

# The FIRST Night TIMES



Noreascon 4/Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Thursday, September 2, 2004

*“Not Bad for Our First Time”*

## My First Public Performance of Cigar-Box Faust

“Cigar-Box Faust,” my only performance piece to date and the title work of my collection, *Cigar-Box Faust and Other Miniatures*, was originally written to amuse my wife. It’s a five-minute version of *Faust*, performed by a cigar in the title role, a cigar-cutter as Mephistopheles, and a box of matches as Helen of Troy, an Angel of the Lord, the light of ontology, and the flames of hell. When Marianne came home from work, I sat her down at the kitchen table and said, “Watch.”

But its first public performance was at Noreascon 3. It wasn’t a program item. I just stuck the cigar box with the props in one jacket pocket and a tape recorder with the spoken text in another, figuring an opportunity to show it would arise.

It did. The first evening of the con, I wound up in a wandering group of die-hard revelers. One by one, the parties closed behind us. Until at three a.m. we found ourselves meekly watching James Patrick Kelly release a helium balloon. Not a *special* helium balloon, mind you — just an ordinary party balloon he’d found.

It was obvious to me these people were starved for entertainment. So I led them outside, and set up the theater atop a convenient trash receptacle. I hit the Play button on the recorder.

“Watch,” I said.

*Michael Swanwick*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.



*Welcome to the one-shot fanzine that’s one lasting legacy of Noreascon 4’s magical, manic First Night celebration.*

*We asked you to contribute words or artwork on the theme of your First Time. So many of you replied that we’re lucky to get this zine out by the con’s Last Night ...*

*Thanks for sharing your thoughts on dogs and cats and crabs, sex and stalking, worldcons, more worldcons, and the Wild Leafy Sea Dragon. Hope you had a good Night.*

**The Editors**

## The trouble with first times

is that as I grow older, so they grow fewer and further in between. Been there, done that, and no longer even feel tremendously inclined to wear the t-shirt. And all the other first times, those barely noticed when they happened, are settling into the primordial ooze of memory. If it's true that as we grow older, so long-lost memories will rise again, pin-sharp at last, I'm looking forward, in some ways, to the promised cascade of events relived. Paul Kincaid and I will meet again, and this time we'll know for sure whose memory of our first encounter is correct. We both have clear recollections of the event, but they barely match. We still wonder about it, not that it really matters for I'm right.

But it's not actually the big events I'm after; it's the small ones. I want to remember what it was like at the moment when I first read a whole sentence to myself and understood it. Or wrote down a sentence on my own. Or what about finally learning to ride my bicycle without falling into things (rose bushes, mainly)? The first time I tasted ... oh, cheese, say, or chicken. My first cup of tea. Or the very first book I chose on my own and bought with my own pocket money. Or the very first journey I ever made anywhere on my own. All those unregarded firsts, piling up, waiting to be rediscovered ... something to look forward to.

**Maureen Kincaid Speller**  
60 Bournemouth Road  
Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ  
U.K.

## Worldcons have always been

firsts for me, with the chance to meet and speak to people whose work I have read and admired, but probably the best first was at Philcon 2001, where I got to meet Orson Scott Card. Specially exciting because he wasn't advertised as a participant.

Not only was he a pleasure to listen to, but he took extra time to speak to fans — so much so that the signing had to be extended into a second day to incorporate the fans in the queue who hadn't got to him, because of the time he took to chat to each one.

**JANIS BENVIE**  
Edinburgh, Scotland  
(Born in South Africa)

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### *The FIRST Night TIMES*

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*The FIRST Night TIMES* is published once every, well, make that just once.

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## My First WisCon

One of the first times I attended a con with my current spouse and family was a WisCon, in Madison, Wisconsin. Now I've been attending cons since the 1969 Worldcon, but my girlfriend had not, even though our first date was a science fiction club party. While Helen at least had a few clues about fandom, her 13-year-old daughter had not. At WisCon, Tai thought she could run wild and no one would know who she was.

WRONG! While Helen and Tai were new to fandom, I was not, and most long-time Chicago and Milwaukee fen knew me, and quickly figured out who my new family was. Also, Tai is biracial and there weren't that many African-American fen in 1986.

One of my close fannish friends noticed Tai with a much older guy — late teens. She very carefully mentioned to him how mature Tai was, considering that she was 13 years old. The fellow said "Oh really" and did not immediately vanish, but started relating to Tai as a "younger sister" rather than a potential girlfriend.

**DOUGLAS E DRUMMOND**  
Itasca, Illinois U.S.A.

## This was inspired by

my father, Albert David (Dave) Bates. Born August 12, 1935, he passed away this year on February 27. He did a lot of fannish writing: science fiction, fantasy and folk (filk) music. You name it, he wrote it. He also ran the Blue Star book store. He inspired my sister and me to come to this Worldcon. This is our first convention and we are having a blast — great fun! Thank you very much.

**KYRIE AND SARAH BATES**  
355 Kennedy Drive  
Putnam, Connecticut 06260  
U.S.A.

## My First Worldcon

As one of the oldest third-generation fans around, it was obvious that my first Worldcon was important; not only to me, but to many others. It was St. Louis 1969, the infamous DisasterCon. Not because of the fen who put on the con, but the hotel that was selected. Although the maids were nice enough (including sneaking me back into the room when I was locked out; I wasn't officially in the room!) the bellboys were surly and greedy, and the regular staff were arrogant, inconsiderate, and generally ill-mannered. (Also none too bright, in the case of a desk clerk who tried to deny a room to a fan who was 6' 4", well-muscled, and a lawyer!) I certainly enjoyed being at my first Worldcon — at 12, you don't notice much that doesn't directly concern you. I remember that the con

offered paperbacks at the freebie table: at the end of the con, my father took home a couple of boxes of free books which we sold over the next 6 years. St. Louis was around my sixth con; I thought of myself as a seasoned SF fan. What others thought of me had perhaps best not be mentioned for a family fanzine...

**BRUCE COULSON**  
Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.

## The first sci-fi book

I remember reading was in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I no longer remember the title, but it was about a young man from Mars who took an ancient spaceship to Earth and made friends with a boy there. The problem in the story was that the ancient ships were protected with a moss-like covering, and if it was damaged the ship started to deteriorate. This book started my lifelong enjoyment of reading science fiction, and I'm glad our school library had it.

**JANICE GALECKAS**  
Cicero, Illinois, U.S.A.

## Memories From Noreascon 3, My First Worldcon

One of my memories from my first Worldcon was when my husband and I went to get a bidder number at the art show. One of the staff, possibly one of the Atwoods, said "They're OK." Which meant they knew us and we could get the number without showing ID. It made us feel wonderful.

I also remember accompanying my husband on his photo-taking rounds. We got to go around to various exhibits and not wait in the lines. After the convention, *Locus* asked permission to publish the photo he had taken of Larry Niven. I was extremely proud when I saw his photo in print.

**RACHELLE LERNER**  
Mansfield, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

## On the flight here

from Texas, I looked out the window and saw ... nothing. No land, no roads. Haze, I thought, until I looked down and saw what I finally identified as a boat wake.

Oh. So that's what ocean looks like...

**JOSEPH ABBOTT**  
Waco, Texas, U.S.A.

## Back when I went to

college there was, I heard, a science-fiction club at the school. So I found out when and where it was meeting, and went.

By a strange coincidence, a week before the meeting, I was in a chemistry class and heard a book fall off the chair that the next guy over was using for his books; it turned out to be *The Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge* by Harry Harrison. The reader, Grant McCormick, would stick with me through thick and thicker, but that's another story ...

Grant and I went to the science fiction club meeting. I managed to make an ass of myself by repeating something silly about "John Norman." From there I went to cons, fan writing, and eventually marriage ... All because I wanted something to do on Monday nights at school.

**JOSEPH T MAJOR (ALEXIAD)**  
Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.

## The first time I read a fanzine,

I was 11 or so, and it was a *Star Trek* zine. I don't remember the title, but what I do remember was that the lead story enthralled me until it ended with the equivalent of, "and it was all a dream."

I was furious. *I could write better than that, I was sure.* So I did. I turned out several reams of *ST* fanfic.

Fortunately, I had the precocious good sense not to publish any of it, and all the evidence is long gone. But that terrible story had at least some value, because it started me writing. For the First Time.

**JANICE EISEN**  
Brookfield, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

## The first time I flew

hardly counts, because I was too young to remember it. So I'll write about the first time I remember flying.

I was 17, on my way to Rensselaer for freshman orientation, after going to my first Radio Club convention and visiting relatives (it was also my first trip by myself). I had to fly from Wilkes-Barre to Albany; the airline of choice (well, the only choice) was Altair Airlines. I was surprised by how small the plane was; I was even more surprised by how bumpy the ride was as we threaded our way around thunderheads. And I was very happy when we landed and I'd managed to hold onto my lunch.

After that, orientation was a piece of cake (despite the dire warning to "Look to your left, look to your right, and look at yourself — one of you won't make it"). So was my trip home, which included my first train trip and my first flight on what was rumored to be a *real* airline (Eastern, if you remember them).

Three years later, I discovered fandom. But I've already used up my word allowance for the evening, so that story will have to wait.

