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Of course
Notre Dame has
two towers. Why
do you ask?



Edited & published by John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA

Proofreading services this time were rendered by Duckie, the wonder Labrador, ably assisted by our cats Inga, Eyegore, and Froderick. If there are typos anywhere in this issue, now you know who to blame.

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What you have here in your hands (or on screen) is another Mythical Publication. Copies of this fine, back on a quarterly schedule fanzine can be had for The Usual, which means expressed interest, submission and eventual inclusion of articles and artwork, letters of comment, and cold hard cash in the amount of \$3.00 USD if you want a printed copy mailed to you. Bribes are also accepted. Of course, if you send in locs, articles, and artwork, you just earned a life-time free subscription. Consider yourself lucky, indeed.

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Nicked from Internet – 16, 8, 27, 37; Brad Foster – 20, 25; Lloyd Penney – 24
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What's all this then?

A good question. Let's see if I can come up with a good answer.

I guess I should start by saying that this is the 44th issue of *Askance*, the fanzine I have been producing for the last 11 years. That's not a bad streak, and I am not complaining. In fact, I am grateful to have enjoyed one heck of a run with this zine and will be continuing its publication for (I hope) many more years. *Askance* is a fun aspect of my hobby interest in SF to maintain, one that keeps me relatively sane and in touch with all the friends I have in science fiction fandom. Not only that, but the more reading I do over current research done in the field of cognitive development – notably Alzheimer's and dementia, aphasia, plus language development (one of my academic fields of interest) – reveals the benefits of keeping an active mind and body. If a person continues to be mentally engaged and gets some kind of regular physical exercise, there appears to be a positive correlation between living a more productive life past retirement age. (My preference is to call this the *Twilight Zone* years, for obvious reasons.) My goal is to keep going at this fanzine fandom thing as long as I am physically and mentally able.

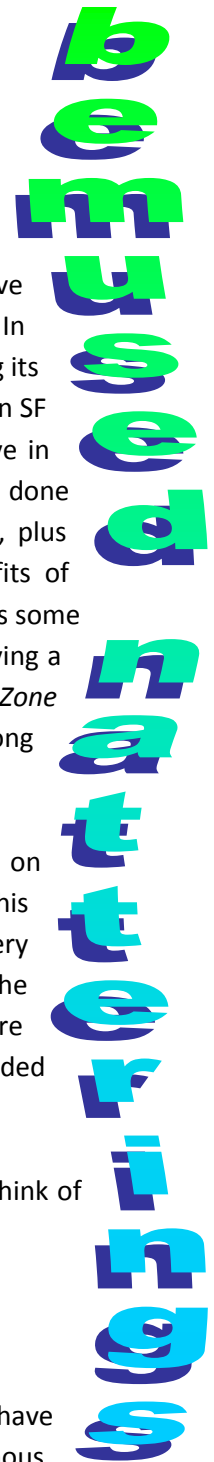
Speaking of elderly fans, many of my fannish peers are announcing their retirements on Facebook and in other venues. The cover artist for this issue, Kurt Erichsen, reached this life plateau earlier this year, and he seems to be enjoying himself quite a bit. I am very happy for Kurt and other friends of mine (such as Yvonne Penney and Laurel Krentz) in the science fiction community who have now retired. The way I figured it, now Kurt has more time to create artwork for fanzines, so I asked him for a cover. As you can see, he responded with a beauty. All I can do now is produce an issue worthy of Kurt's work.

The crazy thing is that all this talk of retirement and other effects of aging makes me think of other matters close at hand. F'rinstance...

You say it's your birthday

Since the last issue my age has advanced yet another year, and in light of the number I have now reached, when people ask me how old I am my response is, "The age of a famous Beatles song." In other words, 64. So now that I have reached this magical mystery tour of an age, there are certain things that come to mind.

First among them is that I am now the same age my father was when he died nearly thirty years ago. That is definitely a sobering thought, more so when I think about dad's health during the last decade of his life. He suffered from severe emphysema, a direct result of being a two-pack a day smoker for nearly forty years of his life. By the time he did quit – in his late fifties – the damage had been done. While visiting mom and dad in Utah back in (I think) 1987, I had to clip his toenails and help him put socks and



shoes on his feet because he couldn't bend over: these simple tasks were too much effort for his ravaged lungs to handle. By then I had cut back on my own smoking habit substantially, indulging in maybe only four cigarettes a day, and maintained an active lifestyle by bowling, playing in a community softball league, and walking a lot. Eventually I quit smoking completely by mid-October of 1988, two months before dad died. If you do the math, that is now approaching the thirty year mark.

Bemused readers may be wondering what prompted these maudlin musings. Well, it is Father's Day of 2018 as I write this, trying to crank out this issue before the end of the month of June. Every year I think of dad on this day – mom, too – and believe that he (they) would be very proud of what I have accomplished in my life. While I may not be considering retirement yet – I really do love my job as a professor of English and ESL at a community college in Texas, making a nice wage, with full benefits, and all – that will probably happen in six years. Heck, teaching is one of those professions a person could do well into their Seventies or even their Eighties, health permitting.

Therefore, here I sit, typing out a new issue of *Askance*, reflecting on a life that has resulted in almost 29 years of marriage, in the process gaining children, grandchildren, the incredible experience of traveling through Europe last year, and accumulating a passel of great friends with memories of everyone and everything. All things considered, I would have to agree with Joe Walsh's 1978 assessment: "life's been good to me so far."

Still – where the hell's my flying car?

Blast from the Past

While perusing one of my old USB drives, I ran across this, which I had written for my SNAPS (Southern Nevada Amateur Press Society) zine, *Nukking Futz #38* (early 2011), the last contribution I made shortly before that APA folded. Untitled, it was my way of sharing a common early morning occurrence in the Purcell household at that time. I have taken the liberty of revising it just a tiny bit.

John announces: "Good morning, listeners! It's 6:45 in the morning, and time for the daily feline running of the Daybreak 150: that refers not to the distance covered, but the speed at which the Purcell's cats ramrod around the house.

According to the Leaderboard, after four laps, Eyegore is leading Inga by a length, followed closely in a battle for third between Theadorable and Frodorick. I am enjoying the race while munching on a whole wheat muffin slathered with orange marmalade, washed down with a cold glass of generic cran-grape juice. This race is sponsored by Kroger™: your family's place to shop for all your needs.

Five minutes into the race, we have an official update: There has been a massive collision! Inga and Eyegore are entangled, blocking Frodorick's progress, giving Theadorable the opportunity to literally spring into the lead.

Now on the seventh lap, the yellow flag is out for the track crew - me - to clean up a spill.

Good news, fans! The green flag is waving, so they're off again!

The racers appear to be slowing down as we approach the back turn on the tenth lap. Apparently, the pace set by 9-month old kitten Theadorable is too much for the older trio of cats to maintain for much longer. We may have a winner shortly.

And yes, we *do* have a winner! It's Theadorable, who obviously had more gas in her tank than the older competitors. Inga finishes in second place, a half lap behind, followed closely by Eyegore nipping at her tail, while Frodorick was disqualified by settling in for a nap on the infield just before starting the ninth lap."

"Yes, John, Frodorick's indifference was definitely a key factor in this morning's race."

"Tell me what you like the most about the Daybreak 150, Bob."

"Well, John, the Feline Daybreak 150 has all the spills and thrills of NASCAR, and is not limited to only taking left turns, but also resembles steeplechase races as competitors leap over assorted obstacles while incorporating many of the features of Roller Derby: the slingshots, the free use of elbows, hip checks over the rails...Everything."

"Thank you, Bob. And that brings us to the close of today's Feline Daybreak 150. Tune in tomorrow morning for still more classic races from the Purcell Indoor Race Track, live from College Station, Texas, here on KRAP radio, 1973 on your AM dial."

Who's in this issue

The dominant article in this issue is "I See France – among other things," an accounting of the museums and sights of Paris that Valerie and I visited last summer. Honest, I did my best to keep this article as succinct as possible, but it kept going and going and going. It is hard to limit yourself when you have so much to say. In spite of my verbosity, I hope you enjoy it.

Bill Fischer

Since my old college chum just turned 70 and his laptop has been exhibiting signs of dementia, there is no new "Figby" cartoon here because he didn't have the technological tools available. So I am reprinting a classic "Figby" that first appeared in *Askance* #22 back in March 2011.

Teddy Harvia

All hail the return of "Chat: the 4th Fhannish Ghod"! It has been awhile since this felonious feline has been here, so it's good to see him back. Or is it?

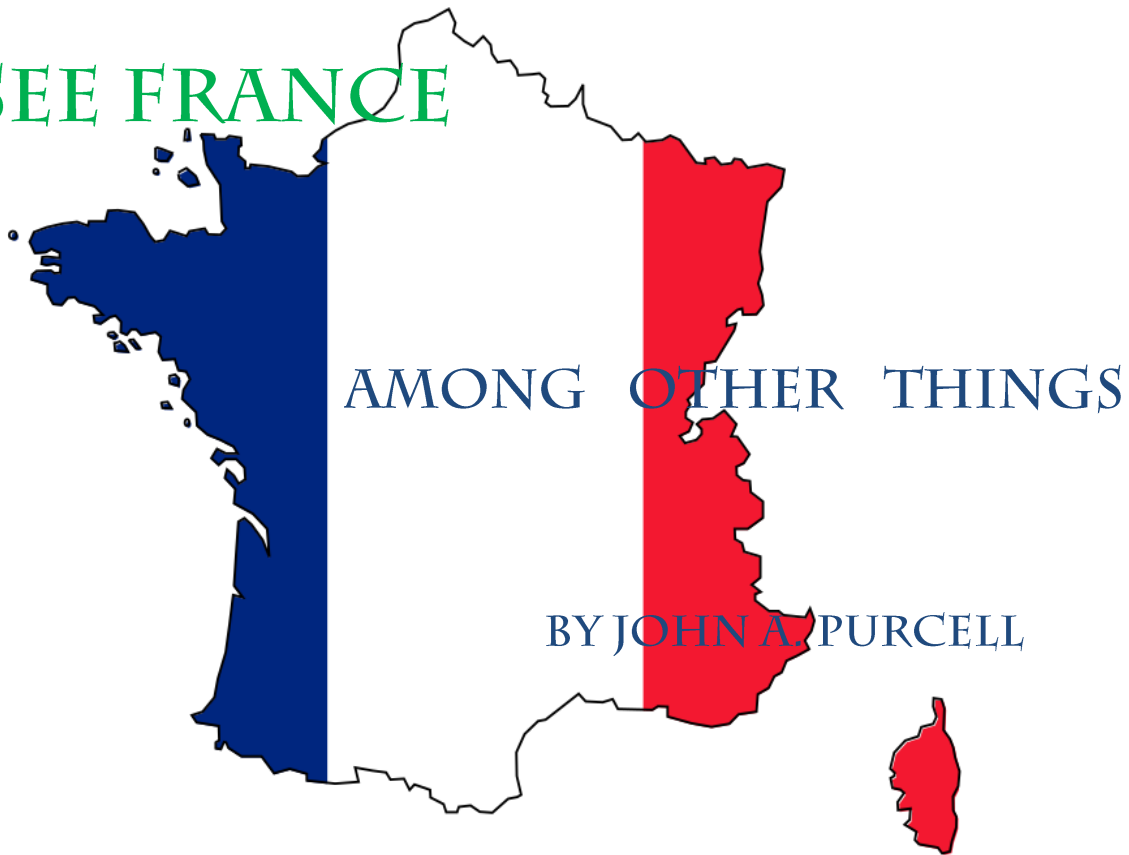
Lloyd Penney

Besides being a massively prolific letter writer, Lloyd has been involved with conventions for many, many years. So many, in fact, that he was written up a batch of his convention experiences that have appeared in this fanzine over the years. Thus, this episode of "Tales From the Convention" is a fun one about the time Lloyd and his wife Yvonne were in charge of the con suite at the 1994 world convention held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, a.Ka. Conadian.

