

John Hertz's Westercon Notebook

Westercon LXI, "Burning Fan," July 3-6, 2008

J.W. Marriott Resort, Las Vegas

Writer Guest of Honor, Kage Baker;
Graphic Artist, Lubov; Fan, Milt Ste-
vens. Attendance 320; Art Show sales
\$4,800 (\$1,300 at auction) by 24 artists.

It was the first Westercon in Nevada. One of our finest fans was Guest of Honor. The town was a palace of fantasy, the luxurious hotel off season was remarkably empty and cheap. I probably could have gotten egg in my beer.

I've read *Last Call*, *The Godfather*, and *Diamonds Are Forever*. I don't remember how long I've known Joyce & Arnie Katz. When Rick Sneary moved to Henderson, it seemed impossible he could live anywhere but South Gate. That proved true. But no omen; James Daugherty our chairman, and his wife Kathryn, thrive. I'd never been to Las Vegas.

Leaving my home airport I saw a Patsy Cox sculpture "Los Angeles County Conglomeration," two five-foot lengths of spheres and trumpet mouths in high-fired clay with engobe. Arriving I found Chris Garcia setting up the Fanzine Lounge, flanked by Leigh Ann Hildebrand and España Sheriff, the San Francisco triptych. I had brought, I thought, something congenial for Hildebrand; wrong again. At such moments the best thing is to go find Registration.

Sue & Steve Francis were home from DUFF, touring the U.S. for balance. Westercon being rare for them, they had readied with Midwestcon; they would go to the Worldcon; Armadillocon for a chaser. The bad news was Bert Carlson, treasurer of the Seattle for 2011 Worldcon bid, killed in a car wreck on her way. Four with her survived. The Seattleers did not need another reason to wear black. But their show went on.

At Opening Ceremonies, Tadao Tomomatsu sang "Secret Agent Man," or possibly "Secret Asian Fan," in the manner of Elvis Presley, and made it rhyme with "Westercon." Baker said she'd just gotten an idea for a story that was due in October, so the con was already productive for her. Lubov said she was glad to be back. Stevens drew cheers.

A Las Vegas resort hotel has a convention hall and a casino. The casino is the center. It really is open all hours. The electronic gambling machines are a wonder; I passed gawk-

I'M NOT A CHEF, BUT I
PLAY ONE ON TV, OUR MAITRE
D IS A ELVIS IMITATOR, AND
OUR WAITERS BELONG TO ACTORS
EQUITY!



ing among ours whenever I could. Restaurants range from cheap to costly. The hotel wants you to feel gratified, wants you to find something to suit your reach; gambling income makes it generous. I ate at Wooloughan's Irish pub. Garcia was moved to

He had the greatest power of
admiration.

C.L. Barber

speak of James Bacon, with whom he was starting a new fanzine *Journey Planet*, from a one-shot at Orbital; Claire Brialey will be along, so it may not be quite like trying to live on a diet of coffee and cola.

This was the debut of a Reno for 2011 Worldcon bid, and of two Westercon bids, Pasadena for 2010 and San Jose for 2011. Reno, possibly encouraged by Bucky the Crab, cartoon mascot of Bucconeer the '98 Worldcon, and conscious of bidding from Portland for a Worldcon Over There, had got Brad Foster to draw as a mascot Rennie the Carpetbag. At the Pasadena party, Sherri Benoun recalled visiting Kyoto, seeing a tour

of U.S. Toyota employees go by, and exclaiming "Oh look, a U.S. tour." Her Japanese relatives asked "How can you tell?" She answered "They're speaking English." In the Hospitality Suite, the tabletop blockpiling game Jenga. Garcia said party reviews in the newsletter had to be in *haiku* form, so I wrote,

Building a tower
Niven and a 12-year-old
Seem to be the best.

On Friday, in the same room, I found Tomomatsu explaining it was the *previous* man who was asked "Why do you shake hands?" Women knitted. In the lobby, Reno chair Patty Wells said "I waited for Portland hotels as long as I could." I caught a glimpse of *Match Game S-F*. Kevin Standlee could indeed call forth the personality of a game-show host. His wife Lisa, busy with tech, denied everything. To the Art Show. Light here is always a problem, hotel "function rooms" being designed to light events very different from ours; this year, alas, we believed the hotel, although we could have brought lighting from Los Angeles, and the room darkled. Theresa Mather went out for flashlights. Art Show chiefs Elizabeth Klein-Lebbink & Jerome Scott made "1 flashlight," "2 flashlights," "3 flashlights" buttons for tour leaders to stick near artwork as awards.