**DAVID SINGER**  
Los Gatos, California, U.S.A.

## Hier bin ich also — auf meiner ersten World-Convention!!!

Bei meinem letzten Besuch in den Staaten, vor ziemlich genau 2 Jahren, habe ich von diesem Event gehoert und wusste sofort, dass ich als echter Sci-Fi Fan diese Gelegenheit wahrnehmen musste. Ich habe also sofort ein "Membership" gekauft und, zurueck in Deutschland, meiner Chefin gleich gesagt: "Marianne, mir ist egal, wie das angestellt wird, aber vom 2. bis 6. September 2004 brauche ich Urlaub — ich will auf eine Sci-Fi Welt-Convention gehen !!!" Vielen meiner Kollegen und Freunden musste ich zwar erst noch erklaren, was das ist, aber hier bin ich nun — in einem wuderschoenen Kostuem auf meiner ersten Welt-Convention !!! Jet-Lag, Hunger, und andere Probleme vergessen — dafuer kribbeln die Schmetterlinge im Bauch viel zu sehr...

**MAIKE BEBENSEE**  
Melle, Germany

*(In other words ....)*

## Here I am — attending my first Worldcon!!!

During my last visit in the States, almost exactly 2 years ago, I heard about it and knew right away that, as a true sci-fi fan, I had to attend this event. I immediately bought my membership and, back in Germany, told my boss, Marianne, "I don't care what's happening at the office, I'll need vacation time from the second to the sixth of September 2004 — I want to go to a Worldcon!!!"

I still had to explain to my colleagues and friends what that *was*, but here I am, finally — in a beautiful costume at my first Worldcon!!! Jetlag, hunger and other problems are forgotten — the butterflies in my stomach are going crazy ...

**MAIKE BEBENSEE**  
Melle, Germany

## The first time I read a Star Trek book

was both a good and bad time.

What was good was the book was well written. It was *Dark Victory* by William Shatner (Though probably the collaborators, the Reeve-Stevens, did more.) It had a very good plot, and described Kirk and the surviving crew of the *Enterprise* well.

The bad thing was it had a very good plot.

Let me explain: The plot was so big, the book was the fifth in the series — which I didn't know at the time. Thinking it was a stand-alone, I was horrified to discover Kirk was about to marry someone I hadn't even heard of! (Though not knowing someone rarely stopped the captain from almost marrying in the past.) I didn't know how he had got into that the nasty situation with a crippled ship and his mirror universe counterpart aiming weapons at him in the first place!

Even though I enjoyed the story, I always had the "huh?" feeling. When I found out it was a series a few days after I was finished, I rightly felt stupid for not checking before I read (looking at the book jacket for a "Part 5" symbol). Eventually I read all the books leading up to it, and the ones after it, and enjoyed them all.

*Dark Victory* is a very good book if read fifth, not first.

JEFF SINGER — AGE 14  
Los Gatos, California, U.S.A.

## My First APA

The first APA issue I ever saw was an old issue of *Alarums & Excursions* that a friend of mine had picked up, used. The first APA collation I participated in was *WOOF*, at Bucconeer. I had wandered by, and Robert Sacks dragged me in to work on it. The first APA I actually contributed to was *WOOF* again, the ConJose issue. This had the major advantage of being very informal, and only appearing annually. Now I just need to start up a new one (not really).

DAVID F. SHALLCROSS  
Piscataway, New Jersey, U.S.A.



## My First Con

I saw a presentation on a con at a gathering of junior high students in San Diego, and went up and asked the presenter to tell me more. She said "There's another coming up soon, and we're looking for roomies. Wanna come?"

My mother dropped me off at the El Cortez Hotel on a Friday after school (hardest thing she'd ever done), and I spent the evening in the film room (we didn't have the room until Saturday).

When *Ship of Fools* came on at 6 a.m., I decided it was time for breakfast. I met up with my enabler at the Masquerade, and eventually made my way to our communal room, where I crashed. Thirty-nine hours without sleep, a personal best.

I had a wonderful time, and never looked back. I also never told my mother that there were also (gasp!) *boys* sleeping in that communal room.

VIVIAN CARLSON  
King of Prussia,  
Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

## My First Time Visiting Jackson City Pound in Mississippi

The best word to describe my feelings on my first visit to the pound is "appalled." The place stank, the staff could not have cared less, and the animals were suffering.

My volunteer group has tried to improve the lot of these unfortunate animals, but almost nothing has changed thanks mainly to Jackson City politics and apparent police corruption. We do manage to get many animals out, alter them and find them good homes, with the help of PetSmart.

This is not an uplifting story, but it is the truth.

FIONA LA CROIX  
Jackson, Mississippi, U.S.A.  
(but still a British citizen)

## The first sci-fi book

I remember reading was in third or fourth grade.

I no longer remember the title, but it was about a young man from Mars who took an ancient spaceship to Earth and made friends with a boy there. The problem in the story was that the ancient ships were protected with a moss-like covering and if it was damaged the ship started to deteriorate.

This book started my lifelong enjoyment of reading science fiction, and I'm glad our school library had it.

JANICE GALECKAS  
Cicero, Illinois, U.S.A.

## My First Worldcon

My first Worldcon (which was also my first con of any kind) was Torcon 3, last year in Toronto. From the time I arrived, I was struck by the enormous diversity, of people, places, ideas, and interests — and by the evident good-natured tolerance of it by everyone involved.

I've always been considered an "oddball" by the people around me, even those who care about me. This "stranger in a strange land" feeling is something a lot of fans talk about, and it is wonderful to spend several days in a setting where I, along with everyone else there, can simply accept and be accepted. Within an hour of getting to Torcon, I was wondering why I hadn't gone to a con 20 years ago!

This oddball is definitely happy to have found a home.

**BRIAN KEAVEY**  
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## My first stalker

appeared my freshman year in college. (Well there was that guy in high-school, but I don't think that was full fledged stalking, and he wasn't nearly so interesting.) "Lad" latched on within my first few hours on campus. He had long bushy hair that kind of looked like a mop, which is what it smelled like. This guy seemed to have some sort of biological problem which made him always seem to stink. The smell was intensified by his habit of rolling down the hill to accumulate grass stains on his jeans. More bizarre than his grooming habits were his philosophical beliefs. As he tells it, back in high school, he fell asleep in history class. As he dreamed, Jesus and Lucifer revealed that "Lad" was no mere mortal. In fact, he was on the level of Jesus ... half-man, half-god.

"Lad," like me, was a physics and mathematics double major, so unfortunately we were in many of the same classes. One memorable event occurred during a class in the basement of the science building. Arriving to class one afternoon I opened the door to find the room pitch-black, due to the lights being out and the room having no windows. Logically thinking that I was the first to arrive, I flipped on the lights and walked into the room. Half a second later I realized that I was not the first.

"Lad" was there...sitting in the dark...waiting for me.

**Laura Burns**  
Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.

## My first exposure to fanzines

Many years ago, in my own neofannish forays into Toronto fandom, learning about all the activities available, I found out about apas, and then fanzines. Kinda reverse to what many fans do. When I was in TAPA, our local apa, Marc Ortlieb, our only Australian member, sent me copies of his fanzine, *Q36*. I was pleased to get it, but for the life of me, I didn't know what I was supposed to do with them other than read them. Marc asked for some kind of response, and my response was ... what do I do here?

Mike Wallis, the OE of TAPA, gave me some ideas, as did Mike Glicksohn, when I had the chance to meet him and ask about fanzines. Articles, artwork, letters of comment, my own fanzine ... I had my choice for trade, or *The Usual*.

I still had a lot to learn about zines, I didn't know what to write about, I had no artistic talent. But I was a journalism grad from university, so perhaps this letter of comment thing would be something they might want. If it was part of *The Usual*, perhaps I could give it a try.

My apa experience gave me the idea of mailing comments, but Mr. Glicksohn did tell me my letters of comment would have to be more polished than plain apa mailing comments.

Constructive criticism, combined with encouragement from many faneds, and the relative affordability of writing and mailing letters of comments (even pre-email) has allowed me to enjoy fanzine fandom from the comfort of the local for 22 years.



**LLOYD PENNEY**  
Etobicoke, Canada

## My first SF con

happened by accident. There was a poster to see *Metropolis* at the Minneapolis Public Library. I invited my big brother, from whom I had stolen my first Heinlein books. A friend I met there invited me to drop in at this convention at the Dykman Hotel (I am not sure how to spell it because like most of Minicon's hotels, it was shortly thereafter torn down) but I was too shy to say yes.

A few years later, my friend Melinda Hutson was doing an internship in Washington D.C. (in the summer of 1983), and she called to say, "Why don't you come down and go to the world science fiction convention in Baltimore?" Since Lynn Anderson was looking for someone to drive down with him, I decided to go. We had to pay the outrageous at-the-door rate of \$55! Fortunately, if we would volunteer for 4 hours, we could get housing that evening. Innocents that we were, we tended to go to bed early, so we were two out of the 20 or so who crashed in that room at the Holiday Inn who got a bed.

I ended up ushering for the Hugo Awards, a formative event in my life. Even with first choice of seats, all of us peons without tickets to the Crab Fest had to sit miles away from the stage because they used an enormous amount of space for the big round tables and we could not see anything. (No big monitors then!) I have since been aware space should be arranged for the best use of everyone.

The next spring, I met Eric Heideman at Minicon (1984, "Big Bosoid is Watching") and he invited me to join Second Foundation, a SF discussion group; it was downhill from there. Soon I was on the Minicon committee and running first programming and then the convention. Twice. I've gotten better since.

It was a few years before I got back to a Worldcon (Chicon V), but I have made most of them since and my summer vacations are built around three things: WisCon in Madison, Baggiecon in Winnipeg (really a folk festival, but fannish!) and Worldcon ... Worldcon is an important part of my year and I get my membership every year on Sunday after the vote is counted. It is a great way to see the world and meet lots of new people. I am even signed up to take Japanese starting this coming Wednesday just to be ready for '07!

**POLLY PETERSON**  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.

## My first sexual experience

occurred at this very con.

