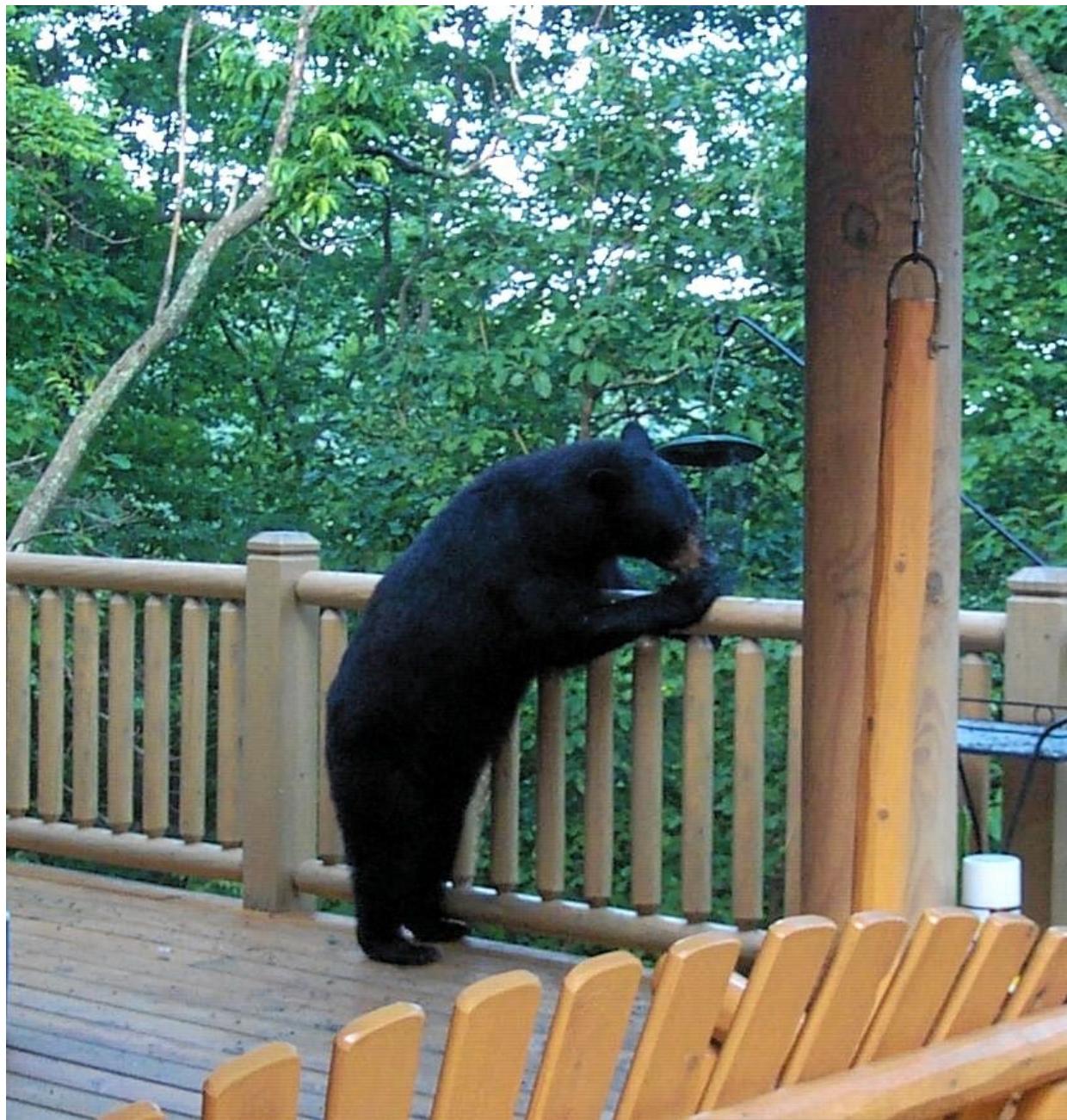


# Visions of Paradise

## #134



# Visions of Paradise #134

## Contents

Out of the Depths.....	page 3
<i>Me and Books</i>	
Listmania.....	page 4
<i>Inventory Season</i>	
The Passing Scene.....	page 6
<i>October 2008</i>	
Wondrous Stories .....	page 8
<i>Extraordinary Engines ... St. Peter's Fair</i>	
Halcyon Days.....	page 10
<i>Slate, Penney (2), Deckinger, Mayer, Dengrove</i>	
On the Lighter Side.....	page 16
<i>Jokes by Lloyd Penney</i>	

—\\/-  
  ( 0\_0 )  
\_\_\_\_\_ o00\_(\_)\_00o \_\_\_\_\_

Robert Michael Sabella

E-mail [bsabella@optonline.net](mailto:bsabella@optonline.net)

Personal blog: <http://adamosf.blogspot.com/>

Sfnal blog: <http://visionsofparadise.blogspot.com/>

Fiction blog: <http://bobsabella.livejournal.com/>

Available online at <http://efanzines.com/>

Copyright ©October, 2008, by Gradient Press

Available for trade, letter of comment or request

### Artwork

Cover... bear on deck (see *The Passing Scene*)

