

Purrsonal Mewsings #66



Purrsonal Mewsings, formerly *Feline Journal* and *Feline Mewsings* is a personalzine by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, PO Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 520-275-6511, Laurraine@mac.com, <http://www.weasner.com/>. I hope to publish every six weeks.

It is distributed through StippleAPA and sent to other friends and family. It is available for the usual (a response of any kind, including letters, e-mail, and phone calls of comment; trade; contributions of illos, fiction, or articles; or even money: \$5.00 per issue). The zine will be placed on the web shortly after paper publication; please let me know if you prefer just to read the web version. I can also e-mail this in Word or rtf format. Kattesmint Press #480. ©2019 R-Laurraine Tutihasi.

Permission is granted to reprint or forward any part or all of this newsletter created by the editor provided that it carries the following statement: "Copyright 2019 by R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Originally published in *Purrsonal Mewsings* #66, http://www.weasner.com/Purrsonal_Mewsings." All other material is copyrighted by their respective creators, and they should be contacted for any reprint permission.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial / Introduction—p. 2
Kritter Korner—p. 2
Astronomy—p. 3
Africa trip report—p.4
Reviews—p. 18
StippleAPA—p. 19
Letters—p. 21
Closing Remarks—p. 24

Art and Photo Credits

Cover illo—Sheryl Birkhead
Title page header—Sheryl Birkhead
Unattributed Photos p. 3 and in the "Astronomy" section—Mike Weasner.
Unattributed Illo p. 20—Alan White

Contributions of art, reviews, articles, fiction, letters, even poetry welcome.
Publication not guaranteed, but all submissions will be given due consideration.

[] if this box is checked, I need to hear from you if you wish to stay on my mailing list.

If you are reading this electronically and would prefer to receive a printed version, please let me know. Or vice versa.

*** Editorial / Introduction**

Since my last issue, we did some work on some shelves we're building. This process was interrupted by the assembling of my Leanchair. This is a product that I supported on Kickstarter. I'd been having problems with discomfort when sitting, so it sounded like just the ticket for me. The idea is similar to a standing desk, but there is a slight inclination to avoid putting too much weight on the feet. It comes with an attached table. There was a problem with a couple of the parts, but this was corrected with the shipment of replacements. It's all put together now, but I find that I need a source of light brighter than the ceiling lights. I've picked out a lamp that seems suitable, but I haven't ordered it yet.

We've had a few cold snaps during this time, nothing that would faze any of you in the Midwest. When the temperatures drop below freezing, I have to cover my orange tree and the top of the saguaro. We've also had a couple of snowfalls. The first time was only about an inch. The second time topped out at six inches; it snowed almost continuously for more than twenty-four hours. Since then the weather has warmed up, and almost all the snow is gone except on the mountain tops.

* * *

*** Kritter Korner**

In late January we had the opportunity to adopt a new cat. His name is Cato, named after a character in the Pink Panther movies. He has a habit of jumping on people to ride on their shoulders.

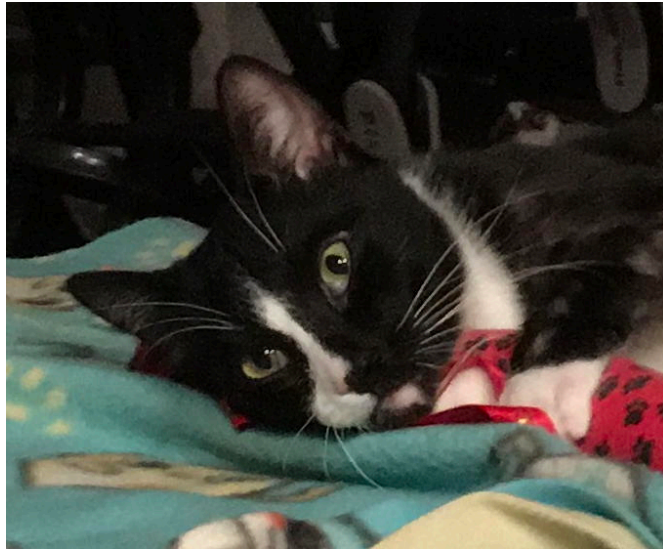
When we met him, at a fellow Oracle resident's house, he was recovering from trauma. He had suffered a loss of hair on the back half of his body. The woman who had been taking care of him had been away for a while. When she returned home, she found him covered with scabs. When we saw him, he had licked off the scabs and was almost bald where they'd been. He looked and behaved otherwise healthy. We later found out that he had been bonded with another cat, but that had been adopted without him. I think maybe he was stressing out because of that. In any case, his hair seems to be growing back nicely.

He is about a year and eight months old. He was found wandering around locally. He was not chipped, and all efforts to find an owner failed. He was also not neutered, but that was taken care of shortly after he was captured over a year ago.

He was understandably skittish when we first brought him home but adjusted quickly. He had been in a house with several other cats and other animals. The first time I fed him, he just about inhaled his food. To keep him from eating too much too fast, I feed him four times a day. I have a puzzle dish for his dry food. I thought I'd have to get a puzzle dish for his wet food, but his eating has slowed down.

He had his first vet visit and had an adventure. He escaped from the examining room and ran around the lab area. The vets and other workers got some unplanned exercise. He got his vaccinations updated and chipped.

Here is a photo:



* * *

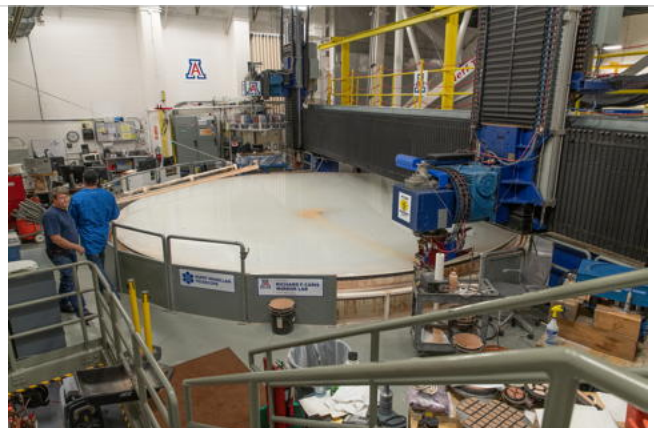
* **Astronomy**

In early February we were invited to accompany new friends on a tour of the Steward Observatory Mirror Lab at the University of Arizona. The lab is located underneath the football stadium. It makes mirrors for many observatories as well as those for the university's own observatories.

The U of A observatory is named for Lavinia Steward, a resident of Oracle who left a donation specifically for an astronomical observatory at the U. The first observatory was located near the campus; back then it was all farmland. Now they have telescopes on Mount Lemmon, Kitt Peak, Mount Graham, Mount Bigelow, and Mount Hopkins. In addition they partner at sites in New Mexico, Hawaii, and Chile.

