were officially announced the next morning.

The vote counting went so quickly, in fact, that I had plenty of time to swing by the Con Suite and get a Diet Dr. Pepper (glorioskies again) before heading to the Masquerade, which was scheduled for 20:00 in the Conference Center. I got to the area about 20 minutes before that time only to find the doors still closed and a queue outside. They opened the doors about 10 minutes later and the line quickly filed inside. There was a large block of prime seats set aside (though it wasn’t clear to me for whom since I couldn’t read the signs from my angle) but they later opened up most of those and I ended up with a very nice seat. Both before and after moving I was sitting near a couple of the St. Louis people who probably already knew the vote result.

Music, crowd shots on the live video, and a peppy announcer tried to keep the somewhat undersized crowd pacified while waiting to actually begin — and mostly succeeded. I suspect the crowd failed to fill the room at least in part because the video feed was going live over the hotel’s cable, so one could watch comfortably from a room, or even the hotel bar.

By my watch, the traditional live pre-masquerade announcements began at 20:12, so they weren’t running *too* late. I was a little disappointed that there was no “program book” available for the masquerade (but I was also pleased the next morning to find details of the winners announced in *Fax Cascadia*). Other than one video glitch that happened between entries and was fixed quickly, the technical aspects of the masquerade were very good. One entry apparently did not have prerecorded audio and it was very difficult to hear them singing — the voices did *not* fill the hall. (BTW, that video glitch apparently wiped out the recording of the entry “Snape’s Dark Secret.” The crew asked the audience to stay after the awards were announced so they could get audience reaction during taping as the presentation was re-run. Both the costumers and the audience did a very nice job under somewhat trying circumstances, I think.)

With one exception the costumes and presentations were not what I’d consider “Worldcon quality.” (And yes, that one — “Wizard & Roo” — did win Best in Show.) There were only 11 entries. Discounting W&R, perhaps 3–4 of them were nice Journeyman-level entries. Most (but unfortunately not quite all) of the others at least avoided a major cringe factor.

The entertainment during the judging interval was styled as the “Cabaret of Dr. Caligari” and consisted of three local magic acts with another magician as MC. Not the best stuff in the world but again not particularly cringe-worthy, at least by my lights. Their timing was good in at least one respect, the judges came back just a minute or three before the final act finished. A list of the winners can be found elsewhere in this issue. Here I’ll just note that not every entry won an award, a vast improvement on many groups of judges.

One further note before I leave the topic of the Masquerade. For reasons unspecified in public and unknown to me, Cascadia Con had to replace their Masquerade Director very shortly before the convention. It appeared that a significant part of the crew may have been brought in at the last minute as well. Their “Emergency Holographic Masquerade Director,” Don Glover, and the whole crew should be heartily commended for making it seem as if that had never happened.

I hit only two parties that evening, the first being the Chicago 2008 Worldcon bid party. I picked up the hot dog I’d turned down the night before. I later realized that while I’d had various snacks much of the day I’d never managed to go to an actual meal after breakfast. I guess the hot dog will have to count as supper in retrospect. Next door at the WicCon party (a con for pagans) I ran into Timmy and Gary. Though Mr. G had plans to attend the “Fantasy Fetish Fashion Show” at 23:00, I talked Timmy into going in search of KCS.

Mark and Mike were back at their hotel so we started that way. Timmy being Timmy, we had to go the long way just in case he could spot some people he had been wanting to talk to. He did. I didn’t try to count the minutes (can you hear me whining?) before Tim finally let himself be dragged away from promoting LibertyCon and Chattanooga, but finally we headed off to his hotel and achieved four-ness, that being a necessary prerequisite to KCS.

Gary came in during the first game — having tired of waiting for the FFFS to start. I managed what I thought was a neat come-from-behind win after several poor hands at the beginning the game. Gary sat in for Mike on the second game and I came pretty close to sneaking out another win, but fell a couple of tricks short in the end.

I got back to the HI sometime after 01:30, by far the latest I’d been up the whole convention. News from Katrina was still bad, but it seemed like in some respects a corner might be in sight. No corner had been turned, mind you, but at least that seemed like it could happen in the foreseeable future.

