

Purrsonal Mewsings #75



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, Lorraine@mac.com, <http://www.weasner.com/>. I hope to publish every six weeks.

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#75

September 2020

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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

Drought conditions persisted until 16 August when we had two tenths of an inch; it fell in the evening, so the rain could soak into the ground. Unfortunately that was the biggest rain we had. After that we had amounts measurable in the hundredths of an inch a few times before the hot, dry weather resumed. While I find the dry weather much more comfortable, we really need some rain.

I had a strange bug bite. I first noticed it at the end of July but thought little of it until I started experiencing joint problems, particularly my right knee. It swelled up quite badly initially. The bug bite looked peculiar. So I called my doctor to make an appointment and was able to go in the next day. He assured me that though the joint problems were connected to the bug bite that it was nothing serious and should clear up. It took about a month for the joint pains to clear up completely, but the worst part lasted only about a week. The doctor explained that foreign matter had entered my body as a result of the bug bite and that my body was reacting with inflammation.

Back in mid-July, the power supply to Mike's observatory developed problems. His portable air conditioner would trip the circuit breaker. That meant there was no cooling in the daytime during our extreme heat. Otherwise the electricity got through okay. It took a while for our electrician to repair it. He and his crew had been exposed to Covid-19, and the test results didn't get to them for weeks! But it was finally repaired in late August. New heavier gauge wiring was put in between the observatory and the house.

At the beginning of August we purchased a product from AT&T that would permit us to have Internet access for our house using cell tower service. It took Mike a few days to set up and work out all the bugs. The device allowed us to plug it in to our Ethernet, so we can run several devices using that. We also set up some Wi-Fi service to run other things, such as our iPhones and iPads. We were able to determine that everything worked well. We had great Internet speed. I learned how much time I'd been wasting waiting for slow HughesNet service to download things, not to mention that sometimes we were unable to upload at all. Wait times were such that they were usually not long enough to do anything productive, usually only a minute or so. But it all added up. I



found myself being able to accomplish so much more than I had been. It's amazing. After we were satisfied that everything was working as hoped, we terminated the HughesNet service.

Two new fires were started by lightning on 27 August about twenty miles away from us. The photo on the previous page shows how it looked from our front door. Fortunately there was a period following of little wind and some rain, and the fires were under control fairly quickly.

I also joined ANZAPA, an APA mainly based in Australia and New Zealand. Jeanne Mealy and Lucy Schmeidler are also members. I was able to join, because the slowdown in mail service forced the APA to become electronic. If things go back to "normal" and the general membership votes to go back to paper, I will be forced to drop out.

Otherwise things are about the same. We remain wary about going out other than grocery shopping and necessary doctor appointments. We both got our flu shots at Safeway; they give us 10-percent off coupons when we get our shots there.

* * *

* **Kritter Korner**

One night about two-thirds of the way through August, our big birdbath fell over or was knocked down and broke into irreparable pieces. I only recently received a birdbath I ordered as a replacement a few days ago and haven't had a chance to set it up yet.

There are indications of seasonal changes. The bird feed isn't getting used up as quickly. On the other hand, there have been hawks and roadrunners hanging around a lot, and that lessens bird feeder use, although the birds seemed to get used to their presence given time. On the other hand, a bird may have lost its life due to carelessness; we don't really know, we just found some feathers under the bird feeders.

Here are a few photos captured by our wildlife camera:



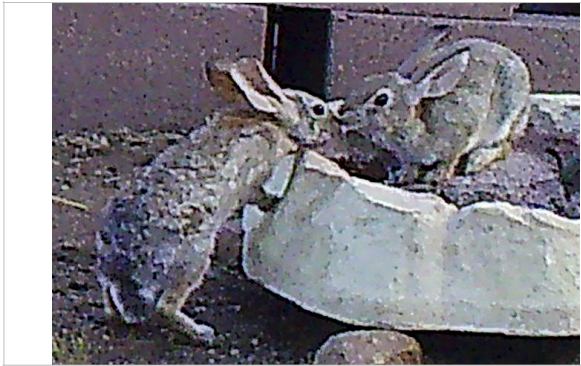
Harris's Hawk



Cooper's Hawk



Hooded Oriole



Bunny Kiss



Greater Roadrunner

* * *

* Astronomy

Much of August was terrible for astronomy because of cloud cover or smokey haze, much of it blown in from out of state, including California.

