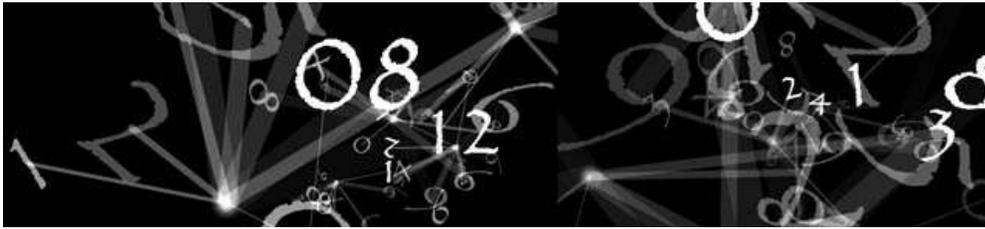


# Time and Again #9

August 2009

Library Fortress





# Time And Again

#9 August 2009



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Primary source of inspiration and advice: **Eric Mayer**

Schedule: Time and again (and here you thought that was just the title...).

Deadline on incoming material for #10: I'm ready, let's go...

A matter transmitter full of thanks to **Bill Burns** of eFanzines <<http://www.efanzines.com/>> for the presentation and storage of this fanzine. *Time and Again's* page at the eFanzines site is <<http://tr.im/12vc>>. I've gotten too spoiled by eFanzines these past few years. Not only does Bill keep the zines from overwhelming my small living area, and keeps them organized, but he dusts them as well.

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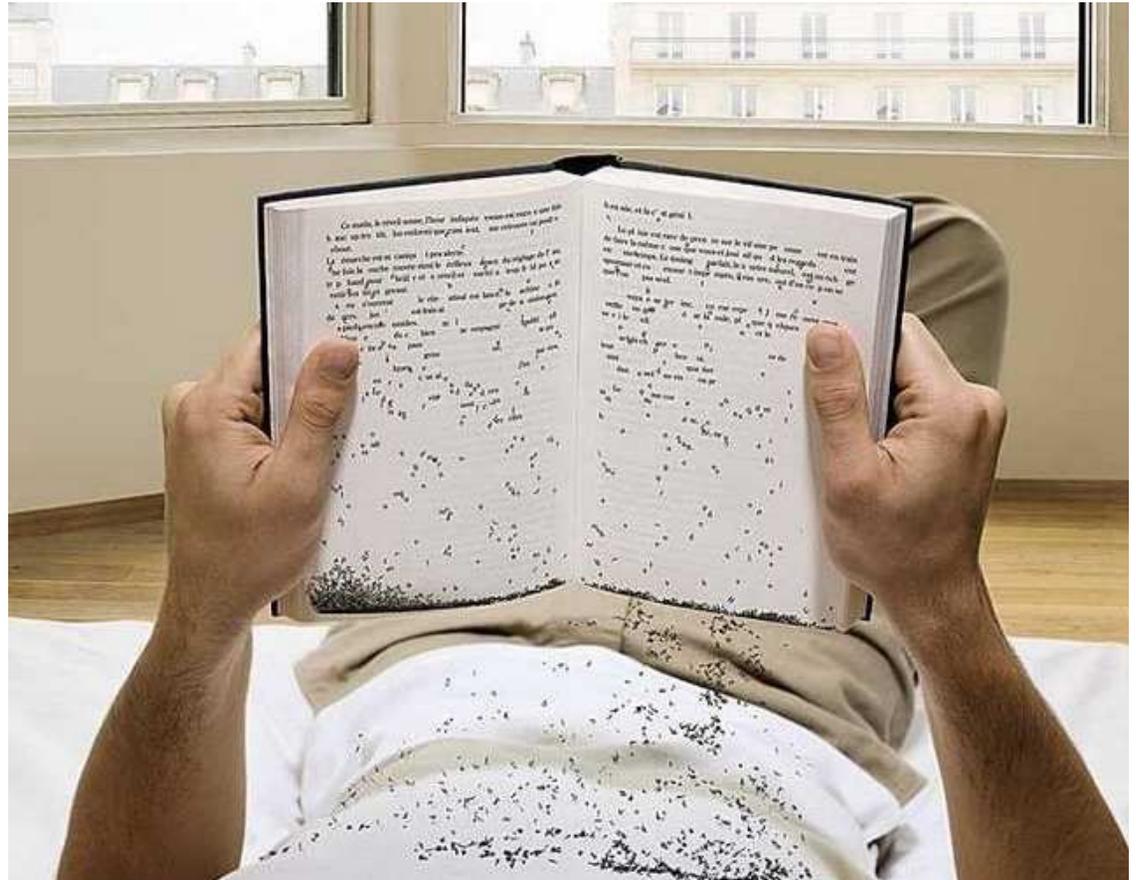
Nicked from the Net: Cover - Library Fortress, 2, 3, 4 (Aldunin), 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 21, 23

# Diabologic

## Editorial by Dave Locke

Back in the Pleistocene I'd sometimes gallop through books. While I recognize that, of those who read, most will gallop faster, my being a slow reader doesn't mean that my lips move as I read but it does mean I settled happily into a comfortable average of about 50 books a year. The difference between the Pleistocene and relatively recent times is that my reading dropped to pretty much zero books. From 9/08 through 5/09 I read two. Is that pathetic, or what?

Well, that was my first priority to think about as the problem advanced. It wasn't that I didn't want to read books, or that my available free time for them had been taken up with something new like hanggliding or jumping from airplanes. I'd started developing cataracts, and until I was in a financial position where I could deal with them, the advancement of their evil intentions meant that some things were coming to a temporary halt. Reading books was one of them, and the most important one.



I stretched out my ability to read books as best I could. The last 'meatspace' real book I started reading was finished as an eBook. The thing about an eBook is that it allows you to manipulate print. I could adjust the size of what I was reading to the point where, if I had taken my laptop outdoors, what I was reading could have been viewed from the Space Station.

I began to better appreciate what a guy I like said last year in an apa:

*"I read online a lot more than I read books these days. Not that paper isn't a good match for printing. But it is so inflexible. If I don't like the font, I can't change it, if I don't like the type size, I can't enlarge it. If it's too dark, I can't make it brighter. If I don't like the document size I can't change it. I can't get it to read itself to me aloud. Paper has a lot of disadvantages."* -- Eric Lindsay

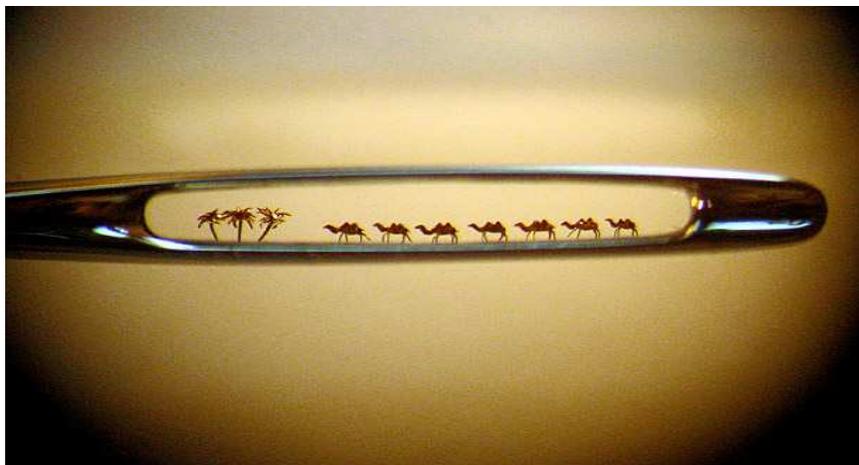
But, quickly, even that became too difficult to put up with, and my Books Read list looked abandoned.

This genzine came in second in importance to reading, but I had to put it on hold due to an inability to handle the proofreading part of what's involved with wearing the fan-editor's cap. I was making mistakes that I wasn't happy to live with, because there are always limits to how many things you're willing to do poorly.