Trinlay Khadro .....Page 9

# Out of the Depths

When I was young, books were very important to me as a way to escape the world in which I lived. I recall taking numerous walks down Palisade Avenue to the town library, usually with my brother Stephen accompanying me, to take out books with little rocket ships on their spine. Most titles are lost in my memory, although I recall **The Light at the End of the Tunnel** (whose author is still lost to me) and L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books. In junior high school, books became even more important to me. Perhaps the most important moment in my life though occurred on Christmas morning, 1962, when I found a copy of **Worlds of IF** magazine in my stocking. My parents had always put a comic book in the stockings, but that year one parent—I never knew which one—obviously found that sf magazine right above the comic books in Sal's Stationary and decided I might enjoy it.

I spent most of Christmas Day reading it, and the next morning I ran to Sal's and bought the February, 1962 issue of **Galaxy**, beginning a lifelong love affair with science fiction. After 45 years, I still think about books constantly. It takes a major effort not to buy books continuously, and I am rather proud that I have only bought a total of 22 books this year. I would love to have the time to read every book in my inventory, starting with the unread ones (246 fiction and 206 nonfiction), but that will never happen. But it is nice to still be passionate about something that has been with me my entire life.

Sometimes I wonder what people do if they have no passion guiding their life? No matter how much I love my job--and I do!--if my life consisted exclusively of working and household chores with occasional vacations and partying, I think I would be bored much of the time. Reading and writing are what fuel me and provide a large portion of my pleasure and satisfaction. I really feel sorry for people who have no passions in their life.

\*

Fei Fei sent me a link to a Japanese website which has a brief test to determine the age of your brain. Obviously I took the test, and my brain's age is 31. Here is the link for anybody else who might be interested in it: [http://flashfabrica.com/f\\_learning/brain/brain.html](http://flashfabrica.com/f_learning/brain/brain.html)

Since the site is in Japanese, you also need to read these instructions:

1. Touch 'start'
2. Wait for 3, 2, 1.
3. Memorize the number's position on the screen, then click the circled numbers in order from the smallest number to the biggest number.
4. At the end of game, the computer will tell you the age of your brain.

# Listmania

Readers of this zine probably know that I enjoy making lists, everything from *Best of the Year* lists to *Future History Series* to *Recommended Reading/Listening*. This summer I spent about ten hours inventorying my collections of books and music. I deliberately do not have huge amounts of either because (a) I have culled my book collection of hundreds of books I did not enjoy and which were taking up space on my shelves; and (b) I gave hundreds of record albums to charity last summer, so that my music collection now consists of the remaining tapes and cds.

I have 993 tapes and cds left, over 950 of which are rock and roll in its various sub-genres. Progressive rock is my most dominant type of rock music, with 219 albums. The most prominent artists in my collection are:

The Kinks / Ray Davies	41
Bob Dylan	26
Richard Thompson	24
Pink Floyd	21
Yes	21
Van Morrison	20
The Beatles	18
Moody Blues	18
Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers	18
Neil Young	18
The Strawbs	17
Creedence Clearwater Revival / John Fogarty	16
Elton John	16
Bruce Springsteen	16
Dion Di Mucci	15
David Bowie	14
Jethro Tull	14
Rush	14

The Who	14
Chris de Burgh	13
Metallica	13
R.E.M.	12
U2	12
Dwight Yoakim	12
John Hiatt	11
Simon & Garfunkel / Paul Simon	11
Dream Theater	10
Paul McCartney	10
Frank Zappa	10

This list contains most of my favorite artists, although the order above is not the same order I would list my favorites. Chris de Burgh is one of my very favorites, but I had most of his output from the 1970s and 1980s on records which I have not replaced yet, another dozen albums. The same with the Strawbs and Bruce Springsteen, each of whom I have a half-dozen albums to replace.

As for books, I have 1,480 books of fiction, 206 books of nonfiction, and 1,349 prozines (covering 27 different titles). The most prominent authors of fiction in my collection (not including prozines) are:

Robert Silverberg	46
Roger Zelazny	35
C.J. Cherryh	27
Jack Vance	26
Clifford D. Simak	23
Michael Bishop	22
Samuel R. Delany	21
Robert A. Heinlein	20
Ursula K Le Guin	19
Isaac Asimov	18
Poul Anderson	17
Marion Zimmer Bradley	17
Kim Stanley Robinson	16
Gene Wolfe	16
Orson Scott Card	14
Frederik Pohl	13
Stephen King	12
John Brunner	11
Charles Sheffield	11
John Varley	11
Greg Benford	9
Philip K Dick	9
Philip José Farmer	9
Jack McDevitt	9

Larry Niven	9
Dan Simmons	9
H.G. Wells	9
Brian W. Aldiss	8
Edgar Rice Burroughs	8
Charles de Lint	8
Louis L'Amour	8
Sherri S. Tepper	8
Kate Wilhelm	8
Agatha Christie	7
Thomas M. Disch	7
George R.R. Martin	7
James Michener	7
Edith Pargeter (Ellis Peters)	7
Robert Louis Stevenson	7
Rex Stout	7

Not surprisingly, the most popular 30 authors all write science fiction and/or fantasy (counting Stephen King as a fantasy writer). I was surprised I have so many titles by Heinlein (who is not one of my favorites) and how few Arthur C. Clarke books I have (merely 4). I'm not surprised that Silverberg and Zelazny top my collection, since they are two of my favorite all-time writers (along with Michael Bishop and Kim Stanley Robinson who have never been terribly prolific).