SUNDAY, THE CON BREAKS FREE

After being incarcerated (albeit consensually) at Site Selection for a good chunk of each of the three preceding days, I hardly knew what to do with myself on Sunday. I decided to start by finally going back to Denny’s as I had planned a couple of days before. The entire Timmy & Co. clan was there and had just ordered a few minutes before. I joined them and ordered a gut-buster breakfast, though it wasn’t quite the ton-of-bricks size of the one I’d had on my first visit.

After breakfast, I let my arm be twisted into dropping by their hotel for KCS. This time I got my brains beat out, but it was still fun playing. All of us headed over to the con around 12:30, though we split up after getting there. I made a visit to the Art Show for the first time during the con. It took about an hour to make one medium-speed pass through the show, with a couple of side trips to go back and check on one thing or another. I put in one bid, but it was on a small piece that almost certainly wouldn’t get the four bids necessary to go to auction. I’d have to wait until Monday to find out if I won the piece or not. There wasn’t anything that just screamed at me that it *had* to be bought. Most or all of the interesting-but-not-screaming pieces were either sold already, not for sale, or totally impractical for me to try to get back to HSV on the plane.

Timmy & Co. once again tracked me down and twisted my arm to play KCS, this time in the Hilton lobby at the same table we used for the first game back on Wednesday. I got creamed again. I took a quick Con Suite break and then went to my panel-for-the-day, this time the Baen Slide Show at 15:00.

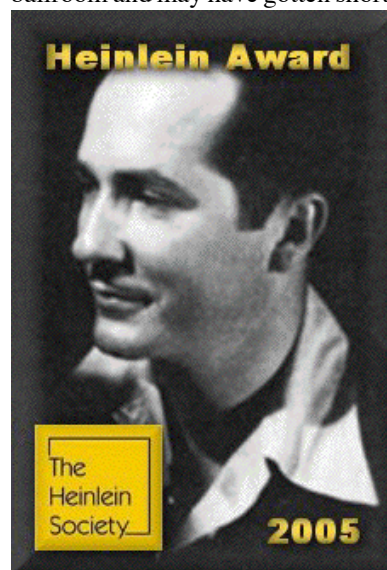
Toni, as usual, was entertaining. She later rated herself as “B+” and I’d say that was about right. I’ve seen her do better but she was *way* more than adequate.

I started back to the HI to do some noodling on my computer and change for dinner (about which more below) but got sidetracked for a few minutes when I ran into Tom in the hall. I’d had a half-baked (well, more like quarter- or eighth-baked) idea about collecting the history of bids and site selections for Worldcons and NASFiCs. Some of the info (like voting totals) is available for “modern” cons as it’s in the Business Meeting minutes. Other stuff, like infamous gaffes that led to difficult or lengthy vote counting, is relatively well known within fandom. However, Tom knew of no place where that and/or tales from bidding are collected together. I think there might be a niche to be filled on some fannish web site somewhere, but I don’t have a well-formed enough idea of what might be useful to pursue it — nor do I know much of the information myself.

The Heinlein Society held their awards banquet in conjunction with Cascadia Con this year. Shortly before the convention I finally decided I’d attend and bought a somewhat expensive ticket online. Consequently I decided I needed to dress up a bit for dinner — nothing too fancy but I don’t think I scared little children or horses *too* much. (Chaz took my picture after the banquet so you might even be able to see me online once he posts the photos.)

The banquet was scheduled to start with a social at 18:00 but got off to a rocky start as the doors to the hall stayed firmly closed until around 18:30. I did have a nice chat with Toni, Hank, and the Copelands (Liz and Jeffrey) while waiting. Once the doors opened, we found ourselves near the tail end of the line as they marked names off an attendance list one at a time and handed out slips for one’s choice of entree. This process took far too long, I must say. Once inside, Toni and Hank were whisked off to a reserved table (though convention guests played little part in the proceedings) but I did end up at the same table as the Copelands. Naomi Fisher also joined the table as did Tom Veal. Friends of the Copelands and a woman whose name I’m afraid escapes me rounded out the table.