But the two cataract surgeries are now part of the past. In the last month I've galloped through nine books, and obviously right now I'm writing the editorial for *TIME AND AGAIN* #9. At least, I think I am.

And I'm happy to have returned to both.

The books. I had some choice stuff awaiting me. My first



ex (and it's pretty bad when you have to number them...), and still a friend, gifted me with a Large Print edition of James Lee Burke's *SWAN PEAK* when I was between cataracts. Since the eye doctor did the worst eye first (as, after all, why wouldn't he?) I had enough vision to read through it provided that I read with one eye (which I did; hey, books are important...). If you're familiar with Burke, I don't have to tell you it was excellent.

When both eyes had their surgeries, I dug into Dean Koontz's *LIFE EXPECTANCY* because it had the misfortune to lie next to where I put *SWAN PEAK* when I'd finished it. Koontz is uneven with the quality of his output, and this was a silly little story from the guy who did well when he wrote *THE BAD PLACE*. But, on a quick gallop, I was off to two Michael Connelly novels which Gary Grady had read and mailed to me, and enjoyed both so much that I temporarily held up on plying, wheedling, and cajoling him for a *TIME AND AGAIN* article (but I'll get back to that). Next up was Meg Gardiner's *CROSSCUT*, a novel which had been recommended to me and was worth only the time to read it (which, of course, is Good Enough). Then, for the sixth time since 1986 (I started recording Books Read in 1983) I reread the Eric Frank Russell novel *THREE TO CONQUER*. And still loved it (Science Fiction; you knew I'd get around to that sooner or later, even if it was something written in the 1950s).

I then picked up and read Thomas Perry's *VANISHING ACT* and *DANCE FOR THE DEAD* from the 'Jane Whitefield' series about the modern-day Injun woman who helps people to disappear. Anyone who likes mysteries should rush out and get those, even if by doing so they act without thinking. And I read Julian Baggini's *WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT: Philosophy And The Meaning Of Life*, which was interesting, but I'd give Bertrand Russell and Will Durant the

edge for writings in that field.

Back while I was mostly puttering around on the Internet, entertaining the crew on the satellite with my stunning surfer activities, I ran through a fresh wave of commentary on such things as Facebook, LiveJournal, MySpace, Twitter, and the like. I escaped being washed away because I'd already decided that none of these things had any appeal to me and weren't offering something which would immediately prove useful for anything I was already dealing with.

I mean, back in 1996 I was in the *Firefly* web community, which had nothing to do with the Josh Whedon production and even predated it. It was fun, and I enjoyed it while it lasted, but it's not the kind of thing I'd want to get into today. However, I mentioned Twitter up there, and my only experience with anything like it was text messaging. You know the drill: both texting and Twittering are based on creating messages with 140-character spaces to play around with.

So, Twittering is basically 140-character messages which people send to each other about such things as the minutia of their daily lives ("Had scrambled eggs for breakfast." "Skipped washing my hair when I showered." "Took a shit." "Letterman's Top Ten List last night was 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1."). It all sounds basically that inane, even when it's somebody attending Congress and reporting on what's happening in 140-character bursts (well, actually, that sounds inane even with turgid prose). However, Twittering seems to be very popular, and I'd explain why if I could do it in some way which avoids me sounding like a misanthrope.

So none of this interested me. Even with cataracts limiting my Internet mobility, Twitter certainly wasn't of interest despite reducing the world almost to monosyllabic grunts. I considered writing a takeoff on Twitter for this editorial,



but then I read *Washington Post* humor columnist Gene Weingarten on the subject and immediately abandoned the notion. Gene wrote that "Twitter exists primarily to serve individuals with an insatiable appetite for crap", started a Twitter column himself, and adopted a Twitter icon "that is so disgusting I am not allowed to even describe it here." I'm sure others have made fun of Twitter, too. I even remember an episode of Jon Stewart's *DAILY SHOW* devoted to that. By the time I'd finished reading Gene, though, I was laughing too hard to start writing.



# Lee Anne Lavel I



## Much Nothings About Ado

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### Kids and Kats



#### Dramatics Scholastic Act I

In a previous account I told of one of the experiences I had with putting on children's performances at school. This was not the only one to tell about.

The last year I taught at school 73 in Indianapolis was also the last year that the school was open (logical, right?). The area around the school was primarily black and the children were not bussed, so of course that was not allowed to go on. So the teachers decided we would have two big school events that year and go out with a bang. Both of the events were to be all-school programs, one at Christmas, just before winter vacation, and the other in spring, just before the final closing of the school. Ellie Hopkins, our music teacher, was to be in charge of them. For Christmas she asked me to write a "frame-work" play that would involve toys, Kermit the Frog and to end up with candy. After thinking about it a bit I wrote a general plot that involved

Kermit, as a TV newsman, who would be reporting about a strike by the Official Christmas Candy Maker and how the children would have no candy for Christmas. Otherwise Christmas would go on as normal. The play then had different rooms singing songs about different kinds of toys with Kermit reporting on the news about the strike in between numbers. At the end the strike would be settled and the Kindergarten kids would sing "The Good Ship Lollipop" while dressed up as different kinds of candy. Then, we ran into a problem. Ellie couldn't find the music for "The Good Ship Lollipop" and couldn't think of another appropriate song about candy. So I quickly wrote some words to "Down in the Valley" (*Candy is pretty, candy is sweet, and we think that candy is so good to eat...*) that I thought the kindergarten kiddies could learn easily. So that problem was solved.

But that wasn't the only one. She also assigned my room to "do" stuffed animals which meant that I needed to make costumes for the children selected to participate. Ellie speci-

fied bunnies and bears and one boa constrictor. The bunnies and bears were relatively easy to do. They were made out of paper and cardboard. They looked terrible up close, but from the stage they looked just fine. The snake was another matter. The head was made of the two halves of a paper plate securely fastened over the child's head. But the body had to be very flexible. I finally decided on green burlap, which was tightly wrapped around the child's body, arms and legs. I laced it on her. She then had to learn how to scoot herself forward. For the act, the bunnies and bears were to do a dance on the stage while the rest of my room sang "Talk to the Animals." The idea was for the snake to inch herself (laboriously) out from the wings and rise up on her knees (not an easy task when she was sewn in so tightly) just as the song was ending. She managed it perfectly and the audience, who apparently had been watching her struggles, roared in approval as she rose upright just before the song ended. Then, when the curtain closed I had to rush onstage and carry her off and unlace her from the costume.

### Cat Tales Act I

I have had many cats over the years so this piece is going to be about some of them.

*Gummitch:* Gummitch was a seal point Siamese neuter. He was very intelligent. Sometime he was so intelligent that it was almost scary. I shall cite you an instance. Once I was reading a book about cats. It mentioned a cat (named Basil, I think) who, whenever visitors arrived at his "owners" house, would go into their bathroom where he would retrieve the bath sponge which he would carry out in his

mouth. Visitors never saw that cat without a bath sponge in his mouth. I thought this was very funny so I read the passage to Jim, who was sitting nearby with Gummitch on his lap. Immediately Gummitch got up and retreated to our bathroom, returning with a bath sponge in his mouth. He had never shown any interest in it before and never did again.

*Chun (the Unavoidable):* Chun was a blue point Siamese male. When we had him neutered we brought him home on a Friday and he let us know that his bottom was very sore, so sore he could hardly walk, so we thought "Oh poor Chunny" and carried him around sympathizing with him (and feeling guilty). This continued through Saturday and Sunday and we were getting very concerned and had just decided to take him back to the vets to be checked the next day when we heard a scrabbling noise from the next room. Going in to check, we found Chun happily leaping all over one of his cat toys. The minute he saw us he went into his "I'm a poor sick pussycat" position. It didn't work from then on, and he didn't realize how close he came to another trip to the vet.

