

John Hertz's Westercon Notebook

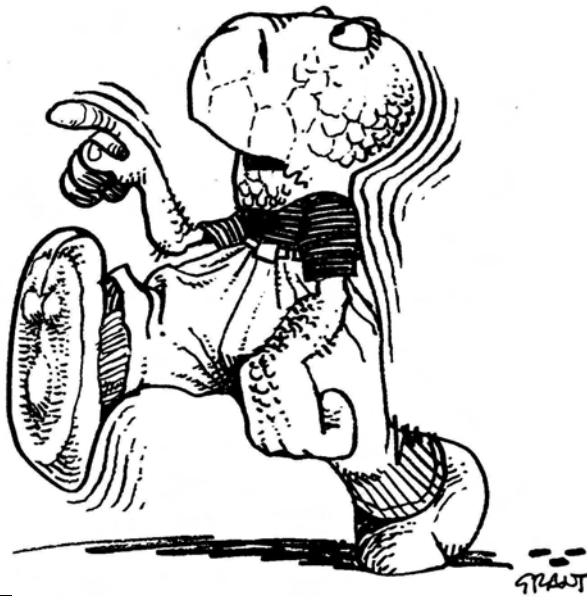
Westercon 56, July 3-6, 2003

Seattle-Tacoma Doubletree Hotel

Writer Guest of Honor Bruce Serling, Artist GoH Lisa Snellings, Scientist GoH Michio Kaku, Fan GoH Saul Jaffe, Editor GoH Claire Eddy, Toastmaster Connie Willis. Attendance about 1,400.

"Eugene, Oregon," said an 8-year-old boarding my plane ahead of me; "who wants to go there?" I said, "It's the home of the Eastern Europe Folklife Center. You could learn to play the Bulgarian bagpipe. Start now." I never know what will happen; he gave me thumbs-up. We flew over Crater Lake, deepest in the U.S. I went on to Seattle feeling it might be a good weekend.

My first panel was Thursday evening at seven. This had seemed doubtful to me, but many came to discuss Zelazny's *Lord of Light* (1967), Hugo and Nebula winner. Westercon



in Germany. Mike Willmoth tried not to mention Mercedes Lackey. Westercon LVI instead of "only soft drinks at open parties" ruled "must have a registered sober host", an improvement. Clifford Wind pursued my Van Vogt theory. The collapse of Buddhism in *Light* bothered him. Where did all those monks go? Yet the scene of Sam's facing Yama, like a Buddhist, is strong.

Morning. Sally Woehrle, chair of Westercon L, ran the Green Room. I love these Cincinnatus moments. Real nourishment in the Green Room, if budget allows, is a blessing when one has a lot to do and hopes to refuel on the run. There is a risk of developing a sub-con where the hip hide, a nasty unfannishness we'd better not fall into. For *1984* I moderated Richard Dahm, Roberta Gregory, Pierce Ludke, Bruce Taylor. June 25th was the 100th anniversary of Orwell's birth. Dahm

said *1984* was like *Dilbert*, people read it but what happens? Ludke said good art was inherently disturbing. From the audience: if art asks you to change it's political. Taylor read aloud about doublethink. I tried asking about literature. Is it an accident we open with Smith's horrid notes of that war film? What happened to Julia's earlier men? This struck no sparks. The room was seized with approval of a message.

I have strewn it with such flowers as my high spirits have permitted.

Beaumarchais

LVI was pleased with the "S-F Classics" panels last year, and scheduled several. I did *Light* and Orwell's *1984* (1949), both of which, I cracked, could have been written by Van Vogt. Like his famous technique they so dazzle, overwhelm, that one hardly notices what is going on, and hardly cares. For *Light* I moderated Raymond Eich, Duane Wilkins, and Robyn Sondra Wills. Weeks later I found my own copy; meanwhile a public library had the 1979 Gregg Press hardback reprint with illustrations by Freff, goshwow.