My tour pondered, what is *professional*? what is *well-finished*? how do you tell? The burning question for me is "What do you see?" You can't see a person is expert. You conclude it, perhaps rightly. In s-f art this is acute; rightness is within a framework the artist invents. Lubov had brought originals of several oils. Her "At the Pond" (Program

In poetry those who are skilful can
reveal an emotion in a scene and a
scene in an emotion.

Wang Fu-Chih

Book front cover), a nude woman butterfly-winged, prone on a leaf, had to be magical; a ladybug was half as big as her finger, nor could her musculature move those wings. I gave 1 flashlight to Sheriff's "Haunt," one of

few monochromes, a woman in snow, immobile while her hair and gown blew in the wind, bare-legged; another to Peri Charlifu's "Lost Lenore," the diagonals of her fur collar and face for focus, her pupils fantastically wide.

Sue Francis and Larry Niven came to Regency Dancing. Fuzzy Pink Niven couldn't, so I dined with the Nivens afterward. Matthew Tepper didn't attend the con; who was first to tell him the hotel's master chef was Gustav *Mauler*? We got to the Valencia Ballroom, with a roof view, for the end of Lynn Gold's filk concert, there being a coincidence of her name and her birthday; then Independence Day fireworks. Joni Dashoff said her son Jared, only non-Asian in his high school, surprised its Mah Jongg club. Similarly when the late Gary Louie found Los Angeles fandom he mixed right in. Martinis at 2 a.m. in the Fanzine Lounge After Dark. Hildebrand and Sheriff discussed Harlan Ellison. A television showed the David Lynch *Dune*. I took Sheriff to find Tomomatsu. For the newsletter,

Loscon toga feast
Begs "Eat grapes." I hear Elayne
Say "Must have cow now."

Mary Ellen Daugherty came to the Fanzine Lounge on Saturday, looking for Chairman James. She said "No relation." About her late husband Walt, Westercon's Founding Father, Alan White had built a fine display for the Art Show. Christian McGuire again brought spectacular s-f matte and illustration from Local 790, I.A.T.S.E. (Int'l Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists, and Allied Crafts). Mather on her tour said she liked the vitality of amateur art. To "Keeping an S-F Club Alive," Ed Green, Kevin Standlee, Mike Willmoth. Outreach, certainly; who will do it? From the audience I asked if *Look for young people* was ageist. A man said "Where are the hall costumes?" so I happening to be a hall-costume judge got up, gave Standlee a rosette for his Captain of White Star Federated Spaceways outfit, and sat down.

Programming chief Kathryn Daugherty

scheduled a panel on Core Fandom. But the Katzes didn't attend the con. She made it Mike Glycer, Gold, Kevin Roche, and me. At the '84 Worldcon I had been on "Who You Callin' Fringefan, Fringefan?" Stevens in the audience proposed "residents" and "tourists." Gold knew mass-media fans who considered

Those who have no power to judge
of other times but by their own,
should always doubt their
conclusions.

Johnson

her far from core and cried "Eeuw, you read *books*?" I said, "Our fanzines, filking, Masquerade, have some element of participation, some element of art." An hour later Glycer moderated Stevens, Willmoth, and me on "Fannish Trivia". In this company I was out-classed. I told of Scott Shaw in peanut butter at the '72 Worldcon. Stevens said, "I was Hotel Liaison. He got the peanut butter off in his bathtub. It looked awful. He gave the maid \$20. She said she'd seen worse; what was *that*?"

Woody Bernardi said, "Why don't you call the Katzes? The Vegranats meet at their place tonight. Here's the phone number." I reached Arnie before the Core panel and spoke awhile. But I was a judge in the Masquerade and couldn't abandon one duty for another. We gave Best Master to Anastasia Hunter for "Mortals Enchanted Here," in dark cerulean blue; Best Journeyman to Danae Youngard for "The Scottish Play," wine-red over an aquamarine gown; Best Novice to Jeremy Check for "No-Face," more texture in its black than the version I'd judged at the '07 Worldcon in Japan. Tasha & Chuck Cady won Most Authentic (Journeyman) as "Offering to Tchernebog" from the S.M. Stirling book *Peshawar Lancers*, twilight blue, forest green, and frightening. Afterward Bernardi kindly gave me a ride to the Katzenhaus, dropping off Ron Bushyager who was staying at another hotel.