*Frocky:* When Chun was six years old Jim acquired a six-week old calico kitten. As she was particularly foul tempered about this change of venue we named her Snelfrocky. (Heinlein fans might recognize the reference.) She took one look at Chun and immediately said "Mommy!" (Yes, I know cats do not speak verbally, but they do have an extensive vocabulary nonetheless, which is expressed through body language, tail, ear and whiskers movement which immediately convey meaning if one is observant.) Chun looked at her and said "Forget it." She said "Mommy!" "No way!" "MOMMY!" "Well..." And from that point on he became

just that, doing every thing a mother cat would do except nurse her. He would get rather irritated with her when she tried that. As she was a quite rambunctious kitten he would be exhausted when we came home from work and would run off and hide so he could get a nap in for a little bit. She would yowl for him until he returned. Since Chun preferred his subjects quiet she generally remained so until Chun died, after which I had a diva on my hands. She loved to sit up high somewhere, rise up on her hind legs and caterwaul at the top of her lungs. The only way to quiet her was to say in an admiring tone "Frocky has such a pretty voice!" Then she would look smug and be quiet.

*Sam:* Sam was a very large blue mackerel tabby male. We rescued him from a tree where dogs had chased him during a rainstorm. Sam had no desire to go outside and would retreat to another room when an outside door was opened. Sam did not particularly like to be held but would allow me to use him as a pillow at night. There is nothing more soothing than going to sleep to a purr. The best lullaby in the world! Sam also liked to groom me, which was fine when he was washing my hair, but when he got to my eyelashes I had



to stop him.

*Waif:* I first saw Waif when she appeared at the teachers' lounge window of the school where I was teaching at the time. It was raining heavily and she was mewling piteously. I tried to ignore her. I learned that she had belonged to a family at my school who had moved away and just left her behind. After a couple of days I couldn't stand it any more, so I called Jim to check with him (He laughed and said "I knew you would") then brought her home. Waif was a petite brown mackerel tabby. She loved canned peas. I once offered her some from a dish I had beside me on a couch. Instead of eating it there she scooped up a pawful and tried to jump down to the floor with them. That didn't work, of course. She landed on her nose and the peas rolled in every which direction. She hunted them down and ate them before I had a chance to clean up the mess, though. Someone must have messed with her tail before I got her, for if you happened to accidentally pull it she would turn into a buzz saw. Otherwise she was quite docile and shy.

These were the cats Jim and I shared. I accumulated a whole bunch of others after he died.



## June Moffatt

### Len's Adventures In Cardioland

12/7: Len had great difficulty breathing, and couldn't breathe lying down at all. Monday morning I called our doctor, and got an appointment for 3:30 that afternoon. Dr. Rawson sent Len to Downey Hospital on suspicion of pneumonia, and had me take him to the Emergency Ward. Len got great relief when Emergency put an oxygen mask on him. They also gave him an EKG and determined that the bottom half of his heart was too slow. A pacemaker was recommended and installed on Tuesday. Len had a male nurse named "Leigh" in the CCU, who reminded me a bit of our friend Karl. There is a slight physical likeness, but it was more the air of cheerful competence. Leigh told us that he and his wife were trying to get reservations for a big barbecue festival in Sparks, Nevada next Labor Day.

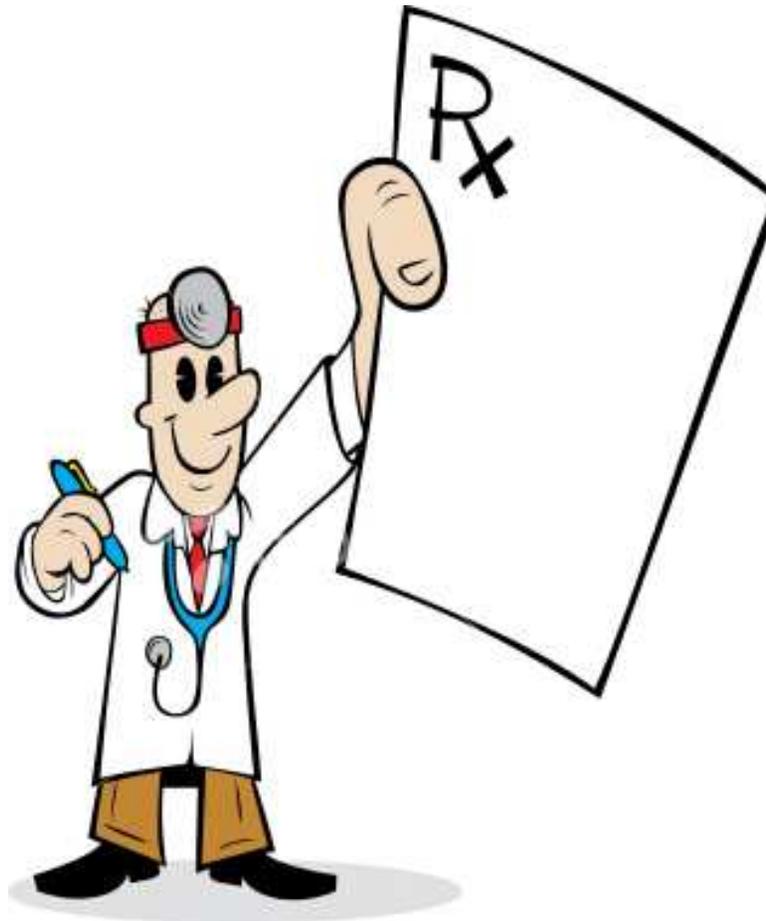
On Wednesday, it was discovered that the pacemaker wasn't doing its job properly and they had to go back in to reconnect it. The procedure was performed in the late afternoon, and when I arrived at 6:30 he wasn't back in

his room in the Cardiac Care Unit yet. A nurse saw me there and rushed over to tell me that I couldn't be in there, but must go to the waiting room until called. She didn't exactly say "Shoo! Shoo!" but that was the burden of her message. I was banished to the waiting room until 7 when

Leigh came in and beckoned to me. "He's back, and you can go in for a few minutes" he said conspiratorially. The "few minutes" stretched until 8 o'clock, which was my Official Time to be admitted. We wished each other Happy Anniversary, December 10 being our 42nd.

Wednesday night when I got home, I felt all wrung out. This was significant, because very soon after, I started vomiting and diarrhea. Imodium took care of one problem, and as for the vomiting, I stopped when I didn't have any more to give. When I saw Dr. Rawson on the next Monday, he said that it was a virus going around.

Thursday, Len wanted his clothes, but I was too sick to drive over there. Fortunately, nephew Dennis stopped in to see



him at the hospital, learned of the problem, and came over to get the bag of clothes and deliver it. He also brought a slice of cake topped with strawberries, sent over by the CCU crew in honor of our anniversary. I stored it in the refrigerator until I felt like eating it.

Friday, Dennis came over, picked me up and took me to the hospital to see Len. We got there just as the staff was in process of moving Len from the CCU to a room upstairs. Len was in it long enough to eat his dinner, and was then transferred to Downey Community Health Center, a short block away, where he will receive therapy—both physical and oxygen. After the visit, Dennis took me grocery shopping. I rode around in one of Ralphs' electric carts, and stocked up on frozen dinners, since I really didn't feel like cooking. (I tried five different Lean Cuisine entrees, and can't recommend any of them.)

The Downey Community Health Center seems to have room for hundreds of patients. Each room has three beds, separated by hospital curtains. The beds are models I haven't seen for years—each one has three cranks at the bottom, the first one for the head, the third one for the feet and I suppose the middle one is for the knees. I haven't seen anyone operate that one. The place is adequately staffed during the day, but Len says that nights and Sundays show a lack of staff. All the employees knock when they come into a room—but it's not a knock requesting permission to enter—more of a "Here I am!" signal.