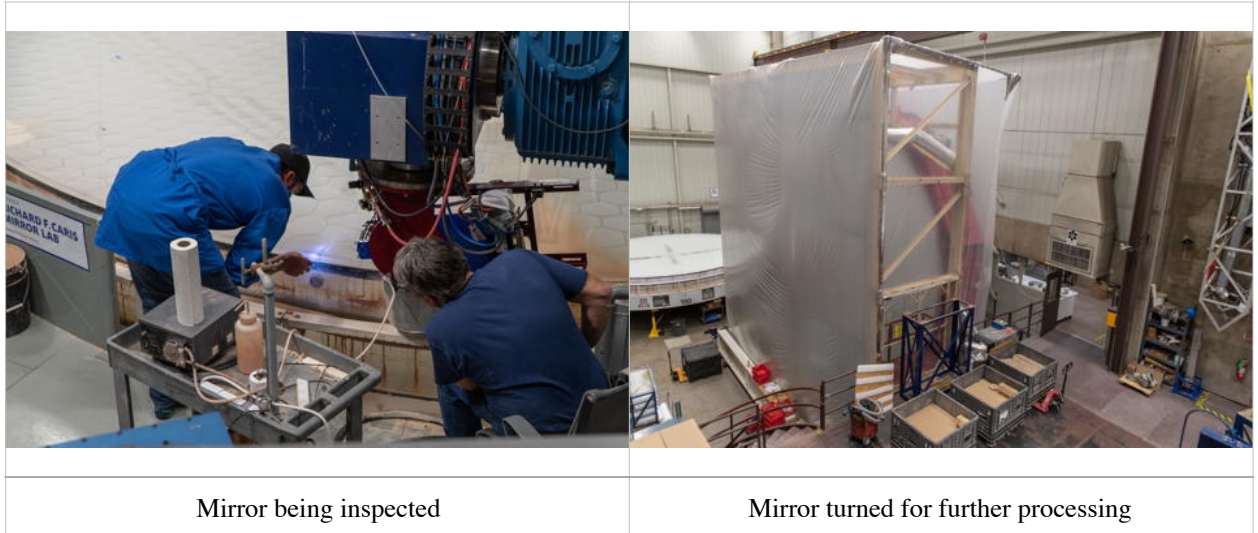


Model of telescope mirrors are for



Mirror being polished

The mirrors are made like a honeycomb; solid mirrors would be too heavy to be practical. After a honeycomb structure is assembled, molten glass is poured. After the glass has cooled down, it must be polished to a very high tolerance.



* * *

*** Africa trip-19 April to 10 May 2018**

Thursday, 19 April 2018, I got up in the middle of the night; and Mike drove me to Sky Harbor airport in Phoenix. I was helped by a human at the airport so got checked in efficiently and quickly. Once at the gate, I had an interesting conversation with a United employee flying home to Chicago. On the flight I was next to a salesman for a company that makes signs for businesses; he flies almost every day; that would drive me crazy.

Before I continue I should explain that I paid for my flights with airline mileage credit. The entire trip was business or first class, except for the very last leg and the flights that were internal to the trip.

Lunch was served on the plane.

I had a couple of hours in Chicago, but we started boarding an hour before the flight took off. I was seated next to a very interesting woman from Germany. We hit it off from the start. She is a biologist working for Roche and makes frequent business trips to the US. She is otherwise very well-travelled. She is also a SCUBA diver. She and her husband, who does scientific programming, share similar interests in travel.

The flight included a dinner service.

I was seated in business class. The seats were designed to fold flat for sleeping, but I didn't manage more than a couple of hours of sleep even

though I was fairly tired. I slept badly for much of the early part of the trip, probably due to excitement, anticipation, and worry.

Breakfast was served before we landed at Frankfurt, Germany, I had to leave the secure area to get to my connecting gate; it was a long walk and short train ride. One of the things my seat mate on the plane had told me was about the availability of beds at the Frankfurt airport that could be rented by the hour. If I'd been able to find them (it was a confusion about signage), it would have been great; I had a wait time in Frankfurt of about twelve hours.

It took some searching, but I found a restaurant with gluten-free food; they had salmon with spinach, and I was able to get iced tea. I was very thirsty.

After lunch I read most of the C. J. Cherryh book I had taken with me. I walked around a bit, figured out eventually how to use the airport internet and make my watch sync with my phone. I also found an intact USB outlet (most of them were broken) and charged my phone.

Being unable to find any other suitable restaurants in that area, I decided to skip a regular dinner and instead ate the leftover chocolate from my flight to Frankfurt and also bought a bag of chips.

Dinner or a snack was served on my flight to Johannesburg, but I opted to maximize my sleep time. That didn't really work as hoped. I think I got about four hours, then I mostly tossed and turned. My seat mate was a Johannesburg native coming home from Europe.

After tossing and turning, I got up just in time Saturday, 21 April 2018, for breakfast. There was a gluten free meal for me.

In Johannesburg, South Africa, I had to fetch and recheck my luggage for my next flight to Cape Town, where the trip actually started. The plane to Cape Town was small. We received a snack in business class. I welcomed it, being hungry after the brisk walk to the gate area. After the plane landed, I retrieved my luggage and eventually found my ride; it was a fair walk from the luggage pickup area to the front door. We drove to the Inn on the Square, a hotel by a square that reminded me of a similar square in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Cape Town is located on a peninsula that sticks out toward the south. Because of this the weather is different in this area from the rest of South Africa. While most of the country has a rainy summer, Cape Town gets rain during its winter.

After unpacking somewhat I had lunch at the hotel restaurant about 13:00. Afterward I bought a couple of postcards. I sent out postcards to friends and family sporadically through the first half of the trip.

Back in my room, I napped for a couple of hours until it was time to meet the G Adventures group in the lobby. Gail was our Chief Experience Officer (CEO) for the Cape Town portion of our trip. I signed up for my trip through

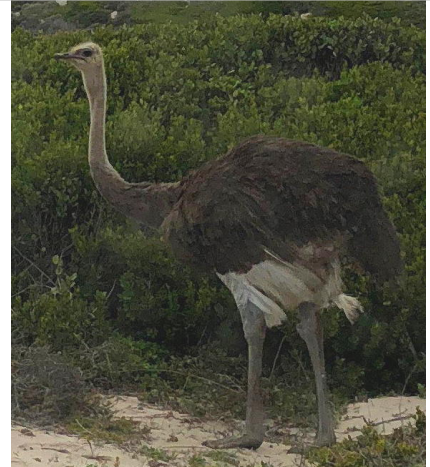
National Geographic, who billed it as a National Geographic Journey, the name they use for trips done with G Adventures, which is a Canadian company. There were ten others in the group: Maria and Mitch from Philly, Annette and David from Pittsburgh, Chris from Michigan, Michael and Melissa from Scotland, Rick and Eileen from DC, and Caroline from Austria.