The quality of the food was better than one gets at many banquets, though I’m still happy I decided on the chicken as the safer option than the salmon. The quality of the service, however, was quite low. Our table was in a far corner of the ballroom and may have gotten short shrift because of that, but



the number of things that went well was low and the number that went poorly was high. Neither the convention nor the Heinlein Society could really be blamed for this, of course, but I’d certainly not be eager to plan another food function there.

The actual speeches and awards started around 20:00, about 15 minutes behind schedule — so they had made up some time from the late opening. The first awards announced were the winners of the 2005

Golden Duck Awards for outstanding young adult and children's science fiction. The awards were actually presented earlier this year at Worldcon and a list of winners can be seen in last month's *Shuttle*. The Hal Clement (Young Adult) Award was accepted during the banquet by the current SFWA president on behalf of the winners. The Seiun Awards announcements were next up, though again the actual presentation had been done earlier this year. Finalists for the Endeavour Award (for a distinguished sf or fantasy book written by a Pacific Northwest author) were also announced. The winner will be announced and the award presented at OryCon 27 (11–13 November 2005, Portland OR).

Finally the Heinlein Awards themselves were presented. The award is for "outstanding published work in hard science fiction or technical writings inspiring the human exploration of space." The recipients are selected by a panel of judges and were announced early this year — Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven. Both were present and dressed rather nattily. Both gave nice if predictable speeches. And the awards themselves were over a bit after 20:30, though that didn't bring the evening's events to a close. One of the Heinlein Society's functionaries then gave what they referred to as an advertisement (more like a 15-minute infomercial) on the upcoming Heinlein Centenary year for which they are planning a major push to get events at as many conventions as possible. The final part of the festivities was a showing of an interview by Walter Cronkite of Heinlein and Arthur Clarke on the occasion of the first moon landing. And thus the banquet ended around 20:15. I did overhear in the halls after the banquet an indication that some of the tickets were given away at the last minute to convention committee or staff members, in order to meet the minimum requirement. The hall seemed full so the minimum must have been pretty high.

Three parties was to be my limit Sunday evening. I first spent some time in the Denver 2008 Worldcon bid party and found out a bit about their proposed facilities. They look feasible, but there would be more walking there than there was here at Cascadia Con and *that* isn't too thrilling. That party was crowded so I made my way across the courtyard to St. Louis to offer my condolences on their NASFiC win. There was a good crowd in and out but there was also a good chair to sit in. They sold at least two conversions from supporting (voting) to attending memberships while I was there. The final party of the evening was the Baen Books party. Toni always does things right and I was pleased to find some very drinkable champagne which, it turns out, goes quite well with bleu cheese. I also tried some Godiva liqueur but I must say it smelled better than it tasted.

Back at the HI, the news on Katrina was slightly better. A few more fans have reported in as safe — the number of unknowns continues to drop. In the wider world, perhaps that first corner has been reached. Evacuations from New Orleans finally seemed to be working, for instance. But, this would be a maze and there would be many more corners still to come — ones that were not even visible at that time.

MONDAY, THE CON-CLUSION

I began Monday with a simple plan — have breakfast in my room, catch up on writing this report, check for my piece in the Art Show, bum around a bit, and go to the Closing Ceremony. I managed all of those except the last — plus adding a trip to the Dealers Room.

It was around 11:15 by the time I had done enough computer noodling and headed across the parking lot and down the street to the Hilton. Once there I made a beeline to the Art

Show and found that no other bids had been placed on the piece I wanted. I had to find a staffer to free it from its entanglement with the display it was on but that went quickly, as did paying. I considered looking around again for some pieces available at a decent after-auction price but decided my suitcases were going to be loaded enough.

At that point I realized I'd left out of my plan the obligatory trip through the Dealers Room so I headed from the hotel proper back into the Conference Center. The room was not huge but they managed to pack in a good variety of merchandise including several book dealers. Three dealers (including the one selling the official con-logo shirts and a wide variety of



others) were set up outside the room. Apparently their tables were moved into the room overnight. That must have been a bit of a pain. I don't often buy much from dealers at cons but I actually bought a couple of things at this one. Of course, they were *actually* bought as proxy for Karen Hopkins. I saw some items I thought she would want and called her to ask.