The night Len got into his room, the patient in the middle bed died—about 5 a.m. Len said there were about 20 or 30 people in the room, what with family, friends and the funeral director. (I have no idea where they could have all stood, because there's not a lot of standing room with three beds taking up space.)

Monday morning when I got out to go to the doctor, I

found our street flooded curb-to-curb. A car passed me, and threw a fan of water clean over Miss Pym, blinding me for a few seconds. As soon as I got a couple of blocks further north, the streets were relatively dry.

I've been to two of Len's PT sessions. One thing they do in Physical Therapy is to park his wheelchair in front of a sink with a mirror, and give him a disposable razor, a comb and a toothbrush. He is encouraged to do as much as possible for himself. He feels much better after sprucing up! Someone has parked a boombox there, tuned to constant Christmas carols, so he does his exercises accompanied by Der Bingle, The Chipmunks, etc.

Wednesday I got up early to go to the Draw Station and get a couple of vials of blood taken for tests that Dr. Rawson wants. Then back home through the rain for breakfast and then a fast shopping trip. I used one of Ralphs' electric carts to pick up some milk, orange juice and a few more TV dinners since I still didn't feel up to cooking. This time I tried Healthy Choice instead of Lean Cuisine.

When I got to the Rehab Center, Len told me that the (new) patient in the middle bed had died during the night. His family (all four of them) had slept in the chairs provided, which is something I hope I never have to try. We were reluctant spectators as the nurses prepared the body—they drew the curtains, for which we were grateful, but I got one glimpse of the deceased which was more than enough. Eventually a narrow gurney was wheeled in and disappeared behind the curtain. When it came out, it was completely covered with a fitted gray tarp. I'm beginning to wonder if that middle bed is jinxed.

Len came home on Friday, December 19. I got to the Rehab Center shortly after noon, where he greeted me with a long face and "I think I'm going to have to stay another night here." We spent most of the afternoon waiting for Dr.

Chang to come in and give her verdict. She showed up around 4, and cheerfully released him. Then it took almost another two hours to get the paperwork done, and a large package of medications—each in its own blister-pack, with MORNING, NOON, EVENING or BEDTIME marked at the top. The highest dosage is Cardizem, at 60 mg. each four times a day. I saw Dr. Rawson today, and he doesn't want to continue the Cardizem beyond this week. Len will continue his regular calcium-channel-blocker after next Friday, and see Dr. Rawson again on January 6.

One of the annoyances in the hospital was the lady in the ward next door. She sat in the hall in her wheelchair and talked constantly in a shrill voice. She was speaking Spanish, but I could make out "Quiero this" and "Quiero that" and "Quiero the other". I don't know what she wanted, but she sure did want it!

Genevieve from the Business Office came in and wanted Len's Caremore card. Since his wallet was at home, we didn't have it with us. I asked if it would be all right for me to make a copy of it and bring it to her. She said that would be fine, so that's what we did. It seems there are two Genevieves there—the other one is a social worker. After she left, we sang "Genevieve, Sweet Genevieve, the Years May Come, The Years May Go..." We didn't want to tease her with it, but I would be very surprised if she'd never heard it before.

I was slightly surprised at the meals they served him in that hospital. Lunches were full-course meals, including soup, salad, entree, starch, vegetables and dessert. (Not that he ate it all.) He said the food got better after a few days, but I wonder if his tastebuds just got back into shape. One thing that surprised me a little was the pat of margarine with each meal. I suggested that he put it on the mashed potatoes, since there wasn't any gravy. Milk was supplied

in the smallest carton I've seen. I don't think there could have been more than a half-cup in it.

Now, here at home, I'm trying to deal with the sodium content of various foods. Fruit (except for tomatoes) doesn't have any, which helps. Many groceries have the sodium content on the label, but not fresh meats. I'll make a Chicken Florentine of sorts for dinner tonight, since I've been advised to consume more greens. I mix up cooked brown rice, spinach and chopped chicken breast with a sauce made from Healthy Request Cream of Chicken Soup, diluted with a can of Kern's Mango Nectar, and lemon juice to taste. (I use two tablespoons.)

Monday night, January 12, we finally got the walker we'd been promised. What we don't have is the scale Len is supposed to use that would "send" his weight reading to a doctor—I spoze Dr. Rawson would be the one. We got tired of waiting for Caremore to provide a scale, so went out and bought one ourselves. We got a Taylor Lithium Electronic scale, which can weigh in pounds or kilograms. The first thing we found out is that Len has dropped more than 30 pounds since he went into the hospital—almost all of which was retained water.

Len has now had his first post-op examination by Dr. Thaker, who installed the pacemaker. All is well so far. (And I certainly hope it continues so!)

We have the red folder that was given to Len at the hospital, wherein we record his weight each morning. Just as a caution, there is a little label on the outside of it that says "Heart Failure."



# You Are Here

**"It is inconceivable that the whole Universe was merely created for us who live in this third-rate planet of a third-rate sun."**

**— Alfred Lord Tennyson**

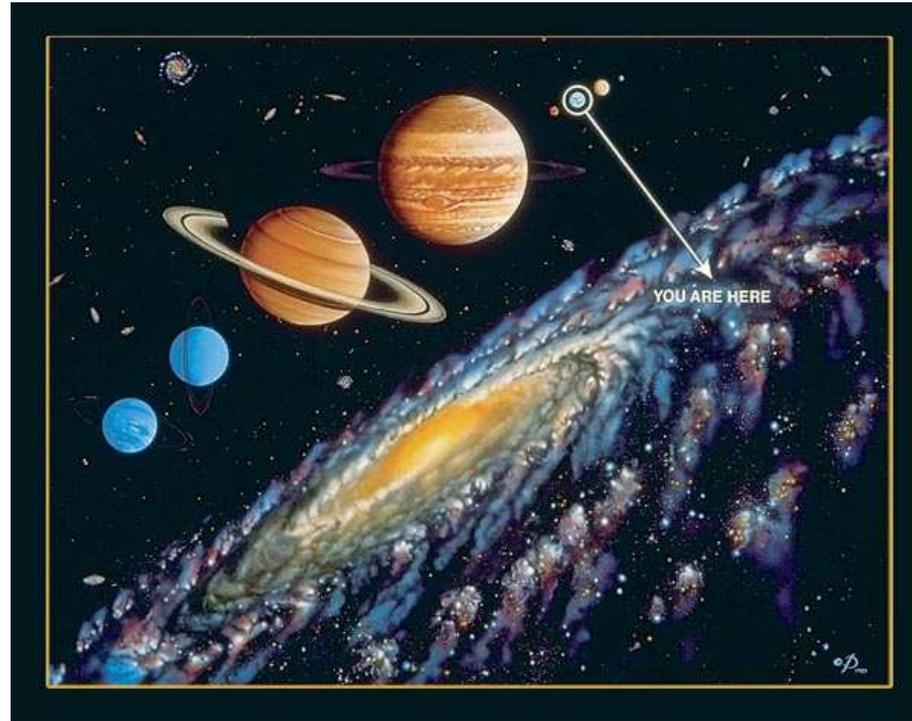
I walked into the Mall and went over to the directory and map. The map had an arrow with the label "you are here".

I was taking a two-hour walk on a trail in Yellowstone and came upon a sign showing the layout of the trail and the sights that could be seen along the way. The sign had an arrow with the label "you are here".

San Diego has a tourist center just before you enter the city from the north. They give away, of all things, tourist maps showing the zoo, Mission Bay, the Reuben H. Fleet Space Theater, Old Town, and all the other major tourist attractions. It even showed the tourist center, with an arrow labeled "you are here".

I saw a book with a drawing of our solar system. The third planet had an arrow pointing toward it and the words "you are here".