Taral Wayne

This issue contains the final chapter in the Taral Triptych. This contribution is yet another fine example of Taral's unique view upon the world, and he expresses himself so well. Now what I have to do is see if he's willing to create another cover for a future issue so that he can give his typing fingers a rest. Enjoy!

I SEE FRANCE



In our last episode, we left our two wide-eyed, love-struck world travelers John and Valerie Purcell on that sceptered isle, who had finished their nearly three week trek through England, Wales, back to London, meeting legendary British scientific fans, and seeing all sorts of legendary sights throughout the United Kingdom, where History is Made. They would eventually return – in mid-August – but for now, Europe lay before them...

We arrived late in the evening of July 28, 2017, in Paris, France, after an uneventful trip via the Eurostar from London, England. It was quite the experience to rocket underneath the English Channel at 200 miles per hour and facing backwards the entire time. Granted, this train ride did not take long at all – not even two hours – and it was rather exciting. We had no trouble at all getting on at St. Pancras ... er, I mean, St. Pancras Station in London, stowing all of our luggage (plenty of storage space near our seats), and then utilizing our Drag Along Methodology Needed (DAMN™) system to get everything back off at Gare du Nord in Paris at 10:40 PM, local time. The trick, we realized, was in getting our pile of stuff to the Hotel Jarry Confort, which was only three-quarter of a mile from the station. We considered walking, but decided against that since we were all alone in a strange city in a strange land and it was dark. Nope. Not A Good Idea At All. We thought of taking a cab, but one glance at the beady, lecherous eyes of all the cab drivers lined up by their cars outside ended that thought. Besides, we had been warned by Mike and Pat Meara about Parisian cab fares, so I pulled out my handy-dandy iPhone 7+ and arranged for an Über driver. This turned out to be a very smart decision. Within ten minutes a very polite gentleman of roughly age pulled up, helped load our luggage into his car, and in short order we were at our hotel.

I suspect that many readers of this zine have already read a previous chapter of this TAFF Trip report in Graham Charnock's fanzine *Vibrator #46* (November 2017), "Riding on the Metro," which detailed our first three days in Paris, but a quick recap would help set the stage for this issue's chapter. In short, the Hotel Jarry Confort was more like the Hotel Jerry Lewis because staying there for only two nights was a comedy of errors. Located in the Tenth Arrondissement, like the Gare du Nord train station, this hotel has no air conditioning – hell, neither does most of Europe – which is no fun at all during yet another summer of record heat across the continent. By day, the Tenth Arrondissement is a lovely part of Paris – breathtakingly beautiful buildings dating back a couple centuries are located here – but at night, the Tenth transforms into its sinister twin. As much as we enjoyed wandering the streets of the Tenth and its neighboring Ninth Arr., where we marveled at the Grand Opera building, and taking the Metro to see the sights during our first two days in Paris, we had no desire to be outside in that part of the city at night. The criminal elements were very much lurking at every corner underneath streetlamps or huddled in alleyways or bus stops. This is part of the reason, in addition to the conditions in the Hotel Jerry Lewis, why Valerie and I switched hotels on Sunday July 30th to the L'Hôtel Opera Richepanse in the First Arrondissement.

Paris, France is one of the world's most visited cities, and I am not surprised. There is so much to see and do here, that quite frankly I think Paris can be very overwhelming if you are not prepared to have a set plan of attack of where to go and what to see and do on any given day. Valerie and I had prepared personal Must See Lists long before we learned that we would actually be going to Europe. I think if we



had not, the two of us would have been completely unprepared for such a trip. Therefore, since we knew that our arrival in the City of Love – among other things – would be quite late on the 28th of July, our plans were to spend our first full day, Saturday the 29th, by doing a brief wander through the 10th and 9th Arr., which are home to quite a few notable attractions, such as the gorgeous Palais Garnier (the Grand Opera, its main entrance pictured here, graced by Valerie's presence) about six blocks from our hotel, and become

acquainted with the extensive Paris Metro system.

Even though we wanted to sleep in the following morning, I am an early riser so was up around 8 AM, and went down four flights of narrow, twisting stairs and got a couple cups of coffee, creamer, juice, and fruit at the bar/bistro in the lobby. Bringing that back upstairs was a trick, but I asked for a tray to accomplish this balancing act. While Valerie awoke and breakfasted, I went back downstairs to talk with the manager about changing our room accommodation. At first, he wasn't very cooperative, but when I mentioned that we had no problem with taking our business to another hotel, he had a sudden change

of heart and became most, shall we say, magnanimous. Thankfully his English was pretty good, and after I checked out room 605 – oh, joy! up two more flights of a medieval stairway – I showed Valerie the room, and she approved. It was ***much*** larger with a king-sized bed, large French doors (figures: we were in Paris) that opened out onto a narrow balcony that overlooked the street, so the room had much better airflow without the sewer stench of room 402. Yeesh! Plus, we were on the top floor, so there were no loud, arguing Italians above us. Well, hopefully there wouldn't be anybody on the roof screaming at each other in the middle of the night. All this for the same price. Heck of a deal.

[Not to get too far ahead of myself here, but when we did return to the Hotel Jerry Lewis just after midnight that Saturday, there were people being loud and obnoxious on the street in front of our hotel, but this gathering of bellicose youths (a half dozen twenty-somethings) were hanging out, not directly below our room, but their loud voices and laughter echoed up and down the narrow street, and this kind of atmosphere is not part of my definition of the “charming Parisian night life.”]

Fortunately, we were able to spend most of that day in the First Arrondissement, where the Louvre Museum is at one end of the Jardine de Tuileries, which is a massive expanse of gardens, paths, outdoor cafés, a small amusement park, and sidewalk artists, musicians, and peddlers abounded. So did hordes

of Chinese tourists, who apparently had followed us from Cambridge, the Salisbury Plains, and London all the way to France. It was hard to believe, but these Chinese groups were substantially larger than the ones we saw at Westminster Abbey and the British Museum. Little did we know that two days later, when we visited the Louvre, that museum appeared to be jammed full of mostly Chinese. We marveled at not only the size of these groups, but at how well-organized they were, moving along with military precision. Well, that



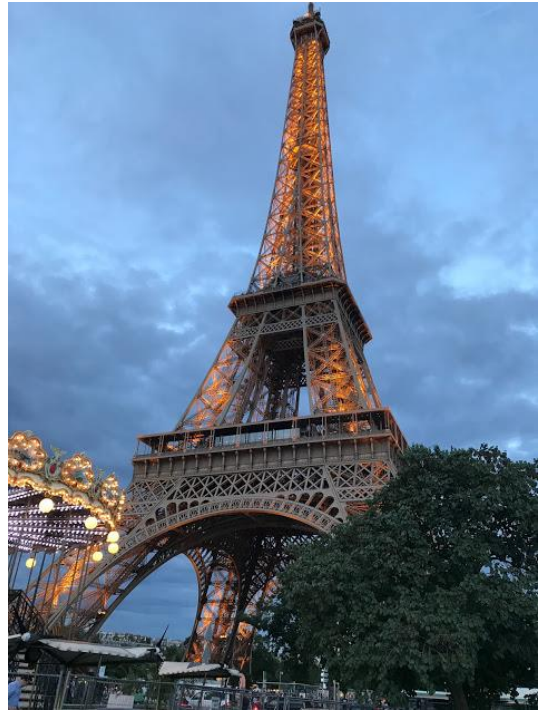
Valerie, approaching the Palais Louvre. The museum is a series of connected palaces converted to a museum in the 1780s.

makes sense because it would be the best way to keep such a large group together. This was when we noticed that every one of them wore earphones and carried the same kind of handheld device. Now it all made perfectly good sense. They used wireless technology to stay linked. A Good Idea.

Shaking our heads at this sight, we enjoyed wandering about, admiring the wares vendors offered while soaking up the atmosphere in this nexus of European culture and history. We were surrounded by 17th and 18th century palaces converted into assorted museums, offices, and shopping centers. The gardens themselves were immaculate, populated with statues both old and modern. At one point I bought a fedora that became part of my “look” for the remainder of our trip, and Valerie purchased a wide-

brimmed sun hat, which would be immeasurably valuable on bright, sunny, and hot European days. Suitably arrayed, we eventually descended into the Concorde Metro Station located in the heart of the Jardine de Tuileries and took a train out to the Fourth Arrondissement where the Eiffel Tower is located.

Emerging from the bowels of the Metro two blocks from the Tower, we followed the crowd along the sidewalks lining the Seine to this architectural wonder. Words cannot describe how awestruck we were by the size of the Eiffel Tower looming over our heads. It is massive, and the entire area around is a perpetual carnival. There was no way we would be able to venture up the Tower because the line was impossibly long. We contented ourselves by sitting on the grass in the park underneath it, agog with the realization of where we were: in Paris, enjoying a lovely sunset in a park in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower; listening to the excited babble of voices in a multitude of languages around us; the aroma of fresh baguettes in the air; boats slowly cruising the River Seine; street artists sketching, musicians playing, children laughing. We were immersed in this wondrous diverse medley called humanity gathered together to marvel at this incredible landmark.



Gawddamn, what a sight!

Eventually we shook ourselves out of this reverie and started walking back to the nearby Metro station, but by then we were extremely hungry, and our water bottles were long dry. I remembered passing a restaurant – one of many, in fact – about a block from the Eiffel Tower that appeared to have gluten free food on its menu, so we located it and enjoyed a late evening – it was after 10:30 at night! – dinner in a sidewalk restaurant in Paris. It doesn't get more romantic than that, my friends. Unfortunately, we still had to get back to the Hotel Jerry Lewis in the 10th Arr., but the Metro runs all night long, so that wasn't a problem. The aforementioned noise of the rabble our hotel mentioned earlier **was a big** problem, though. The racket of those punks kept us awake until three in the morning, and by then we had located another hotel to switch to on Sunday.

Well, what can you do? We had our credit card, and figured that since we never had a proper honeymoon 28 years ago, why not treat ourselves now? As I chronicled in "Riding on the Metro" in Graham Charnock's fanzine *Vibrator #46*, we moved our entire pile of luggage to the L'Hôtel Opera Richepanse down in the First Arrondissement, which is where the Louvre and all sorts of wondrous sights are located. Doing this on the Metro on a Sunday afternoon was not only an adventure, but also damned dangerous. While attempting to clamber aboard with our suitcases, the train doors began to close, hitting me square in the back and knocking me down. I smashed my right shin into one of our

suitcases, bending the handle and giving me one beauty of a bruise on that leg. We made it, though, licking our wounds once it was all over.

