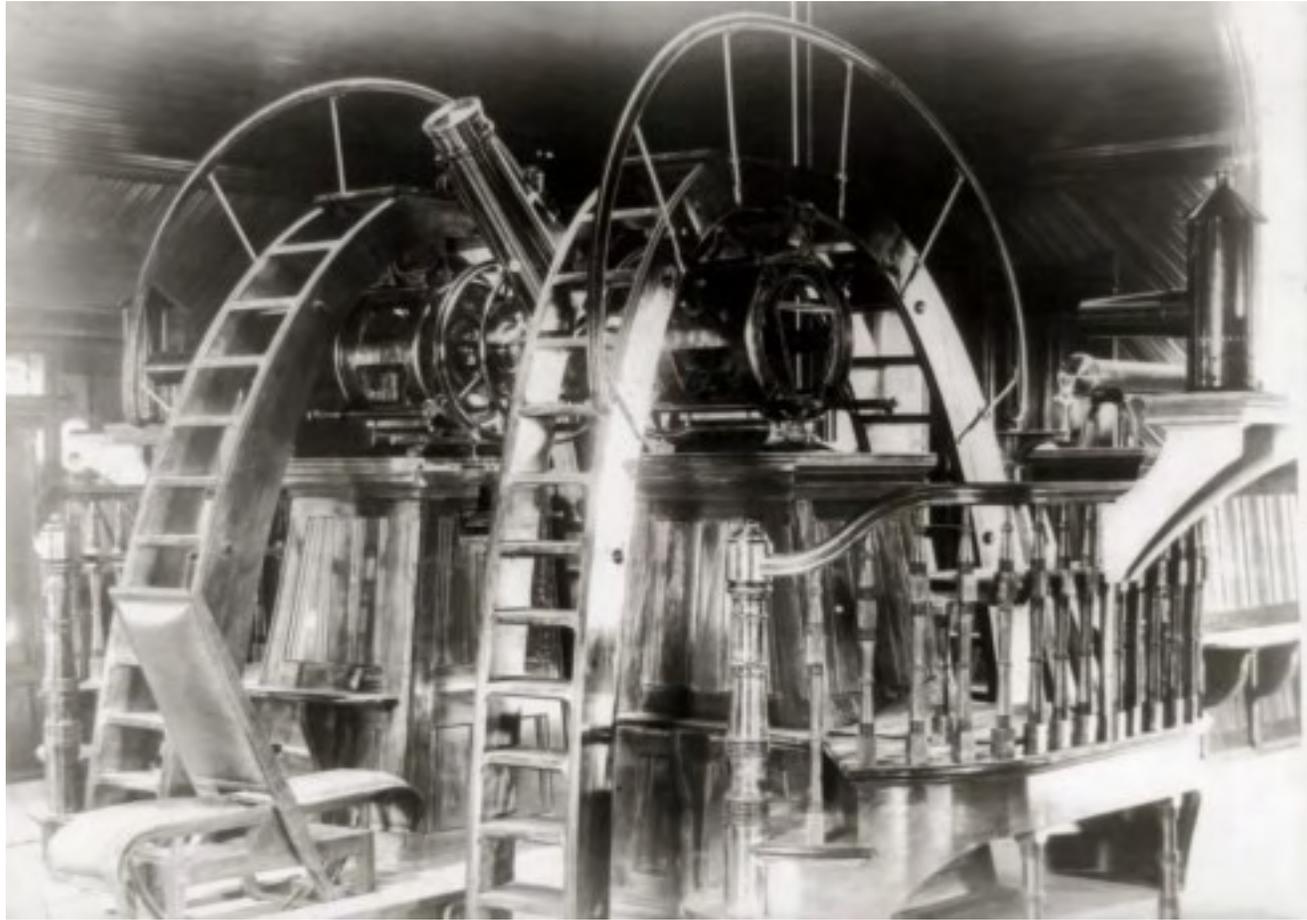


The Drink Tank 163

Wheels Within Wheels



A cover from the old days: 1900 or so, and the building of the Lick Observatory. Let us begin with

Taral!

A Blank Page by Any Other Name

Taral Wayne

“A blank page by any other name” is a play on a line from Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. It refers to a rose, not an empty page, and means that no matter what name it has, a rose smells just as sweet and is still a rose. Likewise, no matter that I intend to fill a blank page with writing instead of art, I will still be very much creating.

In other words, the rumours of my death are greatly exaggerated.