The troll's big, round, spongy arm muscles and glowing red eyes inspired thoughts of sunset strolls on the beach and shared plates of spaghetti. I swooned, completely overcome by his enormous rock-like physique. And as for him, he was apparently overcome and moved to silence by my biochemist goggles. Trolls are kinky like that.

Hence, I preened. I strutted. Hell, I sashayed. And then I realized he was just a statue standing outside The Mended Drum.

Could I unobtrusively tuck him under my arm for later? Hmmm, too big. Didn't know "too big" was possible! Could I commission a special troll-shaped ... toy? Perhaps. Further reports "coming" soon.

**MELISSA G. KNOLL**  
Azusa, California, U.S.A.

## The adoption of my first pair of cats,

who later came to be named Cassiopeia and Andromeda, was the first really grown-up thing I did after moving into my first apartment. I was nervous enough, taking on what I knew would be a commitment of ten years, minimum, but the animal shelter confronted me, as the final stage of the adoption process, with a contract reminding me of my awesome responsibilities as a pet owner: to spay, to visit the vet, et cetera, et cetera. Here I was, just 21 years old, barely more than a kid, suddenly terrified at what I was taking on. I gulped and signed, of course, already half in love with these two beautiful kittens, and took them home.

A few months ago, I learned of a puss who needed rescuing. He didn't come with a contract, but with 15 years of cat ownership now behind me, I didn't need a piece of paper to tell me what I was in for. I took him home anyway.

**MARYANN JOHANSON**  
FlickFilosopher.com  
The Bronx, New York, U.S.A.



## Boston, 1989.

The *Boston Herald* — then still a semi-reputable newspaper — assigns me a feature story on the upcoming Noreascon 3. I get to interview Hal Clement, whose First Fandom group from Boston are Fan Guests of Honor. I also write up a piece for *Variety* on how all the studios preview their SF films at the con.

Now with my press pass in hand (or, more accurately, around my neck), I attend my very first convention at age 34. I have two immediate reactions: “These people are *crazy!*” and “Where do I sign up?”

I still report on cons on occasion, but now I attend as a fan and a program participant. And I’ve learned to try and anticipate things like the idiot editor who “corrected” my *Herald* story to note that the Writer Guest of Honor was Andrew Norton.

**DANIEL M. KIMMEL**  
Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## My First Worldcon

Tricon, Cleveland, 1966.

The memory fades, but a few things stand out ...

The terrifying overnight drive on the Pennsylvania Turnpike in a car full of fans, only *one* of whom knew how to drive — and that one had been awake all the previous night and was in serious danger of falling asleep at the wheel.

My roommate, Cory Seidman, getting recruited into the cabal that kept delivering jelly beans to Harlan Ellison at odd moments during the convention (in honor of his Hugo-winning story, “Repent, Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman”).

Entering the ballroom one morning to find Harlan and companion enjoying a leisurely catered breakfast at a table in the back of the program room while the fannish crowd swirled around them. It was clear right from the start that Harlan was not your normal average sort of person ...

The site selection, which involved getting everyone together in a big room to hear speeches from the bidders and then vote. Boston in '67 finished last in a field of four, trailing behind New York (the winner), Syracuse, and Baltimore.

The costume ball, which was really a ball, with a small platform to one side to let people show off their costumes.

And a few actors in costume promoting this new science fiction TV show called *Star Trek*.

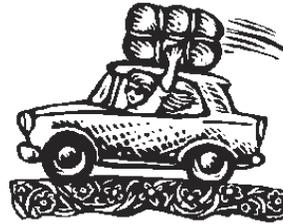
Isaac Asimov, presiding over the Hugo Awards, complaining that he’d never won one, and then getting the

award for Best All-Time Series for the Foundation trilogy.

It seemed like a really big con at the time, so it’s jolting to look it up in the Long List of Worldcons and learn that there were a grand total of 850 people in attendance! My oh my, times have changed.

**LESLIE TUREK**

Watertown, Massachusetts, U.S.A.



## That First Slice

“Your Dad’s bringing something special for dinner.”

“What?”

“A pizza pie!”

It was already an exciting season, that summer in the 1950s we rented a flat on the Jersey Shore, U.S.A. The salt air of Long Beach Island smelled thrillingly like Sea & Ski lotion and the cheap rubber of ill-fitting kiddie diving masks. My parents occasionally timed out the wolverine deathmatch that was their marriage to do nice things for the children. Daily trips to the beach, a towel with a bright blue fish, experimental cuisine.

Of course, paradise was not without perils. Sunburn. Undertows. Watching Great-Uncle Harry suck snot-colored clamsludge straight from the shell. When swimming or diving, the constant threat of impalement by a horseshoe crab — vacation’s version of having a BB gun shoot your eye out. Though let’s admit a young boy feels the stimulating appeal of any such gruesomeness, heedless of real consequence. As a Superboy comics fan, I already knew what “invulnerable” meant, and mostly that’s the way I felt.

This one long day passed in the usual blissful blur of swimming, watching the bubbles tiny sand crabs made as each wave receded, and tormenting my little brother. But eventually our station wagon crunched up the white-shell driveway. My father, arriving with pie for dinner!

Years later I would learn to love pizza more than life itself. (Just ask my doctor.) But at that first nightmare glimpse on the kitchen table, the betrayal seemed monstrous.

They promised *pie*. What was this flat red thing, glittering with grease and burnt to brown blisters at the edges? I fled, yowling disapproval, inconsolable for at least 15 minutes.

It must have been then I first realized that parents are not to be trusted.

**BOB DEVNEY**

North Attleboro  
Massachusetts, U.S.A.

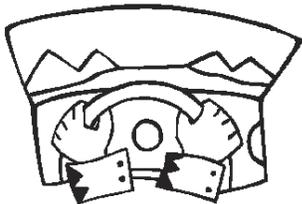
## Last weekend I drove

to a con for the first time. Legally, that is. True enough, this last spring I drove our 1991 Ford Escort, named Boswell, to Madison for Wiscon. Yet I was engaging in procedures relating to gas, brakes, and steering without state sanction. There Martha and I were, tooling down the two-lanes with me at the wheel, the least likely outlaw: who would dream of holiday-weekend, big-city driving without ever having had a license?

This last weekend, though, after decades of being left in the dust, sometimes literally, I drove to and from Diversicon (where, for the first time, I was formal guest of a convention, the sub-guest to exalted guest of honor S.P. Somtow) as a validated creature of the tarmac.

I had a chance to flash my validation, too. A waitress in one of those flossed-teeth restaurants in the Mall of America — where I went for the first time, the convention hotel being just across the street — wanted ID's, since we ordered beer. After learning Martha wasn't carrying one, the waitress relented; and thus I lost my first chance to prove my forty-five years with a DL.

I seem to get carded about once a year. One of these years, though... I do have white hairs, after all, in my mane. Martha expects the driving life will grant me more. Then I will not be carded even that once ... a first time for that, too, eventually.



**MARK RICH**  
P.O. Box 971  
Stevens Point,  
Wisconsin 54481-0971  
U.S.A.

## It was 1972. I was

ten years old, and my dad had just died after a long illness. I was looking for an escape ... any escape ... from the "real world." And I found it in science fiction.

I bought the aptly titled *Where Do We Go From Here?* collection, edited by Isaac Asimov, at one of those book fairs held in the school gymnasium, where piles of "educational" paperbacks are displayed on folding tables around the perimeter of the room. The first story in the volume, "A Martian Odyssey," had me intrigued, and by the time I got to works like "— And He Built a Crooked House —" and "Surface Tension," I was utterly hooked.

Though a tad tattered, I still have the book, and now and again — especially when I'm wondering, "Where do I go from here?" — I pull it off the shelf and read a tale or two.

**JEFF BERKWITS**  
P.O. Box 12202  
La Jolla, CA 92039-2202  
U.S.A.

## If You Are Going to San Francisco

Few cities in the world bring music to mind as readily as San Francisco. Vienna, perhaps, or Liverpool?

**All the leaves are brown, and the sky is grey...** Coming into San Francisco (on my first trip ever to the U.S.A. from Melbourne via LA), I could have been forgiven for thinking that the plane had taken a wrong turn and ended up at Heathrow. The colour of the fog was decidedly London-like ...

**Such a lovely place ...** It doesn't last. Soon you are into the city proper and experiencing a delightful confection of 1930s nostalgia. The restored art deco trolleybuses haunting Market Street are the major culprits. But the crowning glory is the Marriott hotel. Imagine, if you will, a 39-storey skyscraper with a gently cascading summit. Now switch into art deco mode and apply the classic segmented hemisphere style — the sort of thing you see on the front of old radios.

**Down in the crowded bars, out for a good time...** Of course San Francisco is justly famous for its restaurants ... I was sorry to miss out on The Stinking Rose, a garlic lover's restaurant where dishes marked with a V are safe for vampires. But I went to John's Grill, famous from *The Maltese Falcon*, and Max's Diner, a classic American café with a soda fountain and jukebox terminals on every table, and mountainous servings. No wonder so many Americans are horizontally challenged.

**On the San Andreas fault.** In amongst those magnificent, arrogant buildings, it is hard to believe that the whole edifice could come crashing down at any moment. But I've had the good fortune to visit two of the world's most beautiful cities: San Francisco and Sydney. One has earthquakes, the other has poisonous spiders. Give me the earthquakes any day.

**CHERYL MORGAN**  
Sunnyvale, California, U.S.A.





## Greenings Earthers!

We have interrupted the communication from Mr. Devilny and feel honored to particulate.

We are not sure of the significance of this First Knight though. We watched the dvd and it did not seem to help even though we enjoyed the way Sean Connery scowled. We remember our first time with facial expressions.

