

Purrsonal Mewsings #76



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 #495. ©2020 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 2020 by R-Laurraine Tutihasi. Originally published in *Purrsonal Mewsings* #76, http://www.weasner.com/Purrsonal_Mewsings." All other material is copyrighted by their respective creators, and they should be contacted for any reprint permission.



#76

November 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial / Introduction—p. 2
Kritter Korner—p. 2
Astronomy—p. 3
Ring of Fire Con—p. 3
Reviews—p. 5
StippleAPA—p. 6
Letters—p. 7
Closing Remarks—p. 13

Art and Photo Credits

Cover illo—Photo of desert cottontail taken by Mike Weasner
Title page header—Sheryl Birkhead

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 7 September we've continued off and on to get smokey skies blown in from various places. Fortunately October has had better skies usually. The weather finally cooled down enough during the last week of October and ended our "long, hot summer".

During the last week or so of September I had a lot of landscaping put in. I hope to have photos next spring. Right now all the new plants are in "cages" because of our high rabbit population. Without the cages, the new plants would become rabbit food.

October began with a problem with one of my external computer hard drives. One set of connecting ports failed. It was still under warranty, and we returned it for repair. In the meantime we went ahead and bought a replacement drive. It's the dual drive I use partly for automatic backups, so I didn't want to do without for any period of time. We have no good alternate way to back up what was on the drive.

In mid-month I attended Ring of Fire Con, which I report on below.

* * *

*** Kritter Korner**

A while back someone asked about the size of the antelope squirrel. Here's a photo taken by the trail camera that shows both the antelope and rock squirrels. Unfortunately the larger one is in front, but I think you can still tell the difference:




And here to the left is a photo I took of a spiny lizard that happened to be on the patio when I went out to refill the birdbaths one day.



Below are photos of some birds.

		
Black-headed Grosbeak (Trail camera)	Female Black-headed Grosbeak (Trail camera)	Hooded Oriole Pair (Trail camera)


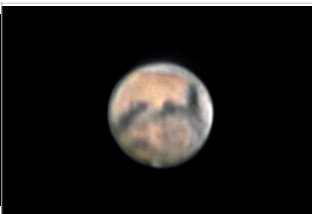



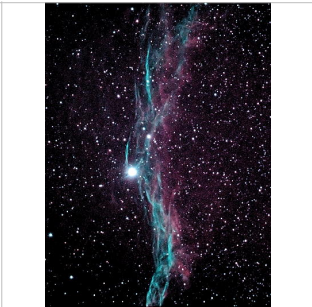
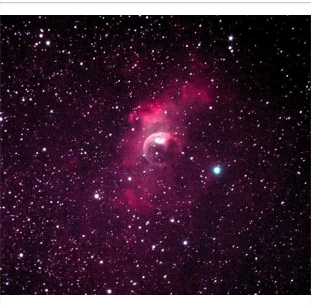

The quail families gather at the birdbaths once or twice a day.

	
<p>Pyrrhuloxia (Mike Weasner)</p>	<p>Two quail families (Trail camera)</p>

* * *

* Astronomy

The sky was terrible for much of September, mostly because of smoke blowing in from the West Coast. October was much better.

			
<p>Jupiter</p>	<p>Mars</p>	<p>Dumbbell Nebula</p>	<p>Helix Nebula</p>
			
<p>Andromeda Galaxy</p>	<p>Veil Nebula</p>	<p>Bubble Nebula</p>	<p>Pleiades</p>

* * *

* Ring of Fire Con, 8-11 October 2020

Ring of Fire Con celebrates the "1632" alternate history series started by Eric Flint.

The series currently consists of twenty-six books. The basic premise is that in the year 2000, the town of Grantville, WV, is somehow sent back in time to the middle of the Thirty Years War. The Thirty Years War took place from 1618 to 1648. The war started in the area now considered to be Germany but spread wider with the Habsburg-Bourbon conflict at its core. The series started in the year 1632, but later books cover later dates up to 1636. Books are written by many authors with Eric Flint acting as the series editor. I have not read any of the books, as alternate history, with a few exceptions, is not one of my primary interests. Still the convention was interesting in terms of the large number of guests included, and I learned a lot of about the series. The convention was run from the Central Time Zone.

This series of conventions started in 2003. The first three cons were held near the location on which the fictional Grantville was based. Since then they've been held as parts of larger cons. This year was to have been part of NasFic. When NasFic went virtual and shrank, it was decided to do a stand-alone virtual con.

I missed the opening ceremonies for RingOfFireCon on Friday night due to time zone mixup. However it was recorded, so I was able to view it later.