# The Passing Scene

October 2008

Not surprisingly, being back in school has made me reconsider whether I am ready to retire at the end of this school year. I still enjoy my students and many of the activities I do at school, plus once I retire I will become a lot more solitary than I am now. Besides teaching and spending lots of time helping students in the Math Lab, this month the *Indian Culture Club* had a bake sale, both Indian food and American cupcakes/cookies, which was lots of fun. Then one day I was really flattered while I was in the Math Lab and a small group of my sophomore girls brought me a crepe from the French Club sale. As usual, I had no idea this early in the year how my sophomores feel about me, so that was really nice of them.

Jean, Andy, Mark, Kate and I took a two-day trip to Maryland for the wedding of our neighbor's son Chris. We have been friendly with them for the past twenty years, even before they were our neighbors. Originally we lived two blocks away, but one weekend Jean was bringing the boys to Chris's birthday party and noticed the house next to them was having an Open House. It was a considerably bigger house than ours was at the time, so she decided to check it out. An hour later she came home and told me to go look at the house, which I did. A week later we had sold our house and had a bid accepted for the new one.

The drive to Maryland was mostly good, even though we hit a lot of traffic around Washington D.C. Saturday and in both Princeton and Chester coming home Sunday. We arrived at the Marriott hotel about 3:30 Saturday afternoon where Jean and I stayed in one room while Andy, Mark and Kate stayed in the next one. Our rooms overlooked a gorgeous pond around which was a walking path which we all walked at some point while we were there.

The wedding was in a little chapel next to the restaurant. The food was a buffet consisting of mozzarella and tomato, chicken stuffed with spinach and feta cheese, flank steak, overcooked asparagus, and mashed potatoes. For about 4 hours we sat and listened to music and watched people chatting and dancing. Jean and Andy did talk to people quite a bit, being the more outgoing members of the family.

\*

Weekends are funny during the school year since my schedule varies very little each weekend. Here is what my typical weekend is like:

*Friday evening:* Generally Jean and I go out to eat somewhere—generally a diner-level restaurant—after which I spent an hour browsing at a bookstore while Jean shops elsewhere. Fortunately I do not buy a book every week, but the time spent there is still enjoyable.

*Saturday morning:* This is my prime time to do schoolwork, usually writing tests, quizzes, and college recommendations as well as grading. Last year I wrote an all-time high of 129 recommendations, but this year I don't expect to approach half that number.

*Saturday afternoon:* Off to the YMCA in the afternoon, followed by shopping for produce at the farm store, then shower and cook dinner.

*Saturday evening:* This is when most of my free time is and, as I write this, last night I read a fabulous story by Clifford D. Simak, a novelette from the 1950s entitled “Immigrant” which was his typical thought-provoking pastoral look at life.

*Sunday morning:* Back to work on the computer, more schoolwork as well as catching up on accumulated mail, journal and blog entries.

*Sunday afternoon:* First we go to Shop-Rite for our food shopping, followed by chores such as vacuuming and cooking dinner. Tonight was pea soup and zucchini bread.

*Sunday evening:* More free time, provided all my schoolwork is finished. In good weather we go bike-riding, followed by more reading.

\*

Late October this year more resembled mid-January. On 10/28, while we were at school somebody told Jean that Route 80 west—the major route to Budd Lake—was closed, so she and Nancy—our carpooler—put on *New Jersey 12* on tv to see what was happening. The news was discussing the snowstorm in the northwestern corner of the state which had not touched Parsippany at all. Not only was there 8" of snow, but Route 46 and Route 10—the alternate routes home—were parking lots. Jean talked to Denise on the phone who took 4 hours to drive home. It was worse for Nancy, since trees had fallen on her road and she had no power, nor did the police anticipate her getting it back overnight.

Jean and I went to a two-hour meeting, then ate dinner before finally leaving for home at 6:00. It took us 2 hours to get home, normally a 40 minute drive. The snow worsened as we got closer to home and, as usual, the top of the mountain where we live was the worst: the roads were covered with 10" of snow and so many trees had broken branches that the neighborhood looked like a tornado had passed through it.

Andy and our neighbor Steve were snow-blowing our driveway when we arrived (fortunately Andy was off from work all day), so I changed clothes and helped them finish it and then we did Steve’s driveway. A huge tree in Steve’s yard had fallen, blocking his front walk and porch, so the only way into his house was through the garage. Jean and I decided to stay home the next day since we feared the roads might be treacherous at 6:30am when we normally leave for work. Andy was also supposed to be at work at 7:00am, but he left at 9:00am for the same reason. This is not a good omen for the winter!