So we did the deed, switching hotels, making an appreciable upgrade from the Hotel Jarry Confort in the 10th arrondissement to the L'Hôtel Opera Richepanse (a.k.a., The Rich Pants Hotel). Yes, it cost much more, but we decided, "Hell with it! This TAFF trip is doubling as our long-delayed honeymoon, so we're doing it." End result, on our own dollar (not the TAFF funds), we were living it large in Paris. After what we had been through these past few days, we deserved to treat ourselves.

After unpacking and resting for a bit, we headed out to see the Paris Catacombs, which is across the Seine, but when we got there, the queue was a massive snake winding its way up, around, and down the sidewalk. It would have taken too long to enter the Catacombs before it closed, so we figured we would wander about this cool old part of Paris (the 14th Arrondissement). During our meanderings we bought fresh veggies, cheeses, a bit of ham, and crackers (this last was more like matzo bread) down at the Rue de Gaugherre, a long, straight street lined with lots of shops and little cafes and restaurants. What surprised us was the abundance of sushi shops on that street. Go figure. I even found a small bookstore, which was closed - this was early Sunday evening, you see - so I snapped a couple pictures of it. We eventually arrived back at the Square Claude-Nicolas Ledoux across from the entrance to the Catacombs - the line to get in was still lengthy - and sat down on a bench to enjoy some of our purchases while observing a number of very large rats running to and fro. None of them approached us, even though they certainly smelled the food we were eating and scampered back into the bushes. We didn't bother them so they didn't bother us. I am sure they cleaned up whatever crumbs we left behind. It was an environmentally friendly repast, don'tcha know.

Eventually we took the Metro back to the Louvre (which was a major portion of the next day's agenda) to await the lights turning on there. Again, that was one hell of a sight that made us linger much longer



than planned. When you are surrounded by such enchantment, it is very hard to leave. We were living in a fantasy world. But, what can you do? Back in our new-fangled, upgraded, air-conditioned, fancy-Nancy hotel room, Valerie and I kicked off our shoes and relaxed, flipping through the channels on the wide-screen HD TV, settling on a feature-length Asterix the Gaul animated movie. Somehow that was the perfect ending for that Sunday.

Monday, 31 July 2017, was definitely the heart of the Parisian leg of my TAFF trip. While the first two days in Paris were undoubtedly unique and memorable, today we were going to fulfill Valerie's lifelong dream of seeing the Palais du Louvre, the home of one of the world's largest collection of art masterpieces in all genres. The Louvre is a massive complex of

wings and pavilions on four levels, that started out as a fortress (begun early in the 13th century) and would eventually become the royal palace of Charles V in the 14th century. The palace was added to starting in the 16th century, and after the French Revolution, in 1793 part of the complex became a public museum (known as the Musée du Louvre) which now encompasses most of the original palace. The glass pyramids in the courtyard were built in the 1980s and early 1990s, forming the underground lobby, and today they are recognized as iconic an image of Paris as the Eiffel Tower.

The problem with going to a museum as gigantic as the Louvre, just like our visit to the British Museum a week and a half earlier, is figuring out where the hell to begin? Practically everybody who enters makes a beeline to see the Mona Lisa, but Valerie and I have other artistic interests. Yes, we eventually did see Da Vinci's masterpiece – it is quite small, housed in its own display room with extensive security both human and inhuman – that day, and I wanted to visit the Rodin sculptures in the Richelieu Wing, but Valerie's big love was the Italian Renaissance, so off we went, oohing and aahing all the way.



Everywhere you looked – walls, floors, columns, doorways, the ceiling – there was **ART**. We marveled at the works of Raphael, Botticelli, Titian, Donatello, Piero della Francesca, and I fell in love with Andrea del Verrochio's paintings. When Valerie saw Botticelli's "Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist" she began to cry. I must admit, it is hard not to be moved by these master works. I managed to actually get a clear photo – nobody blocking the view – of the Mona Lisa, despite the swarming crowd. It annoyed me to see people taking selfies with the Mona Lisa. Okay, maybe I'm an artistic prude, but to me doing this sort of thing demeans the original; it's insulting.

There was simply no way a person could spend Just One Day in the Louvre and see it all unless you were on a high-speed express tour. Valerie and I wanted to spend much more time than available inside,



soaking up all of the history and beauty. Just like our half-day at the British Museum, we knew in our hearts that we could spend a month in the Louvre and *still* not see everything. No question, this was an overwhelming experience that we couldn't imagine being eclipsed.

So naturally, the next place we visited that day was the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Ho-hum. Just another marvel of Gothic architectural engineering in the

heart of Paris. Move along, citizens...

Properly named the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris (meaning, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Paris), this magnificent structure, possibly the most famous church building in the Western World, is located on the Île de la Cité of the River Seine (14th Arr.) and like anyplace in Paris it is accessible via the Metro. We were surprised at how quickly the long lines moved; this was due to there being two main entrances, and people dutifully doffed hats as they entered. The interior of the Cathedral inspires you to silence. Just like Westminster Abbey, photography was not allowed inside except for specific areas, such as on top of the one open tower (should you aspire to climb something like 300 steps to get there). The view is spectacular, I am sure, but we were not feeling physically fit enough to do so. Even so, the beauty of this church – the altar is astonishing, and the artwork depicting the Stations of the Cross was simple yet beautiful. I marveled at the size of the pipe organ, imagining what it must sound like during mass; behind us, the choir loft likewise was adorned with finely carved filigree and figurines. Being there definitely brought back memories of my childhood growing up in an Irish Roman Catholic family. Closing my eyes, I imagined hearing again the Gregorian chants echoing through this massive nave during mass, my father as usual dozing off during the homily.

Though we were stunned by the magnificence of the Cathedral de Notre Dame, the Archeological Crypt of the Ile de la Cité blew us away. See, underneath the cathedral are Roman ruins: the remains of the earliest settlements in what would eventually become Paris. The brochure we picked up stated that these ruins were discovered in 1965 as part of excavations that lasted until 1972, and the crypt was established in the 1990s. Perhaps it is not surprising at all that we spent more time underneath the cathedral than inside it. Valerie and



I were completely mesmerized while looking at the foundations, walls, rooms where Roman legions and their families lived 2000 years ago. Just incredible. Naturally, we took a lot of pictures. Eventually we had to leave because the crypt was closing, so we reluctantly ascended into early evening daylight to explore more of the this island before taking the Metro back to the Jardine de Tuileries again, slowly making our way to our hotel. Heck of a day exploring beauty and history.

The next day continued this trend of making us Americans feel miniscule in the face of European history. Our plan for Tuesday, August 1st was to definitely visit the Musée D'Orsay, one of the items on both of our Must-See Lists because Valerie and I are enamored of the Impressionist Period. Once again we walked the three short blocks from the Rich Pants Hotel to the Tuileries gardens and started our slow stroll to explore the flower beds, watch the ducks in the ponds, enjoyed some freshly brewed espresso, perused sidewalk art, etcetera, etcetera. In short, we walked along the length of the Champs Élysées until we finally came to the Arc de Triomphe.

Out came our cell phones and we started in on yet another spell of picture taking. We noticed a short



line of people going into a door on the interior part of the arch. Intrigued, we went up and discovered that for a small fee – twelve euros per adult – you could go up inside the Arc de Triomphe, then even take another short stairwell and go up on top of it! So we did. There is a small museum up inside the arch, and when you walk outside you are fifty metres (164 feet) above ground. The view of Paris is spectacular, and you will never guess what we did. If you said “took a lot of pictures,” you’re right. We even had a Chinese tourist couple take a photo of the two of us on top of the Arc de Triomphe with the

Eiffel Tower in the background. This photo is my favorite from the entire trip. We thanked these delightful people, and returned the favor.

After maybe half an hour up there, we descended and took a short bus ride to the Musée D’Orsay, where we did not want to scrimp on time. Valerie and I are huge fans of the French Impressionists, and the D’Orsay has the largest collection of this art in the world. Needless to say, it was exquisite and well worth buying those tickets in advance. Of course, we lingered in the Van Gogh section, but also tarried before the other masters: Manet, Gauguin, Monet, Cezanne, Renoir, Seurat and Sisley. Seeing all these artworks spurred my music memory to start playing Debussy’s “Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun” in my head while admiring the paintings. When that music ended, I mentally cued up some Saint-Saëns, followed by selections from Ravel and Richard Strauss. How else could you view all these masterpieces?

Hours later, we reluctantly left at closing time to take metro back to the Concorde stop, enjoying the sunset while walking back to our hotel to have dinner. Then we leisurely went back to the Concorde station, went back out to the 4th Arr., where we then walked to Champ de Mars (left bank) for our midnight boat ride on the Seine. Our boat was docked across from the Eiffel Tower, which was all lit up as we boarded the boat then started glittering as cathedral bells starting ringing out the hour. All I can say is that Paris at night, seen from the river, is glorious. Without question, nothing says romance like snuggling together while serenely floating down the Seine, past the palaces, museums, churches, cathedrals, columned government buildings... Oh, good heavens. Why should I even try to describe the scene? If there was ever a time for including photographs into a trip report, this is the spot. Sadly, I don’t think any of the photos I took would look good in print: too dark.

Once we returned to the dock and disembarked, even the Metro couldn’t sway our mood. From the Concorde station we strolled arm in arm, full of l’amour, back to the Hotel of Rich Pants.

Our final day in Paris was Wednesday, August 2nd, 2017, and we continued our quest to see specific sights before getting ourselves to the Gare du Nord for our train to Rotterdam, Netherlands that evening. Thus we rose early, and after breakfast we boarded the Metro to first see the Chocolate Story, a museum fully devoted to the history and development of chocolate. In its own way, this is a fascinating topic. Most people probably don’t care about where chocolate comes from or how it’s made,

but as a devout advocate to the wonders of the cocoa bean, I can say I care. I mean, we are talking about **CHOCOLATE** here! Nectar of the Gods, healing balm of the soul. This is my kind of museum. It falls into the category of “hands on, help yourself” art: samples of chocolate made from cocoa beans from across Central and South America are spread out over the three levels, and you can taste the



differences between cocoa from San Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, and so on. Recipes of various concoctions created from cocoa beans were reproduced from diaries kept by the Conquistadores and missionaries who traversed and



conquered the New World. Archeological finds of Meso-American pottery and chocolate cooking utensils were on display alongside elaborate European silver and gold sets the Spanish, Portuguese, and French created to serve these highly desired exotic beverages brought back from far off lands. There is even a display of chocolate clothing and a huge model of the Eiffel Tower completed sculpted out of chocolate! By the time we left a couple hours later, with cups of delicious hot chocolate in hand, I had such a natural sugar buzz going I felt like I could fly to our next destination, Montemarte.

Our main goal of visiting this ancient mountain – basically a 130 meter tall hill rising out of the 18th Arrondissement – is because this is the artistic heart of Paris. Think New York City’s Greenwich Village and you will have a good idea of what Montmarte is like. The Espace Dali – a small museum devoted solely to the work of Salvador Dali, Valerie’s all-time favorite artist – is located up here, and while small, it is jammed with some of Dali’s most outrageous and iconic work. His larger and more famous work is displayed in Spain, but the Espace Dali is pretty darned cool, if you ask me. Valerie loved it, and I have to

admit that I really enjoyed it, too. Dali definitely had a unique vision and explored all sorts of means of creation to make them reality. Sketches, sculptures, furniture, architectural designs, paintings... you name it, he tried it. Dali certainly had a fertile imagination.