As a side report, Klaarg, our navigator, wanted to speak of a different first time but you would not like the details of what is an interesting but internally queasy process.

It was the wide diversity of your electronic flailings that first drew our attention to your backwards arm of the galactic spiral. You seemed to be seriously confused. We struggled to discern the meaning behind the many of your messages.

Was the F-Troop symbolic or an indication of a repressed past? Why was the Kangaroo a Captain and was the Bear's dancing significant or simply interpretive? Who was Erica and did her work at a hospital for Generals mean your society was militaristically inclined?

We were dismayed that the first three dozen or so Earthers we probed for information retained memories of numerous contacts with Galactic entities. We moved to study your dvd records and were stunned. After reviewing multiple tenstacles full of these records which chronicled your various encounters with non-human species it

became clear to us that your multiple dysfunctions are due to your frequent contact with what we consider to be the lower form of superior beings.

We have much more to share with you but Mr. Devilny is waving to us and making Altair eyes which we interpret to mean we must end.

**STEVE SAWICKI**

Altamont, New York, U.S.A.

*(Steve's further messages from The Damn Aliens can be found monthly at [www.SFRevu.com](http://www.SFRevu.com))*



## Attending My First Science Fiction Convention

I had never been to New York City before, and growing up in the suburbs of Chicago had not prepared me for what I saw when I turned the corner. Ten thousand people showed up at the door to the Commodore Hotel on Friday, February 16th, 1973 ... lined up in the snow, shivering, patiently waiting. I went to the end of the line — the first line of many — and was immediately engaged in a discussion about quantum physics and warp drive with two fans, one named George Lawrence who would become a lifelong fan friend.

The first place I went after (eventually) registering was the dealer's room, and I found it amazing! I was seeing books and fanzines I had never known existed. I spent my few meager dollars, including my lunch money.

The convention was a kind of Woodstock for Mensa members ... Al Schuster, who fronted the money for the convention, would later publish my first book and a series of my articles; other future friends and colleagues included Devra Langsam, Stuart Hellinger, Elyse Rosenstein, Jeff Maynard, Allan Asherman, Jackie Lichtenberg, and Joan Winston. By attending this first convention, I discovered that I was not alone! Sure, it was great to meet Leonard Nimoy, George Takei, and James Doohan. But even more exciting was meeting Hal Clement, Isaac Asimov, D.C. Fontana, and David Gerrold; they were my idols!

I will never forget the image of Stuart Hellinger skulking around the halls in a Dracula cape or David Gerrold christening a basket of rolls as "bald tribbles" or Jeff Maynard's *Star Trek* "light show." I was completely hooked, and I desperately wanted to be a part of this world.

Thirty-one years has passed since that first convention, and I have been part of science fiction fandom as a fan, dealer, costumer, and writer ever since.

**JOHN L. FLYNN, PH.D.**  
Owings Mills, Maryland, U.S.A.

## Putting Worldcon First

In the fall of 1988, I was a high school senior knowing I wanted to spend a year in Israel between high school and college. I even knew which program I wanted to apply for — Young Judea Year Course, a work/study program for the academic year.

Yet I knew there was something momentous coming. For the first time since I became aware that such a thing existed, Worldcon was going to be in Boston. And I, living only 20 miles north of Boston, was not going to miss it. This would be my first Worldcon, and I had been looking forward to it since it was first announced.

Many of my friends who were also applying to Year Course had a hard decision to make — did they apply for the section that started out the year on kibbutz, so that they could start with a taste of what it was like to live on a communal farm and work the land? Or did they start with the academic program in Jerusalem, learning the history and language of this foreign land in which they found themselves?

I had no such dilemma. The section starting on kibbutz was leaving during the last week of August. The section starting in Jerusalem was leaving in early September. If I were going to be able to attend Noreascon 3, I had to choose the later departure date ...

## It Was Thirty Years Ago Today ...

The first SF convention I ever attended was the 1974 Worldcon, Discon II, in Washington, D.C. I was sixteen years old; my older brother Chip, who introduced me to SF in the first place, went with me. I talked Chip into it because Roger Zelazny, whose work Chip adored, was the Guest of Honor.

From around 1973-1977 I was actively involved — OK, totally immersed — in fanzine fandom. Although my locs and reviews usually argued for SF as Literature and for a, dare I say, mainstream aesthetic, the cold truth was that I was, if perhaps not His Highness, King of the Geeks, then certainly a serious candidate for Mayor of Nerdtown. I was isolated and poorly socialized even by the pliant standards of fandom ...

It is nearly impossible to convey the impact Discon II had on me. I met many of the fans whose words filled my mailbox. I saw and even spoke with Isaac Asimov and Harlan Ellison and Frederik Pohl and, yes, Roger Zelazny, however briefly. I attended the Hugo Awards banquet, when it was still a banquet. My brother and fan friends and I were seated at Table #2. At Table #1 were seated, among others, Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm, and James Gunn. I saw Ellison win the Hugo for "The Deathbird" and saw Hugos presented in absentia to Ursula LeGuin and James Tiptree, Jr. and Arthur C. Clarke.

It's been exactly 30 years. Now I have a wife and a dog and a cat and a small bunch of published stories and a book with my name on it that should be in the dealer's room at this very convention, and none of that is as astonishing as my attending the 1974 Worldcon. (Well, maybe the cat. I've always been more of a dog person.)

**F. BRETT COX**  
Northfield, Vermont, U.S.A.

That Labor Day weekend, I wandered the halls of the convention aware of the fact that I was going from the exotic landscape of the Worldcon to the exotic landscape of the land of Israel. I was going from discussing *Stranger in a Strange Land* to being a stranger in a strange land. But I knew I had a home in both.

**NOMI S. BURSTEIN**  
Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A.





First Convention 1977  
Anne McCaffrey, Guest  
of Honor

Only (neo)fan in the  
room, who had *not*  
read the Dragon  
books yet!

## First Time Fanzine

Having helped bring the Walter Coslet fanzine collection to the UMBC library in 1973 (I was the collection’s founding Curator) I got to put together a display for Discon II — a fanzine display of historically significant fanzines. We had Ray Bradbury’s fanzine, we had *Snide* — Damon Knight’s first fanzine — we had various issues of VAPA, FAPA, and SAPS. I worked for months at it, but something was missing ... a fanzine of our own.

Struggling — there wasn’t much of a history of library fanzines — I came up with the title *SF Bibliodd*.

And knowing that a fanzine needed content I wrote a couple short things about the collection, got the librarian — Tony Raimo — to do an intro ... and found someone to do a great cover.

The cover art was by James Reuter. As far as I know it was his only fanzine art. Against my suggestions, the librarian decided to scotch my idea of printing the zine on a copier or on a mimeo, and tuned it over to an “official printer.”

Alas and alack, the printer took longer than expected (surprise me) and when it was time to leave for Discon what I had in hand was ... barely dry interior pages and a cover still damp, nearly sodden, with black ink.

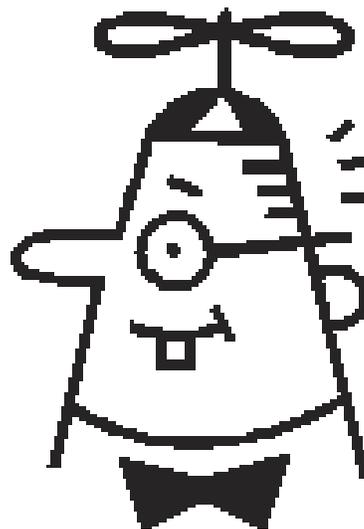
Being both plucky and optimistic, I fled the safe confines of the library and ended up (with the parts but not the whole of *SF Bibliodd*) at Discon, where I spent the first day of the convention getting the fanzine display arranged in the cavernous dealers room, and the first night working (along with fans from the Nelson Bond Society) at collating the first fanzine I’d ever edited. That was, of

course, exactly 30 years ago (Worldcon-time) — 1974.

Here I am, 30 years older and wiser (yeah right), helping get a fanzine together on the first night of Worldcon.

The more things change, the more things echo through fannish halls.

STEVE MILLER  
Unity, Maine, U.S.A.



## My first SF convention

was Boskone VI in 1969. I was dating enchanting Evelyn Chimelis, whom I had met in high school, met again at college, and had introduced to the UMass SF Club just a few months before. I had been a member for maybe two weeks longer than Evelyn had. The two of us were interested in science fiction and heard about this concept of a convention. Neither of us had much money. She stayed at the YWCA near the convention hotel, the Statler-Hilton. I stayed at the YMCA several grubby, pimp-ridden (I found) blocks away and a perilous night walk for a weird-looking nerd with heavy luggage.

That weekend we found to our relief that there was a TANSTAAFL table in the con suite that had crackers, Cheese Whiz, and peanut butter. That's all. I think that most of our eating that weekend was that and purchased raspberry yogurt. Who cared? I think we were engaged in a three-way triangle: Evelyn, me, and these wacky stories we read. That weekend I was reading the novels *Skylark of Space* and *Atta*.

When I was not going to panels, watching SF TV, or buying used SF books at fifteen cents each, I taught origami to children I had found there. Their father was an artist who was a Guest of Honor. Jack Gaughan was his name, and I afterward heard he was a big deal. He later used one of the origami creatures I had invented in one of his illustrations.

**MARK R. LEEPER**  
Matawan, New Jersey, U.S.A.  
mleeper@optonline.net  
www.geocities.com/markleeper/



## The first time I went

to Boston was back in 1962 when I was at UCONN at Storrs, CT. I took the bus up so I could attend the Brandeis Folk Festival featuring Bob Dylan, Jean Ritchie, the Charles River Valley Boys and Jesse Fuller among others. This event was held in a school gymnasium which had been curtained off to half its usual size. Folding chairs were provided, not too comfortable. Probably cost less than \$5 and the hall was only half full. The music was great! Bob "sang" his "Talking Bear Mountain Disaster" song.