I was passing through the kitchen that afternoon we were home when I saw a huge, black bear standing up at the bird feeder trying to eat from it (the color of the bear was black, not necessarily the “type” of bear). It was close to 7' tall and huge. Somehow it noticed me and immediately turned and went down the stairs off the deck into the woods. Jean grabbed her digital camera and took a picture of it approaching the trampoline. Scary! (The cover picture is not our bear but a picture I found online).

# Wondrous Stories

Even I, who love making lists, admit that some people take the stratification of f&sf too far. All those sub-categories such as New Weird, Mundane, Steampunk, Cyberpunk need to be taken with a grain of disbelief.

Which does not mean there are not some good stories in the so-called sub-categories. It is just that sometimes it is hard to tell a salt-and-pepper-punk story from a parsley-sage-rosemary-thyme-punk story. That being said, *steampunk* seems to refer to sf stories set in the Victorian era and reminiscent of the writings of Jules Verne with a dash of Charles Dickens thrown in. Retroproto-sf so to speak. A good primer for the sub-genre is **Extraordinary Engines**, an original anthology edited by Nick Gevers. While the title is somewhat of a misnomer, all the stories do involve some type of scientific machine at its center.

The opening story, James Lovegrove’s “Steampunch” is about boxing robots becoming popular in Victorian England, and particularly the outcry in certain quarters about it, spearheaded by the Marquis of Queensbury whose name resounds through human boxing history. The story is slightly tongue-in-cheek and Lovegrove carries it off well.

Kage Baker’s “Speed, Speed the Cable” tells of the laying of the transatlantic cable, which also sparked considerable protest by groups of people who feared dire consequences from it and who organized into terrorist groups determined to prevent it. The “engine” of this story is a submarine protecting the huge ships laying the cable. This story might have been tedious except for Baker’s considerable skills as a storyteller which pulled it off successfully.

Robert Reed’s “American Cheetah” has a truly fantastic premise: in order to maximize Abraham Lincoln’s visibility during the re-election campaign of 1864, automaton versions of him are created which go around the country campaigning. After the war ends, most of them are decommissioned, but one survives until Lincoln’s assassination after which it is granted a reprieve. It becomes a dedicated public servant in the town where it lives, eventually becoming sheriff and engaging in the story’s climactic showdown with the James and Younger gangs trying to rob the town’s bank. But keep in mind that Abraham Lincoln would never carry a weapon himself, so neither would his automaton. A good story.

Ian R. MacLeod’s “Elementals” treats those mythical beings as purely scientific creations, and does a good job of it in MacLeod’s typical low-key manner. A scientist creates modern elementals from the powers of the city, intending to use them as power sources. But, in a resemblance to *Peter Pan*, only people who believe in elementals can see them, which causes a problem when he tries to introduce them to a disbelieving public. A well-done story.

James Morrow’s “Lady Witherspoon’s Solution” tells a story of *hubris*, combining a bit of the legend of Icarus with some “Flowers for Algernon.” Its premise is a lady’s club at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which has a sinister function that lures a young orphan into its circle, resulting in some strange doings. Interesting reading, although the secret behind the story’s mystery reveals itself about halfway through. Not to mention there was no mention of any extraordinary machine

(not that it matters except in micromanaging).

While not every story was as enjoyable as those listed above, overall **Extraordinary Engines** was a good book worth reading.

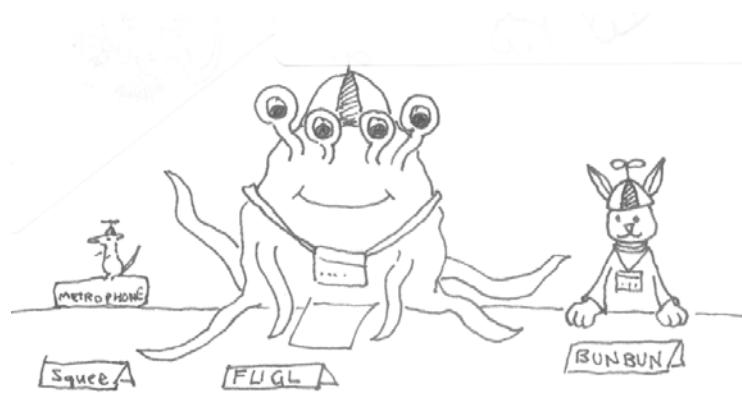
\*

As readers of this zine probably know, I rarely read contemporary mysteries, but I enjoy historical mysteries when the fascination of the setting trumps the mystery. Books such as Steven Saylor's *Roma Sub Rosa* series and Mary Reed & Eric Mayer's *John the Eunuch* series (both previously reviewed here) fall into that category.

Another excellent example of this genre—and perhaps the prototype of all of them—is Ellis Peter's *Brother Cadfael* mysteries which are set during the same English Civil war as Ken Follett's **Pillars of the Earth**. But although both works are set in monastery towns, Follett's epic involves many of the movers and shakers of the civil war, while Peters is primarily concerned with common people undergoing life's trials and tribulations during the late Middle Ages. **St. Peter's Fair** is set during what amounts to a three-day flea market run by the monastery, a common occurrence which was also the setting of one of the important scenes in **Pillars**.