We went to dinner at Arnold's Restaurant as a group at about 19:30. I had the mixed game plate, which included warthog, crocodile, ostrich, and oryx. My favourite was warthog, which tasted just like pork. We returned to the hotel shortly before 22:00.

Sunday, 22 April 2018, we were supposed to leave the hotel about 07:30 for a tour of the city, but our bus didn't arrive until about 08:15. I think this kind of threw a spanner into the plans. We did a tour around town before going out into the country south of Cape Town. We drove past a cloud-shrouded Table Mountain to a national park where we saw ostriches and baboons. We continued south to the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Point Lighthouse. Both places have good views. The Cape of Good Hope represents the meeting place of the Atlantic and Indian oceans. At the cape we saw sea lions and cormorants, seagulls, and other unidentified birds. Then we went to see the South African "jackass" penguins. I took lots of photos and videos. I also saw a rock hyrax, a small mammal mostly closely related to elephants.



Me at Cape of Good Hope



Male ostrich

In the afternoon Neil Ferguson, who led us on a tour of the gardens. While there we also saw a type of guinea fowl and a mongoose. I also bought a few postcards. Afterwards seven of us went to Table Mountain to watch the sunset. We just made it in time. We also saw many hyraxes. Everyone should know better than to feed the wildlife. There was a young man, probably a student, feeding a hyrax; he was paid for his foolishness with a nasty bite. We went back to the hotel in a taxi.



Penguin



Protea

I slept very badly again before getting up Monday, 23 April 2018.

I was able to catch up with Gail at breakfast, so I found out when we were to leave the next morning. She also arranged for me to get a gluten free muffin the next morning, since we wouldn't have time for a proper breakfast. She also gave me pointers for things to do near the hotel. Plus we had a very nice conversation.

An aside about gluten free bread in South Africa and Namibia. Most of them don't really get it. They haven't figured out how to make bread that doesn't crumble if you stare at it too hard. The first time I bought gluten free bread back at home was also like that. Today there are several



Rock hyrax (about a foot long)

companies in the US that sell good gluten free bread. Most of the companies originated in Europe, but the bread sold in the US is usually made in either the US or Canada.

I returned to my room, put up the "do not disturb" sign and relaxed on the bed; I was just too tired to do any sightseeing. Besides it was raining, so it was a good day to stay in. I relaxed and slept a bit.

I skipped lunch.

I continued to relax; and watched the 2001 movie *Texas Rangers*. I managed to contact Chris about 18:00; she had gone on a shark dive in the morning. About 18:30 I went to dinner with Chris to Mughals Indian restaurant on the same square as the hotel.

I didn't sleep very well that night either.

I went down about 06:15 to check out Tuesday, 24 April 2018, meet with Gail, and have a small breakfast.

About 07:00 most of us boarded one of two buses to the airport; one of the couples did not continue with us. There, after checking in, we said our good-byes to Gail. Those of us on Facebook friended her. Our flight left about 09:00. After some shuffling of seats because of miscellaneous minor issues, I ended up next to a young couple going on a camping holiday on Mauritius. Her name was Nicole, apparently of Japanese descent, from Vancouver, BC. She is working on a project treating pregnant women with HIV and has a pharmaceutical background. Her date was a young man from Swaziland.

After we landed we were met by Guillaume, our CEO for this portion of the trip. After dropping off our luggage at the lodge where we would spend the night, we drove to Soweto, which is a district for the poor. There we visited one of Nelson Mandela's homes.

We then had lunch at Nex Dor, a restaurant nearby.

After lunch we drove back to the Malikana Guesthouse and checked in. I was in an outside room; there are several rooms outside in a row like a motel besides rooms in the main lodge. About 18:00 we had a meeting to introduce everyone, including four new people (Nicola & Ryan from Sheffield, England; and Diane and Johnnie from Belfast, Northern Ireland). The trip I was on had apparently been variously sold in different combinations.

After dinner we found that the converter plugs I had wouldn't work in this area. I transferred the clothing and other stuff for the upcoming foray into the parks to the small carryon, so I could leave the big one at the guesthouse, as we would return there in a few days' time.

About 06:30 on Wednesday, 25 April 2018, I left my room, taking all my possessions with me. I left the large suitcase in Suki's care. She had prepared gluten free rusk for me; they're somewhat like biscotti. I also had some juice and a bit of tea.

About 07:00 we left Malikana Guesthouse with packed breakfasts, which ended up serving mostly as my lunch.

Before we got to the scenic part of the drive, we made three convenience stops. At one stop there were shops where we could get maps, a book identifying the wildlife of the area, adapter plugs, and water. Guillaume told us not to drink tap water.

We made three sightseeing stops in the afternoon—Blyde River Canyon, Bourke’s Luck Potholes, and God’s Window with an additional stop just before the last to get a look from a different angle. Then we went on to Muluwa Lodge where we’re staying in glorified tents with full bathrooms and other amenities. In the safari areas, our accommodations were usually huts that were a cross between tents and cabins. They usually had AC or fans and electric outlets and USB charge ports.

Blyde River Canyon, officially the Motlatse Canyon, is a scenic feature in the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve. The canyon is an average of 750 meters deep.

Bourke’s Luck Potholes is an area in the same reserve where the water has carved the surrounding rocks into potholes of various sizes. We hiked on a trail in this area. When we returned to our bus, we discovered that a vervet monkey had got into it and stolen our trash bag! After that the door and windows were kept closed.



Me at Bourke’s Luck Potholes



Vervet (photo taken by Chris F)

God’s Window is a vantage point in the reserve with a great view.

After settling into our individual tents, we had dinner as a group about 18:00.

Most of us headed back to our rooms almost as soon as dinner was done, as we had a very early morning the next day.

We were given boxed breakfasts when we left about 07:00 on Thursday, 26 April 2018, for Kruger National Park. The drive there took about an hour.

After arriving there we piled into one of two sightseeing vehicles and

started looking for animals. We spotted many impala (they resemble North American antelopes), a water buffalo, some spotted hyena, a white rhino, some hippopotamus, some elephants, some giraffes, some warthog, some kudu, a few waterbuck, a rock squirrel, a striped skink, some crocodile, a couple of African fish-eagle, some flying jackal buzzards, numerous lilac-breasted rollers (a colourful bird), and a fork-tailed drongo (a black bird). There were others I was unable to identify.