Here are a couple of nice photos taken recently:



M8 Lagoon Nebula



M20 Trifid Nebula

* * *

* ReCONvene, 15 August 2020

NESFA hosted this one-day convention online. I read about it, probably on the File 770 website. I didn't sign up until earlier that week after I determined that I had time in the my schedule and after I determined that I wanted to see some of the guest speakers, especially Brother Guy. For those of you who may not be familiar with him, he is the Vatican Astronomer. He has been at several cons I've been to, but there was always another programme item going on at the same time that I wanted to go to more.

ReCONvene had four tracks of programming, including gaming, over six hours. The

items were each fifty minutes in length. It was really well run, mostly on Zoom.

The first item started at 11:00 am Boston time, which was 8:00 am for me. I had to really hustle to be ready on time. I skipped my usual morning exercises and had Mike top up the birdbaths for me. I ate breakfast during the presentation. The speakers could not see us. The title was “Glimpsing Climate Recovery”. The speakers were Vincent Docherty and Vandana Singh. David Brin, who was also scheduled, was a no show. The focus was on using the climate crisis in fiction. Of course it’s already been done, but possible ideas for new fiction were also discussed.

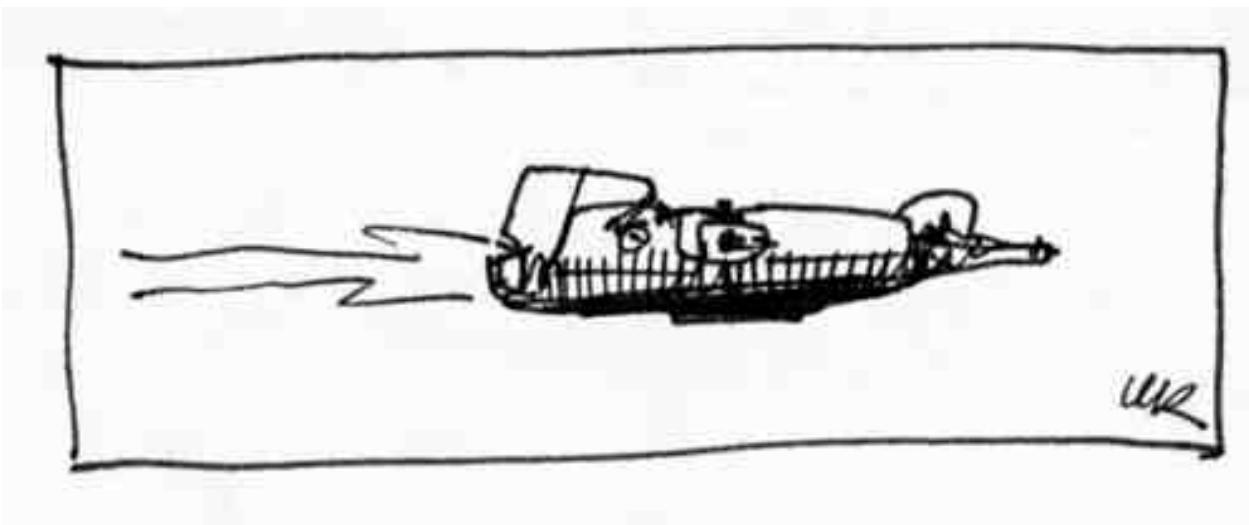
The second session I attended was “The Distant Future in Science Fiction”. The speakers were Sharon Lee, Steven Barnes, Jennifer Marie Brissett, Brother Guy Consolmagno, and Adrian Tchaikovsky. The meaning of sentience was discussed. Sentience means having free will or the concept thereof. Are dolphins sentient? Would we recognize an alien sentient species?

My third session was “The AI among Us”. The panellists were Ted Chiang, Alastair Reynolds, Karl Schroeder, Martha Wells, and R. W. W. Greene. We already have AIs in a limited form. How well is that working? Can AI develop sentience? How and when might that come about? The panellists believe that sentience won’t be achieved by AI for a long time if ever.

The fourth session I attended was “Modernizing Fairy Tales and Myths” and featured the following panellists: Victor LaValle, Rebecca Roanhorse, Catherynne Valente, and Seanan McGuire, writers who have used fairy tales and myths in their fiction. Using well-known stories helps writers reach readers familiar with the stories. It can be tricky using some mythology, such as those regarded as proprietary by Native Americans.