Brother Cadfael himself is a fascinating character, a former man-of-the-world who became a monk while in his forties and has been tending the monastery gardens for the past 16 years. He is very friendly with the under-sheriff of the town whom he helps investigate mysteries, in this instance the murder of one of the merchants at the fair.

**St. Peter's Fair** was a very enjoyable book wrapped around the murder and several subsequent crimes. It is a very slow-paced, chatty book, which was fine with me, so that even the last section's "thriller" was enjoyable, something I rarely say. The overall result is that I am planning to read more of those books, and I will likely put the Derek Jacobi videos on my Christmas list so I can enjoy the medieval setting visually as well.



# Halcyon Days

Alexander Slate

Alexander.Slate@pentagon.af.mil

September 15, 2008

I definitely seem to be in the minority regarding Michael Chabon's **The Yiddish Policeman's Union**. I read it, or more correctly, I slogged through it, and really did not care for it. While a decent mystery, as mysteries go, it presented no characters that I even remotely cared for or could get interested in—which seems to be a one of the requirements I have for an enjoyable book.

I do agree with you regarding Steven Saylor's *Roma Sub Rosa* series though. Enjoy them thoroughly. Gordianus is a character that I am interested in, which makes all the difference. As for me—I enjoy the mystery itself. History is also one of my interests, and the combination of the mystery, the character interest and the well-done historical perspective makes for a combination that delights me. It was the same way with the *Brother Cadfael* mysteries by Ellis Peters.

As a result, I will probably pick up one of the John the Eunuch books to check it out. That is, after I get through the 4 books I have out from the library currently: Mosesitt's **Mage-Guard of Hamor**, Harris's **From Dead to Worse**, Carey's **Kushiel's Mercy** and Hamilton's **Blood Noir**.

One the personal front, much is happening. I am through the first year of the two-year career broadening assignment in DC. I am also ready to switch rotations mid-next month. This current rotation has been good for me. I have learned a lot, and picked up a perspective I otherwise would not have.

Found out that my bedroom was infested with bedbugs. Didn't have a clue they were there until one night they were all over one bedroom wall. I freaked out. The timing, at least, was sort of on. Because two days later I was off for a two-week vacation which allowed pest control to come in and take care of the problem without worrying about my being exposed to the agents. The last treatment was supposed to have been last Tuesday, but I have still seen a couple of them and have requested an additional treatment. Right now I am sleeping in the living room until I go a week without seeing one.

As for the vacation, I flew to Dayton and the next day we started the 3-day drive to Yellowstone. Four days at Yellowstone, two days in the Grand Tetons (Jackson, WY), one day in Thermopolis and then the 3-day return drive—stopping off to see the Devil's Tower and Mt Rushmore. One day of 'rest' in Dayton then flying back to DC. Very enjoyable, but exhausting. Way too much time in the car.

[The popular fantasy thriller series at my school now is Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series of books which are popular among both students and faculty. My first-year teacher has been staying up late nights reading the series (and coming to school bleary-eyed in the morning as a result!).

[I think I would have freaked out as well if my bed were infested with bed bugs!]

**Lloyd Penney**

1706\_24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON, CANADA M9C 2B2

[penneys@allstream.net](mailto:penneys@allstream.net)

September 16, 2008

I've got **Visions of Paradise** 132 printed out for my convenience, and I must get a loc written. I am at my new job, at Southern Graphics Systems, and I am taking advantage of downtime and getting extremely caught up with loccing fanzines. Hey, there's one below...

Before the Hugo results came out, before the nominations were released, I don't think I'd every heard of John Scalzi, perhaps as a novelist. I certainly hadn't read anything by him, neither book nor blog. I know that fandom is passing me by when I haven't read anything by the Hugo winner for Best Fan Writer. At some point, I will have to find his blog and see why he and his writing are so popular. I don't know how anyone finds the time to search the myriad of blogs out there to find the best writing that covers your interest. Is there a vital list of fannish and SFnal (I'm using the word, Robert) blogs available somewhere on the Web?

The last movie I saw was *Wall-E*. I didn't see many movies, mostly because there's so few that really attract me. I've now seen *Wall-E* twice, and Yvonne three times. The animation is a treat to see, the story is pertinent to the modern green era, and there's enough ha!ha! and awww! factors to make me want to buy the DVD when it is released. I think the movie did fairly well at the box office, but perhaps not as well as I had hoped. No matter, Disney and Pixar continue to produce great movies together. *Wall-E* reminded many people of ET, Yoda, an ewok and just about any other cute little character.

I do have a FaceBook page, and it's been very handy to connect up with old friends from fandom and high school, and organizations I support, but there's so much more on FaceBook I have to ignore, or I'd spend my whole day on that page.

An inventory of all our books? It wouldn't take us a year, but that inventory would have to be fairly flexible. We have lots of different kinds of books, mostly SF and fantasy, but also other genres and lots of non-fiction. We purchase used paperbacks from time to time, so even more flexibility will be needed.