There were beets and Braunschweiger left, and beer, and Ross Chamberlain who may yet

send art for my fanzine. He and the Katzes and I had all been Westercon Guests of Honor. In Shakespeare "What's in a name?" is Juliet's line when her family is already at feud with the Montagues. I don't think *Core Fandom* was meant as an act of exclusion. It may have been yet more innocent terminology. "We were going to call it *Traditional Fandom*, for a love of tradition," Arnie said. "We kicked it around for months. Show us a better term." But I had not come to quarrel, about that or Webzines either. I loved these fen; the way to get them in my convention was to go to them. We talked of Marshall McLuhan and topology. Teresa Cochran helped.

Cooler in the night,
Who cares how much we agree?
One mountain, one man.

Back to the Marriott. Tom Galloway, Janice & Chip Morningstar pondered debates as part of a con schedule. I thought fans' minds showed better in the more free-form conversation of our usual panels. In the Fanzine Lounge After Dark were layered drinks, blue-raspberry vodka, orangecello. I heard James Joyce and Jackson Pollock were the

Your chief trouble is that you think
you've got a sense of humor. It con-
fuses people.

Max Christy

same person. It was 3 a.m. Andrew Trembley said "I'm going to succeed at sleeping while others fail." At the Xanadu party Lubov said she first read Shakespeare translated by Pasternak, now was trying English. We discussed *To bring home the wealth of the Indies, you must carry the wealth of the Indies with you*. On one tentacle, translating poetry calls for a poet. On another tentacle, by communication one receives what one didn't already have. I said art was partly subjective, partly objective.

Daylight Sunday. Pasadena won unopposed for 2010. Espresso with Sandra Chil-



No! No! *Bad Nameless Space Horror!* No!! Bad!!

dress & James Briggs, to whom SMOF Racing now meant their horse Cara Blanco, a winner on Friday, his silks a propeller beanie in purple, gold, and green, on the sleeves white stars. Bobbi Armbruster and the Wombat took shares. To the post-Masquerade session. "The Scottish Play" sparked discussion of the relative weight of story and costume. We said, do what you deem will be good, find your own focus, think; drama can lose, or come-pose-turn-go win; the judges' task is to rate a strong apple higher than a weak orange. An entrant: how do people learn? The Wombat said, sometimes there are panels at cons; the West Coast has Costume College; local clubs. Masquerade Director Joseph Kerezman said, learn by doing. I said, why wait to be taught?

At Closing Ceremonies, Tomomatsu in the manner of Louis Armstrong sang "And I think to myself —" and we all joined in, "What a wonderful world." Supper with Judy Bemis & Tony Parker, who often have been where I haven't. Bemis is another SMOF Racing partner. Secret Masters Of Fandom, as Bruce Pelz said *a joke-nonjoke-joke*. Also Bernardi had given me *Marquee* 5/6 and *Wood Pulp* 1 with his perspective on Las Vegas fandom around the '87 NASFiC and the '93 Silvercon, which called for their moment. I went to or was gotten by the Garcia gang. Hildebrand noted the smugness of atheists. I said, we theists are partly to blame, we must have been annoying. Geordie Howe earlier with his Canadian perspective had helped me think about reverse snobbery. Dave Clark arrived with a copy of *Pebble in the Sky*. His book business, he said, had been good. Klein-Lebbink said the Art Show, a third the size of Loscon's, had sold half as much.

People drifted in and out of the Dead Dog Party. I found the Fanzine Lounge After Dark watching *anime*. James Daugherty strolled over the grounds with me for an hour or two; cooler in the night. I wanted to know

Dichotomy, a hard word at 3 a.m.

Kipling

and indeed asked him what he'd learned. But as fans will we drifted in and out of topics, talking of acceptance, exclusivity, reason. At one point I said something so unexpected he stopped. That was unexpected for me. I don't think I do it very often, and don't try to. I did it to Harlan Ellison once. In another hour or two my airport bus would come; I didn't care to sleep. I walked through the casino and the empty halls. Sometimes I wrote.