The programme items were all prerecorded but initially presented at the times indicated on their schedule. The "room parties" were conducted on Zoom after each day's programmes.

I didn't attend any programme items on Friday, but I visited a couple of socializing groups at Ring of Fire con. I talked with Melinda Snodgrass and Tom Kidd among others (Rose Beetem, Margaret Middleton, Jody Lynn Nye, and, and others whose names I didn't note). I've previously met Melinda Snodgrass on other occasions. I met Tom Kidd a number of years ago through a common friend.

I had breakfast and watched an interview of Steven Barnes at Ring of Fire Con on Saturday morning. The most interesting thing about this interview was learning how his background of growing up as a Black kid with a middle class background influenced his writing and his approach to life.

Then I watched the panel "Pandemics, Then, Now, and to Come: Diseases in Fiction" with panellists David Brin, Virginia DeMarce, Cecelia Holland, Eric Flint, and Edith Wild moderated by Alexi Vandenberg. This was a very timely topic.

I had lunch about 13:00 and watched the ROFCon panel "Writing Characters You Don't Like" with panellists Nancy Kress, Dave Freer, Shoshana Edwards, Jonathan Maberry, Cat Rambo, and Eric Flint (M)".

After lunch I watched the ROFCon panel "Working with Editors" with panellists Walt Boyes (M), Edward M. Lerner, Jim Minz, Christopher Ruocchio, and Melinda Snodgrass. This panel had a mix of authors and editors, so we received both points of view. A couple of the panellists also wear both hats on different occasions.

At night I visited a few breakout rooms at Ring of Fire Con. One man (Victor something) in one of the breakout rooms was an immunologist, and he was fascinating to listen to. He gave me a couple of things to discuss with my allergist as well.

Sunday after breakfast I watched the ROFCON interview of David Gerrold and the panel "Fun and Frolic in Films and TV" with panellists David Gerrold, Aaron Semmel, Melinda Snodgrass, and moderated by Chris Barkley. Even though I've seen other

interviews of David Gerrold, I seem to learn something new each time. The panel about films and TV also revealed a lot about him and Melinda Snodgrass.

I had lunch about 13:00 and watch the ROFCON interview of Melinda Snodgrass. She told of her early ambition to become an opera singer. Unfortunately her voice just wasn't strong enough. She obtained a law degree to make her father happy and worked in law for a while before she threw in the towel and started writing. George R. R. Martin encouraged her to submit a script to a TV show. She was fortunate that her spec script was accepted for *Star Trek: the Next Generation*.

In the afternoon I attended the closing ceremonies of Ring of Fire Con and attended one of the room parties.

Attending a virtual con isn't the same as going to a physical con. It's a lot more convenient and more affordable. The virtual cons I've attended, as far as I can tell, have been a lot smaller than most physical cons I've been to.

* * *

*** Reviews: Guest Review by Michael Weasner (reprinted from weasner.com)**

The Last Stargazers - The Enduring Story of Astronomy's Vanishing Explorers, by Emily Levesque, \$24, Copyright ©2020, 321 pages

I learned about *The Last Stargazers* from an interview that the author did with the MacObserver Background Mode podcast. After listening to her talk about her experiences, I knew that I had to read her book.

I was hooked from the very beginning of the Introduction. You will be too.

In her book Dr. Emily Levesque, University of Washington, describes what it is like to be a professional astronomer. The book is part autobiography, so you will learn how Emily came to love astronomy and how she became a professional astronomer. You will also read about the experiences of some other professional astronomers. And you will be treated to many fascinating stories about life as an astronomer. While some of the stories may appear to be myths, they are more in the category of "you can't make this stuff up". Along the way you will learn some of the history of astronomy and even some astronomy and astrophysics (not painful).

Dr. Levesque describes pretty much every type of research that an astronomer can do. You will experience some of the preparation and planning involved to get the data the astronomer seeks, the joy and frustrations of making or trying to make the observations, and then analyzing the data that has been collected. There are "detective stories" as scientists try to track down the source of an equipment problem or decide whether a signal detected is real or not. The book's stories are from personal experiences, the experiences of colleagues, and well-researched historical records. They are funny and sad, exciting and frustrating, and educational and life-changing.

The stories in *The Last Stargazers* make for an enjoyable read and will resonate with all amateur astronomers as well as with the "I want to be a professional astronomer". The equipment, weather, and moon light struggles are things that all lovers of the night sky experience. Being an astronomer can seem to be a lonely life, but, as we all know, the stars are our friends who return to us at night. Also among our friends are other astronomers, both professional and amateur, who have the same love of the night sky as we do and will live through the many challenges to observe and learn everything the Universe has to tell us.