An example of the type of vehicle used for safaris.



Elephant

There was a lunch stop early in the afternoon during which I finished my breakfast and also had an orange and juice that was provided as part of lunch.

We did more driving around in the afternoon but saw much less than in the morning. After that we drove back to our lodge.

Dinner was in the boma (a wooden enclosure usually used for livestock), where a large fire was a source of heat. There was a variety of food. I had salad, a piece of summer squash, beef and bacon served on a skewer, and some chicken followed by creme brûlée.

After much conversation we walked back to our tents. It was very windy that night, and I heard a lot of wind noise during the night.

Friday morning, 27 April 2018, I joined Mitch and another member of our group on the path to the reception area. We three plus Caroline, Chris, and one more went on a pre-breakfast nature walk. It was led by a young man who had studied ecology, and we learned a lot of interesting facts, which of course I've forgotten.

We had a standard breakfast at 07:00. Then we settled our accounts and drove to Karongwe Private Game Reserve about 08:00. The drive took about four hours with one comfort stop. Our rooms were not available yet when we arrived.

We had a buffet lunch at 13:00. Everything but the bread was gluten

free, and they gave me gluten-free bread (that didn't crumble).

We had a short break to go to our rooms, which were now ready. Our rooms were cabins on stilts. This was followed by tea at 14:30 accompanied by a talk about cheetahs by a naturalist. Then we went on a safari and really lucked out after dark with a sighting of a mating pair of lions. We also saw a chameleon, rhinos, zebras, wildebeest, and the ubiquitous impalas.

A buffet dinner was at 19:20.

Sometime in the middle of the night I woke up to animal sounds and people talking. I think some warthogs were in the area. The area was not completely closed to wild animals.

Saturday, 28 April 2017, we left about 06:00 on a morning safari. We saw a leopard and three male cheetah, among other things. It was a bit nippy. Halfway on the safari, there was a refreshment break. I had a gluten-free muffin and a bit of hot water.

After we returned from the safari, we had a proper breakfast.

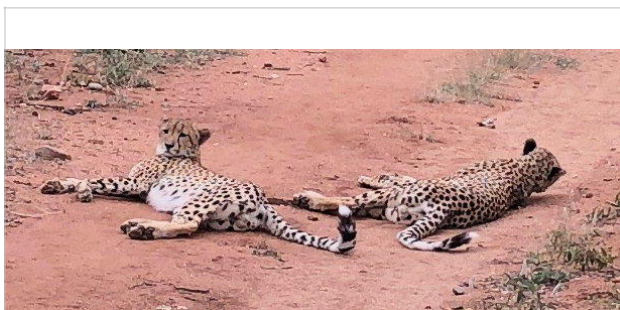
Then we had some free time, and I took the opportunity to visit the bird hide, which was located by a river. There were lots of hippopotamus in the water. I also saw a fish eagle, a spoonbill, another bird, a crocodile, and a couple of turtles. I headed back to my tent for a rest before the next meal.

I went up to lunch about 13:30 and found most of our group already eating.

There was another safari in the evening. We revisited the copulating lions and also saw a leopard and many elephants.

We had dinner after we returned from the safari.

Sunday, 29 April 2018 started out cold under clear skies but later started clouding up. The morning's safari netted us three white rhinos lying in a road, a distant sighting of a leopard with two cubs, a lioness with four cubs, vervet monkeys, nyala (a spiral horned antelope), many impalas, and several giraffes. At the mid-safari break, I was given a fruit that was probably a large apricot.

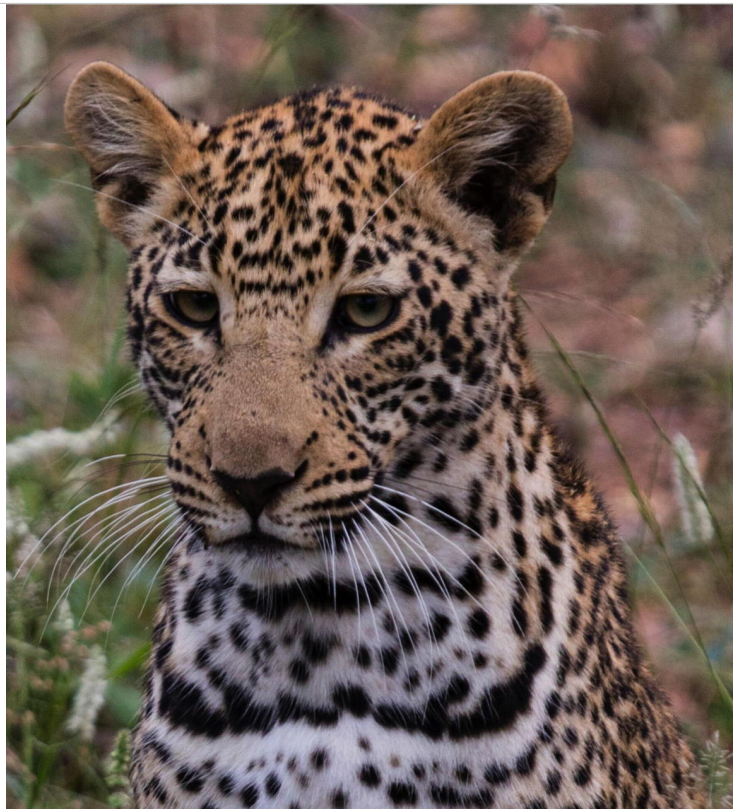


Cheetahs in road



White rhinos in road

Breakfast back at the camp was about 09:00.



Leopard (photo taken by Chris F)

Then we checked out, returned to our rooms to finish packing, and left Karangwe about 10:15. We made a comfort stop after a couple of hours where we could also get snacks.

About 14:05 we stopped for lunch at a location that had rhinos, ostriches, and other animals in a field next to it.

During the afternoon drive back to Suki's place, I slept quite a bit. We were back in the same rooms as before.

We had dinner about 19:00. It was at this dinner or the earlier one that we had acorn squash, and I was introduced to a new dish that I liked.

On Monday, 30 April 2017, those of us going to the airport to fly to Windhoek, Namibia, left about 08:00; I think the people who had joined us for this leg did not continue. Guillaume stayed with us up to the security check and bid us all farewell. Many of us friended him on Facebook. I went straight to the gate and enjoyed an interesting conversation with a man waiting for an earlier flight. He's a Hoosier originally from Montana. We got to talking after I made a remark about the book he was reading about the financial world, an interest I shared with him. A bit later I was interviewed by someone working for the tourist bureau or some such.

Our flight to Windhoek took off a bit after noon, and lunch was served. There was no gluten free selection, but a steward got me some salad,

cheese, and nuts from first class.