The storms we've had to deal with...Fay, Gustav, Hanna, Ike. It's been a busy storm season. Living where I do, the storms do come up our way, but by the time they do, they are weak enough to give us a soaking without causing any real damage. It's hard to believe that the damage Houston and Galveston suffered rival what Katrina dealt to New Orleans.

Living right beside the US, we have to have some awareness of US politics. After 8 years of Republican rule, I think the American public wants a break. Barack Obama has the charisma, and Joe Biden has the experience. John McCain has the old grandad thing going, but I think he's partially derailed his campaign by choosing Sarah Palin as his veep candidate. As you say, what was he thinking? This candidate was not sufficiently vetted by the Republicans, and even though the public has somehow warmed to her, I think she's a very poor choice. Given McCain's age,

would you want gun-totin' Hockey Mom in charge? Sounds like she's ready to declare war on Russia. She has far too many skeletons in the closet, and she seems relatively ignorant of the world around her.

*Star Trek: Explorer?* I think you're referring to *Voyageur*.

Mention of Arthur C. Clarke... I have written here and elsewhere about a book of condolences Yvonne started up right after the announced death of her favorite author. The book started at Ad Astra in Toronto, moved to Eeriecon in Niagara Falls, NY, and then to Corflu Silver in Las Vegas, and then Apogee Books publisher Rob Godwin took the book to several major space conferences to ask attendees to sign in Sir ACC's memory. Astronauts, major movers and shakers in the space industry got to sign the book, and recently, Rob sent the book to Sir Arthur's brother, Fred. We had no idea how much of an impact the book would have on the Clarke family. Fred was very touched, and revealed that he has been able to secure funding for a Sir Arthur C. Clarke museum, and will make the book of condolences a major, if not central, part of the museum. We're amazed by where this little book is going, much further than Yvonne ever thought. We have some preliminary plans to go to Britain in a few years; perhaps we'll see that book again.

[Many blogs list other blogs that its author considers worthwhile, but all of them are determined by the blogger's personal taste, so none of them are definitive. And I agree that checking them all out would be incredibly time-consuming, which is why I generally only check out blogs whose authors comment on my own.]

### **Mike Deckinger**

mike2004@aol.com

Oct 2, 2008

I dont know where **Lloyd Penney** is buying LOCUS, but if he's being charged \$10.00 a copy, someone is pocketing a very hefty profit. I subscribe, so my per unit price is less than the designated cover price of \$6.95, a far reach from \$10.00.

I also skipped my senior graduation prom. I had no interest in attending at the time, and my view, over the years, has not altered.

**Richard Dengrove** mentions the Rosicrucians. Anyone who read the old pulps will recall the countless advertisements for the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) plastered on the back covers. The Rosicrucians still exist and you can find a handsome web site detailing their background. They maintain an Egyptian museum, mummy collection and public library in San Jose, CA, open to the public. I've been there twice and would recommend it as a fitting glimpse into the eerie texture of Silicon Valley, on par with Sarah Winchester's demented Mystery House.

I was troubled by **Locus** actions toward the assignment of votes in the **Locus** poll. One solution to ballot-stuffing, or bloc voting, would be to only accept votes from subscribers. Non-subscribers would be free to submit their ratings, but only the subscriber votes could count

towards the poll. I'm not thoroughly restful with that solution, but I feel it trumps the activities in the last poll.

We should try not to be consumed with anger over old age because we can't change it. Of course not. I'm inclined to exult in old age, because the alternative is too dire to contemplate.

**Eric Mayer**

[maywrite2@epix.net](mailto:maywrite2@epix.net)

Oct 3, 2008

Thanks for **VoP** 133. Sounds like you've been busy. Around here it's been a bit stressful the past week. I managed to find a small gap in my legal writing to spend a few full days working on the new book and, as always, as soon as I feel I have to make good use of my time, I can't. The ideas all seem to run away. I don't have that problem with legal writing and I can easily force myself to do that when required. Well, usually. Of course I tell myself that if I am not turning out as much writing as I should I shouldn't be reading books or fanzines. But that doesn't help matters and then I waste even more time doing nothing whatsoever.

If I had to get up at 5:15 am I think it would kill me. For many years I got up shortly after six for work, but 5:15 am is still the middle of the night. I've read that some researchers think it is foolish to force teenagers to be in class early since their bodies aren't geared to early hours. I recall I didn't like early classes but at that age I could physically handle practically any schedule.

Not sure how teachers cope endlessly with colds and flu. When my kids were in school everyone in the house was sick by the end of September. My dad taught but whether he got sick from the kids he taught or my from what my brother and I brought home, who can say.

Your students sure come from a remarkable array of backgrounds. Seems like it would be difficult to deal with that. I often think I might have been happier had I gone into academia where learning and curiosity and creativity get some respect. Unfortunately I don't have the right personality or skills to teach. I observed my dad. Engaging students' attention, inspiring them, imparting information...these are difficult things to do.