After that I spent some time chilling in the prefuction area outside the Art Show where the bid tables and Site Selection had been earlier. The Zellichs from the Archon group were there selling NASFiC memberships and Timmy was hanging around. We all chatted with each other and various friends who dropped by. The con was definitely beginning to wind down.

Eventually, Mike Wilmoth, I, and what was left of Timmy & Co. (Tim and Gary) ended up shifting to the Hilton lobby for a game of KCS which I won in a very tight game. That's about the time that the plan to go to the CC fell apart. Tim wanted to go eat and I allowed as how that would have to happen sometime, even though it was a bit early. Anyway, Tim and Gary walked back up to their hotel to fetch their rental car and before 16:00 (when the CC was to start) the four of us were on our way to the Southcenter Mall food court. Thus I missed the CC but finally got to eat at IFB as I'd originally planned for Sunday a week before. The "tanker" of chowder was huge and quite decent, but not as good as that I'd had at IAoC early in the trip. The jumbo size was certainly all I could handle for an early dinner (or late lunch, whichever it was).

I was dropped off back at the HI by 16:40 with plans to meet at Timmy & Co.'s hotel at 17:30 for a last round of KCS. I won again, this time in part because I made an early nil I shouldn't have. Well, that and I got good cards the last 2–3 hands. Mike had to head back to the Hilton for a meeting (some sort of SMOFish business) but the three of us remaining gossiped, ate popcorn, and generally wound down from the con for a good while after. I didn't make it back to the HI until after 20:00, which gave me time to pack as much as I could and turn in at a reasonable hour. I also checked the weather forecast for Huntsville and my connection in Houston. Going back to highs in the 80s and 90s promised to be miserable after more than a week with highs up to 20° cooler than that.

Monday's news from Katrina was mostly the same with a few bits of improvement here and there. There were still fans (and pros) unaccounted for, though only a few friends-of-

friends-of-friends close enough in social space that I might hear updates. Some pumps were finally running and beginning the draining of Lake New Orleans, though it'd certainly be a long time before that job was finished. The economy of the affected region was obviously to be in the proverbial world of hurt but the effects hadn't spread to strongly affect the overall US economy. (Yeah, I know, try telling that to anyone buying gasoline...) The grim task of finding, counting, and identifying the dead had just begun.

POST-CONTUESDAY

I deliberately scheduled my return flight to leave at a civilized hour, knowing that I have trouble getting out of bed in the wee hours even when not tired from a long trip. Thus I was able to schedule a wake-up call at the leisurely hour of 08:00.

The morning went smoothly, at least as much as it ever does when traveling. I had enough food left in the room to make a light breakfast, later supplemented by a brownie bought at the airport. My check of weather and flight info yielded only good news. There was an extra night of parking on my hotel bill but the desk clerk was more than happy to take it off. The hotel shuttle van came quickly, and by shortly after 09:30 I was at the airport. Check in at Continental Airlines went very quickly, the TSA security check somewhat less so. A silly TSA agent asked me to take my shoes off before walking through the metal detector though she volunteered that there was no metal in the shoes. Sigh. By 10:00, though, I was inside the security barrier and had put both myself and my baggage back together.

With the better part of two hours left until my flight, I had time to wander around a bit. There are now a number of semi-high-end shops in the secure zone at SEA, probably to take advantage of the traveler with time on his hands, just like me. I browsed through several of them but the only things I bought (other than the aforementioned brownie) were quite cheap. Good for me, bad for them.

There were also a large number of restaurants, including some local names. It turns out I could have eaten at an IFB at the airport even if I'd missed going to the one Monday night. Of course, chowder for breakfast before a cross-continental flight might not be the best idea. All of this meandering still got me to the gate area about an hour before departure time for my flight.