I recommend listening to Dr. Levesque's Background Mode interview (<https://www.macobserver.com/podcasts/background-mode-emily-levesque/>) and then reading her book. Thanks to Dr. Levesque you will experience the thrills, chills, chuckles, tears, and awesomeness that is the life of the astronomer.

* * *

* **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 #337

The Periodic Table of Variable Elements (Jeanne Mealy):

Welcome to new member Kathy Sidles.

Quirky Bits (Jeanne Mealy): I have vague recollections of seeing *Mercy Point*. As I recall it only lasted a few episodes. I was disappointed when it wasn't picked up. It reminded me of some sf I read growing up.

Mike has been cutting his own hair for a while.

The comics I currently get are Doctor Who and whatever J. Michael Straczynski is publishing now.

No much luck on the rain front yet. Maybe tonight.

I managed to see a fire hydrant

about a mile away from our house—assuming it's in working condition. I guess the water in the grey water tank or the rain water tanks could be used in a pinch. Right now the rain water tanks are in need of topping up, since I've been using them to water the newly planted landscape plants.

The car colour personality thing could be stymied by couples or families who have to compromise on colour choice. I remember one time my family chose beige, because we couldn't agree on anything else. Also there are people who buy whatever is in their price range regardless of colour. Some models don't come in a wide choice of colours. You'd have to custom paint your car, not something

most people do. I had one manager when I worked one summer at Kodak who always painted her car pink.

Looking Around - Panda Wildflower Says Hi! (Kathy Sidles): Welcome to StippleAPA! I hope you enjoy your stay.

I don't think we have bumblebees

here, but we have a slightly larger and fairly benign carpenter bee.

We ought to have dark skies here, but there was too much smoke this summer. In general we have noticed more tendency toward clouds since we moved here eleven years ago. You can see many of Mike's astrophotographs at weasner.com.

You'll have to wait until the next disty for more comments. I haven't finished reading it.

* 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.

Richard Dengrove, richd22426 at aol dot com

8 September 2020

I would like to start with the cover. When I was a teen, my father got me a bunch of science fiction paperbacks from a patient of his. A lot of the covers looked like Al Sirois's, half-Abstract Expressionism., half realism. I wish I had some to show you, but I am sure that, sometime in the past sixty years, they got thrown out.

((I recall that Richard Powers often did covers in that style.))

I will first comment on the Editorial/Introduction. My wife, Heidi, was doing my hair for a time. I liked, it but she was not too keen on cutting on my hair. Now I use a nearby barbershop where everyone wears a mask.

In Reviews, you review Frank Wu's "In the Absence of Instructions." Would men ever let robots have human emotions? I doubt it. Robots would be made to serve human emotions. On the other hand, that means that robots would carry the emotions of their creators. A robot made by a mad scientist would be very different from one mass produced.

Was Frank's story anything like that?

In Mailing Comments for Stipple-APA #224, Eric Biever said that he visited a zoo and the attendant asked him whether he wanted to pet a cockroach. Since he was afraid of them, he declined.

((I believe you are referring to a comment I made to Eric.))

I remember being asked to pet a tobacco worm in the Insect Room of the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum in Washington, DC. It was somewhat less familiar and less frightening than a cockroach, so I was willing to pet it.

Also, Jeanne Mealy commented on my theory of the current shortages of different products. She said that, rather than hoarding, what happened was many were staying at home and used different products, which caused shortages, like with toilet paper. The problem is that toilet paper for the home was in short supply, then it wasn't, and now it is again. Also, when it was in short supply, I tried buying the toilet paper stores and offices use; and that was in short supply too. Not as short because I found one place that would sell it to me.

((I believe you are referring to my comment to Jeanne Mealy. These shortages also vary by geographical location.))

Finally I get to Letters to the Editor. Gerri Balter says she should do more in the way of exercise. I think my exercise is OK: I do weight lifting. Nothing heroic. However, before Coronavirus took over, I used to go on the treadmill in my apartment complex's gym. Now that's closed. Anyway, I should get more sun and more fresh air. I know a place to walk. When the weather gets cooler, I will walk again there.

John Hertz defends Heinlein's plot in Heinlein's *Rocketship Galileo*. He says that the fact that it is a cliché doesn't mean that it can't be great literature. I have to admit he's right. All novels have pluses and minuses. However, it didn't strike me as a great novel when I read it as an adult. It might have struck me as a great novel, though, when I was a kid.

Lloyd Penney complains about the offerings on TV. I long ago decided that TV didn't interest me. Recently, however, I have been watching the offerings on Amazon Prime Video. Lots of movies, lots of series. Right now, I am really engrossed by the episodes of *Babylon 5* I have seen.