I was thinking about what **Richard Dengrove** said about how your description of your teaching and your acquaintances wouldn't seem to mark you as an unsociable person and **Sheryl Birkhead's** comments about how she feels uncomfortable at conventions but not in situations dealing with veterinary matters. Perhaps we are not really all that unsociable but just don't care for the situation presented by sf cons.

To some fans, fandom seems primarily to be a hobby (or way of life, if you will) which involves traveling to stay at hotels to socialize with a particular group of people who like traveling to stay at hotels to socialize with the same group of people. I'm not sure where the substance is. It all seems purely social and I prefer dealing with people who share some interest or purpose. I have no trouble socializing with folks at orienteering meets where the sport of orienteering is always

available as a shared interest. Having not read science fiction in decades, I wouldn't be able to go to an sf con to discuss science fiction, but I gather that is not the "faanish" reason to attend cons anyway.

I am not advocating against cons or any such thing, just trying to ascertain why the concept makes me uncomfortable.

[ I definitely should not be writing fanzines or blogs, since it erodes most of my writing time. But I enjoy it so much, as well as the social interaction that comes from it and, quite frankly, I think I am a better nonfiction writer than fiction writer, so I might as well stay with my strength! ]

[I never thought I had the right disposition to be a teacher, but I fell in love with it soon after trying it. It is not the least bit difficult dealing with all the diversity of Parsippany; it is definitely one of the greatest joys of my job.]

### Lloyd Penney

October 11, 2008

Thank you for **VoP** 133. Guess I'm curious enough to examine another slice of the Sabella family's life. As I read how your students and graduated students are living their lives, I am thinking that my own life in university, plus a year of community college afterwards, was dull and uneventful. Good in some ways, but not in others.

*Wondrous Stories...* I am not certain I've read the Dozois book (not at home as I type this), but I have read the Silverberg and Niven books.

As far as baseball goes, I am a Jays fan, but I've only been to one game, and I attended it with George Alec Effinger, a life-time baseball superfan.

My loc...I did ask Rob Sawyer what **Locus** had against him, and he's not sure himself. They may not like his writing style, or possibly his politics. Work has changed yet again. The RASC let me go, so I now work at Southern Graphic Systems in Etobicoke, a giant step up. As to **Rich Dengrove**'s comments, if I had \$10 for every resume I've ever had to send out for a job, I'd never have to send out resumes again. It hasn't been easy, but my profession, proofreader, is one that is usually seen as relatively unimportant and disposable. I have lost a number of jobs over the years to incompetent bosses, petty politics, ambitious juniors and layoff. I am also certain I've lost my share of jobs because of my own incompetence and my age. Diminishing faculties, faulty memory and all that. Perhaps I should make a career of jobsearching; it's the one job I've been able to do well in.

John McCain and Sarah Palin... you've probably read in a few places that the only Palin most people want to vote for is Michael. Perhaps Republicans have tried to estimate the intelligence of the American voter, and picked Palin as folksy and homespun. After her various performances, I think most people wouldn't vote for her as vice-president of the PTA. Gun-totin' hockey mom

should scare everybody.

Lately, I've been ending these locs on some pretty negative ideas, and it's not intentional. Perhaps this worldwide credit mess is behind it, who knows. Anyway, take care, and I'll be looking for more from you soon.

**Rich Dengrove**

RichD22426@aol.com

Thursday, October 23, 2008 8:57 PM

I enjoyed **Visions of Paradise** 132 and 133, and I, of course, have comments.

**Visions of Paradise** 132. **Eric Mayer:** *Imagining the Past.* The Roman Empire was taken over by many people of many different races and religions. There was in fact an emperor by the name of Philip the Arab. Also, the Empire changed religion: the emperors were originally pagan and became Christian. In addition, many historians, say the Empire changed capitals, from Rome to Constantinople. They say the Empire did not end in 476 AD, but lasted until 1453. Of course, by the above criteria, the Roman Empire did not end in 1453, but was taken over by the Ottoman Turks, and did not end until 1919 when the Turkish Empire disintegrated. ...What think you?

*The Passing Scene.* Here, in the DC area, we seem to have a lot of Russians too. On the subway, you can hear people speaking that distinctive language. Also, a lot of Russian girls go to the local college; and others, in the summer, work at the local pools. I knew a fellow who was bowled over by how beautiful the ladies who did the latter were. Of course, this area of the country does not hold a candle to others: I hear Brighton Beach is practically a little Russia.

About the election, I suspect that John McCain found out that he could only run for President weighed down with George Bush's policies and campaign strategy. Otherwise, he was not going to have the funding. So he sold his soul to the Devil. And the rest will be history. Among the Bush policies has been pleasing the Evangelicals. McCain probably wanted to run with Joe Lieberman or Tom Ridge, but he had to pick an Evangelical. So he picked Sarah Palin. I suspect the choice was not only a matter of the Bush campaign strategy, though. No, I bet there was some of McCain in the decision: he liked her gumption.