I bought a poster of the Milky Way galaxy, with an arrow pointed toward a little dot called Sol and labeled "you are



**Dave Locke**

**Reprint from 1994**

here".

If we could take a photograph of the known universe, which presently is everything we can see using any telescope at hand, we might be able to make out a small dot which represents the Milky Way galaxy, and no doubt there would be an arrow pointing to it and telling us "you are here".

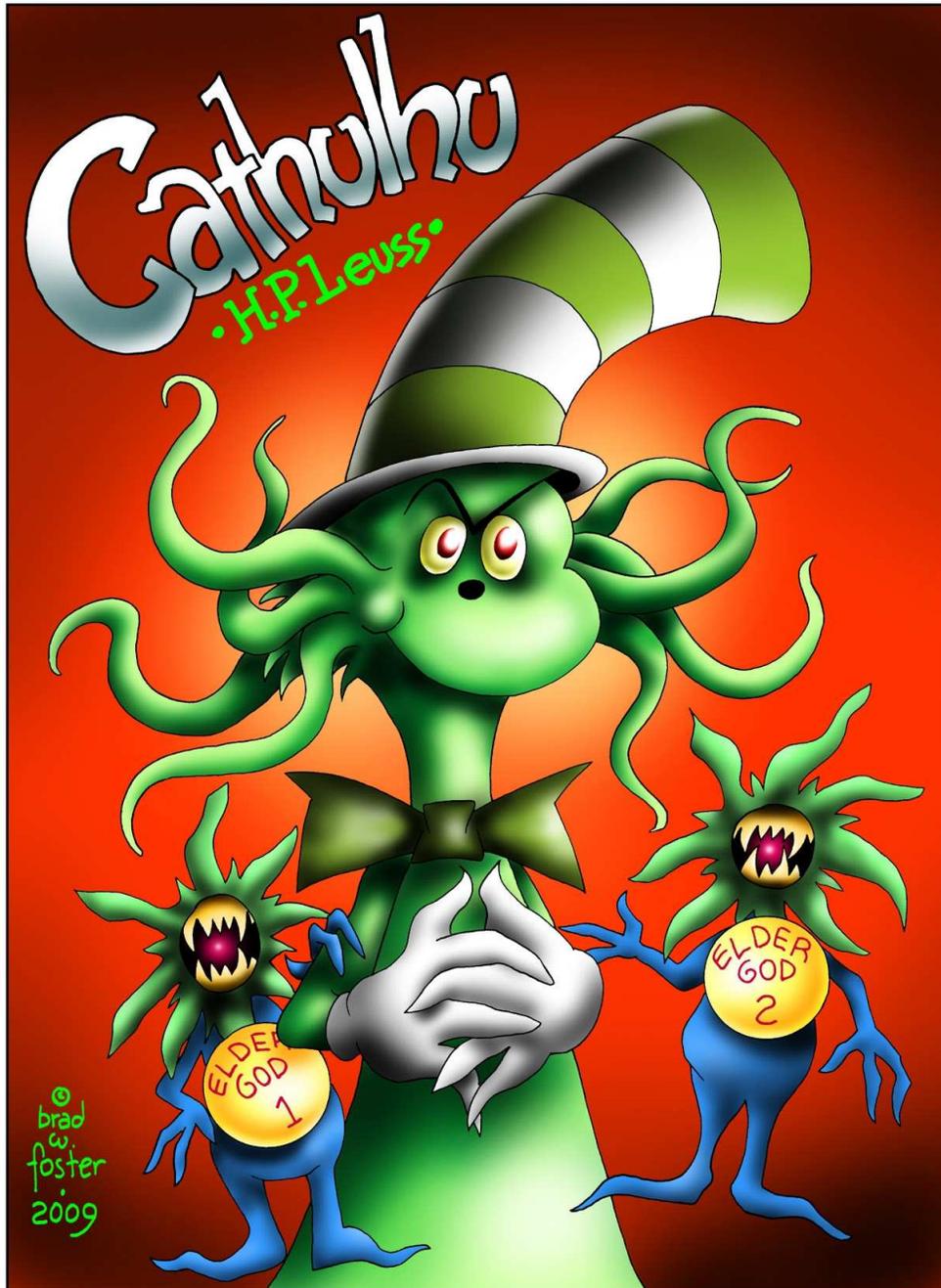
If we had a picture of the entire universe, provided there was an entirety to it and the picture-taker could stand outside with the camera, there might be an arrow labeled "you are here" pointing to a sector of space containing a little dot of light. This dot would represent our galaxy and all the other galaxies which we presently can see, plus those we can't.

I find it immensely hard to believe that within this universe, within that sector of space, within that Milky Way galaxy, within the solar system of the star called Sol, there exists a planet third from the sun where many people believe that only on their spinning little ball of mud could intelligent life have evolved.

You are here.

That may be the limit of your uniqueness.





## Eric Mayer's

### Notes From Byzantium - Something About Reading

During the past year I've made an effort to read more -- books that is. Those rather long and complex collections of words I grew up with, rather than the short bursts of simple information endlessly available in cyberspace, the world news, sports scores, political commentary, blogs, Yahoo groups. Words that do little more than temporarily fill and quickly pass through the mind. Intellectual Olestra.

I don't mean to put all the blame for my lack of reading on the Internet. The Internet is only the newest slayer of books in my life. Starting in the early seventies fanzines played a part. So many genzines and perszines and crudzines, and so little time, bound or not. And there were Locs and articles to pound out on my Smith Corona manual and illos to laboriously ink in the post-midnight light of my desk lamp. Then I did four years in law school. Hard labor. No kidding, I worked full-time my last year and went to classes at night. And as for reading, appellate court cases and legal treatises don't have much in common with books written in English.

Job and family responsibilities followed. After days filled with eye glazing memos and departmental meetings which lasted till the heat death of the universe, or seemed to, I went home to an everlasting Big Bang of incontinent infants and rampaging toddlers. What few spare hours were left, I devoted to my own creative efforts: mini-comics, small press, magazine and newspaper articles, newsletters for the local zoo and orienteering club, programming computer text adventures and, eventually, co-writing stories and books with my wife Mary. I am a slow writer. I hate to think how many novels I could run through in the time it takes me to co-write one short mystery. Speaking of "run through" I almost forgot all the time I spent running and orienteering rather than reading...

Hard as it is to believe, for most of my life I haven't been much of a reader. Less than two decades passed between my hauling stacks of Doctor Seuss back from the library and shoving aside a Lovecraft collection in favor of trying to draw Cthulu for a fanzine cover, yet again. (I must have gone through five erasers and wore a hole right through the Bristol Board into another dimension. No matter what I did there was something wrong with the damn angles.)

Ah, but those years I spent reading ... they seem to have lasted forever. No wonder. I lived more lives than I can count. Experienced innumerable worlds. How many amazing machines did I invent? How many alien races did I encounter and conquer? How many despotic dictatorships did I rebel against and overthrow? Those were the days!

I suspect all the science fiction and fantasy I absorbed in that short but formative period made me what I am, or, perhaps more correctly, made me what I am not. Which is to say, not an enormous success. How could I take much interest in a career or making money or a name for myself in a world so unsatisfactory, so very tedious, compared to all

the other places I'd lived? What's more, on a nasty little planet that does not have to be the miserable place it is. Reading had shown me there were alternatives. Theoretically.

I read other genres to be sure. As early as high school I went on a Steinbeck spree. As my reading diminished I turned to mysteries. I once had collected from used book stores, thrift stores and library and yard sales nearly 100 paperbacks by John D. MacDonald. Quite a few of which I never did get around to opening. Because my reading was dying.

A couple years ago, I realized that I rarely looked at a book anymore. And suddenly, for the first time in years, I missed reading.