That’s another freely adapted quote; from Mark Twain this time.

I thought it odd that several people read my previous journal and took it to mean that I was giving up art altogether. I had said plainly enough that I wouldn’t try to make a living by art. And I thought I clearly said that it was a sabbatical, a break, that I hoped would last only this one year.

Be reassured dear reader! I have not hung up my pens and pencils for good. I haven’t even foresaken art entirely for the calendar year 2008. I still intend to draw for myself.

That, in many ways, is in itself a great improvement over what I had been doing. Fewer pin-ups of nekkid bunnies with restless hands may result from all this, but I promise that those that I *do* draw will be better for my having my heart in work that’s not “just another job”.

Moreover, I have a large backlog of drawings in various incomplete states, that I have wanted to do for a long time. I may find time to finish some of them now.

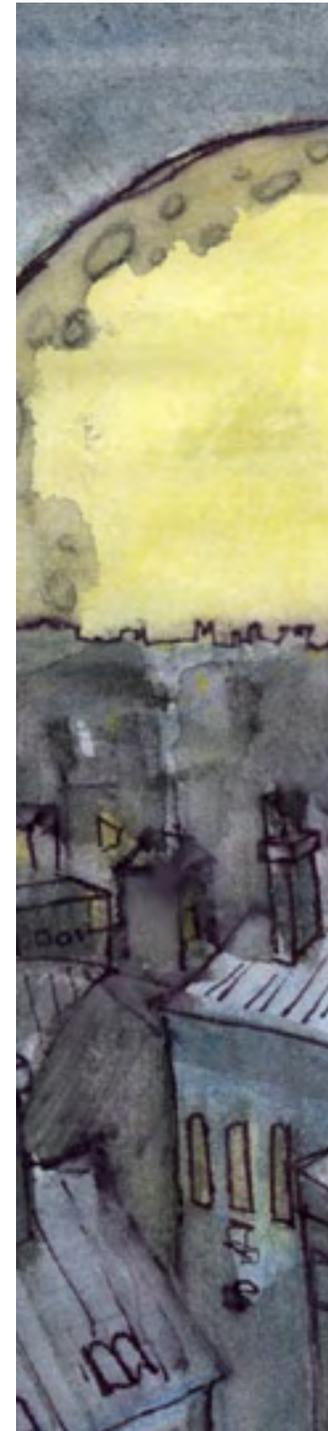
FA only stands to benefit by the change, I think.

* * *

In the meantime, I have a lot of writing to do. With luck I can complete at least two short stories every month, each around 5,000 words. As measured by my empty pocketbook, three would be better. And as I have taken as little as three days to write a story, the limit is likely how deep my client’s pocketbook is rather than my typing speed.

I’ve already written two stories. “No Bet” and “Changing of the Guard” have already earned me \$350, which is a damned sight more than I’ve earned from art over the previous three months. I start work on number three tomorrow.

If you’re curious, and would like to read them, I’ll post the stories in Scraps.



A strange thing happened the other day at Cinequest. I’ve been announcing there for years, since 2001, and I’m pretty good. I’m a ham, naturally (like the ones made from the acorn-eating pigs, in fact!) and I have fun doing it.

One of the actresses in a film (The Village Barbershop) saw me announce a film and went through the trouble to ask the head of programming for my cell number so she could ask me to do her film. Sadly, I couldn’t, but it was nice to be asked by one of the actresses from Gillmore Girls to announce it!



This is the last issue of The Drink Tank before I go on my trip. It's going to be awesome. It's going to be tough. I'm going to have a blast. I'm going to be pushed beyond exhaustion. That's what I expect will be true of my trip. I do know one thing: I've got people!

My question is, what about writing?

You see, no matter where I go, no matter what I do, I always write. There hasn't been a time of more than a couple of days when I haven't written a few thousand words. I'm bringing my laptop and I do plan on doing some writing. Certainly on the plane, I fully expect to do a full issue of The Drink Tank while I'm in the air, but also when I'm on the ground. I know I'll be packed back-to-back with stuff, but at some point, I'll need to do some writing. I've even written an article (that ran in Banana Wings, no less) while I was on a panel about the History of Science Fiction. I tend to find a way to do these things.

So, I expect to have my brain leaking out of my ears, and hopefully onto the screen at least at some point.