We landed a bit late and therefore we arrived at the Windhoek Country Club Resort a bit late. Our CEO here was Chris Arnold. We had a welcome meeting at 18:30. We're joined by four new travellers: Dominick and Kate from Seattle, Marie from San Francisco, and Naomi from Canada living in France.

Tuesday, 1 May 2018, I checked out the back of the resort briefly. There were swallow-like birds with nests under the roof apparently feeding chicks in nests. Then I returned to my room to finish packing.

After we left the resort, there was a stop to buy water and lunch. I just bought a bag of nuts that I munched on from time to time.

There was another shorter stop later before we arrived at the Sossusvlei Lodge about 15:00. About 18:00 there was a meeting to go over the next day's plans. The Sossusvlei Lodge was located in a desert region that felt a lot like Arizona.

Dinner was a barbecue about 19:00. The dinner included a large selection of meats, both regular and game meats.

At 07:00 on Wednesday, 2 May 2018, we left for the Namib-Naukluft National Park, where we were given over three hours to explore the area near Dune 45. This is an area covered by huge dunes that have been in place for a very long time because of wind patterns. Dune 45 is eighty-five meters tall. I didn't climb it but settled for a much smaller one next to it. Walking on the dunes is exhausting; for every step you take, you slide back down a bit. After I walked as much as I thought I could handle, I waited near the drop-off area. Those of us sitting in the area were entertained by numerous birds. Someone put out birdseed and water, so there were plenty of photo opportunities. We left the area about noon. We made a brief comfort stop, then proceed to Sesriem Canyon which had been carved by water hundreds of years ago. Once in the canyon, it was mostly shady and not so hot. We walked to the end where there were many rocks. Beyond that is a well that a couple of people clambered over rocks to see.

Returning to our lodge, I mostly rested.

Dinner was served at 19:00 and was similar but not identical to the night before.

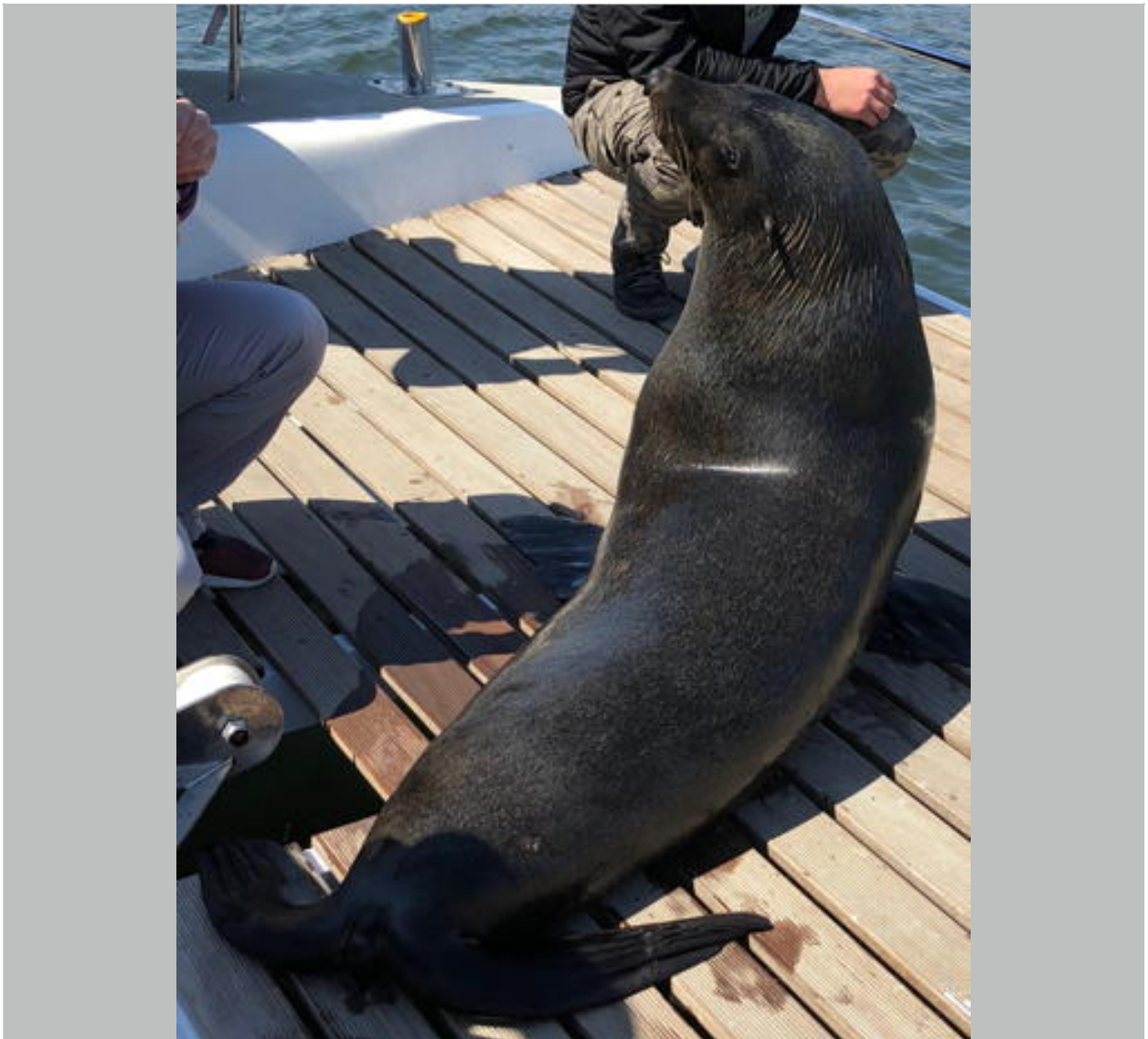
Thursday, 3 May 2018, we started off about 08:00 for our next destination. Soon after we started, it became obvious that something was amiss with the AC. We had to make do with open windows. We had a comfort stop. Then we stopped for a Bushman tour of a large property. When I found out it involved a hike up a dune, I bowed out after climbing to the top of the first rise. Annette, who woke up with a queasy stomach, gave up even sooner. From the top of the first rise, I saw ostriches through

binoculars.

Lunch, provided by the lodge, was eaten en route. The sandwich bread was the worst example of gluten-free, crumbling badly. A couple of snacks were suspicious, and I didn't eat them.

There was another comfort stop. Then we stopped by the ocean where there were hundreds of flamingo and other birds. It was also much cooler in this area. Just before we got to the hotel in Swakopmund, we stopped where we could buy excursions for the next day. I signed up for a catamaran ride to see seals, dolphins, and other animals, as did three others. After checking in to the hotel Zum Kaiser, I washed my feet of sand.