Thus I've made an effort to get back to books. It's been hard finding the time and the concentration. The six books a month I've managed this year wouldn't have kept me going for a week in the old days. And deciding what, exactly to read, has been a problem as well. I have no favorite genre. One week I embark on a study of philosophy with *Pragmatism* by William James and Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*. Then I'm diverted by some fifties Gold Medal type crime novels (wow, Charles Williams -- not the Inkling -- is amazing and I never heard of him) lurch into some mysteries by Simeon, Tey, John Dickson Carr. Maybe I should read some classics I never got around to. *Moby Dick*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Appointment at Samarra*. Man, are there ever a lot of classics I have yet to read. And not to neglect my first love, fantasy. William Hope Hodgson's *The Nightland* is still as awe inspiring (and in parts as mind-numbing) as it was when I first encountered it and *At the Mountains of Madness* is great fun too, although Lovecraft's debt to Hodgson shows.

Although genre isn't very important to me, I've noticed



that I prefer older books. There's something about the style or attitude (or who knows what) of current books that puts me off, although I sometimes find exceptions such as the remarkable sf/mystery *The City and the City* by China Mieville. So

I tend to stick to things written in the mid-sixties or earlier. I am perfectly comfortable with novels penned back in the dark ages of the nineteen-thirties and my favorite science fiction is from the Golden Age.

Maybe this is because early on I devoured the books that were on the shelves of the local library. Most of those probably were written before I was born but to me they were brand new and they formed my taste.

I'm pleased to be doing some reading again. I don't suppose the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer would approve. As he put it:

"When we read, another person thinks for us: we merely repeat his mental process. It is the same as the pupil, in learning to write, following with his pen the lines that have been penciled by the teacher. Accordingly, in reading, the work of thinking is, for the greater part, done for us. This is why we are consciously relieved when we turn to reading after being occupied with our own thoughts. But, in reading, our head is, however, really only the arena of someone

else's thoughts. And so it happens that the person who reads a great deal -- that is to say, almost the whole day, and recreates himself by spending the intervals in thoughtless diversion, gradually loses the ability to think for himself; just as a man who is always riding at last forgets how to walk."

He has a point. If I had not recently read his lugubrious and highly entertaining essays, I wouldn't have been quoting him here. I would have had to fill the last paragraph with my own thoughts.

However, I don't care. I spend too much time with my own thoughts as it is. Why shouldn't I allow myself the relief Schopenhauer disdains? There are lots of people in the world smarter than I am, who think better, or at least differently. I enjoy spending time in their heads, rather than my own and probably benefit from it as well. Other heads feel a lot more spacious than mine actually. My own cranium gets pretty cramped. Besides, I'm pretty much an old misery guts, like Schopenhauer. Maybe he should have read more. Alas, he died about three years before Jules Verne's adventures started to appear.

And if I spend time reading rather than making mini-comics, or writing articles or co-authoring mystery books or composing essays such as this, I am hardly depriving the world of any great gift. There are already far more things worth reading than any of us could ever get around to in our lifetimes.

But enough of this. I want to get back to re-reading *The Puppet Masters*.

What's that? The ending's too abrupt? Well, you can hardly expect a clever ending when the world's being threatened by an alien invasion.



**The rules are that you write things in a black font, and if I respond to anything it's in a blue font. That's so simple that even I can remember it.**



**John Purcell Sun, 8 Feb 2009**

"Mighod! It's full of stars!"

That's a common refrain around here at night when the sky is clear. College Station doesn't put out a super amount of ground light - enough to blot out some stars - at night so we get a pretty good show most of the time. We have a decent telescope (can magnify up to 300x) for looking at the moon and the planets, and that's a lot of fun. The strange thing is that I probably do more star-gazing than the kids, who are more interested in computer gaming and skateboarding (Daniel) or texting and hanging with friends (Josie); Penny pretty much just does her homework if she's not off with her boyfriend Eric when he's home from school. \*sigh\* At least the telescope gives me something to do with my eyes besides grading papers or reading fanzines. Of course, I don't mind the fanzines at all.

If Vermont were closer to Texas I'd have been tempted to ask about borrowing your 300x telescope, back when I was

trying to tolerate the cataracts, so I could see the fanzines and the nose on my face and anything else that was normally visible around here.

This brings me around to your latest effort, and a most enjoyable effort it was. Is, in fact; I printed off a copy, which makes it so much easier to make comments.

Your comments about Guy's comments about T&A reflect how a zine works for most of us faneds nowadays: it certainly is an exercise in nostalgia for when we all did those zine-producing things at all hours of the day and night, cranking our mimeos, and that sort of rot. I agree with you, Dave, that doing a zine keeps us out of trouble. Besides, getting good articles is a pretty decent agenda, don't you think?

Which is a wonderful segue into the few arklers herein. That lead arkle, "McSorley Among the Nightingales" was very interesting, and I have to admit that some of it seemed rather disjointed to me. It took a couple readings - yes, I ac-

tually had to reread this one - to discover the actual connecting threads running through it. How Cyrus Banning Condra started off writing about a pub then finished discussing Eliot was something else. As you know, I teach college English, and I do like Eliot, but only to a certain extent. There are times when I figuratively throw up my hands in the air and say, "feh!", but Cy is right that Eliot loved to use avian imagery and metaphor. He's an interesting poet and was quite the literary figure, exceedingly well-versed in classical languages and verse. Personally, I would much rather talk about Michaelangelo.



Lee Anne Lavell's trials by nuts was fun to read. We don't have many nut-bearing trees down here; lots of nuts, but those can usually be found behind the wheels of big honkin' 4x4 trucks and SUV's while gabbing on their cell phones. Idjits, all. Also, I am glad that Lee Anne understands that cats have us trained. That certainly is how things work around here at the Purcell Petting Zoo. I laughed out loud at how she traumatized that poor kid. It is so much fun to mess with people's heads sometimes, even accidentally.

Eric Mayer's reminiscence of his backyard radio station reminds me of when I used to set up my home-made drum kit constructed from large and small boxes, tin cans, and cymbals (the large flat metal sheets of my Erector set) in the backyard and give a sort of "concert". The set would hold up for a couple songs, usually disintegrating halfway through the third number, which was my howling and mad-thrashing version of "I Saw Her Standing There." Thank Ghu none of my neighbors had hand-held cameras in those days. Come to think of it, a thrash version of that song would be a big hit nowadays. Maybe I might just recreate that childhood backyard scene on my 4-track recorder. You Have Been Warned.

It nearly pains me to admit that I have never read *Martians, Go Home* by Fredric Brown. I have read some of his stories, notably "Arena", but that's about it. Thank you so much, Dave, for making me add yet another book to the sagging "to be read" bedside shelf. \*sigh\* Looks like I'll be reading well into the afterlife. Very good article, though.

Chris Garcia's and Eric Mayer's locs made me a bit jealous of their lack of debt and having a decent credit rating. Mine is shot to hell, notably because of having to use creative financing to support a family. Maybe if I had stayed single and simply paid for everything on a cash only basis I'd be alright. But, them's wishful dreams there. No matter. My

family means a lot to me, and now that my wife is working again things can get a bit better now. The world economy is tanking big-time, and all we can do is what we can and ride the storm out. Here's hoping that President Obama and other world leaders can at least figure out some kind of strategy that Just Might Work. Ah, there I go again dreaming.

I believe that Chris is single, but I'm not sure that being single and paying with cash is the fast track to having "a decent credit rating", though it might go far toward a "lack of debt". Of course, we'd all like to swim like Scrooge McDuck.

Great issue, Dave, capped off with a fun cartoon on the last page.

**Lloyd Penney Tue, 27 Jan 2009**

Many thanks for Time and Again 8. I'll get started with this letter just as soon as you give Toesie a skritch behind the ears for me. Every office should have a little fuzzball to keep them occupied. Earlier today, Yvonne had an interview with an agency, and the office cat promptly climbed up on her lap and purred at high volume. I could get used to that...

I gather she got the job.