Getting up Montmarte requires riding a cable car up a very steep grade, but once you get to the top of this hill and stand on the steps of the Sacré-Cœur (here on the left), the view of Paris is



spectacular. The basilica atop this 130 meter hill adds another 90 meters, making this the second highest point in Paris: only the Eiffel Tower, at 300 meters, is taller. This white marble basilica is truly amazing to see, and a wedding was being held there that day. The gown the bride wore perfectly matched the setting. Romantic? Most definitely. What a lucky bride and groom to be wed in that setting.

Sadly, we had to leave Montmartre before 5:00 PM so that we could get to the Gare du Nord train station two hours later. Getting to the Metro stop meant walking down steep and winding streets, but this was really cool because we passed by a bunch of shops and art studios along the way. It didn't take

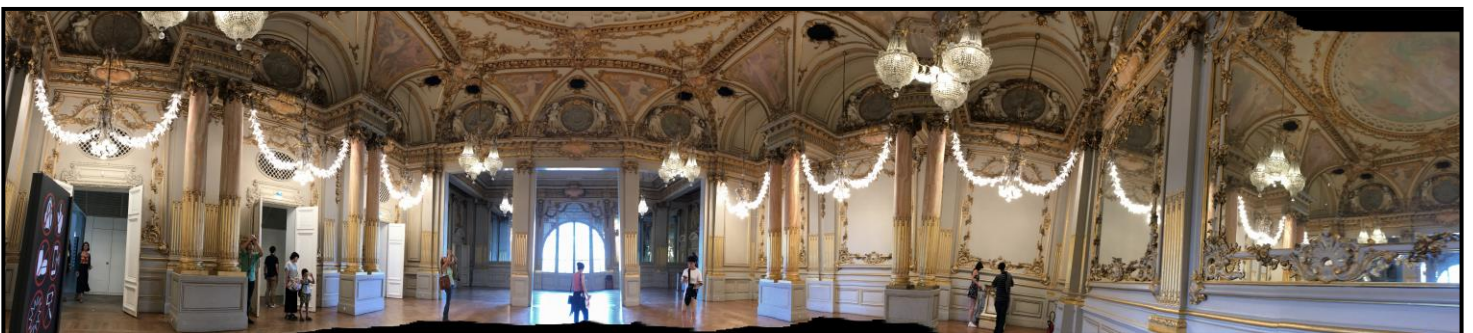


A panoramic photo of Paris from Motmartre.

that long, either, and we easily made it back to the Rich Pants Hotel where our luggage awaited. We thanked the staff profusely, and made a vow that should we ever get the chance to return to Paris, this would be our first choice of hotel.

Thanks to all the practice we had since arriving in Manchester three weeks earlier, our Drag-Along Methodology Needed (DAMN™) system worked perfectly once again as we boarded a Thalys train with plenty of time to settle in for our 7:25 PM departure for Rotterdam. Kees van Toorn met us there at the train station at 10:00-ish (our scheduled arrival on the tickets said 2202 hours): our train was a few minutes ahead of schedule. Kees was waiting for us in the station's central lobby under this massive television screen displaying arrivals and departures, schedule changes, plus assorted advertisements.

So ended the Parisian Adventures of the Purcells. Next up: a week in the Netherlands.



The grand ballroom of the Musée D'Orsay. *C'est magnifique!*



I'm always looking for reasons to get out of the house, and as luck was with me, I didn't need much of an excuse to attend the Canadian National Exhibition on the opening day. And although there was fog that morning, it didn't rain. That's usually a good start.

I've seen cheerier days, though. Saturday was supposed to be a nicer day than the weekend, but I chose what was likely to be the less crowded day. At first the gloomier opening day looked like a mistake, but in the end the weather was fine.

This was the third "Ex" in a row I've attended in recent years, so the thrill had begun to wear off a little. It didn't help that I knew exactly where to go this year, what to skip, and how to waste as little time as possible by avoiding going where I didn't want to be. After all, part of the fun of going to the Ex in recent years had been its rediscovery. Getting into the habit of going right to what I want to see, without seeing everything along the way, violates the spirit of the occasion.

But the big disappointment this year at the Ex was the absence of that huge discount record and CD retailer in the Enercare Building¹. I had used my free entry each year to return there again and again, until I had found every conceivable bargain. But this year ... gone. This year that vendor's space was occupied by yet more endless acreage of off-brand, out-of-fashion or out-of-stock or surplus clothing – sports wear, women's wear, children's wear, caps, sunglasses, handbags, backpacks – you name it, you

¹ The Enercare building was only added to the CNE Grounds fairly recently, and is named for no earthly reason I know of. It has a rather attractive exterior – in a style reminiscent of the Royal Palace of Oz – but inside, it might well have been an aircraft carrier. It is an immense enclosed space for vendors to set up their wares, and nothing more. It is only one of two structures that I can think of that have been added to or replaced at the Ex in maybe 50 years ... and the other was just a new sports stadium to replace the one that was falling down, and probably rat-infested.

wear it. From all appearances, the majority of humankind must spend most of its time and effort in the vain attempt to make itself appear better looking than it is. And, of those, I strongly suspect three-quarters of them must be women. But it is fair to point out that those who are not women seem to be disproportionately preoccupied with brand name running shoes and team logo t-shirts.

In fact, I have to make a confession. For once, I once I did exactly what I accuse other people of doing, and bought a Toronto Maple Leafs official jersey. Actually, if I must be totally honest about it, I bought “Darl’s” team sweater. I’ve sort of always wanted one, and they were hugely marked down! They are warm, as you might expect, and well suited for the coming October and November weather. They are official Leafs merchandise, as well, not knock-offs made by ten-year-old children employed illegally in Thailand – I’m pretty sure they are made perfectly legally for Reeboks by twelve-year-old children. I need to take the sleeves a bit, since they were obviously made for god-like beings with slender waists and seven-foot-two statures, but Cadet Cleaner says they can take the sleeves in for only a few dollars. At \$15 each for the shirt, maybe I could ask if they will sew “Johnny Bower” onto it also.

But I dearly wish I had been able to run amuck buying new movies and music as well.

I also failed to find the butter sculpture at the Ex. Someone told me it had been moved somewhere else this year, but I wasn’t able to discover it on the first day.

Nor was I able to find The Armed Forces display.

Still, there wasn’t anything I wouldn’t have seen that I hadn’t seen during either of the previous years. Canada hasn’t been involved in any very remarkable number of wars, nor have we been overly solicitous about our army. The Canadian Armed Forces still deploys antiquated F-18 fighters, Sea King helicopters, Leopard II tanks that we bought used from the Dutch and cold-war-era warships. But we hadn’t actually spent money for new procurements for several successive governments, regardless of whether the Conservatives or the Liberal Party are in power. And you can be certain the New Democratic Party will not spend a dime on firecrackers on closing day at the Ex, let alone on weapons. I have been thinking we might actually be too peaceful a nation for our own good. As for the F-35 the Americans want to sell us ... good luck on those being delivered before 2020, or later. The RAF isn’t expecting delivery of any aircraft before 2023.

On the other side of the ledger, I discovered a pair of plush dolls from Fraggle Rock. I instantly wanted both, of course. I had seen them pictured on the internet, but had never seen one at first hand. They are certified Jim Henson Products, and not some cheap trademark violations. As you might expect, they were well made, if a bit pricey. For some reason, only Red and Gobo Fraggles are available. This is clear insult to Mokie, Boober and Wembley, of course, who are every bit as essential to life down in Fraggle Rock. It was more understandable that Kiki and Darl were left out. The two Fraggles are hung from a shelf for now, awaiting a permanent home. Which is a somewhat of macabre statement in itself.

It was already early enough to start thinking about Christmas, so I also bought a bottle of real Quebec maple syrup as a gift. Hopefully, I can resist the temptation to indulge it myself ... as I succumbed to doing last year.

I also bought three delicious, creamy, thick slices of home-made fudge. There are three or four different vendors who sell home made fudge every year, but one offers far and away the best, and in an impossible number of flavours, from amaretto-maple to watermelon – a list of twenty wouldn’t begin to

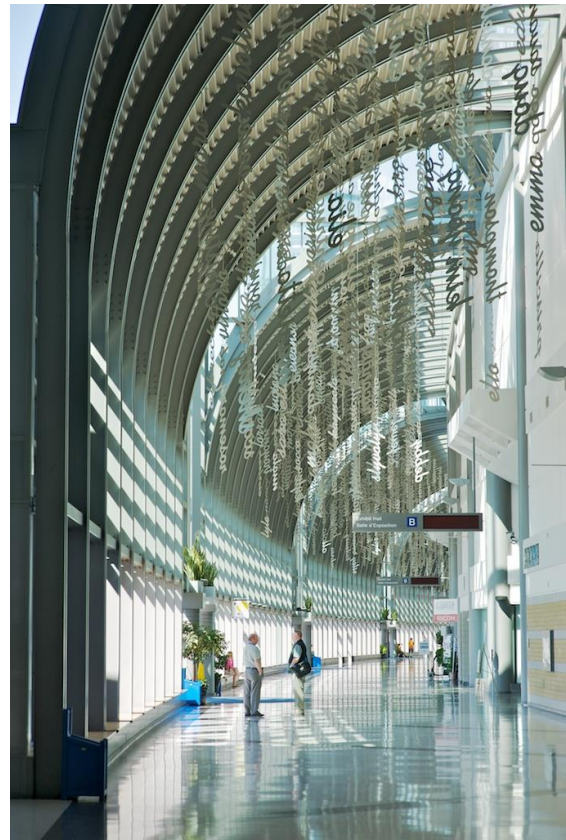
exhaust them. They're all good, I usually return to a small number of favourite. Unfortunately, they are also ungodly expensive – almost as expensive as Black Sea caviar. But the usual half-sugar/half carnauba wax imitations are not an acceptable substitute, and I happily spend the money for the genuine mouth watering experience. One a year is about all I can afford, though.

I had dinner by myself in the Food Building. You might think the building would rejoice in a more romantic name – “Le Concourse de Appetite,” or something like that. But no, it has always been merely the Food Building, and in truth it would be hard not to acknowledge the simple truth in that name. It is a place to eat. But it is also a place to sample food you might not otherwise try in a million years, such as deep-fried Mars bars and bacon donuts. Unfortunately, I must be mindful of prices, and tend to choose wisely if not experimentally, so I ordered Jamaican jerked chicken, beans and rice, finished with a bit of green salad. Then I had the deep-fried Mars bar. Not surprisingly, they're way over the top, but they're also really good!

While I dined, my rambling thoughts thought were about how much I was enjoying all this, pretty much by me, myself and I. There is much to be said for doing the Ex without the nuisance of having someone to keep you company. There is no one to “ooh” and “ah” over the prize-winning pumpkins, no one to take excessive attention to the two-for-one, non-stick cookware, no one who gives a rat's ass about the designer cell-phone cases ... and, yet despite the advantage that I don't have to care about every single detail that I wasn't personally interested in, it sometimes feels a bit lonely having such a great time by myself.