What is a classic? I've been saying it's an artwork that survives its time, that's revealed as having merit even after the currents it first floated on are changed. David Howell in the audience said a seminal work may not be a classic. If it holds many messages, does that make it timeless? Is a classic one to which we return only to think "I was wrong last time"? Howell said it should resonate across a range of people. I said James Joyce reached a top and middle, but no bottom; the film *A New Hope* (1977) reached a bottom and top, but no middle. Wilkins suggested Burnett's *Secret Garden* (1911) was more of a classic than her *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886). Art

Widner in the audience compared *Light* to Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922). I said the real joke in *Light* was Nerriti, whose soulless hordes really were soulless — they're androids. Wills said *1984* meant more to mundanes, *Light* more to us, but I showed the chock-full library check-out card, and from the audience Anthony Ward, a librarian, said copies of *Light* wear out. It may be Zelazny's most poetic.

Drinks in the bar with Widner and the Busbys. Widner was writing up Jack Speer, one of two Fan GoH for Noreascon IV (2004 Worldcon). Widner said "He invented a move in Interplanetary even I didn't see." Sandra Childress & James Briggs, Ed Green, and a host of others put on a joke bid for a Westercon in '05 at Port Barrow, Alaska. At their party Childress served snow cones, naturally, flavored with Midori or lemon. By high tech I saw the World-Wide Web site. They would have Regency nose-rubbing (not

Ingeniously ugly.

Anna Leonowens

my fault, honest) and mukluks. They liked to say "mukluks". At the Silicon Valley for '05 Westercon party Sharon Sbarsky told of cars driving at 200 miles an hour on the Autobahn

Something beyond flesh.

Faulkner

"Convention Experience" was Dahm, Janice Gelb, Raven McCracken, and Edward Steiner, me moderating. Calm went before a storm of people aggrieved at long mistreatment and urging that without them there would be no conventions. A pro writer was followed by an Operations volunteer (not Gelb), a Green Room host (not Woehrle), a con producer. It did not help that all was true. The topic had been *How to get the most out of your* — and finally I offered the old Zen monastery rule "Everybody works, everybody eats". However, each had a fair turn, and with a clear conscience I went to Ulrika O'Brien's docent tour of the Art Show.

This year's docents were Astrid Bear, Greg Bear, Mark Ferrari, me, O'Brien, Margaret Organ-Kean, and Tom Whitmore. I like to take other docents' tours, and I notice they do too. The Art Show, under Lacey Axmaker, had 1,200 pieces from 90 artists, sales \$14,000 — again attendance □ 10. When I engage the docents, as this year, I try for a variety of pros and fans, women and men, graphic artists and people just good at talking about art. Knowing history or being able to make things can help, but the vital element is, as Kelly Freas put it, "Say what you see." We can't see *skillful*, or *clumsy*; however accurate, these are conclusions: what do we see? O'Brien, perceptive and articulate, I hope may be within reach of a Worldcon to lead a tour soon. Organ-Kean's pen-and-ink "Game of One" won Best Monochrome, a lady alone with chess pieces as candles burn low, the drapery of her gown and the feathers of her headdress setting off a window of deep black. Whitmore found Tim Kirk, who was at the con in connection with the forming Paul Allen s-f museum. In the *Locus* Awards, Bob Eggleton won Best Artist, and Tor won Best Publisher. I saw O'Brien again at Regency dancing. Rum punch at the Kansas City for '06 Worldcon party. At the Los Angeles for '06 party Christian McGuire said "The Jell-O makes it fannish."

"Fanzine Publishing" at 10 a.m. Saturday with Jerry Kaufman & Suzle. A note on a whiteboard, about what vampires should wear, we could not help applying to our topic. "Dress for Success" was *Trial by Air*. "Dress for Camouflage" was *Uncle Smiley's Bookcase*. "Dress to Overwhelm" was *Plokta*. "Dress for Repose" was *Vanamonde*. Suzle & Kaufman broke into "76 Fanzines Led the *Locus* Poll", which once counted such things; "followed by rows and rows o' the finest offset illos, the dream of every Big Name Fan." We adjourned to the Fanzine Lounge. Pat Diggs, who did Treasury at Intersection ('95 Worldcon) but admittedly knew little of fanzines, to be helpful had accepted the role of hostess. Suzle &

Not the leisure which wealth or a secure pride convey, but repose and the spontaneous action of the mind.