After the concert I got to talking with some antiwar leafleteers and also got to meet Bob and say hello as he was leaving. As there was a peace march across the Charles River to Cambridge the next day I left with the peaceniks and stayed overnight in Boston at a crash pad in Boston. There I first witnessed someone rolling and smoking a joint, which I declined to indulge in at that time. I was 19, clean-shaven, not a user of anything stronger than coffee. After the march I hitchhiked back to UCONN, Another First!

**MIKE MCINERNEY**  
83 Shakespeare St.  
Daly City, CA 94014-1053  
U.S.A.

## The Night I First

Full costume regalia I'd don,  
And my phaser and sword I strapped on.  
Terry Pratchett was judged  
(Though we knew it was fudged)  
The night I first came to Worldcon!

Writing panels and games in the hall,  
Then we danced at the Ankh-Morpork ball.  
There was swordplay and filk  
Costumes of fur and silk –  
Yes, Noreascon 4 has it all!

**JANTIQUE FIELDING**  
Red Sox Nation  
Jantique1020@hotmail.com

## February 1979. It was the beginning

of a new semester at the University of Southern California. I was a freshman, and I had just survived my first semester of college. Luckily for me, a few weeks before, I had stumbled across the USC Science Fiction Club, so I didn't feel quite as alone as I as I could have. The environs of the club were familiar ground, the members were (and are) friendly and accepting and intellectually stimulating, just as the members of my high school SF club were.

One fateful day, Jan Bender (or Vicki Smith) asked me if I had ever attended a science fiction convention. No I said, and asked what sorts of things people did there. I don't remember her description, but I gladly went along instead of sitting in my dorm room and studying.

It was a tiny regional convention called Science Fiction Weekend. I was amazed to see so many folks who read the same books and magazines I read, and watched the same films and television I watched, all gathered in the same place.

What sealed the deal, what really made me feel at home, was when I ran across the film room, and saw that they were running old serials. I believe it was *King of the Rocketmen* with Commander Cody.

I was hooked. I was enchanted. I was mesmerized. I was a fan.

**MARLIN MAY**

Lowell, Massachusetts, U.S.A  
Earth, Sol, Orion Arm, Milky Way

## I have a history of winning

literary awards.

In college, an Old English poem I wrote for a class assignment one year won the graduate essay contest. Actually, since a poem is not technically an essay, I had to share the prize with another student who wrote an actual essay.

After graduating, I entered an amateur science fiction short story contest. My entry placed second. Incredibly, the recognition did not immediately lead to a career in professional writing, at least not the one I originally envisioned. I became a technical writer.

What went wrong?

As far back as high school, I dreamed of becoming a professional writer. Unfortunately, my dream consisted more of dreaming than actual writing. I imagined that if only I had 24 straight hours uninterrupted by mundane worries like homework, I could finish that winning novel. What a naïve goof!

Not easily dissuaded by reality, I enrolled in writing courses at college. Years of training in public school prompted me to write only the minimum to get by. In graduate school, I convinced my counselor to allow me to write a novel for my thesis.

But I never followed through. After receiving my

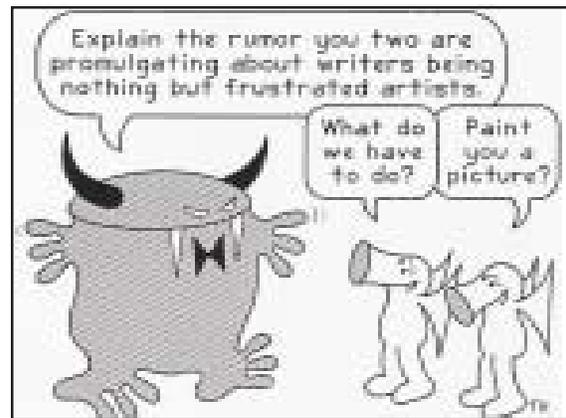
grades, awards, and diplomas, I never went back to rewrite and edit. My thesis languishes in a box in my closet.

Stories lie lost amid assorted papers. I mistakenly viewed first drafts as failed endings rather than good beginnings.

And the rest is history, a history of winning no more literary awards. Yet.

**DAVID THAYER**

12341 Band Box Place  
Dallas, Texas 75244-7001 USA.



## My First Intimation of the True Nature of the Publishing World

## Full-Body Blush

The year: 1980. Boston. Noreascon II.

Across the dealer's room, I spotted R—. As usual, he was wearing a regular shirt and not a character or slogan tee, which made him stand out in that crowd. I hadn't seen him for some months, and hadn't realized that he would be there.

I was young and impetuous then, so I ran up behind him, covered his eyes, turned him around and gave him a passionate "hello" kiss. It lasted a while, and his friends were making comments, but what did I care? (Men with mustaches are the best kissers, don't you think?) The kiss ended, and I said, "Guess who?"

Long pause, while I stared into those familiar blue eyes and realized (despite what I still maintain was a remarkable separated-at-birth resemblance) that it wasn't my friend R—. It was a total stranger.

For the first time in my life, I blushed "right down to my toes," just like it says in all the novels, and blurted, "I'm sorry, I thought you were R—!"

He looked me up and down with a huge smile on his face (OK, I admit my dress was a little low-cut; in fact, I think it was referred to as a wench-clencher in those days) and said, "No, but I really wish I was." I mumbled an apology and slunk away.

I'm happily married now, to another R—, but I just wanted to say to (Donald, I think his name tag read), I still blush all over when I think of you.

**DARCY CAMPION DEVNEY**  
Arlington, Massachusetts, U.S.A.



## The first time I saw

a Wild Leafy Sea Dragon was at the Boston Aquarium. I was there with my son, who was in his first year of college at Tufts. Although we went to the aquarium to see the Baby Blue Penguins, we spent the longest time watching the Sea Dragon floating idly in its tank.

As I told my son, staring into its luminescent gold eyes, catching the small flutterings of its purple and green excrescences, seeing it rise, and fall slowly and rise again was better than most of the drugs of the Seventies.

When I got home, nobody believed it actually existed. The — um — wild leafy — um — right. Sure. This from the woman who created *Prison Planetoid Three*, wrote *A Lunatic Fear* (ahem — just out through Wildside Press).

Okay. Let it ride. Fast forward a few years, and I was invited to attend Balticon as a participant — for the first time. The hotel for the Convention was not far from Baltimore Harbor, and I learned that there was an aquarium at the harbor, with a Seahorse exhibit. Aha, I thought. They might have a Wild Leafy Sea Dragon. I'll go, and get pictures this time. So I made my way down to the harbor. It was crowded with people in orange and gold robes, handing out flowers and brochures to tourists. I saw a great arching sign that said "DEATH AND YOUR BODY."

I would've been worried, but I found out that the harbor was hosting the Annual Hare Krishna festival that day. Lovely. Like the Wild Leafy Sea Dragon, I floated idly about, listened to the drumming, got pretty flowers from pretty people, eventually following the signs for the FREE VEGETARIAN FEAST.

And there, standing in line for their portion of peas and rice, were half a dozen Klingons, in full warrior dress. One of them squatted down and handed his weapon to a diminutive Krishna girl. Her little bracelets jangled as she hefted it up and smiled. He patted her head.

Only at a Convention, I thought. The lion frolicking with the lamb. The Klingon and the Child caught in profound cultural exchange. Definitely a first and a peak experience. And I was so surprised, I didn't think to get a picture.

But I did get pictures of the Wild Leafy Sea Dragon. They had three at the aquarium.

It was a good day.

**BARBARA CHEPAITIS**  
Altamont, New York, U.S.A.

## In the spring of 1963, I was a senior

at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and had been a fan since at least the fifth grade. I was writing reviews for Paul Williams' fanzine *Within*, and otherwise spending as much time living the life of a lordly senior (while trying to get the grades to get into grad school). One of my fraternity brothers, Paul Crissey, was on the Williams Lecture committee, and asked me to recommend a speaker who might be popular with the college community. And so it was that I recommended Isaac Asimov, who was hired for his first non-SF public speaking gig, on the topic of Translating Science into English. I did this because I wanted to meet one of my SF heroes. And it worked.

A month or two later, I was invited to the faculty club (which I had not in my previous college career entered) for a wine and cheese reception prior to the lecture to meet Isaac Asimov. Because of a rotten schedule conflict, I would be unable to attend the lecture later. And so I did indeed meet Isaac. I was impressed by his casual professorial ease, until he began to giggle. He had been handed a glass of white wine, and because he was nervous, drank it down.

But Isaac didn't drink, and so it made him a bit tipsy — only for a short while — and I stayed and talked while he calmed down. Everyone wanted to meet him, including a number of Williams faculty members who certainly made me nervous.

Later, after missing the lecture, I was able to impress several girls at Bennington College, where I ended up later that evening as a guy who just met Isaac Asimov.

Strange, but true.

**DAVID G. HARTWELL**  
Pleasantville, New York, U.S.A.

## Why *Sleight of Hand* #3 Is So Late Or ... Excuses, Excuses, Excuses

Truth to tell, *Sleight of Hand* #3 has been something of my own private set of chains, much like poor Marley of *Xmas Carol* fame. It's never far from my mind as something I want to put together and publish, but at the same time it's not the only chain weighing me down. These days I'm running a fairly successful little freelance typesetting enterprise. The money is pretty good, and pays for all sorts of extras my girl and I would otherwise have to forego. Most of my freelancing is for a company called Bearmanor Media which puts out books on Old-Time Radio and Hollywood nostalgia. It's been fun work putting out books on Paul Frees, Daws Butler, June Foray, Albert Salmi, Walter Tetley, and Spike Jones.