Yvonne and I are occasional astronomers, and we belong to the Royal Astronomical Society, so we are looking forward to 2009 being the International Year of Astronomy. I haven't heard about much going on yet...may be too cold to sit outside in the winter and stare at the sky.

I knew the name was familiar...when I saw reference to

McSorley's Wonderful Saloon, I thought I'd seen it before in town. There is a McSorley's Wonderful Saloon on 1544 Bayview Avenue in Toronto. And here I thought it had something to do with a hockey player. I guess the Toronto McSorley's hasn't been around nearly as long as the New York original, which opened in 1854.

Love the squirrel pictures. They are a reminder of how resourceful they are, and one was a local fixture in the neighbourhood I grew up in. And then, I was reminded of the squirrel slingshot videos on YouTube, and I called them up, and laughed my head off once again, and felt just a little guilty about it.

Like Eric Mayer, I have gotten fed up with local radio...crap music, loud voices, not much content. That's why I will often go to the BBC website, and listen to Radio 4 or 5, or the World Service. For me, there's a lot more content on the BBC. If Eric likes novelty songs, I remember listening to the Doctor Demento show, but couldn't tell you if there are any radio stations that play the good Doctor these days.

It's been a while since I've seen Kelly's Martian. I saw a Marc Schirmeister piece a few months ago that portrayed a group shot of various Martians from various books, movies and TV shows.

My Loc...nope, never did see the TDTESS remake, and it will probably stay that way. The remake did have in mind that Klaatu would go to the Earth to plead with humanity to save itself and its world, not from war this time, but from pollution. I guess I will stay with nostalgia.

I think that, at worst, you'd watch it and think it was an SF movie worth seeing. If you watch any current SF movies at all, then already you've seen too many worse movies...

Where I'm working now, the IT department in the head

office in Louisville, KY could spell my name, and they weren't smart enough to ask how it was spelled, anyway. So, I was initially pegged as LLOYD Penny. Yup, two capital Ls. Eventually, they spelled Penney right, but wouldn't budge on the two Ls, and they didn't spell Penney right everywhere...I am certain I don't get most of my corporate e-mail because of spelling.

### **June Moffatt Fri, 13 Feb 2009**

The little critter on p. 3 looks sad enough to be singing "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes". As for Galileo's problems, I have to wonder why the Religious Conservatives of his time made such a Big Thing against his discoveries. Sounds as if they were already running scared.

[And they didn't stop running for centuries after Galileo.](#)

Splendid article by Cy Condra. I take it you just scanned it in, without proofreading it. (Or could you proofread it?) The only typo that had me going for a moment was the "enormous farm dinner ell" stored in the shower. Knowing the size of farm dinners, I couldn't imagine an "ell" large enough to contain one inside a shower.

[Heh. I retyped Cy's piece. Then I couldn't stop finding typos, and then I could barely find a typo if I tripped over it. It illustrates well the kind of thing that told me it was time to put T&A into a stasis field until I bagged a new set of proofreader's scouting tools.](#)

As for Lee Anne Lavell, I can only say that she should never have named that cat "Gummitch". That's a name with lots of Really Heavy Vibes, as Fritz Leiber would be the first to tell you. // When I was young, I too had long, thick



hair, though not nearly as long as Lee's. (Nowadays, I have short, thick hair.) Hair aside, what I wanted to comment on was the effect of a dramatic change in appearance on a small child. When I was about four, my mother got glasses for the first time. I didn't recognize her at first, and was Very Upset about it.

To Eric Mayer, I will say that I still retain a fondness for novelty songs--the sillier the better. Somehow I missed the song with the "See you later alligator, after while, crocodile" chorus, though I certainly picked up on that phrase.

Good on you for using Kelly Freas's illo from "Martians Go Home"! The Martians were not only obnoxious, but curiously well-schooled in current slang.

Good on you for getting something by Curt Phillips in this. Unfortunately, Len and I will (or "were", depending on when this sees print) not be in attendance at Corflu Zed, much though we would like to. // Lloyd Penney, when we get young and strong, we'll no longer need to be cranky! // Lee Anne Lavell: Aha! Someone else from my generation. I was in high school during most of WW2, so never got to work in a defense plant (but I wanted to!). Did serve in the Communications Corps. We were supposed to man a telephone exchange in case of an emergency -- I'm kinda hazy on the details at this remove.

### **Lee Lavell    Fri 3 July 2009**

*Diabologic*: I have never heard of *The Man from Earth*. I shall be on the lookout for it now. Your type of zine, one that aspires to nothing more than good, and has no other agenda, is the type of zine I most enjoy (and I am honored to be part of it).

*McSorley Among the Nightengales\_(Cy Condra)*: This is a prime example of what you are writing about, Dave. Although I have no specific comments about it, I read it with fascination.

Although I've had the pleasure of publishing many fanarkles worth reading, Cy's was the piece I took the most pleasure in. I thought it was fascinating, too, and I haven't even read most of those books he was talking about...

*Notes from Byzantium (Eric Mayer)*: I always look forward to Eric Mayer's pieces. The mention of those old novelty songs brings out things apparently buried deep in my subconscious. Not long ago while I was driving, a friend who was with me remarked on a cement mixer we were passing. I promptly said, "Putty putty." This caused all sorts of be-

wilderment on his part, since he had no idea as to what I was referring. I finally found a cd of novelty songs which contained it, just to prove it existed.

*Martians Go Figure: Martians Go Home* was never one of my favorite Brown stories. There is a lot of competition in that category, as far as I am concerned. I had no idea, however, that it had been made into a film, however trivially. I did find your article interesting, Dave.

I regret that Dave Burton gafiated again, and that I hit the road out of town, and thus that you and I and Dave won't again have one of those interesting lunches at the midway point of Midtown Diner, New Point, Indiana. If we were still doing that, I have the feeling we could spend an entire lunch discussing our favorite Fred Brown stories. I have no idea what Dave might have thought of this, but perhaps he can write and tell us.

I'm looking forward to your next issue, whenever it may appear. The eye thing will be over before you know it.

It's over, it's over! I can see the dot over the lower-case 'I' again, and the crossbar on the 'T', and all the words of questionable spelling which are underlined in red. I'm back!

### **Mike Deckinger    Mon, 02 Feb 2009**

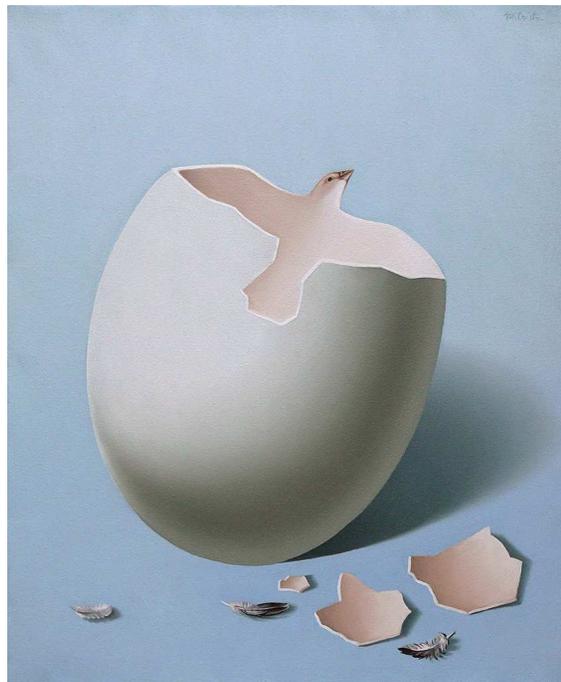
Like Lee Lavell, I've had several cats. They have always been the assertive, make your own decision breed. No shrinking violets or introverts for me. Whenever a vacancy existed within the household, we'd trundle on down to Cat Shelter and come back with a new resident. In past years the feline grapevine has been operating on overtime, and now they turn up in my back yard, ready for adoption. The word has gotten around: I'm powerless to deny succor to needy

felines.