It had been a long time, a very long time, since I had had a great time at the Ex. I thought about the many times I wanted to have back bacon on a bun, to fish for cheap prizes in the Midway, see the dozens of HO trains all running in the Hobby Building, to be awed by the Cold War era CF-101 Voodoo fighters, to gawk the “Porcupine Boy” at the freak show, the laugh at life-size caricature of Red Skelton entirely sculpted in butter and to fill my bag with free samples from one end of the Ex to the other. Much of that had disappeared over the years. Not all of it, at least. I could still eat fatty, undercooked back bacon, and the cheap prizes in the Midway still weren't worth what it cost to win them.

Yet, I remember the actual instant, when I was about ten, when I realized that I was now a jaded man-of-the-world, and that the impressionable child of eight no longer existed. My bewildered parents were unable to fathom why their son, content as child with a mouth full of sticky cotton candy can be, suddenly broke into tears with the unwanted knowledge that Everything Must Change and I Could No Longer Be As I Was. Then I snapped out of it ... sixty years later. No, things did change, and were not the same as they were. That is the destiny that draws us ever forward, for better or for worse, and there is



nothing to be done about it except wait to see if there's more. I decided to just eat my back bacon on a bun, and be grateful.

It was getting much later than I expected when I finished the Ex, and it was quite dark by then. The gloomy day had inspired no photography until I stepped out of the artificial light and into the Midway again – but I discovered it had been transformed into a neon-lit metropolis for Smurfs, where I finally found my inspiration. I stalked the Midway with the camera lens, seeking the best angles for rides and games, and discovered that I was more pleased with the results than I had any reason to expect.

With the Midway behind me, and the pavilions closing for the night, there was not much more to keep me from going home. I wondered if the Ex still exploded fireworks from the stadium after eleven, but I didn't know ... and didn't care to wait for another hour to find out. It seemed that the first day of the Ex was all over for 2017, and the laughter fading away behind me seemed final. I was certain that I'd return, however; not once, but as many times as I wanted, before the last day of the Ex.

After all ... being disabled has its perks. Free admission to the Ex has been one of them for as long as I can remember, and once I was enabled to move freely by Traveling Matt, I took full advantage of the free entry. At least for another year ... but, as with anything in our uncertain future, free admission may not be free any longer. Last year there was a discussion among Ex officials about whether or not to bring free admission for the disabled to an end, and this year the matter was decided. Freeloading cripples like me will likely have to pay up from now on!

Unless they change their minds yet *again*... One can always hope for the best.

But for the time being, I was able to come go as often as I wanted, before Labour Day brought the Ex to a close.

Feeling the opportunities slipping by, day by day, I went to the Ex once more, and then one final time. While there was not a hell of a lot left to see again, I simply enjoyed the ambiance of the crowd. For the most part, I was there each time for excitement and the crowds, but I found couple of small, last-minute gifts for family at Christmas – home-made wine jellies, jam and genuine maple syrup from a family farm in Quebec.

At the last minute, I also found where the butter sculptures had been moved! As I did last year, I took photos for those who were skeptical. Our youthful Prime Minister had been immortalized in Canada's finest, dairy-fresh, yellow butter for the second year in a row. Along with the raccoons, squirrels, pigeons and the monstrous hog also sculpted – worthy of William Hope Hodgson – there was easily enough butter for three hundred boxes of popcorn! Rendered next to Justin Trudeau was a capybara that had escaped from the Toronto zoo last summer, adding topicality.

Rather out of place was what appeared to be a half-grown gorilla in a clown suit. Perhaps it was politically motivated; I couldn't say.

By then, there was little I hadn't seen at least twice. And yet, at virtually the last moment – in a far corner of the Enercare building, hidden behind a display of hot tubs, reclining leather chairs and demonstrations of miracle saucepans – I discovered what appeared to be a joke shop or costume outfitter. It was as almost too crowded for me to even get into the booth, but I briefly envied the ersatz

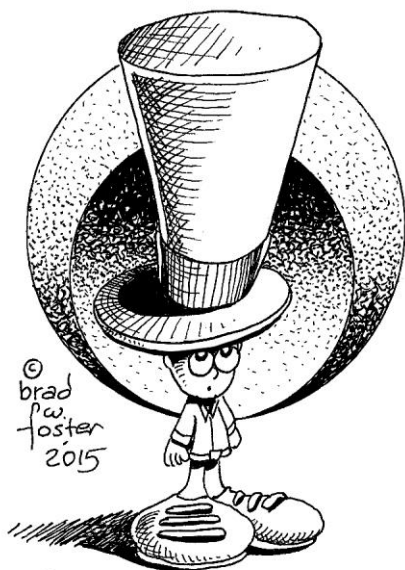
samurai swords. They were only replicas, no doubt made of pot metal, but at \$200 they were pricier than expected. I wanted to replace the broken thing I had, but that would have to done another year.

And at the very, very last moment, I found a toy AK-74 Kalashnikov in the costume shop was far more reasonably than a samurai sword. No one could conceivably mistake one of these for real, of course. The seams and screw holes would not even fool an American inner-city cop in a predominantly black neighborhood. But the detail was fairly accurate and it was life-size, the magazine could be removed and there was a detachable infra-red scope. Admittedly, the scope had a non-functional red LED that you couldn't see through ... because of the non-functional light. But it was cheap, so I indulged my inner child yet again. It took but a minute to pull out the bright orange plastic plug in the muzzle, so that it would not be too actively humiliating to play with.

I was enjoying the last impulsive moments of a Canadian National Exhibition splurge.

Deciding on a hunch that I'd return to the Ex one last time, I went on the next-to-last day. It turned out to have been be a smart move, because it rained nearly the whole of the next day, the very final day.

Will I attend the Ex once again next year? It's hard to say.



**BIG HATS REQUIRE
A FIRM FOUNDATION**

While I'd like to go back, adult tickets were around \$20 this year, and that's a hell of a lot of money just to just to walk through the gate, taking nothing tangible with you when you leave. A friend of mine had to pay to take a pair of relatives, his sister and his mother to the Ex. The five of them cost him nearly \$120, without so much as one of them having as a single taste of cotton candy. You could almost imagine someone who had to turn right around after paying to get in, simply because they had no money left for hot dogs and rides. I never saw the logic of this at all. Surely, it makes more sense for the organizers not to take a cut for the Ex before the visitors have a chance to spend anything on the rest of it? But perhaps I exaggerate the problem. Perhaps it is normal for most people to think of spending \$500, even \$1,000 for a weekend at the Ex ... even if not nor normal for me or anyone else I know.

Unless the Ex changes its mind next year, there may be little alternative but to hope for a reduced Senior's rate. It seems likely there will be one, and ten bucks wouldn't seem unreasonable, as such. There would be no question of returning to the Ex again and again, however. Once I'd paid my way in, that would be it for the year. There would be no second thoughts, no chance to reconsider a purchase, nothing to be seen on a second viewing until next year.

Perhaps there really isn't anything new under the sun, but that isn't really the point of the Ex. Of course there's nothing new to see, but it was fun. It's certainly more fun than the same city streets and the same shopping mall, week after week ... even though there was nothing I couldn't find in the stores that was made any different by the Ex's excessive crowds, glitter and noise. But when you push past sixty, maybe you start cherishing excitement as you find it.

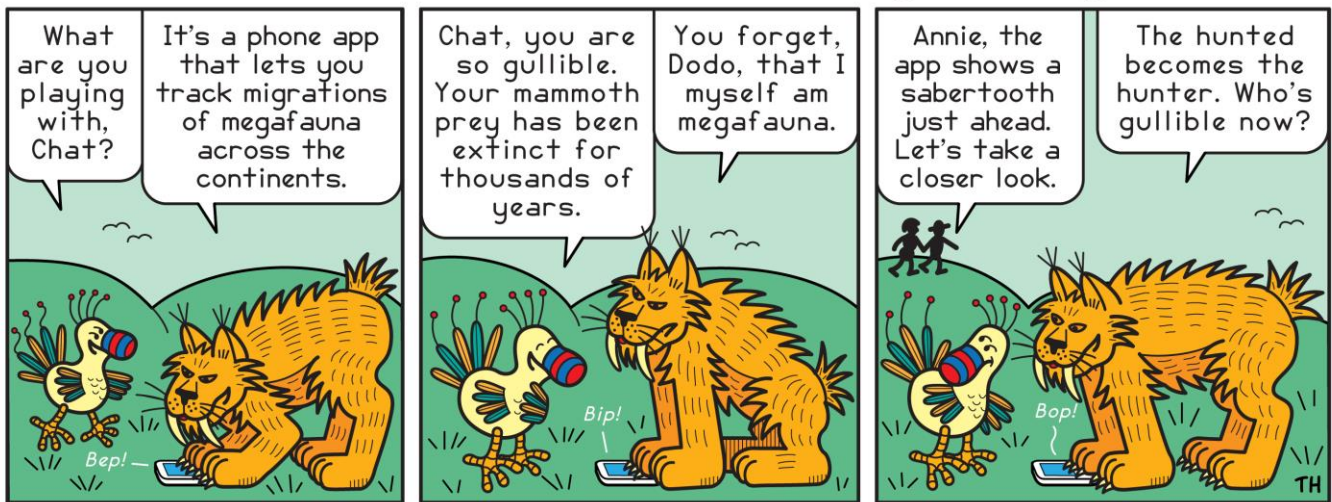
It is never too early to be begin picketing City Hall. The Ex is over for another year, and – whether they wanted to or not – eager, newly invigorated school children have begun their new school year. Now is the time for Seniors to begin our preparations for the coming year. Yes, perhaps there may be a reasonable Seniors’ rate ... or perhaps there won’t be. Why wait for unwelcome news? But if not, we old folks can be only be pushed so far, after all. Once at our limit, we can break out placards and bullhorns at a moment’s notice. The Powers That Be who try to cross us will find us to be dangerous, obstreperous opponents, stewed to the gills on Geritol and just not taking it any more. We who have so little remaining in our declining years, have little to lose.

And I want my Ex, just as it has always been, and will always be in my heart.

- Taral Wayne



CHAT, the 4th Fannish Ghod *by Teddy Harvia*



BOOKS READ

I have been on a bit of a reading tear, despite teaching full time, which means I have essays to grade on top of everything entailed with preparing for classes. Over in the next issue of *Askew*, hopefully to be out in the next couple weeks, I shall briefly review what I have read in the past couple months. Notable among them is *The Frightened Man*, by Kenneth Cameron, and the second and third books of the *Expanse* series by James S. A. Corey, *Caliban’s War* and *Abaddon’s Gate*. Also there are a couple other fun items on the review docket. Check out *Askew* #25 when it appears and see what those are.

SOME WORDS ABOUT FANZINES

Not so very long ago – in other words, May just past – I expected to see in the mailbox the initial flurry of paper fanzines generated by the annual fanzine fan's convention, Corflu, the 35th edition held this year in Toronto, Ontario. A few dead-tree fanzines did arrive that old-fashioned way while others were posted to efanzines.com, the website repository of electronic fanzines maintained by the male half of next year's Fan Guests of Honour at the Dublin Worldcon, Bill Burns. If anyone deserves such an honour, it is definitely Bill and Mary Burns. Kudos to them!