Unfortunately it's eaten into the time I would have put into fanzine production.

Now I can hear you saying to yourself, "*Bullshit, John. How much time can it take? You're just making excuses!*"

So true, hence the title of this piece. I've also gotten myself involved in a very committed relationship with a lovely young woman whom readers of my webjournal know as Pretty Maggie ... Domestic bliss distracts one a lot from fanediting.

Yeah, yeah. Domestic bliss — got it. Is that enough reason to be a year late in publishing #3?

Did I get a little discouraged when I realized fan editing took work? Did I get a little discouraged when I realized that soliciting articles was easier than getting the actual finished articles in hand?

More excuses, John. It won't work.

So right. Did I mention the cost of...

*John, we're not buying any more excuses. Are you, or are you not going to put out a third edition of Sleight of Hand?*

...when you consider paper versus electronic publishing...

John...

...or fanart versus clipart, and two columns of text?

Or one? Which is...

John!

Wha ...? Yes?

So how about it?

Oh very well. No more excuses. Yes, I am looking to get another issue of *Sleight of Hand* out sometime around the New Year. Happy?

Which *new year*?

Harumph! Articles, letters, fanart, and so forth can be sent to John Teehan at [jdteeahan@sff.net](mailto:jdteeahan@sff.net) or to 31 Doyle Ave., Providence, Rhode Island 02906 U.S.A.

I'll believe it when I see it.

Able was I ere I saw Elba ... We gladly feast on those who would consume us.

**JOHN TEEHAN**  
Providence,  
Rhode Island, U.S.A.



## Boston: A Belated Memoir

[The writer recalls a 1987 trip to the Boston area.]

My then-girlfriend, now-wife Elaine's home town, Lexington, Kentucky, was named by a group of hunters who were on the spot in 1775 when they heard the news of the battle of Lexington. I was born on the anniversary of the battle and take great joy that in Massachusetts, at least, my birthday is a holiday.

As we began our drive out, a flurry of snow began to fall, getting heavier the further we got from Boston. By the time we reached Lexington, it was more than just a flurry and it was making driving slow and the roads slippery ... We stopped in Lexington and wandered around the green where the battle had been fought. We took the obligatory photos in front of the statue of the Minuteman ...

[Then] we drove out to Concord, where we stopped for ice cream at a small ice cream parlor near Orchard House, the home of Louisa May Alcott. I attempted to order a milk shake and was confused when the soda jerk asked if I wanted ice cream in it. To me, "milk shake" implies ice cream. He explained that what I wanted was a frappe, a Boston tradition. A milk shake would just be a flavored milk. As far as I can tell, the only thing about a frappe that is a Boston tradition is that they felt the need to rename something that the rest of the English-speaking world calls a milkshake ...

After fortifying ourselves at the ice cream parlor (we have a tradition of ice cream eating in cold weather — I maintain that the ice cream lowers your internal body temperature and therefore makes you feel the cold less. Elaine claims I'm full of it. As long as it's peppermint ice cream I'm full of, I don't have a problem with that), we headed out to Concord Bridge.

... With our second trip mostly on Cape Cod, this is really my first time back to Boston since then, but with the convention, I don't expect to see much of the city. We'll be back, though, kids with us, to explore more of Boston's history.

**STEVEN H. SILVER**  
Deerfield, Illinois  
U.S.A.

## My First Time (or Rather, Newsweek)

The April 2, 1990 issue of *Newsweek* had my first (and only) letter to the editor in any news magazine. That was not noteworthy in itself. I've had lots of letters published in newspapers and magazines, including many in the *New York Times*.

I've also had two letters in the (London) *Times Literary Supplement*. I don't read the TLS but we get it at work and a cover blurb caught my eye. I sent a letter answering a statement by death philosopher Peter Singer quoted in a review of a pro-abortion book he wrote. Singer replied and I answered him as well. A friend at work who

reads the *TLS* was impressed, saying it is difficult to get even one letter published there and that my letters had "the right snippy tone for the *TLS*."

The *Newsweek* letter is memorable because a woman I had dated in the early sixties saw it and wrote asking if I were the same Marty Helgesen she had worked with back then. (She later said she worded it that way in case I had a jealous wife.)

Although I am unmarried and she is a widow we did not get back together romantically, but we are friends and correspondents, from which much good has come, including me getting my *first* computer. In drafting my reply I said that although I ran a turnkey minicomputer system at work, I didn't have my own PC because I had no place to put it. While thinking anew about the situation, I thought of a place — and got one.

The impact of that on the world is incalculable.

**MARTY HELGESEN**  
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Malverne, New York 11565-1406  
U.S.A.  
mnhcc@cunyvm.cuny.edu



## The Tale of the Student

It is possible I already had some presentiment of my future. The first time I went to a careers fair was in 1989, when I was two years off leaving my school in suburban South London. The careers department put on an annual event which they called the “Careers Conversazione”, because it was that kind of place. The seating was stripped out of the main hall, and replaced with about 150 tables arranged in a neat grid. Behind each of these was a representative from a given profession. We were supposed to go round and talk to them, and so come to more informed career decisions.

Looking down the list of professions a week or two beforehand, I saw there was someone down to talk about “writing/journalism”. I asked my teacher about him.

“Oh yes,” she said, “we’re lucky to have him along. He’s very nice. He used to be at school here about ten years ago, and he’s become a freelance journalist. He’s published a few books, one about Douglas Adams I think.”

I very much wanted to talk to this person and ask questions I’d half-articulated like: How do you become a writer? How do you know if you’re any good at it? Can you make a living at it? But other people had the same idea, and his table was surrounded all night. I could only glimpse him through the scrum. A black leather jacket, maybe, and tousled black hair. So I spent my evening trudging through Civil Service, Law, Banking, feeling as I answered their questions and took their leaflets as if I’d missed out somehow. The next day, I explained something of this to the same teacher.

“I wouldn’t worry,” she said, “he’s starting to write comics now.”

I went to university and then got a job in publishing, where I’ve worked ever since. About five years ago, something began to twitch in my backbrain, and I began writing about SF and fantasy. I was lucky enough to find that people wanted to publish what I wrote. This has gone on, and I now have more things I want to write than I have time. I believe the man in the leather jacket has also continued writing. I have not seen him again.

**GRAHAM SLEIGHT**  
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## My First Fanzine Article

My older brother Jonathan was in his first year at Columbia College, and naturally he had gotten involved with their Science Fiction Society. Since they were local, I managed to get involved too. In the spring of that year, Jonathan decided to take over the duties of editing their fanzine, a position that had previously been held by E. Warwick Daw. Sadly Jonathan ended up editing only one issue. But since he was involved, I was involved.

So in *CUSFuSSing* #45, dated Wednesday, April 24, 1985, I had two articles. The second article, a review of the “Rendezvous With Rama” computer game by Telarium, Inc., appeared on page 5. But my very first piece of fanzine writing, which appeared on page 1, was the following:

Ionic Column:

### Warp and Weave

by Michael A. Burstein

*He had finally done it.*

*“With this machine, I can rule the universe!  
I can bend reality, twist time, create, destroy!”*

*“To demonstrate my powers, watch as I pull  
this lever.” He pointed as all Earth stared,  
panic-stricken, at the image invading their TV  
sets.*

*“When I pull it, mountains will fall, world  
leaders will die, plagues will rage! And this will  
continue until I am proclaimed Ruler of the  
World!”*

*Slathering, he pulled down the lever, as eight  
point four billion eyes watched.*

*And, with the pull of the lever, E. Warwick  
Daw became Jonathan L. Burstein.*

So there you have it. My first contribution as a fanzine writer, reprinted here for the first time, nineteen years later.

**MICHAEL A. BURSTEIN**  
Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## Not Quite a First

I am an unusual person; as are many fans. One odd habit I’ve had is to retain old boyfriends as friends. Over the years, like many friends, most of them have drifted away, with one exception: Michael Devney.

If that surname sounds familiar, it’s because you’ve either looked at the masthead or seen a Hugo ballot sometime this decade. Michael is the younger, and some claim funnier, brother of Bob Devney. I dated Michael briefly, half a lifetime ago in college.

After we broke up, I had the odd habit of introducing my new boyfriends to him. Not out of sadism, but because Michael is a keen judge of character. Mind you, I didn’t often listen to his advice (to my dismay), but I was

at least forewarned. So when I met this new guy at Noreascon Three (see the *Noreascon 3 Memory Book*), after about two weeks I decided it could become serious. I set up a dinner with Michael.

"Mark, this is Michael Devney. Mike, this is Mark Hertel." I introduced them with my best Julie-the-Cruise-Director voice.

"You look familiar," mused one.

"Well, you were both at Noreascon, but so were about six thousand other people," I interjected.

The men compared notes. They found out they'd both lived in Foxborough, Massachusetts, although the Devneys left before the Hertels came to town. The dinner conversation went on pleasantly, when suddenly, revelation struck.

"You were that guy in the Masquerade line!" Mark exclaimed. "I remember you. Your brother wouldn't let me talk to you."

I couldn't believe it. "What, you *have* met before?" What were the chances? My cruise directorship was sinking.

"Yeah, I struck up a conversation with him in the Masquerade line, and —"

"Bob wouldn't let me talk to him. I remember." Michael grinned. "He said, 'Don't talk to strangers.'"