Friday, 4 May 2018, I met three others (Chris F., Mitch, and Maria) after breakfast for the bus ride to the dolphin cruise. Several other people were picked up at other hotels. The ride to the catamaran took quite a while.



Seal on dolphin cruise in Swakopmund, Namibia.

After we reached the pier, the four of us got on one of two catamarans. The ride was pretty spectacular if chilly; I had worn plenty of extra clothing so was comfortable. Sherry was served early on; it was nicer than other sherries I've had. The crew got a seal and pelican to come on board for photos. In addition they also fed some seagulls, who hung around. Further out we saw some dolphins in the water who seemed to enjoy swimming alongside the boat.

Lunch of was served, of which I could eat parts, along with some mediocre



Me with two native Namibian women in ceremonial dress

and flat champagne.

On the way back, we were entertained by another seal, two pelicans, and seagulls. We were back at the hotel by about 13:15.

About 16:00 we were picked up for a tour of a township; this is where the coloureds were placed back when South Africa was in charge and imposed apartheid. We learned about the history of Namibia and met one of the natives. Namibia was colonized by the Germans and was known as German South West Africa. After World War I, South Africa took over government of the country. Namibia gained independence in 1990. The musical entertainment during dinner was good.

Saturday, 5 May 2018, we left Swakopmund about 08:00; the AC had been repaired. Shortly thereafter we stopped at a grocery store where we were able to purchase lunch for the day. Not too long after, there was a comfort stop in a place with strong wind blowing from inland similar to the Santa Anas. Chris Arnold gave us a brief history of the region, which is complicated by intertribal discord. Later we stopped for a photo op of the highest mountains (Brandberg, c. 9000 ft.) and at a roadside stand selling semiprecious stones in the rough.

About midday we reached the petroglyph site in Twyfelfontein. First we had lunch, and then we saw the petroglyphs. It was murderously hot, and I was at the brink of dehydration when we returned to the van.

It took me a good hour before I felt rested up. Fortunately I was back to myself when giraffes were sighted. We reached the Palmwag Lodge before 17:00, though it was well after that before everything was sorted. After settling into my room, I headed for the dining area early and found most of our group socializing around a fire outside. Chris Arnold gave us information about the next day.

A little after 19:00, we started straggling into the dining room. When the servers found out I was the gluten-free person, I got personalized service.

We left for our next destination about 08:30. A couple hours later we stopped at Namibia's Petrified Forest. The trees, about 270 million years old, were washed there from central Africa.

We stopped about 14:00 at a supermarket to buy lunch and snacks and ate in the van. Most supermarkets in Namibia and South Africa have salad bars and also sell products similar to those in the US.

Then we proceeded on the last driving leg for the day. We reached Etosha National Park about 15:15. We reached our accommodations inside the park, about 16:30. After settling into my room, I went to the nearby watering hole.

I almost got lost going back to my room after dinner. The place is pretty large with inadequate signage.

Monday, 7 May 2018, we gathered before 06:00 for the sunrise safari. It was frigid cold, but they had fleece-lined hooded ponchos to use. It was a 3-hour safari, but we went over by almost half an hour. The restaurant was closing up breakfast but took pity on us. We all had a very full breakfast. The outing had greatly whetted my usually modest appetite.

After eating I checked out the shops and then went to the watering hole. When I became sleepy, I decided to return to my room for a nap.

The afternoon safari was quite productive. We saw lions, blue herons, secretary birds, and many others.

After dinner I walked to the watering hole with Melissa and Michael. After seeing a rhino and elephant, I had to turn in.

We left the lodge the next day about 08:00. About 09:30 we had a comfort stop in Outjo while the van was being refuelled. About 10:00 we got a flat tyre, and Alfonso had to pull over to fix it. We arrived at the Cheetah Foundation about 11:30. After a safari through an area housing five cheetahs, of which we saw four, we had lunch. Cheetahs are endangered, as are many other animals in Africa. Although Cheetahs are much smaller than the other large cats, they are daytime hunters and so are frequently killed by people even though they don't usually prey on cattle and other domestic animals. The Cheetah Foundation tries to educate the public.

They prepared a special chicken salad for me in place of lasagne for lunch.

After lunch we saw the feeding of the cheetahs before leaving for Windhoek. Getting there took a bit longer than estimated because of rush hour traffic. We reached the hotel about 18:30. I made reservations for a shuttle to the airport for the next day.

We all went to a farewell dinner at Joe's Beer Restaurant. I had an oryx steak done to perfection with a baked potato, a white wine spritzer, and cappuccino.

After our return we had a group photo taken. We said our good-byes; people would be going to the airport at various times the next day.

I checked out about 09:30 on Wednesday, 9 May 2018. The shuttle driver found me about fifteen minutes later, so we got an early start for the airport. We arrived at the airport about 10:30. Check-in was slow. Immigration control was confusing. The Ethiopian Airlines lounge is comfortable but offers WiFi with a password I hadn't been given until I'd been there for a while. There were complementary beverages. After the plane that I thought would serve as my flight landed, I left the airline lounge and went to the gate area. I met a Namibian woman who seemed to know more about how things worked in this terminal that seemed more like a bus station than an airport. Eventually we boarded. The woman seated next to me was in the travel business and was from Shanghai.

Lunch was served on the plane shortly after we took off. I had way too

much to drink, including tonic water and wine.

I changed planes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The airport there had a separate waiting room for business and first class on a completely separate floor from the other waiting room. I had dinner on the flight from Addis Ababa.

Thursday, 10 May 2018, morning we landed in Frankfurt, Germany. There was a long walk and train ride to my connecting flight. Breakfast was served on the plane to O'Hare.

About 14:15 Frankfurt time, we had to make an emergency landing in Stephenville, Newfoundland, for a medical situation affecting a passenger. We were there almost three hours, so I and many others missed our connecting flights in O'Hare. I called Mike as soon as I could to notify him of the changes.

Lunch was served shortly before we landed about 13:00.

O'Hare is a zoo. First we had to line up for immigration. After I reached the baggage carousel, I waited just about forever for my suitcase. By then I had information about the flight I was rebooked on. There was a very long line for customs. Then I had to get into another line to recheck my suitcase. After that I had to take a train to another terminal. The gate hadn't been assigned yet, though. When I got to Terminal 1, I found a gate assignment for my flight. When time neared to expected boarding time for my flight, it became obvious that the gate had changed. I managed to find the new gate and got in line for boarding. After a while though, the time was pushed back and then a second time. Eventually we took off an hour later than the original time. I was in the cramped cattle car section. They served drinks and offered snacks for sale, none of which I bought. I think I dozed off for about an hour despite the uncomfortable seating. We landed at almost 23:00. By the time I got my luggage, it was well after that. Mike found me okay. We got home well after 01:00. Since I hadn't had dinner and was hungry, I ate before I finally retired.