Finally, we get to me. I haven't noticed the blood used in movies recently. Is it that realistic? My friend the chemist thinks he can make even more realistic blood. I know in 1960, Alfred Hitchcock claimed that he shot *Psycho* in black and white because, then, chocolate looked more like blood than any of Hollywood's usual chemicals. I have no idea what they use right now .

#

Tom Feller, PO Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214-0937 12 September 2020

Thank you for sending *Purrsonal Mewsings* #74. I am sending you my latest SFPazine in trade.

Anita has been cutting my hair whenever she thinks it is getting too long.

Not counting trips to Captain D's for take-out and Sonic for ice cream, the only restaurant we have visited for dine-in service is Cracker Barrel. We think they are doing a good job of keeping the tables clean and maintaining social distance.

((We rarely eat out, and we have not done so since the pandemic started.))

We were already doing business with State Farm via mail and the telephone. I don't think we have been to the physical office of our agent in twenty years. Our regular branch of Bank of America actually closed down from a Covid-19 infection, although their ATM machine still works.

((I guess the only reason I went to the State Farm office is that it happens to be very close to my allergist's. Since I normally get allergy shots every couple of weeks, I used to pay our insurance bills in person using a credit card; this way I also got the mileage points or cents back depending on the credit card I used. I also enjoyed conversations with the people who work there.))

We have the opposite problem that you have in that we have had too much rain. In fact, we had both tornado and severe weather warnings when the remnants of Hurricane Laura passed over and dumped even more water on us.

I was sorry to read that *Penny Dreadful: The City of Angels* was cancelled by Showtime. Perhaps another network will pick it up.

#

Lloyd Penney, penneys at bell dot net

12 September 2020

Many thanks for the latest *Purrsonal Mewsings*, issue 74. It's a sunny but cool weekend outside, as if someone turned the thermostat down as soon as the calendar changed to September. I think I might be late for the next issue, but we will see what appears in my IN box.

((Our weather, unfortunately, stayed quite hot until the end of September, when we finally came down from three digit Fahrenheit highs. It's only now, in late October, starting to feel like fall.))

The Weather Report... Given the fact what looks like the entire US west coast seems to be on fire, what is the state of your air these days? You must be breathing in far too much smoke.

((We had many days of smoke-covered or -dimmed skies. Sometimes the smoke fell to an altitude where we could smell it.))

We've known Frank Wu for a long time now, and his wife Brianna Wu has taken a couple of runs at a Senate seat. I remember when Frank had enough sales to qualify for SFWA membership; he was a very happy boy. I am planning to be a part of AmazingCon II.

The letter column... We are about six months into this pandemic, and already, we are impatient and only too willing to ignore masks and social distancing for a good time. Some of the reactions I have seen are far too childish. We need the reminder that the 1918 pandemic did last three years, with lasting effects going on a full decade afterwards. With superior technology, we might be able to cut down the length of this modern pandemic; but we should be prepared for the worst event, which might happen if we aren't adult enough to deal with it.

Part of the pandemic means walks. Yvonne can't walk great distances, but I can; so I have been exploring some of the parks department's long pathways. Most enjoyable, and they are helping keep the weight down, but I seem to have the time to do this only every couple of weeks. I need to plan my next walk.

My letter... I was glad to get my haircut as I was perfecting my mad scientist look, but already I could use another one. Our regular shop ripped Yvonne off by overcharging her, and refusing to check their own records to see how much she was charged. We have to find a new shop now. The event I mentioned in August was a steampunk event that is usually a street festival; but because of the pandemic, we went up to help produce online programming. We had a good time, but we are definitely not used to producing anything for online consumption.

Done for the moment...the couch beckons, offering a chance for an afternoon nap. I shouldn't, but... And, now that I am awake again, I can finish this off. Thanks for this issue, and I look forward to the next.

#

Amy Harlib, amyharlib at e-activism dot com

14 September 2020

Glad to get PM 74. Sorry it took me so long to respond. I have been emotionally devastated, having lost my gigs since March.

Been keeping in shape to be ready and able to perform again at a moment's notice.

Loved the astronomy and the Cato photos and enjoyed the reviews.

Streamed many obscure Asian films and TV shows only extreme aficionados would care about with one exception.

Disney's *Mulan*, which in live action form is staged as a straight forward drama, martial arts adventure. I enjoyed it very much, especially the cameos of famous martial arts genre performers Jet Li, Donnie Yen, and Cheng Pei Pei. The production design and the action were as dazzling as anyone could wish for. The lead characters were fine, especially Gong Li as the witch, whom Mulan wins over to her side, and Mulan herself played by Liu Yifei. Jason Scott Lee was a good villain too.