By the time of the fifth session I attended, it was noon and lunchtime for me, so I ate while I listened to the discussion about “Exploring the Literary Sandbox of Speculative Fiction”. This session featured Melanie Meadors, Chris Barkley, Zig Zag Claybourne, S. L. Huang, and Julia Rios. Discussion was about how their own works and those of others have changed the way we think about writing, literature, and society. There was some discussion about using ideas from foreign cultures.

The final session I attended was “Town Hall: Welcome to Wild Cards Nation”. Wild Cards is a shared world series (currently with twenty-seven books) with many different writers. It was originated by George R. R. Martin. Melinda Snodgrass is partnered with Martin. The panellists were Melinda Snodgrass, David Anthony Durham, Max



Gladstone, Mary Anne Mohanraj, and Peadar O'Guilin. They discussed the series in general and the characters each of them created.

Afterward I checked out the art show, which was hosted on a different platform. There were many artists represented, but I didn't make a note of the names. Some were artists whose names and works I recognized from previous conventions.

Overall the length seemed good. I presume we will be limited to virtual conventions for the foreseeable future. It's not an altogether bad thing. Where the con originates won't matter. No worries about whether we can afford to go wherever.

* * *

* **Reviews: What I've Read/Seen Recently**

Movies

36 Hours, MGM, 1964, starring James Garner, Eva Marie Saint, and Rod Taylor

[spoiler alert] World War II seems to be a popular topic for motion pictures. In this film James Garner plays an American major who is working more or less undercover in Portugal. Because he is tasked with discovering information about German troop movements, he is privy to D-Day invasion plans. The reasoning seems a bit thin to me. In any case he is drugged and kidnapped by Germans who work him over so that he appears to have aged six years. They tell him he's been in a coma for a while and is suffering amnesia about the previous six years. In conversation they hope he will give them information about D-Day. They trick him long enough that he does just that. However when he realizes what's really going on, he lets them think he's known all along. Therefore they doubt the D-Day information he had given them. By the time they discover the truth, it's too late.

There was a scene early on when a lowly soldier appears for a few seconds. I thought I recognized James Doohan, but I couldn't verify this until I checked Doohan's filmography. It was an uncredited part.

It was generally an interesting movie with an interesting idea. I've been finding that a lot of James Garner's early work was quite serious, as opposed to the lighthearted stuff he became famous for later.

#

The Red Sun (Soleil Rouge), Les Filmes Corona, 1971, starring Charles Bronson, Toshiro Mifune, Alain Delon, and Ursula Andress

Generally I wouldn't watch a movie starring Charles Bronson, but I was intrigued by the fact that Toshiro Mifune was also in it. This was a spaghetti western jointly made by France, Italy, and Spain. The basic story is that in 1870 ambassador from Japan is travelling by rail to Washington, DC, and his train is held up by bandits led by Bronson and Delon. As a result a gift meant for the President is stolen. Mifune plays the samurai

sent to recover it from the villains.

Although Bronson is one of the villains, he is portrayed as not being as bad as the one portrayed by Delon.

While I wouldn't give this movie any awards, I found it interesting. The TV series *Wild, Wild West* treated similar themes.

#

Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet, Warner, 1940, starring Edward G. Robinson

Turner Classic Movies presented a series of movies about medical scientists.

This is the true story of Paul Ehrlich (1854-1915), a medical researcher who developed the method of staining selective cells for easier detection and who also helped develop treatments for various diseases, including diphtheria and syphilis. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for his contributions to immunology. According to TCM Robinson regarded this role as his favourite and immersed himself in the role during the shooting.

This movie was nominated for an Oscar for Best Writing, Original Screenplay.

#

TV

Lovecraft Country, HBO

This series is fantasy but is also a commentary on the social status of Blacks in the 1950s. I came to this country in 1956 when I was seven. I knew things were bad in the South. One Japanese couple who had driven through the South told us of some nervous-making experiences there. There was prejudice not only toward Blacks but also anyone not White.