As in IAH, there were multiple flavors of wireless connection available for my computer, but none free. There was some airport info available without paying anyone, but no news, weather, or flight info. Bah. I was able to work a while on this convention report at least, and sit in what would be the most comfortable seat I was to encounter for many hours. That said, the flight from SEA to IAH — though completely full — was not as awful as it could have been. Once again I was in an aisle seat but this time the fellow behind me knew the secret of raising the inboard arm rest, which allowed me to considerable ease the strain on my right knee, currently the worse of the two. The snack lunch (breaded chicken sandwich, small salad, "fun sized" bag of M&Ms) was also not awful. Still, travel by airplane isn't something I'd wish on anyone. (I did notice that there were several pilots deadheading on this flight and all of them were in an exit row. RHIP.)

Despite a weather detour we landed in IAH several minutes early — enough so that we had to wait a while for our gate. Those few minutes made my somewhat tight connection a bit less intimidating. Since all the "commuter" jets are concentrated together, I knew I'd be changing concourses, which involved two quite long walks as well as a people mover. As I

NASFiC Masquerade Winners

WORKMANSHIP AWARDS

Judge's Choice for Use of Materials "S.T.O.A.T.,"
Mike Duquette
Best Novice "The Sugar Plaid Fairy," Elizabeth Fellow
Best Journeyman "A Dark Shadows Fairy Tale,"
Laura and Mike Rieschick

PRESENTATION AWARDS

Honorable Mention "The Sugar Plaid Fairy,"
Elizabeth Fellows
Most Humorous, Novice "Snape's Dark Secret,"
Charlen C. and Steve Harmon
Most Humorous, Journeyman "Princess Luthien,"
Kalyn Nilsson
Most Dramatic, Journeyman . "A Dark Shadows Fairy Tale,"
Laura and Mike Rieschick
Best Recreation, Journeyman "The Huntress,"
Rogue (Erik Prill)

BEST IN SHOW

"Wizard & Roo," Suelyn and Kristopher Taylor

reached the end of what I *thought* was the final corridor (to gates B84–91) I found out I should have paid more attention to the fact that my departure gate was B84C. I scanned the gate numbers in the circle at the end of the corridor and counted down from 91 to 85. No gate 84. Hmmm. Ah, there was yet another corridor, this one to gates B84A–E. As I neared the end of *that* corridor, I found myself directed to go *downstairs*. I must profess I felt just a little like I was descending into a third- (or at least second-) world airport. It was so much less formal than anything I've experienced in an airport in *years*. The seating seemed randomly distributed, with people sprawled every which way. Just for a flash I expected to see someone with their feet propped up on a crate of live chickens. As I walked toward the far end of this sub-sub-concourse, an attendant stepped inside from a wide open doorway and *yelled* (no PA system involved) for all rows to Huntsville to *board the bus* which was parked outside the door for gate B84E. It was all very surreal.

This turned out to be the first of three busses to pull up to the tiny Embraer jet parked quite a distance away on the tarmac. Being in the first load was good since there was still room in the very tiny overhead bins for both my carryon bags. I was in seat 1A, which is on the one-seat side (directly across from the galley) of the 1 and 2 configured craft. The seat was narrow, but made up for that in delicious knee room. And, once I found the secret button to lift the outboard armrest, I had enough room to raise my left leg and prop my foot on the bulkhead. All in all it was clearly the most comfortable flight since the one starting this journey.

Waiting on the other two busses made us at least 15 minutes late departing. On the positive side, that gave me time to eat the final leftover fake-cheese sandwiches I had packed for supper. We made up part of the time and pulled up to the jetway at HSV at about 20:45, a bit less than 10 minutes late. As arranged, I called Sue Thorn while on the way to baggage claim. Considering how small the plane was, it took a long time for the baggage to make it to the conveyor, so Sue was waiting to drive me home by the time I was ready to go. The trip was

wonderful, but arriving home was perhaps more so.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

The Seattle committee did an overall good job with the NASFiC, which their chair has said is a rehearsal for a possible future Worldcon bid. There were two significant and interrelated errors they made, though, which made the con less enjoyable than it could have been. First, they succumbed to using more space and running more tracks of programming than they should have. Second, they were stretched a bit thin on the worker level (there seemed to be enough senior and midlevel staff but they were light where the rubber met the road).