Hilaire Belloc

Kaufman had brought Peter Roberts' 1977 TAFF report *New Routes in America*. He too found them liable to burst into song. I had brought thirty or forty current zines for reading copies. Over the weekend as we all dropped in from time to time Diggs told what adventures she'd had in the meanwhile. One fellow in armor, clanking as he sat, stayed reading fanzines for an hour.

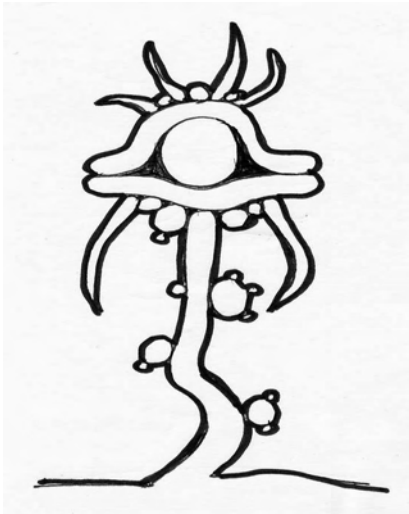
Greg Bear on his docent tour said "The fan crowd really likes animals and attitude." He praised Rob Alexander, who won popular-choice Best in Show, for showing sketches as well as finished pictures. Ferrari said "Look what success he has with narrow color ranges." Astrid & Greg had decided to lead separate tours. In between Greg hosted a presentation of the museum, which is for now under the name "The S-F Experience". Kirk stood at an easel taking notes — I mean the notes were Tim Kirk drawings. As it happens I'd never met him in person. In his days drawing actively for APA-L (e.g. "Harlan Elephant") our paths crossed only in print; no more when as editor of the L.A. con II Program Book ('84 Worldcon) I made sure he was in the "L.A. Artists" portfolio. But from one look at the easel he was unmistakable. The museum will naturally start by exploiting images from film and television. Equally natural is the slogan on a current flier "Remember when the future seemed scarier than the present? Ah, the good old days." In the audience I sat with

Looking for a donkey while riding it.

Wang Yang-ming

Tom Doherty wondering about books. I wondered further too.

Astrid Bear shared her tour with Whitmore, whom the con had scheduled earlier than he'd arrived. We were much impressed by the Canadian artist Quynh Mai Nguyen's painted silk in the modern (founded late 19th Century) Ling Nan style, with bright colors and some Impressionist technique. She won popular-choice Best Application of Media. Here was an artist with a full career (and a Web site *moifa.com*) who brought dragons and phoenixes for us. Bear told how this medium worked. Whitmore showed how in Adrian Bourne's "Bleeding Stones", which O'Brien had likened to stained glass, the light source was



a demon's hand, spread over the background like the word *Europe* on a map in Poe's "Purloined Letter" (1845). Pippin Sardo, who'd posed for Lida & Carl Sloan's "Light Lady", pointed out that the Sloans' work was photographic, not computer-generated.

Moira Stern joined Mark Chanen, Dahm, and me for "Bardic Traditions". Stern and I apologized for missing each other when her harp concert was scheduled against Regency dancing. I volunteered to be the one who said filkers seem the closest we have to bards. From the audience: "What if they ushered cons in and out, at Opening and Closing Ceremonies, as bards did their kings?" Stern said Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738) sang for his supper. Dahm had tales of drumming, and of bardery in the Society for Creative Anachronism. We talked of "killing satire". I asked if beauty perpetuated ugly matter, as the Nazis had sought. Chanen said when there was no written history, killing a bard was like burning a library.