What else is going on? There's a TAFF auction. While I am fully aware

that it's a League of Fan Funds auction, it's a TAFF auction as far as I'm concerned. I love all the Fan Funds, GUFF, DUFF, CUFF, SNUFF, PUFF, RUFF, REBUFF, you name it, I'm for it, but I have a special place in my heart for TAFF. Always have. I've often been told that I should make sure to call things Fan Fund auction, but I can't stop calling them just TAFF auctions.

One thing that I'm looking forward to is Food. I love food. It's what allows me to maintain my somewhat panda bear shape. I'm looking forward to eating some food while I'm out there, food I would seldom get a chance to have out here. I gotta have pub food. Yes, you can get that out here, and a few ex-pat friends of mine have said that one of the places I go is as good as anything they went to back home, but there's something about having the stuff from where it came. Go figure. You really have a hard time finding Russian food out here, at least at something resembling a reasonable price, but I am told that's not a problem at there. Price, as always, will be a major consideration for me when I'm out there. I gotta live as cheaply as possible, which won't be easy because London is one of the most expensive cities in the world. Money being what it is, won't help much. The funny thing is that looking at a lot of menus and such on line, the cost of stuff out there in pounds seems to be the same as

the cost for them out here in dollars. That's a weird thing. I just don't get that.

I gotta have British Mexican food. I've heard stories. Tacos and Burritos are warm climate foods, best made by people whose ancestors saw a lot of sun. I had a friend tell me a story about the time he went to a Mexican joint in Scotland, ordered a burrito and was given what was basically a pirogi. He said it was a tasty pirogi with some really tasty salsa, but you get the point. I must know.

There's Chinese, Greek, Thai, Japanese and pretty much everything but Indian that I must try. I'm excited for eating, but largely, I'm more excited for setting myself down and chatting over food and drink. There are people I've met for a brief period who I will now get to really talk with and there are people I only know as pixels on screens. Nothing lubricates conversation than having something you can eat or drink on the table in front of you.

So yeah, in one week, I'm out there. I can't wait and I'm still a little freaked out. That's probably the best thing for a once-in-a-lifetime trip.



Fannish Memory Syndrome

by Steve Green

“The past is a different country”, wrote L P Hartley, “they do things differently there.” I was forcefully reminded of this insight as I began putting together a nostalgic presentation for last weekend’s Microcon, down at the University of Exeter.

Among the first fannish circles I moved within was the Star Trek Action Group, run by Janet Quarton (whom Gene Roddenberry later honoured by using the “Q” of her surname as the title of a *Next Generation* super-race). This was around 1976, when British Trekkdom was busy petitioning the BBC for a repeat screening of the original series – including four episodes banned under pressure from Mary Whitehouse, an odious self-appointed guardian of public morality whose National Viewers and Listeners Association dedicated itself to keeping everyone else safe from their own base urges.

I’d caught the initial BBC run back in 1969 (qualifying me for membership

of “the First Voyagers”, according to my friend Nic Farey, even if it does sound like a bunch of Trekkers on zimmer frames), so I’d seen “Miri” on its single screening before the NVLA complained the sight of Grace Lee Whitney’s cleavage would turn Britain’s youth into crazed perverts (too late, in my case). In obvious need of a spine transplant, the Beeb removed “Miri” from any subsequent scheduling and refused to air a further three episodes due to their perceived sadistic undertones:



“Plato’s Stepchildren”, “The Empath” and “Whom Gods Destroy”.

Successive regimes at Broadcasting House evolved a truly *Catch 22* response to suggestions that the fearsome foursome be aired after the so-called “9pm watershed”: *Star Trek* was a children’s programme, and therefore could not be given an adult slot; the banned episodes contained adult material, prohibiting it from an early-evening slot. A stroke of bureaucratic genius, and one the

BBC trotted out robotically until the ban was rendered pointless by the arrival of videocassettes in the early 1980s (even then, it took until 1994 for a terrestrial airing to take place, just before the silver anniversary of the original panic).

Skip forward to the summer of 2007, during a visit to a Solihull video store. There, amongst the latest Hollywood dreck and acknowledged classics, I spot a DVD boxset of “video nasties”, uncut copies of the very same horror movies which would have led to the manager’s prosecution immediately following the passage of the Video Recordings Act back in 1984.

On Monday, the British Board of Film Classification announced it was blocking a DVD release for Nick Palumbo’s paean to torture, *Murder Set Pieces*. What’s the betting, though, that in twenty years’ time, I’ll not be able to pick up a copy of the “special edition” at my local Virgin Megastore?