And speaking of kudos, the 2017 FAAn (Fanzine Activity Achievement) Awards were handed out at Corflu 35, and here is the listing:

Best Fanzine *Beam*, edited by Nic Farey & Ulrika O'Brien
Best Perzine *Vibrator*, by Graham Charnock
Best Special Publication *Same Planet, Different World: Jacq Monahan's TAFF Report*,
by Jacq Monahan
Best Fan Writer Randy Byers
Best Fan Artist Steve Stiles
Best Fanzine Cover *Rubber Crab #8*, cover by Graham West
Online Activity eFanzines.com, hosted by Bill Burns
#1 Fan Face Jacq Monahan
Harry Warner Jr Letterhack(Tie) Robert Lichtman & Milt Stevens
Lifetime Achievement Award Bruce Gillespie
Past President of fwa Taral Wayne
Corflu 35 GoH Alan Rosenthal

Congratulations, everybody! I wish I could have been there.

Next year's 36th edition of Corflu will be held in Rockville, Virginia in May 2019, with Michael Dobson chairing. Go to the Corflu website <http://corflu.org/> for all the details you need to know about this annual event. I hope to attend. It has been way too long.

One of the things that I noticed – as did others – when Nic Farey published the final voting figures in *The Incomplete Register Results Issue: 2018 FAAn Awards* in May just after Corflu ended, was that there were, shall we say, oddities in the numbers. For example, of the top 10 genzines, two of those fanzines were edited by John Thiel, *Pablo Lennis* (#5) and *Ionisphere* (#8). Not that much further down the list another N3F zine, *The National Fantasy Fan* checked in at #13, and John Thiel's mostly fiction zine *Surprising Stories* was #15. What this tells me is that there apparently was some bloc voting done by members of the National Fantasy Fan organization, of which John Thiel is a prominent figure on the fanzine side of things there. Now, I understand that award-voting of any kind – Oscars, Emmys, Tonys, etc. - tends to be popularity contests: whoever has the larger fan base usually comes out on top. This has been a contentious issue in Hugo Award voting in recent years (*viz*, the Sad Puppy Affair, which sounds like an old *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* episode), and it bothers me to see it rear its mangy head in the FAAns. I have always thought that fanzine fandom was more altruistic than this, but apparently this kind of behavior cannot be avoided anywhere. *sigh* Time to revamp the process for next year, I guess.

FIGBY

By Bill Fischer

Ponder if you will, Figby:
The conspiracy theories
that abound about sinister
government attempts to
enslave us!



Wacko paranoia, to be
sure! Pathetic and desperate
souls in their fantasies.

And yet.. One still senses
a subtle pressure from
unseen forces, to invade
and control!



Hi! I'm Lyle and I'm from the
MicroGoogleAdsoft®
Cartel. We just need to
gather a little marketing
information from you!



Now just relax while your
cortex is rebuffering
and I reset my
router...





#17 – The Winnipeg Fanzine Lounge

The year is 1992, and Canadian fandom is excited, because we have a Worldcon coming up, the first one since Torcon II in 1973. Some Canfen have heard of Worldcons, but have never been to one, so we will all be there in force. Conadian is coming.

We get a message from chairman John Mansfield that he wants to talk to us about our involvement with Conadian. It takes three conventions where we fail to meet up with each other before we do, and John asks us to run the Conadian fanzine lounge.

"Oh, okay, sure."

I hadn't been to many fanzine lounges before, mostly because we'd been involved with masquerades in the 80s, and usually, the fanzine lounge was tough to find. All Knowledge is Contained in Fandom, so I put out the word that I needed to find out how to run a fanzine lounge, especially the paperwork.

Don Fitch provided me with what Magicon used in 1992, and with some figuring out how to register each of the zines provided, how much to charge for each, and what percentage went to what fan fund, it all went in a binder, and we were ready that way. All we needed was the space and a budget.

The lounge was to be set up in an area on the upper floor of the Winnipeg Convention Centre with the art show and dealers' room, among other attractions, and we were to get pipe and drape, with some miscellaneous furniture. This was what I was told we were supposed to get, but this was before the Winnipeg fire marshal arrived to enforce local fire laws. Once he was gone, various pipe-and-drape walls were moved away from the physical walls, and with the redesign of the floor, the fanzine lounge was...gone.

John had to find a new place for the lounge, and didn't like the solution. The convention centre had 16 clearly marked meeting rooms, and panels were scheduled for each room, but there was an unmarked, 17th room. It had been furnished as a cocktail lounge, but had been shut down and abandoned, and wasn't used. John asked about the room, and was told that it would cost the convention \$500 a day to use. John bit the bullet, and the old cocktail lounge became the fanzine lounge.

John had two large vinyl signs made up to point out the fanzine lounge, but I asked him about refreshments, and he said, the con was paying \$500 a day for the lounge, what more did we want?

It's convention time...we check into our room at the Hotel Louis-Riel, and go to the convention centre to pick up about a dozen boxes of fanzines to put out at the con for sale or distribution. We get to where the fanzine lounge will take place...great room, and we can definitely do some business here. When the con starts and we get set up, Geri Sullivan joins up with us to see what the room looks like. She has brought large blow-ups of fanzine covers to act as decoration and they truly add to the room. When she asks about refreshments, we show her what John gave us earlier...a can of iced tea mix. Geri rightly says this will not do, and off she goes to the catering office. When she returns with one of the catering office senior staffers, she told us she asked the office how much it would cost to put a bartender and full bar into the cocktail lounge for the benefit of those who will visit the lounge. When quoted about \$500 a day, Geri put down her credit card, and told them that if sales for any of the days the bartender was on duty were below \$500, they were to top up the day's take with her credit card. And that's how we got a bartender for the fanzine lounge. All hail Geri for taking the reins. (Just for the record, sales for each day were way above \$500.)

Our bartender is Lisa, and she is charming and helpful, and plies me with Diet Coke and Yvonne with tomato juice whenever we ask. We put the word out in the con newsletter that we have a working BAR!, and we become the social centre of the convention. Geri has no worries about her credit card; business at the bar is brisk. And, a number of people start asking about those fanzine things, and some sit, sip a beer, and peruse some fine fannish publications. (Maybe that's how we get more people into this fandom...large quantities of alcohol.)

We meet with Henry and Letha Welch here, with all three kids, including Kira, who is all of three days old. Yvonne happily goes into doting aunt mode and looks after little Kira while Henry and Letha and their older kids explore the con. We spent a lot of our day in that room each day, but we were spelled occasionally by Tom Feller, who still has our thanks.

Lisa the bartender is there the middle three days of the convention, and the convention tries its best to drink the bar dry. Not only are bar sales brisk, but so are fanzine sales. I wasn't sure how we were going to get the stacks of fanzines home, but more and more, it looked like that wasn't going to be much of a worry. Thanks to a smart suggestion from Yvonne, we toss some bucks into the kitty, and Yvonne buys our sweet lady behind the bar some fantasy earrings as a thank you for her good company and service. She wears them for the rest of the day, and seems genuinely touched. (We know from our own con-running



experience that the service industry is underpaid and under-thanked. We can't do much about the former, but we can do something about the latter.)

It is the last day of the convention, the lounge is pretty quiet, the bar is deserted, and we get a few stragglers coming in to see what we have left fanzine-wise, which isn't much. A local Winnipeg fan, Cheryl if I remember, comes in to see what's left. She is interested in what she's seen, and wasn't sure how much money she'd have left at the end of the con. She purchases the remaining zines, and picks up the few freebies we have left, and heads out happy. We realize that we have sold or given away every last scrap of paper we had left. The faneds who attended come to be paid for their sales, and later on, we issue US\$ cheques to the other faneds and to those in charge of TAFF, DUFF and CUFF. Our duties are full discharged, Geri picks up her large covers, and we bail. We are successful beyond our expectations, and post-convention praise is fulsome, and we bask in it.

That five days is why I've always been up on fanzine lounges. It's a great place to spend some time in a concentrated fanzine atmosphere. And, the egoboo afterwards can't be beat. So, that's why we volunteered to run the fanzine lounge at the Montreal Worldcon in 2009, but that is another story...

-Lloyd Penney



One of the interior courts in the Palais du Louvre.



FROM THE HINTERLANDS

Welcome once again, my friends, to the show that never ends. Come along and enjoy the ride. Step inside, step inside.

Well, I am paraphrasing one of my favorite Emerson, Lake, and Palmer songs, which makes for a good introduction into this issue's lettercolumn, which is as sparse as this

header picture. It happens. At least there are some things to respond to, so onward to the lucky two who bothered to write.



Lloyd Penney
1706-24 [Eva Rd.](#)
[Etobicoke, ON](#)
[CANADA M9C 2B2](#)

5 April 2018

Here I am again, and quickly too, for a change. So soon after the latest Exhibition Hall, I have Askance 43 to have a look at, and I will, too!

Your TAFF trip still sounds so good, it reminds us of our own travels in England in 2016. As you've read elsewhere, I'll wager, we are saving to return to England in the summer of 2019, we hope, so even though Yvonne is happily retired, she has taken on a short-term temp position to save the required funds a little faster. The best thing for her is that she is working a short distance away from home, and we both know how much time transit can eat up. She wants to ensure that we can have the trip we want without worrying too much about money, and our first trip sure taught us a lot about simpler and more efficient spending, which we want to do this next time.

We are still recovering from the loss of Ursula K. Le Guin, and now we must deal with the loss of Kate Wilhelm. She was one of many authors I had wanted to meet, but of course, never had the chance. At least we have her wonderful novels for us to keep as reminders of her talents.

A TAFF guest primer, hm? Well, we'll shelter you and feed you, but you've got to muck your own stalls... Well, a lot of us are picky eaters. Myself, I am picky, so I do eat too much of what I do like. And Yvonne has many food intolerances, including foods with gluten. We certainly enjoy our share of coffee, if not more.

Quiet and uneventful flights are what most of us enjoy, and we often suffer through flights where there are crying children, noisy adults, or in my case once, the guy beside me was built like he was wearing

football shoulder pads, and I was forced to sit through the flight tilted to the left about 10 degrees. Makes you wish Scotty would hurry up and get that transporter up and running.

I hope Taral Wayne is laying rubber down the sidewalk with Travelling Matt very soon. I will wonder aloud if he plans to attend Corflu soon in Toronto, and will quickly check the membership...no, he's not there. Maybe he will pop in for a visit.

The local...I do use LiveJournal for my loc archive, and while there certainly isn't the fannish activity there that there used to be, it is far from deserted. I know many left when Russian interests bought LJ outright, but there's still some people around, and I do get some comments on my loss when I archive them there, an extra layer of fanac, you might say.



My work status...the job at the mystery shopper company has come to an end after just over six months; they simply ran out of work for me, so they let me go. Almost immediately, I picked up a short-term assignment with a medical marketing company, but that runs out in a day or so, so the hunt starts afresh, with the bank account suitably fortified. I will take any sleazy voiceover work offered, for it is good money, and fast, too. I won't act my age! And you can't make me! So there! Nyeaaaah!