I judged the Masquerade with Astrid Bear, Susan Courtney, Kevin Roche, and the Wombat; JoAnne Kirley, Workmanship Judge; David Bigelow, Master of Ceremonies; Michael Kenmir, Director. Bigelow wore a gold-brocade Julian May robe, recently donated by this writer-costumer to the local community; Greg Sardo and many others, not in competition, modeled more. In the Novice class, Sandra Manning and Chet Cady with "The World of Jules Verne", and Tod Mayes as Marvin the Martian, won Honorable Mentions. Bethany

True, strong, natural, and sweet.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Roulett, "Padmé Amidala's Packing Dress" (Workmanship Award for beading), and a woman we knew only as Atika, "Madame Hootch", tied for Best Re-Creation. Most Original was Elizabeth Fellows, "The Sugar Plaid Fairy" (Workmanship Award for hand sewing) in red with a plaid sash that spread like wings. Best in Class was Holly Forbes' "Queen of Hearts", based on Tenniel with a Disney soundtrack (Workmanship Award, best re-creation).

Two more Cadys, with Frances Burns, Roslyn Jeppesen, and Diane Harris, won Best Journeyman with "Diplomatic Faux Paw", crediting *Winter Range* (1932), *Pride of Chanur* (1982), and Tullamore Dew; among Victorian cat people, a stuffy man was put in his place by the woman who had real authority. Best Master was Sue Lyn Taylor's "Wizard and Roo of Wicky Woo", based on *The Witch and the 'Roo of Wicky Woo* (1996) by Jan Loudin, the wizard being Taylor's son Kristofer; in a neat exchange the kangaroo, with butterfly wings, met him, carried a doll

for a flight sequence, then ended with Kris again. For “The Black Riders of Mordor” (Master) the M.C. credited stunt riding to Betty Bigelow, and read off a dozen names from Deborah Strub to Peter Jackson. Lights up. Music. Pounding hooves. “Those were the Black Riders of Mordor.” We gave this a special award. There were trophies for the awards ceremony; curiously, the one Courney handed Betty Bigelow was invisible.

At the Phoenix party for Westercon LVII, Gary Feldbaum talked about hall costumes at Phillycon. Ellen Battle liked the brevity and eclecticism of *Vanamonde*. Shucks. A long conversation about old books and reverse snobbery with her and Edna Lam drew a crowd. Luckily there was plenty of cheese fondue and Barq’s. At the ’04 Baycon party Frank Wu, whose “Courtesy of Guests” I’d liked in the Art Show, boxfuls of things including outer space, said “All the boxes hold things I own,” which I preferred taken literally. Gelb said she wanted to grow up to be Widner. Since he was my roommate I felt entitled to tell him. He did not believe. I brought them together and she admitted it. Pursuing the 1984 panel he said 1984 showed pain slavery, Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) showed pleasure slavery. Calgary, beating the Silicon Valley 136-59,

The delight thereof departed and the headache therefrom descended.

As-Sarri ar-Raffa’ of Mosul

said Westercon LVIII will be called Due North.

Ferrari, renowned for colored pencils, won the popular-choice Best Digital or Electronic Manipulation. He gave two docent tours. On the second, Sunday morning, the Art Show crackled with excitement in the last hour before auction. At Richard Hescoc’s painting, “The Pacifist” — Hescoc walked up as this was going on; he’d won Best S-F for “Double Nocturne”, also the popular-choice Most Awe-Inspiring — Ferrari said “Paintings succeed or fail on abstract qualities more often than on a subject,” and showed how surface texture was implied by the edges of shadows. He asked for favorites. I liked a 7-sided wooden hand drum by Brian Hasted, which led Ferrari to talk of syncopation and order. Blake Flynn’s “End of Time” won the director’s-choice Best Use of Digital Media, a red sunset beach with a tilting clock frame and a man between pocket watches and ripples.

At the post-Masquerade session I was asked about a Regency lady. She was very authentic, I said, but we couldn’t see any science fiction or fantasy element. In fact I

had spoken with her afterward. A Best in Show trophy had been provided for us, but we found no Best in Show and didn’t give it. There is no escape from the existentialist quality of Masquerade judging. Much is confided into our discretion, and we have been put there to use it. We always have to compare apples and androids. We’d better be jolly quick too: if there were, say, fifty-five entries and we took a minute on each, we’d be out deliberating for an hour. It’s excruciating, exhilarating work.