These were interrelated because the two hotels they used for programming were quite a distance apart (less than a half mile, but not a lot less). So, staff that was consumed at one hotel was of little or no use at the other. In the most glaring instance, they ran two Con Suites (though the auxiliary one at the Radisson was farmed out to a separate fan group). Despite the convention-sponsored shuttle bus I never made it to the Radisson, but by all reports the auxiliary Con Suite was much better than the one in the main hotel. If they had combined those functions, it would have probably freed up at least 1 or 2 workers on a continuous basis and those could certainly have been put to use elsewhere.

I don't know the final attendance figures, but the Sunday morning issue of *Fax Cascadia* quoted a figure of 2015. The desire to use programming space at the Radisson (as well as the Hilton itself and the attached Conference Center) may have had three roots. First, it seems clear that *early* planning for attendance at the con was much more grandiose. (I heard one figure of up to 4000 expected when the bid was won two years ago.) Second, Pacific Northwest cons are reportedly more heavily scheduled than cons in other regions of the US. Third, as hotel rooms were snapped up in both hotels (and later several surrounding hotels) it may have become temptingly cheap to use the space in the Radisson. In any case, they *should* have resisted. By cutting back on the programming tracks and making more efficient use of the rooms in the Hilton and Conference Center, all con functions could have been accommodated there — which would have led to a lot more *energy* at the con. It *might* have caused some crowding problems in a few of the hallway choke points, but I don't think it would have been a significant problem for a 2000-attendee-class con. It *would* have caused more elevator problems, but the Hilton is a low-rise structure so most fans could have easily used the stairs more than they did. (Yeah, if they had achieved 4000, or even 3000, both the hallway and elevator calculations would be quite different.)

But, all the relatively-minor glitches discussed in the body of this review and the two major miscalculations discussed in the paragraphs above didn't alter the fact that it was an enjoyable con. And even with the pains (literal and figurative) of travel it was an enjoyable trip. Now if only my credit card company would lose some of the bigger bills it'll be an enjoyable experience on all fronts.

The Secret Witches Other Ball

No Need for Doctor Drake (aka The Lizard of Oz) —
Chapter 11
by PieEyedDragon

(The guards, all women of various Ozian races, gripped their spears with white knuckles and stared at me. I stared back, and reclined beside the road, waiting. Eventually, someone comes out.)

Messenger: How did you get here, and why?

PED: I flew here from Ix. I folded space to get there. My passenger wants to visit someone here.

Messenger: I see no passenger. The Good Sorceress bids you come inside.

— O — O — O —

(The Sorceress dismissed her servants, and looked at me.)

Glinda: My book told me that an old friend would come to visit; but I don't know you. Are you shapechanged?

PED: My passenger requested to come here.

(I coughed three times, took the crystal ball out of my mouth, and set it before her.)

Elphaba: *Boo!*

Glinda: *Eek!*

Elphaba: Hello, blondie!

Glinda: *Elphie!* How are you?

Elphaba: Still just a no-body. I've been traveling. I have seen the cosmos through the eyes of a dragon. I never knew how blind we were. I had another of my *visions*: Myself in a tall fair body. If I stick with this dragon, he promises to try and help.

PED: If you ladies would like to chat for a while, I could go for a nice long nap outside.

Glinda: Please, be my guest. Aren't you in a hurry to get back to Kansas or wherever?

PED: I can leave now anytime. Speaking of time, I know I can return to my origination at any reasonable point in time. I need only leave this land through a whirlpool in a magic body of water. I can even generate the whirlpool.

Glinda: There is a potent magic fountain in the courtyard of Ozma's palace in Emerald City.

(Exit the dragon.)

Elphaba: Glinda, you *are* talking about the Fountain of Forgetfulness, aren't you? If I stay with him I'll have a chance of getting a new body; one *not* green.

Glinda: Using the Fountain would be best for Oz, Elphie. He won't remember us for the rest of his life.

Elphaba: But afterwards, Glinda, afterwards. Who then will have the last laugh?

— O — O — O —

(Back at Emerald City, Ozma threw a grand farewell party for the dragon. Dorothy waved to her friends in the crowd from her perch atop the dragon's head, thirty feet above the ground. Her old aunt and uncle had thanked the dragon profusely for restoring their niece to health. Many people offered gifts of treasures, but he declined them all, explaining that he was never *that* sort of dragon.)