Despite my rather unpleasant experience in transit, I enjoyed the trip immensely. Africa offers so much in the way of wildlife and scenery; I would recommend a similar trip to everyone.

* * *

* **Reviews:** reviews without attribution are by the editor

***Parable of the Sower*, by Octavia Butler**

This is a novel about a possible future. Conditions have deteriorated in the US to the point where there is not much meaning to the phrase "law and order". Police and fire

protection are really only available to the wealthy. To get any protection, a bribe is required. The story takes place in California. The protagonist, Lauren, is an adolescent who lives in a walled community of people barely making do. Some of the members of the community are employed. Outside the walls there is a growing group of drug users that wreak havoc under the influence. We follow her for a few years as conditions outside their walls continue to deteriorate.

Lauren observes the world becoming worse and worse and has plans to leave home at some point. Her boyfriend tells her he wants to leave with her. Then one day her father fails to return. In quick succession disaster strikes as thieves and drug users break into the walled compound. In the melee most of the inhabitants, including Lauren's boyfriend, are killed. Lauren manages to escape along with a couple of others. After things have calmed down, she and her fellow escapees go back to find anything of value they can find. Lauren manages to dig up a hidden cash reserve that her father had put by. She and her companions flee north along with many others. Gradually a few other people join her small group.

It's a rather depressing book but excellently written. The book was chosen by the Pima County library system as an example of literature by a black writer. It also seemed appropriate to read it for the science fiction book club.

#

Ready Player One

This is the movie version of a book I read a few years ago. I watched it mainly out of curiosity to see how it was handled.

For those of you unfamiliar with the book, it takes place in a future in which the economy of the US has deteriorated. The protagonist is a teenage boy living in a home that is basically the remains of a vehicle. Many vehicles are piled on top of each other; many of these piles together make up his community. Education is handled mostly online. There is a virtual reality world where most young people and many others spend most of their day. One day the developer of this virtual world dies. He has left his fortunes and ownership of the virtual world to whomever solves an online puzzle. There are many competitors for this prize, but among them is a corporate giant. So basically the novel is a David vs. Goliath story.

Although the movie necessarily left out many details, the essentials were there; and the movie was entertaining.

* * *

*** StippleAPA**

StippleAPA is an amateur press association. An APA is like a group pen pal. Each distribution includes a fanzine from each member, who usually writes about his or her interests and life and makes comments on the previous issues of the other members. If you're interested in joining, please let me know and I can get you in touch with the person who runs it.

MAILING COMMENTS ON STIPPLE-APA #323

Erik Biever (Ultima Thule or Bust!):

My sympathies on your loss of a friend to cancer and the illness of another.

Stephanie Meyer (Monkey Mind):

Interesting article about Lego. I didn't know there were third party Lego brick manufacturers. There's a group called Cactus Brick that build large Lego projects as a group. They have a site on Facebook. I've seen them a couple of times at cons in Phoenix with one or more of their projects on display.



Dale Cozort (Space Bats & Butterflies): Was the show "A Series of Unfortunate Events" based on the Lemony Snicket books?

Cy Chauvin (Amazons & Swallows Forever! #65): It's possible to get skirts with pockets. I don't buy them if they don't have pockets.

Putting children on a leash is usually for their own safety. I saw a

little girl at O'Hare running around like crazy and driving her parents to distraction. They really needed a leash. I also remember a story of a child disappearance on a show probably on "Masterpiece" that wouldn't have happened if the father had had the child on a leash.

My hair is green now.

I'm adding *Underground in Berlin* to my reading list.

Locking me up in a closet did nothing for my parents. My father did this to quiet me down; I don't recall the circumstances. I kept bawling my head off. Eventually my father gave up and never did it again.

Lucy Schmeidler (Don't Ask #13): So sorry to hear about your accident. Also sorry that you had to cancel your trip to Arisia.

Joyce Maetta Odum (Everlasting Watch and Moveless Woe): I hope your pain has gone away or at least abated.

I have a similar concern about the number of pets in our vicinity that are allowed to run loose. It's dangerous, especially for the smaller ones. There are many predators, including mountain lions, coyotes, hawks, owls, and bears.

S. Rayne (Wright As Rayne): I think we are all living under the so-called old Chinese curse.

Bill Thomasson (Musings from the

Gathering Dusk #21): I consider political e-mails other than those from my own representatives to be spam. Most of them allow you to unsubscribe.

Eis wine comes in different varieties. I don't recall having any with a lemon flavour. I currently am unable to get any locally, as they aren't sold here.

Where I live can be described as rural. Oracle is a small town in southern Pinal County. Our closest city is Tucson in neighbouring Pima County. We don't have a police force or mayor. We depend on the county sheriff's office. We fortunately do have a post office. The fire station and library are run by volunteers. We have six or seven churches, which seems ridiculous to me. We have three acres of land. Our neighbours, I believe, have a minimum of an acre each. There is no mail delivery in our immediate neighbourhood. To compensate the PO gives out free boxes to people without delivery. Other companies, such as UPS, do deliver. We live on an unpaved road, much of which is just wide enough for one vehicle. Oracle sits on either side of foothills of the Catalina Mountains, and the USDA gardening/farming zones are different depending on which side you're on. We're in the warmer half of Oracle on the side

facing west. The area is considered to be grassland, but much of the area below us in elevation is desert. Native vegetation includes several varieties of cactus and grass and oak trees. Most of the oak trees have long since been cut down for timber, and we have mesquite instead. We are at an elevation of about 4500 feet.

The Sparrow and the 'Wolf (Not Unlike a Sparrow's Perspective): I've added *The Thirteenth Floor* to my list of movies to watch.

Jeanne Mealy (Quirky Bits): I'm really sorry to hear you've lost your job. Good luck finding a better one.