Lovecraft Country takes place in the Midwest and the northeastern part of the country. The story starts in Chicago, where we've all heard about how things were and are. A small group of them drive to Massachusetts where a missing father was last seen. They run into a lot of prejudice along the way and in Massachusetts. I wouldn't have believed it, but there is an audio commentary available on the web about the show, so I know the show hasn't exaggerated anything. I was mortified. I certainly have led a sheltered existence. I am not aware of having run into any prejudice directed toward me.

The first Black person I became aware of in my personal life was a student in my high school in upstate New York. I didn't know him personally, but people talked. He was regarded as a curiosity.

My first experience with a Black person was college. My roommate was a Black woman from New Orleans. We got along fine, but we didn't really have any interests in



common. She eventually moved in with three other girls in a different dorm, and I was left in a single. She, however, introduced me to several other Black students. They seemed aloof though not unfriendly.

I didn't make any Black friends until I moved to Los Angeles.

I've only seen three episodes so far, but I presume we will learn more about Black history during the course of the series.

* * *

* **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 #335

Cover (Jeanne Mealy): I like this cover a lot. It's a really nice scenic photo that almost makes me feel I'm there.

Quirky Bits (Jeanne Mealy): There's a lot of testing in Arizona; but results are often slow in coming, from

what I've heard. Our electrician waited over four weeks! My sister, who is a paediatrician in Washington State, complains that her employer sends tests to Arizona for processing.

There are both pet and feed stores near us, but that just adds to the number of stores I need to stop at. The grocery stores used to be adequate, but they no longer seem to have enough stock. I've started ordering both pet supplies and bird supplies from Chewy or Amazon. I tried Petco, but they messed up on their second attempted shipment.

Don't Ask #25 (Lucy Schmeidler):

So sorry to hear about your falls. Please keep your mind on where your feet are.

The problems you've encountered trying to have other people shop for you is why I insist on doing it myself. In addition I don't decide on what fruits to buy until I'm at the store and see what they have, and many fruit have to pass my smell test. Even Mike can't be trusted to do it right and vice versa. He recently had to clarify what he meant by some of the items he puts on the list. He used to accompany me, but he stopped when the pandemic started.

I have voted by mail since the mid 1980s. As far as I'm aware, I have voted in every election I was qualified to vote in.

I've kept a diary since I was eleven. I have also corresponded with various pen pals from about the age of eleven or twelve until a few years ago when I sort of ran out of time. My pen pals all get this zine after it appears in StippleAPA. My writing has gradually

improved over the years and is still improving.

My art has mostly been neglected since we moved to Oracle. I've just been too busy with other activities.

Yes antelope squirrels are the size of chipmunks. In fact there is a chipmunk in this area that differs from them only in small ways. As far as I'm aware those chipmunks have not visited us.

Musings from the Gathering Dusk #33 (Bill Thomasson):

We filled out our census form online, but someone later left a form on our front doorknob. We eventually discarded that. Recently a person came by to verify our house number.

Mamma's Mutterings (Marge Sehnert):

It's apparently taking way longer for people to get their Covid-19 test results here. Our electrician waited over four weeks!

Wight As Rayne (S. Rayne):

ROTFL=Rolling On The Floor Laughing.

I never heard of "Company X".

Lone Wolf and Cub movies are violent, but the blood is so fake looking that it never bothered me. I have *The Hidden Fortress* on DVD; maybe it's time to watch it again, except I have a huge pile of DVDs I haven't watched yet.

Amazons & Swallows Forever! #76 (Cy Chauvin):

I saw Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et le Bête* many years ago. Perhaps it's time to see it again. I've read many versions of the story and have no idea which, if any, is the

original.

MAILING COMMENTS ON STIPPLE-APA #336

Cover (Stephanie Meyer): Thank you for sharing your corner of the garden with us. I hope to plant some milkweed one of these days. If I ever have the time, I may try planting some vegetables.

Off to a Late Start (Erik Biever): We've been in our current house for a little more than eleven years. That's the longest time I've ever lived in the same house or apartment.

I've been voting by mail since the second election I participated in from California—probably 1985.

Tempus Verum Veritas (Joyce Maetta Odum): When I lived by myself, I never used the dishwasher unless I had a party.

Like you I use a double thread to sew on buttons. After going back and forth about four times, I pull the thread under the button, wind the thread around the bundle of threads, go under the fabric, make a knot, and sew up again before cutting the thread. The going around is to allow room for fastening the button; this is particularly important with heavy

fabrics; otherwise the button may strain the thread too much when fastened.