Even after she retired, Yvonne decided to pick up a short-term job to pick up more cash. We want to return to England in 2019, for three to four weeks, if we can swing it, so she'd doing this to build up our saving to a faster pace. She easily picked up an accounts payable job a short distance from home, and may get another one once that job is done. She has 30 years of accounts payable experience, and she is also fluently bilingual

(English/French), so she is in demand. I wish I could get work as easily as she does.

It certainly doesn't feel like the spring here (had a little snow flying around here earlier this morning), but our sales have started up. Penney's Steampunk General Store had a successful show at a craft show in nearby Brampton, and we have more tables at craft shows in Pickering and Bradford, and our regular table at the big Anime North convention on the nearby airport strip. And, there is the regular spate of little steampunk events we attend and even vend at sometimes. They are coming soon.

Thank you for the latest *Askance*, and I hope this is the kind of loc you were looking for. Take care, and stay warm, and say hello to Valerie for me.

Lloyd

{Letters from you are always welcome, Lloyd, and I thank you very much for being such a faithful reader and writer of locs. Say, I am glad that Yvonne is enjoying her retirement and that you two are saving up for a return to England next year. I hope you folks can make it. Valerie and I are saving up for

going to Ireland next summer for the Dublin Worldcon, and hopefully spend an extra week in Ireland and another week in nearby Scotland. With luck, we can add Wales onto that trip. Best of luck to you folks.



Ian Millsted

ianmillsted@hotmail.com

18 April 2018

Belated thanks for the emailed copy.

The highlight again was your Off to Europe/TAFF section which I got to the end of all too quickly. That I would happily have read more should tell you what you need to know. How often does arrival in Manchester signify a happy ending? Probably not often enough I imagine the Skeltons would say. Paul and Cas, who I've never met, arrived briefly at the recent Harrogate Eastercon. I was briefly in the same corridor and thought about going over to say hi but thought their brief time there should be left to them to talk to the people who actually know them. Maybe next time.

With regard to the Robin Bright pieces – I was never sure if these were meant to be comedy or serious. If comedy then a single page was enough to do the job. If serious then I start to question where and how he got the PhD.

The reviews are both entertaining and informative. I was not aware of any of the three publications, but they all sound of interest and worth reading. And as freebies, so much the better.

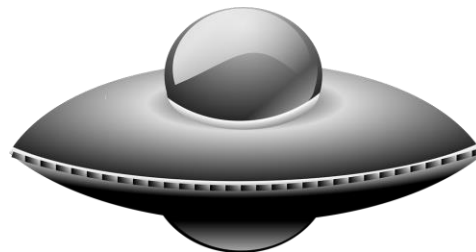
I love the picture illustrating Convention is Texas. I've never been to Texas. Maybe one day. If so, I want to go to an sf gathering of some kind in that shed. Well, maybe not.

Ian

{If you ever do make it down here to Texas, Ian, the two conventions that would probably appeal to you the most are ArmadilloCon in Austin and FenCon in Dallas/Fort Worth. Both are very traditional-based, fannish style conventions that are so much fun. () You should have gone over to say hello to Paul and Cas Skelton. They are delightful.*

I ALSO HEARD FROM

A.B. Kynock
Denny Marshall
Jeanne Mealy
David Thayer



REGIONAL CONVENTION CALENDAR



When creating this issue's listing, I did not include any anime, furry, and the multitude of gaming conventions and events going on in the Texas-Louisiana-Arkansas-Oklahoma-New Mexico region. Even with the deletion of well over a dozen events – I think I counted something like sixteen in those categories – I decided to leave a couple major gaming conventions in this listing. Also included were notable comic conventions, and naturally the literary/media blend of science fiction and fantasy conventions. I am definitely attending ArmadilloCon 40 (2018 TAFF delegate Johan Angelmark is going while staying with us) and FenCon XV – Larry Niven is the Pro Guest of Honor there! – and am holding out hope to get to ContraFlow VIII in October (no dates announced yet). That Dickens on the Strand event at the end of the year is going to have to be on the To Attend List, as well.

[SoonerCon 27](#)

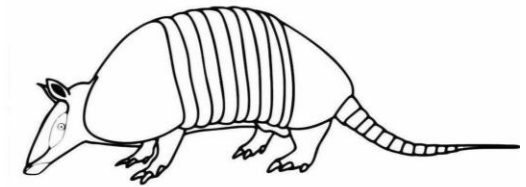
Oklahoma's Greatest Pop Culture Experience
Science Fiction, Fantasy, Gaming Con
June 22-24, 2018
Reed Conference Center
5750 Will Rogers Rd
Midwest City, OK 73110
Sheraton Midwest City Hotel at the Reed Conference Center
5750 Will Rogers Rd
Midwest City, OK 73110

Oklahoma City, OK area

This incarnation of SoonerCon is deliberately designed to celebrate all aspects of fandom. We do not intend to have a solely "books" or "TV" or "art" emphasis. The emphasis is on FUN. Events include: Film Festival, Art Show, Gaming, Cosplay and Masquerade. Charity. Panel and Workshops. Video Rooms. We are very happy to announce the creation of the **Oklahoma Speculative Fiction Hall of Fame**. Beginning in 2013, SoonerCon will induct members into the Hall of Fame, and present them with the newly created "**Nucleon Award**". Members of the Hall of Fame will be Oklahomans (and those originally from Oklahoma) who have contributed significantly to the development of pop culture and speculative fiction in both Oklahoma and the world.

ArmadilloCon 40

Austin's Convention for SFF Readers and Writers
August 3-5, 2018
Omni Austin Hotel South Park
4140 Governors Row
Austin, Texas 78744
Austin, TX area



Guest of Honor: Deji Bryce Olukotun
Editor Guest: David Pomerico
Toastmaster: Aaron de Orive
Fan Guest: Craig W. Chrissinger
Special Guests: Holly Black & Robert J. Sawyer
More Guests TBA

Panels, Art Show, Gaming, Charity, Full Day Writer's Workshop, Dealer's Room, and more!

[ArmadilloCon](#) is a literary science fiction convention held annually in Austin, with several hundred attendees.

We are a place where the smartest people in the world gather to celebrate their uniqueness and intelligence. Oh, and we talk about books too.

The primary focus of ArmadilloCon is literary science fiction, but that's not all we do -- we also pay attention to art, animation, science, media, and gaming. Every year, dozens of professional writers, artists and editors attend the convention. We invite you to attend the convention especially if you are a fan of reading, writing, meeting, sighting, feeding, knighting, and all the other things folks do at a sci-fi/fantasy convention.

Sponsored by the Fandom Association of Central Texas, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Ama-Con 2018

August 4-5, 2018
Amarillo Civic Center
Amarillo, TX

<http://ama-con.amarillolibrary.org/>

Comic Convention with Anime, Gaming, Steampunk, and Video Gaming programming

Amarillo Public Library's AMA-CON is a Pop Culture Convention celebrating anime, comics, gaming, sci-fi, steampunk, and everything else that is geeky and awesome!

AMA-CON is hosted by Friends of the Amarillo Public Library and raises funds to help the Friends support Library projects including Summer Reading Club, ESL and Citizenship Classes, READ to SUCCEED Adult Reading Skills Tutoring, Story Times, and many other fun and educational projects for kids, teens and adults.

Glitch Con

"A fandom oriented convention focusing on Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Gaming, and Anime."

August 10-12, 2018

Northwest Arkansas Convention Center

1500 S 48th St

Springdale, Arkansas

Springdale, Arkansas area

We are a fandom oriented convention focusing on Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Gaming & Anime. Bringing the very best of what these cultures have to offer to NW Arkansas to bring the local fandom communities together & provide the very best entertainment.

WorldCon 76, the 76th World Con

August 16-20, **2018**

San Jose McEnery Convention Center

150 West San Carlos Street

San Jose, CA 95113

San Jose, CA area

GOH: Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

GOH: Pierre & Sandy Pettinger

GOH: Spider Robinson

GOH: John Picacio

GOH: Frank Hayes

Ghost of Honor: Bob Wilkins

Ghost of Honor: Edgar Pangborn

Five days of programming on hundreds of topics from books to media, from art to costuming, from movies to television to anime, from science fiction to science fact, as well as an art show, masquerades, the Hugo Awards ceremony, dealer's rooms, and much more!

CTC GeekFest

August 17-19, 2018

On the campus of Central Texas College in Killeen, Texas.

Mayborn Planetarium & Space Theater

Killeen, TX 76540

Geekfest activities for kids and adults will include video game tournaments, contests, movie screenings, interactive video game demonstrations, presentations and entertainment by local groups and companies, vendor booths and a silent auction. Yes, the Humans vs Zombies competition is back along with two showings of The Rocky Horror Picture Show!

Halloween & Hauntfest Show 2018

August 18, 2018 10 AM-6 PM

August 19, 2018 10 AM-4 PM

Mesquite Convention Center

1700 Rodeo Dr

Mesquite, TX 75149

The Hampton Inn & Suites Dallas-Mesquite

1700 Rodeo Drive

Mesquite, Texas, 75149

General admission gets you access to dozens of Halloween related vendors and exhibitors. Enjoy the free demos, performances, seminars and characters in costume. We encourage cosplay and will be hosting a costume and cosplay contest during the show weekend.

Q: Is Halloween & HauntFest family friendly?

A: Yes! kinda....The convention floor will have a extra gory / extra scary section that is separated from the main show floor. Will your 5 year old end up in line behind an oozing zombie at the snackbar? Quite possibly.

Bubonicon 50: The Golden Age of Science Fiction (since Bubonicon has reached its Golden Anniversary)

Science Fiction & Fantasy Convention

August 24-26, 2018

Albuquerque Marriott Uptown

2101 Louisiana Blvd NE (Louisiana & I-40)

Albuquerque, NM 87110

Albuquerque, New Mexico area

Co-GOH: John Scalzi

Co-GOH: Mary Robinette Kowal

Toastmaster: Lee Moyer

Artist GOH: Eric Velhagen

Media GOH: Mick Garris

Panels, Art Show, Dealers Room, Gaming, Auctions, Film Screenings, Readings, Autographs, Filking, Science Talk, Costume Contest, Green Slime Awards, Fan Programming, and more!

Presented by the NMSF Conference in association with various kind folks of the Albuquerque SF clubs.

Bubonicon 48 will benefit at least the Williamson Library Collection at Eastern NM University, the Roadrunner Food Bank, and the Albuquerque Public Library Foundation. Bubonicon 47 gave away

\$6,000 to the charities/non-profit organizations!

Closing my eyes, I imagined hearing again the Gregorian chants echoing through this massive knave during mass, my father as usual dozing off during the homily.

[Lexicon 2018](#)

Free comic-con & fandom event

August 25, 2018

Stillwater Public Library

1107 S. Duck

Stillwater, Ok 74074

(northeast of Oklahoma City, west of Tulsa, OK area)

FREE comic-con and fandom event intended to draw together community members who share similar interests and to provide library materials to those who enjoy pop culture.

Vendors, panels, cosplay, and gameplay, and displays for fans of comics, gaming, sci-fi or fantasy TV shows, movies and books, graphic novels, and anime.