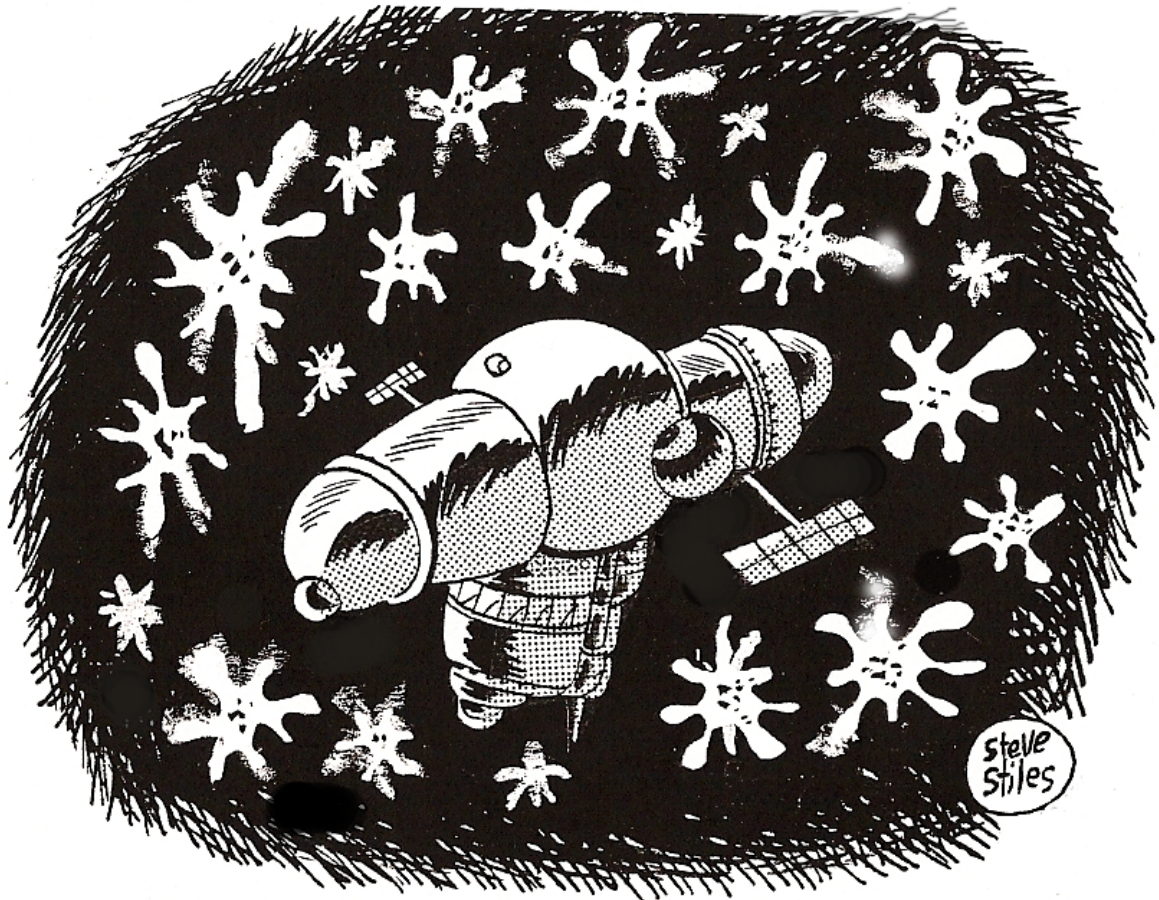
Jacky could go to the LASFS (Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society). The meeting place has been shifting lately, but the latest address shown is the Robert Boyle Studio 800, 1st Floor, 11969 Ventura Bl in Studio City. Meetings are on Thursday evenings from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm. For up-to-date information, call 818-246-2552 or e-mail info@lasfs.org. There is a small fee for attendance, but the first two meetings are free. Loscon is the official convention of the LASFS and occurs Thanksgiving weekend. I believe it's currently held at the LAX Marriott.

See you all in the next disty.

*** Letters to the Editor**

The text of letters received will be in brown. My replies to the letters will be enclosed in

double parentheses and will be in black. I will also routinely make editorial corrections



NOT ONLY DID SOMEONE LEAVE THE AIRLOCK OPEN, BUT
NOW I CAN'T FIND MY LEMMINGS!

in punctuation, spelling, and the like. I use Oxford standards of spelling and punctuation.

There are few LoCs this time, probably because I forgot to send out the electronic copies until quite late.

Timothy Lane, [timothylane51 at gmail dot com](mailto:timothylane51@gmail.com)

16 February 2019

Nice photos as usual. I assume the slanted line of orbs in the montage are different images of the Moon, and the striped planet on the right is Jupiter. I sure didn't see any resemblance to any figure, much less a monkey head, in the Monkey Head Nebula.

((We also cannot see where the monkey head is.))

I've had many beloved pets die over the years, some being put down; so I know how you feel under the circumstances. You have my deepest condolences. I remember when Francesca died in 2001, I used the pre-obituary from *A Door Into Summer* for her. You might find the sentiments similarly apt.

I have some MP3 collections of ABBA and play one of them as part of my regular sequence. My favourites would probably be "Dancing Queen" (I did a parody of that, "Banshee Queen", a few months ago, which is available at stubborntthings.org) and "Fernando".

I suppose *Glory Road* can be considered a classic in that it's a fairly well-known novel that's over fifty years old, but that's as far as I would go. I don't know why someone would call it a "preachment". Heinlein did much more of that in later books, sometimes successfully and sometimes not.

My understanding of Sparta is that they had iron coinage, though this may eventually have ended. The elite Spartiate troops came from the overlord class and were raised in all-male dormitories. The helots need not apply.

I believe there are grains that don't have gluten and can be used for bread, though the tendency today to mix grains may make such bread very hard to find. But I would think even someone with caeliac disease could get some use out of a toaster.

((Only wheat and its variants, rye and barley, contain gluten that is a problem for caeliacs. There are quite a few brands of gluten free bread now sold in the US and Europe. My problem with our toaster is that Mike, my husband, has used it for regular bread. It is impossible to get those crumbs out without disassembling the toaster. If I want toast, I use the toaster oven.))

As I recall, Ovaltine was (or became) something used to make chocolate milk. We never used it in my day. It does get mentioned in Fredric Brown's odd mystery novel *Mrs. Murphy's Underpants*. A running theme in the book is a game represented by a question on the front cover: "Who put the benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine?" (The title itself comes from another example, given at the end of the book, involving fire ants.)

#

Jerry Kaufman, JAKaufman at aol dot com

25 February 2019

Thanks for sending the new issue of *PurrsMews*. I note that you went to that ice-skating event, Skate America, only a few miles north of us in Everett. Our good friend Andi Shechter also went, with another friend, as she is a great fan of figure skating. Another interest she shares with you is a love of "Breaking Cat News"; she followed Georgia Dunn's work before the strip started to appear in newspapers.

((I had no idea Andi was interested in figure skating. I only know her slightly. We met at a Corflu long ago in LA.))

I saw several of the movies you did (*Jurassic World* and *Mission Impossible*), but barely remember them now. Nor have I seen any of the films that Amy Harlib recommends. The only ones that interest me are *The Favorite* and *Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse*.

#

WAHF: Mary Kato, Bill Wright

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

Next time I hope to have my Westercon trip report from last year.
Deadline for next issue is intended to be 4 April 2019

Laurraïne
28 February 2019