Don't Ask #26 (Lucy Schmeidler): In my experience most cats have poor claw control. I've only had one cat who never extended his claw against me; he was a large tuxedo cat.

Mission Creep 12 (Garth Spencer): I haven't watched a regular news show in years. The closest I come is to watch a business news show. Currently I watch *Bloomberg Wall Street Week*, which is broadcast on Fridays and repeated throughout the weekend. Otherwise my news shows, such as they are, include *Real Time with Bill Maher* and listening to NPR when I drive.

Quirky Bits (Jeanne Mealy): By "plugged ears", do you mean there's something physically blocking your ears or that it feels that way. If it's a physical blockage, it should be fairly easy to take care of. Are your sinuses blocked? An antihistamine or decongestant may help.

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

Errata: p. 3—The caption “North American Nebula” should not have the word “Galaxies” at the end. I would have sworn I deleted that.

Dave Amato

20 August 2020

I believe that the photo on the cover of *Purrsonal Mewsings* #73 is the best of a lion that I've ever seen.

#

Timothy Lane, timothyane51 at gmail dot com

21 August 2020

I'm glad the fires didn't cause you too many problems. I've been hearing about the heat and drought out west on the news as well as the fires. It would be nice to learn more about that virtual convention.

They did some more testing at our nursing home, and my roommate tested positive. They sent him out for treatment (I'm informed he has since returned) and moved me to another room, from which I since have been moved to still another room, (with a different roommate) because they had closed down the entire aisle I was on. Whether this is permanent or temporary I don't know.

I think the isolation is a major problem with the shutdowns. I have no idea when visitors will again be allowed, granted that it was only very occasionally that Joseph and Lisa Major visited me. Elizabeth is in assisted living in a different facility and can't go out on group visits to a store until these shutdowns end, if they ever do.

I doubt right-wing agitators have anything significant to do with the riots of the past three months. The various mayors who have acted only reluctantly against the mobs are mostly far-left Democrats and would have been much more willing to put down alt-right or white supremacist rioters. It must be remembered that the Antifa groups are mostly whites from affluent families.

((It has been shown that there was no Antifa involvement but that others pretended to be them.))

Good to hear from you all, anyway. I'm even more isolated than usual here.

#

David Bratman, dbratman at earthlink dot net

22 August 2020

When I read about that fire I thought of you, but nothing in the information I gathered indicated that it came as close to you as three miles. That's far too close: large mountain wildfires can jump that kind of distance easily. How fortunate that it didn't.

((Because of the uneven terrain in the foothills where we live, the possibility of a fire jumping that distance was minimal. If there had been any appreciable chance of that happening, I'm sure we would have been evacuated.))

#

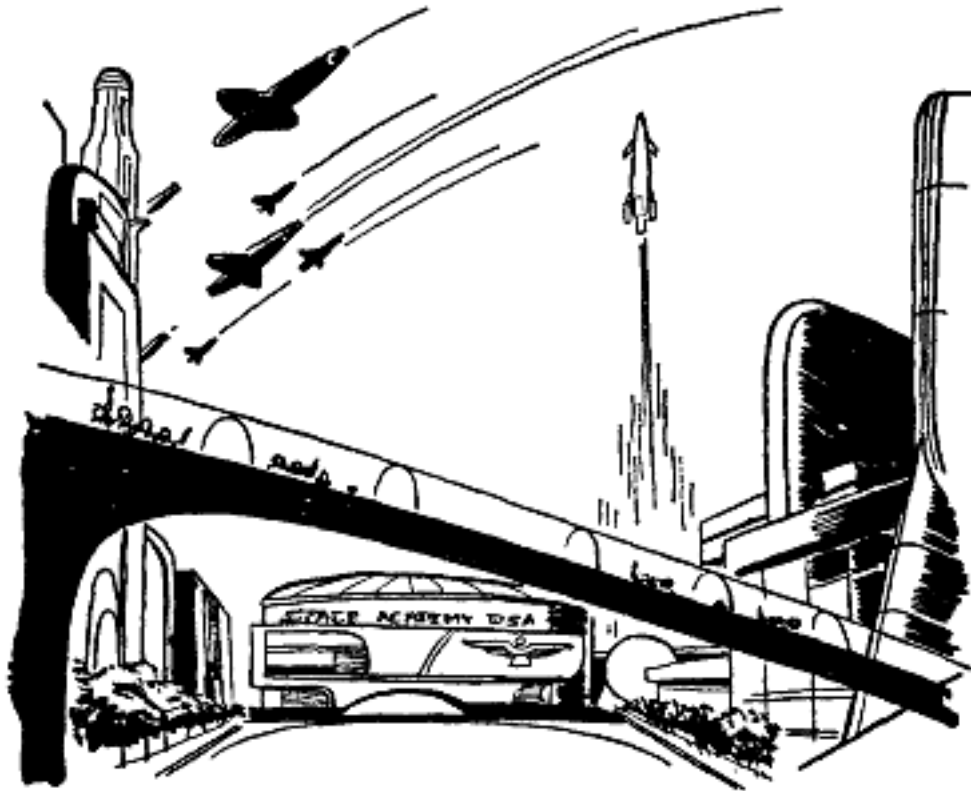
Cathy Palmer-Lister, cathypl at sympatico dot ca