*Wondrous Stories. One For Sorrow.* The Byzantine Empire is lost but not forgotten in America. Nearby where I live, in D.C., is the Dumbarton Oaks estate. It has a museum devoted to Pre-Columbian artifacts, as well as to Byzantium. Maybe whoever owned the estate wanted to do something for those eras which we don't hear too much about. You could say, in a way, it is an All American thing.

**Visions of Paradise** 133. *The Passing Scene.* So Fei Fei lost her cell phone and purse when her kayak capsized and she was swept downstream. I now know not to take my cell phone and wallet on any kayaking trips. I will leave them in the car. Come to think of it, I'm such a chicken I

would probably leave myself there too.

*Wondrous Stories.* **Flatlander.** I was told, in the late '70s, that the need for body parts had been superseded by prosthetics. And Larry Niven's future couldn't happen. Actually, it may yet prove better to transplant others' body parts. **Flatlander** still could happen. We still could have organleggers, transplants of any organ, and the death penalty for parking tickets. There is one problem with the scenario that Larry never dealt with, however. If we transplanted too much of someone else's brain onto ours, we would become that other person, wouldn't we? The person executed would be, at least partly, resurrected. The greedy person who lived forever on others' body parts would, in actual fact, die slowly.

Per your comment to **Eric Mayer**, I don't watch TV much either. In fact, my TV watching has decreased so much over the years that, on any day, I don't watch any at all. On the other hand, unlike you, I don't read instead; I do my reading on the bus commuting to work. Instead, I do writing and exercising during my previous TV time.

Add me, with you and **Lloyd Penney**, to those who went dateless in high school. I have to admit that, in my senior year, a friend of mine took me to 'dances'. The dances seem to have been for the purpose of petting rather than dancing, and I got to pet a girl or two.

This is for **Eric Mayer**. I suspect Obama will win no matter how many Sarah Palins McCain chooses or how much contempt people have for the Harvard Law School Review. It is, as James Carville said: it's the economy, stupid. And it's 1929 all over again.

**Eric**, for what it's worth, I was told, by the author Jack Chalker that the way to write a mystery is to write the ending first. Also, I read where Mickey Spillane went him one further. He told reporters he wrote all the chapters in reverse order. I am sure that was one of Mickey's many put-ons. However, I am also sure that he wrote the ending first.

This is for **Sheryl Birkhead**. I suspect you have to have a special body to work out several hours a day year after year like your relative. I doubt my body could take it. I doubt it could have taken it when I was younger. It is true working out is a high priority for me because I believe it is.

[ I believe the Roman Empire morphed into the Byzantine Empire, but when the Ottomans took it over was the official end of the Roman Empire in any form. Still, that was a long existence for such a widespread entity.

[As of yesterday, Obama is officially the president-elect, so we do not need to fear moose-hunting hockey mom becoming president in the next four years. But those are not the two traits which scare me about her; rather, it is her power-crazy side which is not hidden too far beneath the surface. I think she is more likely a potential Dick Cheney than a George Bush, and that is what really frightens me about her.]

# On the Lighter Side

*Jokes From Lloyd Penney*

## *Walking the Dog*

A woman was flying from Seattle to San Francisco. Unexpectedly, the plane was diverted to Sacramento along the way. The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft the plane would re-board in 50 minutes.

Everybody got off the plane except one lady who was blind. The man had noticed her as he walked by and could tell the lady was blind because her Seeing Eye dog lay quietly beneath the seat in front of her throughout the entire flight. He could also tell she had flown this very flight before because the pilot approached her, and calling her by name, said, "Kathy, we are in Sacramento for almost an hour. Would you like to get off and stretch your legs?"

The blind lady replied, "No thanks, but maybe Buddy would like to stretch his legs." All the people in the gate area came to a complete standstill when they looked up and saw the pilot walk off the plane with a Seeing Eye dog! The pilot was even wearing sunglasses. People scattered. They not only tried to change planes, but they were trying to change airlines!

\*

Archangel Michael looked puzzled and said, "What is it?"

"It's a planet," replied God, "and I've put LIFE on it. I'm going to call it Earth and it's going to be a place of great balance."

"Balance?" inquired Michael, still confused. God explained, pointing to different parts of Earth, "For example, Northern Europe will be a place of great opportunity and wealth while Southern Europe is going to be poor; the Middle East over there will be a hot spot. Over there I've placed a continent of white people and over there is a continent of black people." God continued, pointing to different countries. "This one will be extremely hot and arid while this one will be very cold and covered in ice."

The Archangel, impressed by God's work, then pointed to a large landmass in the top corner and asked, "What's that one?"

"Ah," said God, "that's Canada, the most glorious place on Earth. There are beautiful mountains, lakes, rivers, streams and an exquisite coastline. The people from Canada are going to be modest, intelligent and humorous and they're going to be found travelling the world. They'll be extremely sociable, hard-working and high-achieving, and they will be known throughout the world as diplomats and carriers of peace. I'm also going to give them super-human, undefeatable ice hockey players who will be admired and feared by all who come across them."

Michael gasped in wonder and admiration but then proclaimed, "What about balance, God? You said there will be BALANCE!"

God replied wisely, "Wait until you see the loud-mouthed bastards I'm putting next to them...."