Also Cosplay Costume Contests, Children's Crafts and Activities, Table-top Gaming Room, & Artist Alley. And Photo Ops for Stormtroopers, Jedi Knights, Mandalorian Mercenaries and many more of your favorite characters....

[Dallas Comic Show Fantasy Festival](#)

Celebration of comic books, pop culture, and retro fun that will offer a little something for everyone.

August 25-26, 2018

#DallasComicShow is a family-friendly event in the DFW area featuring exciting comic book and media guests, costumed characters, gaming and Anime content.

Our mission is to bring back an affordable pop culture convention experience to the DFW area, something everyone can enjoy and embrace without breaking the bank. This is show run by fans and done for fans. We are here to make sure you have fun.

[Fandemic Tour](#)

A New Comic Convention Experience

September 14-16, 2018

NRG Center

1 NRG Park

Houston, TX 77054

Houston, TX area

"...We pledge to present events that bring the highest tier celebrities, artists, and exhibitors and to create immersive programming that is both fun and educational. Our mission is simple: take care of the fans."

Celebrity autographs/photo ops, panels, cosplay & fan group tables in exhibitors hall, and more!

This is a "family-friendly" show so no "risque" costumes. "Anyone 11 or older must purchase admission at the regular price. Two children, aged 10 or under, are admitted free with each paid adult admission. You may be asked to provide proof of the children's ages."

Zero tolerance for harassment. ASK before snapping photos of costumed people at the event.

Fencon XV: It's Alive!

A Fan-Operated Science Fiction and Fantasy Literary and Filk Convention

September 21-23, 2018

Westin DFW Airport

4545 West John W Carpenter Freeway (SH 114 at Ester's Road)

Irving, TX 75063

(DFW Metroplex area)

GOH: Larry Niven

Music GOH: Marian Call

Fen GOH: Aislinn Burrows and Carmen Bryan

Artist GOH: Travis Lewis

Science GOH: Marianne Dyson

Special Workshop Guest: Martha Wells

Toastmaster: Timothy Griffin

Celebrating 200 years of classic and modern SF!

Art Show & Auction, Dealers Room, Panels, Concerts, Filking, Short Story Contest, Writers Workshop, Children's Programming, Masquerade, Readings, Gaming, Demos, and lots more!

FenCon is a production of the Dallas Future Society, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of science, literature, and music for the future of all mankind.

Konspllosion

The River Valley Fandom Con

September 28-30, 2018

Ft Smith, Arkansas area

All-encompassing, multi-genre convention combining Comics, Sci-Fi, Anime, Gaming, & Pop Culture located in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Guests, Activities, Vendors, Artists, Tabletop Gaming, Cosplay, Video Games, Nerf Wars, Live Performances, Dances, Stage Shows, Card Gaming, Prizes, Classes, Panels, and so much more!

See also [Facebook.com/Konspllosion](https://www.facebook.com/Konspllosion)

Cult Classic Convention

Horror con

September 28-30, 2018

Bastrop Convention & Exhibit Center

1408 Chestnut Street

Bastrop, TX 78602

Greater Austin/Central Texas area

A convention done the Hitchhiker Way. When Ed aka "hitchhiker" and wife Theresa Neal teamed up with Roy and Lisa Rose they wanted a different kind of Convention. So this is what we came up with.

Hope you can join us year after year for this party / convention.

See also [Cult Classic Convention](https://www.facebook.com/CultClassicConvention) (Facebook)

Seventh Annual Granbury Paranormal Expo

Two-day street festival

September 29, 2018 10 AM-7 PM

September 30, 2018 10 AM-5 PM

Historic Granbury Square

Granbury, TX 76048

About 50 miles southwest of Fort Worth, TX area

Free to the public! A street festival featuring ghost hunters, psychics, horror, sci-fi, fantasy, cosplay, and more!

CONtraflow VIII

Science Fiction & Fantasy Literary Convention with a New Orleans Flair.

(Presumably October 2018)

New Orleans, LA area

Fanzine Lounge and Filk Salon. Focuses on science fiction, fantasy, comics, and related literary genres in any form, including but not limited to writing, visual arts, dramatic arts, and interactive fiction.

Panels, Dealers Room, Gaming, Art Gallery, Fund Raising Auctions, Costume Contest, Dances, Room Parties, Artist Alley, Kids Con, Hearts Tournament, plus much more!

In fulfillment of CONtraflow mission to promote all types of Science Fiction and Fantasy literature, the charity is still New Orleans Public Library.

Corporate Sponsor: Bayou Images Screen Printing

Club and Fan Group Sponsors: Area 504, Krewe of the Enterprise, USS Corsair (NCC 26556)

Dallas Fan Days

Ultimate Fan Experience.

October 19-21, 2018

Irving Convention Center

500 West Las Colinas Blvd.

Irving, TX 75039

DFW MetroPlex area

Twice annual comics, sci-fi, horror, anime, and gaming event in Texas. Packed with exciting family-friendly activities, celebrity & comic guests, and much more! The pop culture extravaganza is host to tens of thousands of fans at the Irving Convention Center for the two or three-day event every Spring and Fall.

Local fan groups supporting this event include:

[Name/Fandom]: 501st Legion (Star Wars), Rebel Legion (Star Wars), Mandalorian Mercs (Star Wars), Austin Browncoats (Firefly/Serenity), DFW Ghostbusters, DFW Cosplay Gallifrey (Dr Who)

[Alamo City Comic Con](#)

Comics con
October 26-28, 2018
[Venue TBD]

San Antonio, TX area

"The primary goal of ACCC is to celebrate the artists who provide entertainment to the public via comics, movies, TV, gaming and cosplay. We also aim to bring unique celebrities and attractions to the Alamo City, allowing attendees to take advantage of the "mega" comic con experience. Alamo City Comic Con also gives back to the community by participating in many fundraising events throughout the year." We offer the opportunity to meet, get autographs, take photos and view panels with some of your favorite celebs, artists and writers. You can also purchase your favorite comics, collectibles, and toys from all our exhibitors.

[Steampunk November 2018](#)

November 9-11, 2018

Amber Inn Academy of Arts
[Venus, TX](#)

<http://steampunknovember.com/>



Steampunk Event

Located on our own family farm just on the south edge of Mansfield, TX, we are the longest running Steampunk Festival in Texas. We strive to give you a personal and immersive experience into the Steampunk genre as we envision it in both Victorian and New World .

We are family operated festival with a focus on creating an escape for the weekend.

Everyone is welcome to join us in or out of costume, cosplay or garb.

[Millenniumcon 21](#)

Historical Miniatures Game Convention
November 9-11, 2018
Wingate Hotel and Convention Center
1209 N Interstate 35 Frontage Rd
Round Rock, TX 78664

Greater Austin, TX area

MillenniumCon 20 is a three day convention that supports Tabletop Wargaming with Historical Miniatures.

We provide a unique event to celebrate our passion for playing wargames, crafting the miniatures and terrain used in these games, and researching the historical events that inspire our imagination. While we do focus on games involving historical time periods, our convention caters to many different gaming tastes and styles.

Unlike other conventions that support multiple genres, we don't have one group trying to be all things to all people. There are also a limited number of RPG games but the emphasis is on miniatures games. Because of our focus on miniatures, we are proud to call Millennium 20 the largest miniature convention in Texas.

This year the MillenniumCon theme is a reflection of the anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad. It was a major battle of World War II in which Nazi Germany and its allies fought the Soviet Union for control of the city of Stalingrad (now Volgograd) in Southern Russia.

Wizard World Austin

Comic Con

(Presumably November 2018)

Austin, TX area

Comics, Celebrity Guests, Artist Alley, Panel discussions, Masquerade Ball (extra fee), Movies, Comics, Toys, Video Gaming, Games, TV, Horror, Wrestling, MMA, Original Art, Collectibles, Anime, Manga & More!

Dickens on the Strand

Galveston's World Famous Victorian Holiday Festival

WEAR A VICTORIAN COSTUME FOR 1/2 PRICE ADMISSION!

(Presumably December 2018)

Strand National Historic Landmark District

Strand & Mechanic Streets between 20th & 25th

Galveston, Texas

The annual holiday street festival, based on 19th-century Victorian London, features parades, non-stop entertainment on six stages, strolling carolers, roving musicians, bagpipers, jugglers and a host of other entertainers. Costumed vendors peddle their wares from street stalls and rolling carts laden with holiday food and drink, Victorian-inspired crafts, clothing, jewelry, holiday decorations and gift items.

Continuous entertainment on several stages, over 150 craft and food vendors, children activities abound at Piccadilly Circus, 3 grand parades, Victorian Bed Races, London Wharf and the Official Tall Ship of Texas ELISSA, GHF Member Club, Costume Contests, Scrooge Scavenger Hunt and wonderful special events throughout the weekend.

Most people probably don't care about where chocolate comes from or how it's made, but as a devout advocate to the wonders of the cocoa bean, I can say I care. I mean, we are talking about **chocolate** here! Nectar of the Gods, healing balm of the soul. This is my kind of museum.

WHAT'S NEXT

This particular issue is being finished on the last couple days of June, and just this afternoon (June 28, 2018) I learned of the death of iconic science fiction author Harlan Ellison (1934-2018). He was 84 years old, and man, what an influence this man had on the genre!

Not surprisingly, everyone in the science fiction community is sharing Harlan stories, and brother, there is no shortage of those. I don't have a story to rival those who were close to Harlan, but I did have three chances to meet and talk with him, each time very briefly.

The first time was in July, 1975 at ByobCon V in Kansas City, Missouri, one of the run-up cons leading to the following year's World con, MidAmeriCon. There were a ton of pros at that little convention because Dr. James Gunn, one of my favorite writers, was running a writer's workshop

just across the river at the University of Kansas. As a result, other writers present besides Harlan Ellison were Robert Bloch, Gordon R. Dickson, Clifford D. Simak, Tom Reamy, Wilson "Bob" Tucker, and so on. It was like a three-day "Meet the Author's" Party. I loved it, and I was all of 21 years old. This con was also my first real exposure to a Smooth session led by Tucker. As luck would have it, I was sitting on his immediate left, so after a couple initial swigs as the first bottle of Beam went around the room, Tucker showed me his trick to make it look like you were taking a massive drink, but weren't. Even so, small amounts of Beam go down your gullet, so after a half hour of this I had a good buzz going.

Harlan was also in the room, but not drinking – he eschewed alcohol throughout his life – and at one point he looked at me and said, "Hey, John! How are you feeling right now?" I waved back, and replied as clearly as possible, "Oh, doing fine. Just fine," and smiled. Harlan laughed and went back to the conversation he was having with the people around him. Three years later at IguanaCon II in Phoenix, when he was the pro Guest of Honor, Harlan remembered that night in Kansas City and said hello to me, *by name!* That stunned me. Harlan Ellison knew who I was! This happened in passing, but it still impressed the heck out of me.

Godspeed, Harlan. Thank you for sharing your life with us.



Harlan Ellison® accepting the Hugo award for "Paladin of the Lost Hour" at Confederation, the 1986 World Science Fiction Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Bob Shaw looks on. Photo by and copyright © Andrew Porter.

Next issue will have another segment of last year's TAFF trip. Until then, here's a picture I took at the Jardine de Tuileries at dusk, looking towards one of the palaces comprising one wing of the Louvre.