22 August 2020

Thanks, Laurraine! I love the astrophotos. I have a 10" Dobsonian that doesn't get enough exposure, sadly. The weather is so unpredictable; and if the moon is dark, it's guaranteed to rain.

((Very little rain here, but a lot of pesky clouds.))

#



Justin E. A. Busch, 308 Prince St, #422, St. Paul, MN 55101 25 August 2020

My compliments to Al Sirois for the cover on PM #74-- Richard Powers meets Philip Guston, with a touch of Dali (surely the spoonlike elements entering from the right are cousins of his 1932 Agnostic Symbol). And is there a small nod to Vaughan Bode (the grey and white device/object centre right) as well? In any case, this is one of the most intriguing fanzine covers I've seen recently.

I'm glad the Bighorn Fire got no closer to you than it did. Here a similar event would be a tornado (60+ so far this season)-- something worth seeing, and perhaps photographing, but only from a distance.

((I've been a mile away from a tornado twice, probably small ones. Once was when I was in college in Minnesota. Someone spotted it from our eighth floor dorm balcony. Half the inhabitants headed to the basement. The other half went in search of a camera. I got a pretty good shot, but you can't see the bottom because of buildings. The other one happened in upstate New York, but we couldn't see it from our house. We only later saw the abandoned barn that had been flattened.))

Apropos watching *Curse of the Cat People*-- a 50-inch TV screen would no doubt enhance viewing of any good transfer of an older film, but I tend to use "big screen" as a synonym for seeing an actual film print in a theatrical setting. The shared experience of much larger than life images thrown upon, instead of out from, a screen is, I think, qualitatively different from any other option. It is also becoming progressively more difficult to see such things, even in cities with theatres which still have actual film projectors, since the studios themselves often no longer have available prints of most titles. Not all technological change is entirely progress....

((Of course I agree with you about the phrase "big screen", but I'm afraid we won't be going to any of those for a while. Actually unless I'm seeing a movie with a group of like-minded people (such as in college or at a convention) I find the other people in the audience usually more of an annoyance than anything else. Also at home I can always pause a film if I need a bathroom break.

((Actually where this particular film is concerned, I watched it on a computer monitor much smaller than our TV, but I was only a foot or two away from the screen.))

#

Frank Wu, qar10999 at hotmail dot com

27 August 2020

Thanks, Laurraine -

That was very sweet what you wrote about my story! Encourages me to write more!

((You're welcome. Just saying it like it is.))

#

We were thinking about you and a friend who lives in Tucson while hearing about the fire in the mountains there. 3 miles is pretty close, although I guess relatively not as close as for those near the California fires in more wooded areas. Glenn Glazer and Allie had to evacuate from their Felton home for several days but are back now. Glad it never got any closer to you.

The cover this time reminds me a bit of an APA-L Road Thingie. Not perfectly but enough, since the topic has run through both my other apas in the last few months.

#

I Also Heard From: Alan White, Ray Nelson

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

Cooler weather is promised in a few days, but I'll believe it when I feel it.

I've been looking for someone to install my landscaping. Maybe I'll have an update next time.

Deadline for next issue is expected to be on or about 15 October.

Laurraïne

6 September 2020