In the end, Michael approved of Mark, and I subsequently married him (now almost 13 years). Good thing I hadn't asked Bob—I'd *still* be single.

**LISA HERTEL**

Andover, Massachusetts  
U.S.A.

## My First Time Abducted By Aliens

'Twas a dark and stormy night, or at least I think it was. After eight double brandies things get a little foggy. So dark, stormy *and* foggy I guess. When dawn broke the next day I was left alone and naked with one unanswerable question: just what the hell is it with aliens and anal probes anyway?

Maybe that's where they think our brains are, but I just don't know.

Other questions stayed with me too of course. Why are aliens always blue, green or purple — and short? Why are their UFOs full of colored flashing lights, and big bay windows? Why does their speech always sound like the groans from some dubbed foreign porno movie? And why the hell are they so obsessed with kinky sex with inferior life forms? Is this the alien equivalent of bestiality?

Unfortunately they only ever pick on drunks and people in remote places, so nobody ever believes us. Thank goodness this esteemed publication is taking this question seriously and exposing these rotten extraterrestrial perverts once and for all.

So my friends, please follow my advice. If you're too pissed to find the bathroom at your favorite pub, don't

go wandering outside into dark alleyways looking to add to the odors. That's where they lurk, in the shadows, maybe with breathalyzers. Instead, ask for directions to the bathroom. And for you stubborn men, for whom asking for directions is against your religion, well pucker up and say hello to krEnuZiftWort for me.

**GRANT KRUGER**

Jackson, Mississippi, U.S.A.

(Originally from Johannesburg, South Africa)

## My First Garden Gnome

My first garden gnome has an e-mail address, and a web page, too. That's hardly what one would expect of a hunk of concrete cast into the shape of a gnome astride a frog. Not that I'd expect a gnome to be riding Western on a frog, either, for that matter, but I'm new to gnomish habits. Still, I think having an e-mail address and web page are two of the many signs that Hugo is not your typical garden gnome ... or mine, either, even if he *is* my first gnome, and my only one at that.

Hugo is here at N4, along with Astra, another gnome (who is not mine). If you see him wandering about the convention and have access to e-mail, please drop a quick note to [wheres-hugo@noreascon.org](mailto:wheres-hugo@noreascon.org) and let us know what he's up to. If you want to invite him to a party, or to the Mended Drum for a pint and perhaps even one of those literary bheers, you can do that, too. We'll do our best to see that he gets the message, even if his frog is so busy hopping around the convention that Hugo neglects to check his e-mail on a regular basis. It is, after all, his first Worldcon.

He was so eager for the experience, he headed to the convention two days before I did. And that only three days after I found my first garden gnome. Surely his is a fannish destiny....

For more information about Hugo's doings and whereabouts, please visit <http://www.noreascon.org/gnome/> With luck, you'll be able to visit him at Toad Woods after the convention. And me, too.



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## Love at First Bounce!

So pretend you're in a space station. A very *small* station, with eight or ten space cadets who obviously have no idea of manoeuvring in free-fall. So **\*bang\*** you struggle upright, only **\*crash\*** to be walloped by an idiot **\*smash\*** flying across and **\*oof!\*** sitting on your head.

I love it!

Not exactly NASA training for the Shuttle, maybe, but if you can't pass their physical the Bouncy Castle is the next best thing.

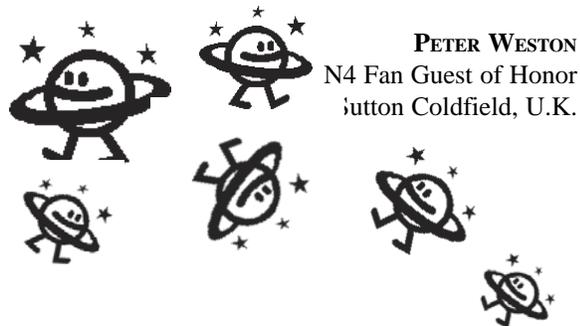
My First Time was at the 1990 Dutch worldcon, when we stumbled out the back of the Convention Centre at 3.00 a.m. after the parties broke up. Slightly the worst for wear, we looked doubtfully at this great wobbling edifice in the car park, but were persuaded by kindly Kees van Toorn to give it a try.

First we had to divest our spectacles, watches, shoes, pointy ears, zap guns and carrier-bags full of cruddy science fiction paperbacks. Then we scrambled on board, only to discover something all four-year olds appreciate: once on a Bouncy Castle you're lost. You can't stand, you can't walk, you can't do anything because the damn stupid thing is rolling and shifting **\*crash\*** and no matter how carefully **\*biff\*** you try to navigate, some great heavyweight like Martin Hoare or Dermot Dobson will rebound **\*splat\*** into you, knocking you and six others into the opposite corner!

Martin's wife Jean, gracious in a ball gown, took off her high heels and dived on, to be thrown into the air with squeals of joy. Several fans found the exhilaration reacted badly with the beer they drunk and staggered off, looking green. One fan reported breathlessly that, "It's more fun than sex," which makes you wonder about his love-life!

The Bouncy Castle was a great innovation, which reappeared at the 1995 Intersection, where your GoH Jack Speer demonstrated his advanced falling-over techniques. Some of you — if you're fast — can perform on this year's Bouncy Castle, kindly provided by the Arisia people *for the first night* of Noreascon only.

Bob Devney and I will look forward to hearing about your experiences; our Future in Space may depend upon it!



## I was thirteen,

and my parents took me to New York for a *Star Trek* convention, one of the ones described in *Star Trek Lives!*, all fan-run. I was very wide-eyed, and determined to make my whole \$50 go as far as possible in the dealers' room. My folks provided light chaperonage — we'll meet you here at 6:00 for dinner, you're expected back in the room at 10:00 etc. They trusted me not to leave the hotel, and not to get into trouble.

I got caught up in the *Star Trek*/Gilbert & Sullivan parody skit, and the enthusiastic filk. They got the whole ballroom full of fans singing along, all together. This was in the days when the entire con fit in the ballroom together, to see Gene Roddenberry speak. The guests were Roddenberry, his wife Majel Barrett, and Nichelle Nichols.

My favorite souvenir from that con was the first fanzine I ever bought. I read it all in the back seat of the car on the way home, and several more times soon thereafter, then put it away. Recently I took it out, and took it to MIT. Peter David was very taken aback to be presented with his 25-year-old zine in the autograph line, and had to show it off to everyone in earshot.

JANE WAKS

Waltham, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## We have no printer

and I must scream... no wait, what's this under the table... let's plug it in and find out what it does. Presto!

Once upon a time in a room very nearby, some fen who have produced lavish extravaganzas in spontaneous sessions ... they laughed at us ...

This is the real thing though, too, and it's bringing in new blood. People are asking what this is. Why, it's going to be a fanzine!

SARAH PRINCE

Keene Valley, New York, U.S.A

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## Firsts ... Hum, Let Me See

My first convention was MidAmericon in 1976. My first short story, "Kayli's Fire," was sold in 1988 to Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Sword & Sorceress IV*.

I've been going to conventions since 1976 and have gone to lots. But Noreascon IV has several firsts for me:

- 1) I've never been to Boston before
- 2) I've never been so far off land on a boat that I (almost) couldn't see the land — I went whale watching.
- 3) I've never worn a costume to a Worldcon, but I am here. It's an old familiar one, my Renaissance Faire one, but it's here.

And it's first night, we're here, it's fun and I think it's going to be a great weekend.

**PAULA HELM MURRAY**  
Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A.  
dragonet@kc.rr.com

## The first time I met

my husband was at the Chicago Worldcon in 2000.

I wasn't planning to go to the Worldcon that year, but my friend Janet promised to introduce me to an interesting and cute guy, and my other friend Pat said she'd put me up in her suite. So even though it was 2 weeks after camping out at Pennsic for 1 ½ weeks, I agreed to go.

A year and a half later we were married, and though I wasn't a regular con-goer except for Boston-area cons, we now alternate attending Pennsic and the Worldcon. I'm happy that it brings me back this year to Boston, my former home city, so I can see all my friends and also belly-dance for First Night!

**KATE WATEROUS**  
Seattle, Washington, U.S.A

## The first horse

I fell for in a big way was not famous. Her preferred speed was a slow plod as she circled my grandfather's house on his farm. I named her Fair Lady after a horse in a C.W. Anderson book titled *Afraid To Ride*.

She was special to me because she was the first horse I ever rode. She was a deep rich chestnut with a golden mane and tail.

At one point my grandfather decided he wanted a foal from her and sent her to a local stallion. I eagerly made up lists of possible names for the foal. I can still remember how much it hurt when the foal was born dead. I felt empty for days, but I never stopped loving Fair Lady. My grandfather sold her after she bucked a neighbor off because he did not want her bucking us off.

He replaced her with a younger gray mare who was more exciting to ride but never took Fair Lady's place in my heart. I liked her a great deal but I had learned with Fair Lady that an animal could be sold no matter how I felt.

**LISA MAJOR**  
Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A



## Memory: deep, lasting,

indelible? However did that happen? Was making the memory, a long-lasting memory, the first, or was the realization that it had been done the first? A world of firsts, which was the first first.

A "gentleman" convinced a lady to wear a costume to a Boskone, lo these many long and thinner years ago. Fuzzy, fluffy, revealing, cool — that would be cold to you sir, in more ways than one... Who knew it would all make such an impression? Or that that impression would become a lasting memory, held fondly by its owner — for the next two and a half decades.

Yes, which was first — the request, the costume, the indelible memories set, the realization that one is remembered? O could it be that the real first was realizing how wonderful it is to be remembered so fondly for so long?