In the hall I asked Whitmore how the ConJosé (’02 Worldcon) “Thanks a Mint” party had gone. He said “Better than expected. Actually, with Geri Sullivan in charge, it wasn’t better than expected.” On to “Neglected Authors”, with John Dalmas, Norman Hartman, Rachel Holmen, Ray Vukcevic, Ted Butler to moderate. I keep saying Rafi Zabor, *The Bear Comes Home*, is the best fantasy of 1999. Hartman proposed Willy Ley, particularly *Engineers’ Dreams*

His thoughts being his own, you leave them alone, too.

Roger Zelazny

(1964). When I gave Hermann Hesse, for *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), Widner in the audience held up *YHOS 59*, shucks; Holmen gave Eleanor Cameron and *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet* (1954), but my copy of *Twink 30* was in the Fanzine Lounge. Eric Frank Russell, whose name made the room cry out with joy. Murray Leinster. Dalmas said, “He’s not *lit’ry*.” I said he was craftsmanly. Widner said “Let’s not forget the mighty R.A. Lafferty.”

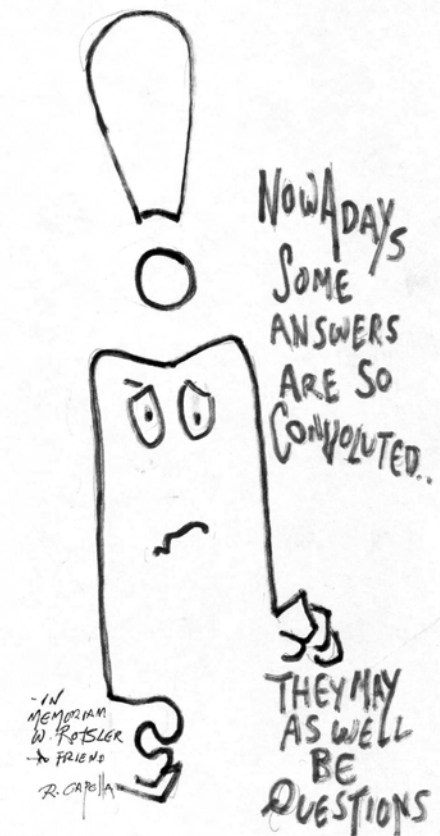
Helping take down the Art Show, I saw Ruth Sachter had successfully bid for Patricia McCracken’s “Snowfall”, under Hiroshige blue a snow creature in *kimono* with coal eyes, a carrot nose. It won Best Humorous. Snellings won Best Surrealism for “Sheep”, and the director’s-choice Best Application of Media for “Limited Edition Carrousel”, with which she has been terrifying people for years. Dinner off-site with Sean Smith. Roche’s League of Evil Geniuses party covered the walls with only a few from the

Sipping their wine in contentment and gossiping with one another in a neighborly way while they waited for the historian.

Mark Twain

gallery Andy Trembley and Roche had made. I proposed Arnold Zeck. Roche said it was harder when graphics-media images weren’t around. I wondered if Zeck had been in the

Nero Wolfe comic strips. From comics, what about Vandal Savage? At the end Saul Jaffe touched me on the shoulder. “Tag: you’re It.” Next morning Widner had grapes rescued from Lin & Rich McAllister’s party. It was time to go.



Glyer’s Extra Words

I’ve written about the wonderful life I have as Sierra’s daddy, and do again later in this issue, but I finally realized it it’s not fatherhood that is handicapping my fanac, but all the writing I do in my new job.

Having your work interfere with fanac is a problem most of you take for granted, so I forgive you for being skeptical when I say this is a brand new problem for *me*. In 1978, I thought up this fanzine, designed its news coverage, named the departments, and chose the artists while I was working full-time in a warehouse in 1978. Taking inventory and packing shipments never interfered with my thoughts about the first issue of *File 770* (hardly a surprise, eh?) Really, the only thing I couldn’t do at the warehouse was type the silly stencils — something I *was* allowed to do in an earlier secretarial job at college: when I was typing fanzines I looked busy, so no one thought about cutting the position from the Dean’s budget.