Ozma: We owe you much, for saving Dorothy's life.

PED: There is no debt there. You saved *my* life by calling me here when you did. We are even.

Ozma: No, you did more than that. Since you will take no material reward... (She raises her hands and wand... the crowd noises subside.) By royal decree; we declare that you shall henceforth be known here as... The Lizard of Oz!

(General applause)

— O — O — O —

Ozma: We contacted King Evardo about the crown. To say that he was mortified scarcely begins to describe his reaction. He had gotten a set of such crowns for a bargain price and wore the other one himself on state occasions. I assured him that they were harmless to fairy-folk.

PED: Need I ask who supplied these crowns?

Ozma: The Nomes are the chief source and artificers of such gems and all precious and exotic metals. The King got them directly from Ben Loden, who was still calling himself Ruggedo.

PED: Where is Ben Loden now?

Ozma: As best as We can determine, he is no longer within our borders. Our mirror cannot locate him. Other sources are unable to place him either. So, he has probably left these lands altogether.

PED: And now, Princess, so must I. I must return to Earth and assure Mother that I am still on the job.

Ozma: Fare you well, Friend.

PED: Thank you; (laughs) *and the blessings of the time dragon be with you!*

(The crowd gasps at this mysterious benediction.)

— O — O — O —

(Dipping his claws into the fountain pool, the dragon breathed a gentle breath of air upon the surface. The water began to rotate until a slight depression was formed. Pulling himself over the edge, the dragon slipped into the whirl with scarcely a splash. Powerful motions of his great tail impelled him onward and into the elemental Plane of Water, steering with half-extended wings like the flippers of a whale or penguin. Surfacing in a familiar lake in Japan, he transmitted an *all clear* message to his monstrous Mother. He licked at his eyes, and traces of the magic waters blocked out his recent memories of Oz; never to be recalled until the day he died.)

— O — O — O —

The kami: Welcome back, Payato. We weren't sure we would ever see you again. When the sacred flame was extinguished, we feared the same had happened to you.

PED: Excuse me, have I been somewhere?

Elphaba: (From within) *We* have been a great many places, Uncle. I remember, if you don't.

PED: Uncle? Sorry, I've forgotten *your* name. Have you been in me for very long?

Elphaba: Call me Fabala. It's one of my more savory nicknames.

PED: I'll have to introduce you to my goddaughter: Ryoko. She is still restricted, in her astral body, to short distances from her more substantial remains.

Elphaba: Is she a good listener? Until you came along I hadn't had anyone to talk to for almost a century. Otherwise, I wouldn't have gone to so much trouble memorizing that entire Grimmerie book.

[Some of the above beings and situations have been suggested by the works of L. F. Baum and Gregory Maguire.]

The End
(of this tale)

Letters of Comment

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

PieEyedDragon 29 July 2005
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What! Another earthquake? Here I go again.

Since there supposedly won't be a chapter in this issue; here is a teaser of Things To Come:

Prolog: Valinor — Year 125, Fourth Age

The ancient Dwarf feels no pain, but has little strength of body remaining. Of the Nine Walkers, six were no more. Soon all seven of the non-immortals would be dead. His thought wanders in that theme: Seven Stars and seven Stones; seven Rings for seven Dwarf-lords; the foundations for the seven great Dwarf-hoards, plundered by...

His eyes wander, following the brightening light that moves downward toward the West. Eärendil the Mariner, bearing the Silmaril through the skies, was returning to port.

With a start, Gimli realizes that he is in a position to do something important for all of his kin. He calls loudly for his friend, Legolas, to go find the wizard.

[Oooh, a teaser. The final chapter of the current adventure will appear in this issue after all. I had to expand the issue from the normal 10-page limit in order to fit in the NASFiC report... Next month's issue will be put together under severe time constraints (Con†Stellation is on the weekend I'd normally use to put the *Shuttle* together) so the new adventure may not start running until later this year. -ED]

POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC

Sheryl Birkhead
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23 August 2005

Hi — congrats to all the Hugo winners — the one picture I've seen of the statue made it appear to be a nice one. Since I haven't heard any horror stories about Glasgow, I presume that means things went well.