Spend most of my time doing political e-activism and have researched a dangerous technocratic agenda behind all the virus misery. Please check out these websites and question and resist authority.

<https://wrenchinthegears.com>

<https://www.thelastamericanvagabond.com>

<https://questioningcovid.com>

<hPp://www.stopcp.com/GlobalResetPSYOP/GlobalResetPSYOPMindMap.html>

<https://everydayconcerned.net/2020/09/04/breaking-major-investigative-report-by-association-of-french-reserve-army-officers-finds-covid-19-pandemic-to-have-a-hidden-agenda-for-global-totalitarianism-nanotech-chipping-of-all-5g-irradia/>

Pam Popper: <https://makeamericansfreeagain.com>

Del Bigtree: <https://www.brighteon.com/channels/highwire>

<https://www.technocracy.news>

Astor kitty has grown big, beautiful and oh so fabulously fluffy; and he helps keep me sane.

May everyone stay healthy and safe.



#

Mary Manchester, 1297 Monroe Ave. #2. Rochester, NY 14620-1655
24 September 2020

Those photos of the fire *three* miles away! One of the many things you never thought you'd be checking off anyone's bucket list, much less yours. It's been quite a year for that sort of thing.

#

Tom Feller, PO Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214-0937 **10 October 2020**

Thank you for sending *Purrsonal Mewsings* #75. I am enclosing a copy of my latest SFPazine in trade.

I am sorry about the drought your area is suffering. We have the opposite problem and are experiencing rain caused by the remnants of Hurricane Delta while I am writing this LoC.

I've seen *36 Hours* at least twice. I agree that the premise is somewhat dubious; but if you get past that, it is very entertaining. James Garner's first tv series, *Maverick*, is very light hearted, so he was doing that kind of work quite early in his career.

I've seen *Red Sun* once. Yes, combining a western with a samurai movie is quite interesting, although it really didn't work for me.

I've been watching *Lovecraft Country*, too, and have found it fascinating. I haven't read the book, so each episode is a surprise for me.

There was a problem with getting results back for Covid-19 testing at the free sites here in Nashville, but I understand that they have been corrected and people with positive tests are being informed with 24 hours.

For the first six months of the pandemic, I did all the grocery shopping. We now feel safe enough that Anita is now accompanying me.

Anita and I voted by mail this year. Previously, we had taken advantage of the early voting option.

((I've been voting by mail since the early 1980s, mostly because both California and Arizona allow me to do so.))

#

Timothy Lane, timothylane51 at gmail dot com **10 October 2020**

That fire photo was interesting, and the bird photos were nice. That's probably the first time I ever saw at least a photo of a real roadrunner.

It occurs to me that, even if real attended conventions resume, some sort of virtual presence will become available. I imagine very few people from Arizona would attend a single-day NESFA convention; but now you can, and I think that will continue to be the case

I came across *The 36 Hours* on TCM once when I had nothing else I was watching, and can definitely attest to its quality and accuracy. They really knew their history, including little-known details such as that the landing was supposed to have been June 5 (it was delayed by bad weather, which of course Garner's character wouldn't have known about).

Even better was John Banner's appearance as a German home guardsman. He very definitely foreshadowed his later role as Sergeant Schultz on *Hogan's Heroes*.

#

Lloyd Penney, penneys at bell dot net

21 October 2020

Many thanks for *Purrsonal Mewsings* 75. You may have it warm right now, but we're just a little chilly, which makes it refreshing, for me, at least. Also, it looks like with ten days left to go, Hallowe'en will be cancelled for this year because of COVID-19. Looks like all of 2020 will be cancelled, and 2021 isn't looking that viable either.

We will be looking at something from Bell Canada to see if we could set up a node in our apartment to get better service with all of the heavy walls in our apartment. I remember asking them a question like that ten years ago, and they had no idea what I was talking about. Perhaps I was just ahead of my time.

Great bird pictures. Harris's hawks are also living around here, and they are often seen gliding on the thermals rising off the highways. Zoomcons seem to be all we can do...there are already plans for AmazingCon II, the Zoomcon I was a part of earlier this year, and I hope I can do much the same this time around.

((According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Harris's hawks aren't found in your neck of the woods. Maybe you are confusing it with either the red-tailed hawk or the northern harrier, which bear some resemblance to the Harris's hawk.))

* * *

* Closing Remarks

Clouds loom as I finish this up, but we've only had a few drops of rain so far. Deadline for next issue is expected to be some time in early January.

Laurraïne

25 October 2021