I have never been a strong music fan, of any particular prevalent variation or trend. I'm probably one of the few persons who doesn't have an I-Pod or other music playback device, and has no inclination to ever get one. I don't seek out live performers either, though I live in an area where all the top musicians make frequent appearances. (Springsteen is coming . All the local folk here are boiling with excitement. I just yawn).

I'm not a fan of any particular musical genre, either. I've got my favorite artists, and what they do is generally rock or folk or country, but that's simply because the artists I like happen to work in those fields. And I too don't have an I-Pod. Occasionally I'll play a CD. More often I get streaming music online, usually at one of those sites which have a good selection of choices among the artists I'm interested in.

As mentioned before, I am a fan of the original *MARTIANS GO HOME*, and much of Brown's other writing. Frederic Brown is unjustly totally neglected today. Can you find anything of his in print? I certainly can't.



Yeah I can, actually. Just type [Fredric Brown into Books in Amazon](#) and you'll be surprised what's in print. A reasonable number of reissues have taken place in the last three years, too.

I'm familiar with the bargain set of DVDs Lee Lavell alludes to. I have them too, as well as several other boxed sets I've secured from BEST BUY, at a cost of a few cents per film. (There are several 100-Film collections available too, at reasonable prices). They're all public domain, which is not necessarily a bad thing. It just means the prints you are getting are of marginal quality, since there's no incentive for the distributors to bolster their viewability. A lot of these early productions are amusing for the crudity of presentation, along with random flashes of wit and creativity, on a very limited budget.

"... but I was reading fanzines before I was reading SF." So says Chris Garcia, offering an interesting reversal on the normal succession process. In my case, and many others, I first started reading sf through the magazines, which were far more plentiful and accessible at the time. From there, my interest was provoked by the fanzine review columns. Not having a clue as to what a fanzine was, and befuddled because I couldn't find any at the newsstands, I sent away for some, and it just took off.

I share Chris Garcia's irritation at individuals who stumble into unsupportable mortgages and then require government help to extricate themselves. Responsibility is a frequently overlooked quality when it's easier to blame other sources for one's shortcomings. "I didn't realize my payments would be so high." "I'm blameless for my alcoholism, I have a disease." And so it goes.

Trying to maneuver through life without a credit card,

and paying only by cash is a stirring credo but it overlooks the fact that an emergency of some type, medical perhaps, may suddenly arise, and the only means to pay for it would be charging. I have VISA which I maintain for sudden emergencies when ready cash is not accessible. I rarely touch it, but it's comforting to know it's there.

It was just after you wrote this that the credit-card companies began jacking up their rates again. Two of them doubled their annual percentage rates on me. Only one of those cards had an active balance, and I chose to not accept the APR increase and instead pay off the existing balance at the old rates. Plus I always enjoy it when I get potboiled junk mail from them letting me know that if I miss a payment they'll be forced to commit usury with their penalty rates.

**Steve Green Sat, 24 Jan 2009**

Regarding this business about the Milky Way barging its way through the Sagittarius Galaxy, leaving a trail of stars scattered in our wake, surely the least we should do is pull over and exchange insurance details?

You'd think so. Either that, or start searching for the registration in the glove box.

I must take issue with Lloyd Penney's assertion that "any movie or television remakes will never be as good as the original". John Huston was the third director to take a crack at Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, yet no one would seriously argue his predecessors did a better job. Right now, *Battlestar Galactica* is bringing a depth and maturity to tv sf light years beyond the one-dimensional nonsense it's lifted from. Every case should be

weighed on its own merits.

I can think of a few remakes I liked better, too. For one controversial example, as much as I liked 1951's *The Thing from Another World*, I liked John Carpenter's 1982 *The Thing* better.

**Eric Mayer Fri, 23 Jan 2009**

This was a very enjoyable issue to me, albeit I skipped the one column. Another great illo by Brad, though. I appreciate him taking his time doing these for my essentially mundane stuff. Might convince a few readers the pieces belong, if only because they provide a place to hang Brad's illos!

Astronomy is always interesting. I wish I could come back every couple hundred years just to see what new discoveries science has made about the universe. Just as there's no end to the universe, there will be no end to new revelations about it.

I had a telescope when I was a kid. I don't recall the specifications. It was just powerful enough to bring in some of what Galileo saw (I'm sure you've noticed where now they want to investigate whether he had bad eyesight). I never made proper use of the telescope (man, does metal get cold on those bitter, January nights when the sky is the clearest) but, still, it amazed me to see the craters on the moon, Saturn's ring, Jupiter's moons and stripes, with my own eyes, more or less. That tiny Jupiter, barely perceptible as a disk, with the four pinpoint moons strung out at its sides, was a more breathtaking sight than any glorious close-up astronomical photograph. Those pictures were second hand. But what I saw when I pointed the telescope upwards was clearly right there over my head.

The massive essay by Cy Condra was wonderful. It's hard

to believe he only wrote two fanzine articles. Surely he must have written something other than fanzine articles. The question that springs to mind is when will you be reprinting his other fan effort?

If I knew where his other fan article was, and could lay hands on it, I don't think there's any question but that I'd want to reprint it.

The style reminds me very much of the old New Yorker essayists like Joe Michell whom he writes about. Which to my mind is an excellent quality. But I guess it is a little too late for me to be piling the egoboo on him. He is probably gabbing with E.B. White right now.

It's kind of hard to comment on. While I was reading I jotted down some random thoughts that the article triggered.

Although I have a degree in English Literature I am not enamored of most literary criticism. I tend to give a wide berth to books that are crawling with critics. *Ulysses* and *Swann's Way* I couldn't get into, "getting into" being defined as feeling any necessity for turning more than one page. (For all I know, the remaining pages could have been blank, but I doubt we're that lucky.) Then again I am not much of an intellectual, and who knows, if I tried them again I might enjoy them. I hated Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* when I was forced to read it in college but loved it when I read it again a couple years ago. Well, as William James put it, the truth is a work in progress.

I just read his brother's ghost story, *The Turn of the Screw*. Critics have spent a century explaining why it wasn't a ghost story, despite the fact that the author explained, at length, in the preface to a later edition how he came to write a ghost story. The critics seem to think he was just playing games, tweaking the critics, trying to put them off the scent.

Perhaps I am naive, but it seems they arrogate too much to themselves. Would an author really lie to readers in order to toy with critics? Ah well, perhaps poor Henry didn't understand what he was writing. It was all a Freudian outpouring and only the critics are qualified to decipher it.

We have to flesh out the words with whatever we have in our own heads. Does modern technology affect what we see when we read? These days our brains are chock full of what we've seen on television or in the movies -- exotic places, special effects. Do we use any of that when "translating" the words we read into our own mental images? Does a reader today see something much different than a nineteenth century reader did when he reads, say, Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*?

Well, I did say the article was hard to comment on. I'm not even sure its connection to what I just wrote is clear, but it's from the notes I took.

Lee Lavell's contribution was terrific in its own, more



**The truth about Global Warming**

concise -- almost blog-entry-like -- manner. Who can say where that plague of walnuts came from? Nature is mysterious. One year, in Rochester, the raspberry bushes along the abandoned railroad track two blocks from the house exploded with berries. Mary and I filled plastic grocery bags with them. Bag after bag. Never happened again and I have no idea what the conditions were that produced such a crop. One year my parents' property was overrun with morel mushrooms. We were inviting friends and neighbors

over to harvest them since we couldn't eat so many. That only happened once in the fifteen years or so my parents were there. (The property hadn't burnt the year before. Morels like to grow after forest fires I understand.) As for how Lee wiggled out the kid I am reminded of the time my dad, who was balding in the back, was down on the floor playing with his grandnephew who suddenly looked alarmed. "Grampy!" he cried. "Your hair's broke."