Also — congrats to the Aurora winners.

Uh, I guess it's probably a bit late to try to find *SW III* in the theaters — guess I'll just continue to wait until it comes out on DVD.

I guess a fair number of US fans will soon be heading to the NASFiC — somehow seems *so* anticlimactic!

[It wasn't *just* US fans at NASFiC of course — there were at least a few Canadians if nothing else. And yes, in some ways I'd have rather gone to Worldcon, but that wasn't in the cards for me or (I suspect) many of the other attendees in Seattle. Through last week, *Revenge of the Sith* was still playing in a few hundred theaters domestically, though I don't know of a list of them. It's no longer playing in Huntsville. -ED]

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

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31 August 2005

Somehow, there's a huge difference between August 31 and September 1, as if the first day was the end of summer, and the next day was the beginning of fall. I almost expect the temperature to start dropping with the beginning of September. We just have to remember that in spite of the kids going back to school, there's three more weeks of summer to enjoy! And with that in mind, here I am inside, writing a loc to the August *Shuttle*. I gotta get a laptop...

Is everyone all right there? Hurricane Katrina nearly destroyed New Orleans, and flooded out Biloxi and Mobile.

Then, it roared up the length of Mississippi, and must have drenched you all, and give[n] you a number of tornadoes to worry about. We were very worried about Guy and Rosy Lillian, who used to live in NO, but now live in Shreveport. Perhaps that move was a blessing in disguise. Stay safe, dry and warm, everybody...

I wish I'd gotten to Glasgow, mostly because of panels like the one on private space flight. I know Yvonne would have loved to have attended that panel, and she certainly could have added to it. She works for a Canadian aerospace company with US offices in Gulfport, Mississippi. We know what happened to Gulfport... I remembered KIM Campbell and Johannes Berg as well. KIM was Canadian by birth, and chummed around with all the Canadians she could find at Worldcon, and we last ran into Johannes at Torcon 3. Their deaths were both shocks.

I understand Gail and Ian's frustration at what could be their last Worldcon... Yvonne and I have been through that as well, declaring that Torcon 3 was our last Worldcon. Well, we've decided to make an attempt to save enough money to go to LAconIV on the cheap. I quite enjoyed the SFSA party in Toronto, and we both joined SFSA there. Grant, you may have to spend your time in LA running the SA party if you're going to be the only South African there!

The YAFazine produced at the Glasgow Worldcon is now available from <eFanzines.com>, and can be downloaded for your .pdf perusal. It's definitely worth a look, and may tell these kids there's more to communicating than blogs and website bulletin boards. I would like to hear the explanation of

why there was no Columbus Worldcon bid party, but this probably means the bid has failed financially, and hasn't told anyone. Ah well, Columbus was so close for us in Toronto, we could have driven there. Maybe Chicago, it's drivable, too. I could even take the train.

Lots of awards, and wish I'd made it onto the 10 and above list for Best Fan Writer. Maybe next year in Los Angeles. Wishes can come true...

I think Charles Ross is from Western Canada. One local fan, Jason Tanaguchi, also does a Star Wars show at conventions, and did it before Ross did.

Time to fold up and get this ready to go. We are getting the remnants of Katrina right now; it's raining outside, but raining much harder in New York and New England. Take care, all, and see you next issue.

[I was in Seattle for Cascadia Con during Katrina's rampage. From all I've heard the Huntsville area got only a moderate amount of rain and wind — no damage. By now most New Orleans and Gulf Coast fans (and pros) have been confirmed as safe, though several of them lost their houses and contents — including some significant sf or fannish collections. Thanks for the pointer to the YAFazine. I've taken a quick look at it already and will certainly finish reading it later. I haven't heard a definitive reason for why the Columbus bid was absent at both Worldcon and NASFiC though I've heard speculation that personal problems may have been a contributing factor. It's not certain yet that the bid is dead but if not they need to reestablish their seriousness very quickly. -ED]



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