**CASSANDRA BOELL**  
Bolton, Massachusetts, U.S.A

## The frozen rain drips

from the tree in large drops, sliding down the back of my bodice. I will be sick for a week with the cold I get tonight. I'm crouching under a bush, holding a giant foam hammer and several pouches, and I shudder at the sound of the people cursing as they search for me in the dark. I've never seen this forest in daylight; I have no idea where I am. My legs are cramping, I'm soaked and sore and sick and I still can't breathe (women's medieval clothing is not designed for theft). But *at the very same time* I have the strangest sensation of finding a place where I belong. Not under the bush, but in this world of fantasy and invention, where I can be who I want and live another life, where my actions have consequences one weekend a month.

The rest of the weekend I ran about as an NPC. I met wonderful people; they are still some of the most creative role players I have found. I saw the beautiful things they created for this game they loved. And they welcomed me, their love and commitment rubbing off. But what I remember from my first time is not the combat, not the role play, but the rush of living as someone else, crouched under a bush in the pouring rain. There, in the dark, I became a NEROTic without even knowing the word.

**BETHANY ANDRES-BECK**  
Northampton, Massachusetts, U.S.A.  
www.nerohq.com

## “Well,” the guy sitting

across from me said. He had the miserable, trapped look of someone who was desperately trying to find something nice to say. “I like how uniform all your sentences are.”

Writing class. Third year university. He wrote long vignettes that always used “you” instead of “I,” or “he” or any of the usual points of view, and had sex in them and other things that astounded and terrified me. I knew I didn’t have any kind of chance with him — he was beautiful and obviously tortured and had a girlfriend anyway — but I’d at least been hoping to impress him by writing something cool.

It was the first time I’d ever been damned with faint praise. It wasn’t the last, but it was the most awful, the time I’ve never forgotten. And the worst part was that he was trying so hard, too — to go easy on me; to say something positive.

I still have that piece of writing, somewhere. The sentences are surprisingly uniform. I just wish I could remember that young man’s name.

**LEAH SILVERMAN**  
Toronto, Canada  
(Now living in Texas, U.S.A.)

## My first true love

affair came on me late in life on my first trip to Europe. I never expected it. I never wanted it. I thought it would be a summer fling. Instead, it has become a permanent impression on my heart, a haunting memory that comes over me at unexpected moments. I fell heavy, and I fell forever. I cannot move on and I cannot forget. The look of sunlight on stone, certain strains of music, the smell of faded summer roses can overwhelm me with remembered passion and bring me to tears of both joy and longing.

What I wouldn’t give to see the face of my beloved again, to linger and gaze upon it with all the time in the world. O Passion. O Amore. O ... Oxford.

Yes, my love affair was with the city of Oxford, England, where I spent a summer studying acting with the Royal Shakespeare Company. How can one feel homesick for a place you had never been? But I fell madly in love the moment I saw the sunlight on the stones of the old colleges that lined the Broad and I spent the summer memorizing its every facet, every feature, every stone and street and alleyway. I left it reluctantly, unhappily and vowing to return.

I haven’t made it yet. And each day, I know others fall in love as I did. It doesn’t matter. Oxford deserves it. And will wait until I can walk the cobbled and haunted streets again.

**B. LYNCH BLACK**  
the bronx, new york, U.S.A.

## This is my first Worldcon.

That I remember.

My mother says I have been to both an ’81 and an ’84 Worldcon, but I don’t remember them, since I was under five years old for each. Anyway, this is my first Worldcon that I remember, and so far it is quite fun.

Today, Thursday, is First Night, and I have never done a First Night before, as I have never been to a Worldcon (that I remember) before. The midway with all these games is quite fun, and I am enjoying my time here, playing games that are keeping me from getting on to a party upstairs. Eventually I will be there, but what the hey, getting tickets to get masks is silly fun that I must partake in.

**STEPHANIE CASS**  
Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.



## Worldcons have always been

firsts for me, with the chance to meet and speak to people whose work I have read and admired, but probably the best first was at Philcon 2001, where I got to meet Orson Scott Card. Specially exciting because he wasn’t advertised as a participant.

Not only was he a pleasure to listen to, but he took extra time to speak to fans — so much so that the signing had to be extended into a second day to incorporate the fans in the queue who hadn’t got to him, because of the time he took to chat to each one.

**JANIS BENVIE**  
Edinburgh, Scotland  
(Born in South Africa)

## The Taff Trip Ting

So far the most amazing aspect of my trip, my first trip to an American Worldcon, has been the warm welcome and friendly disposition of all American fans that I have come into contact with.

I immediately volunteered, sure that's the best way to meet people, I reckoned, and it was. The spirit in the loading dock was amazing. Geff and Angela were run off their feet, but we lugged boxes and carted carts, and laughed as we went. Of course it was nothing compared to the guys in Children's Services, Inger Persis and Sandra run a great ship and they kick ass. Over one hundred and forty programme items cannot be scoffed at, and the kids seem to like the accent!

It's brilliant, it's great and I really am enjoying it, and they have cider and chicks too.

**JAMES BACON**  
Taff Delegate  
211 Blackhorse Avenue  
Dublin 7, Ireland  
[www.lostcarpark.com/taff](http://www.lostcarpark.com/taff)



## The sweat ran from

my fevered brow as the first feature at the Do Drive-In faded from the screen. Coming up, *The Boston Strangler*.

I laughed, breathlessly. What better way to celebrate my first —

What am I saying?

I've done many convention one-shots in my thirty-five years as a fanziner, but this, right here, is my first Worldcon one-shot. Noreascon 4's First Night is well underway about this table, behind which fans queue to contribute tales of their first whatever's. What, besides the salacious tale above, could I contribute? I am, by name, a third, not given to firsts — and what firsts there have been have been of questionable worth. When I first kissed a girl, I hit her nose. The first time I tried a case, the jury convicted the guy in thirty minutes.

But my firsts in fandom have been wondrous. No less noble a soul than Poul Anderson invited me to my first fan club meeting. While my first fanzine wasn't worth the match it'd take to burn it, my latest is the program/souvenir book at this very Worldcon. (Been getting some spiffy compliments — which I've diverted to Geri Sullivan, who designed the book, and la belle Rose-Marie, who copyedited the text.) My first convention was the Worldcon, 35 years ago, and it must have taken. I met Rosy at my second Worldcon. And we are here, at my ... uhh ... sixteenth.

Every day is a first, of course, and this spirited and crazy First Night is no time to compose portentous philosophy. It is rather a time to toss beads and toast TAFF (and DUFF, of course) and let the good times roll!

**GUY LILLIAN III**  
New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A.  
[www.challzine.net](http://www.challzine.net)

## Guest from the Future

One of my friends claims that he remembers watching his first science fiction movie — *Star Wars* — when he was three. My first experience with science fiction was also a movie: *Guest from the Future*, a children’s series produced in the former Soviet Union.

I watched the movie in awe. In awe of the flat stationary buses with numbers painted on the sides, which could take you absolutely anywhere: door #1 took you to the amusement park, door #3 to the Kremlin. In awe of friendly robots, hover cars, and a time where Moscow would contain a spaceport, to say nothing of time machines...

The main plot of the movie revolved around morphing bad guys from the twenty-first century who wanted to capture a thought-reading device. By sheer luck, the device ends up in the hands of a twentieth-century kid and is sent back in time, and he, a girl from the future and the boy’s classmates take on the bad guys in 1980s Moscow. Eventually, the bad guys are captured, the device goes back home and we are left with a glorious and triumphant vision of the future — typical optimistic (if biased) stuff that Soviet kids’ movies were made of back then ...

I didn’t know the term “science fiction” then (in any language), but I knew that the future I wanted to live in involved friendly robots, spaceports, aliens, and time travel — held together by bonds of friendship. Not a bad vision of the future, I think to this day ...

**ALINA FRIDBERG**  
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.  
a-fridberg@northwestern.edu

## The first time I ever won a Hugo,

I wasn’t there to accept it. It was for *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, and my co-conspirator John Clute accepted it for me. The first I knew of the award was when my friend Pam Scoville, now my wife, phoned me from New York to break the news; she’d picked it up from one of the many internet news services she’d been scouring for precisely this purpose.

The first time I ever won any of the other awards this book received, I wasn’t there to accept them, either. That’s the World Fantasy Award, the *Locus* Award, the Mythopoeic Society Scholarship Award and the J. Lloyd Eaton Scholarship Award. A lot of awards not to be there to accept.

Last year I was lucky enough to be nominated for both the Hugo and the World Fantasy Award (under two different names, yet!). I was there to accept them, but unfortunately they weren’t there to be accepted by me — other people had won them.

The first time I ever won a Chesley Award I was actually *there*, and able to accept it in person. It came as a

shock. By then — 2002 — I was certain that the way not to win awards was to be at the convention where they were presented.

I’m still pretty convinced that this is the case — that being present for the Chesley was a fluke, a foul-up by the Fates.

This year’s Worldcon clashes with a family funeral in Edinburgh, Scotland, on September 3 ... But I’ll be flying into Boston (d.v.) late on Friday night.

I’ll be at the Hugo Ceremony ... and will offer my fulsome congratulations to whichever other complete bastard wins in the Best Related Book category, solely because of my presence, before I bolt off to the men’s room for a good long blub.

**JOHN GRANT**  
Hewitt, New Jersey, U.S.A.  
www.hometown.aol.com/thogaththog

## The First Time I Drowned

The first time I drowned was luckily the last time. I’m glad I survived to write about it. It happened when I was five. My family was camping in New Hampshire and I went to the lake docks with my two older brothers, Charlie and Danny — Charlie was the oldest and was in charge. Once by the docks, my older brothers went off to one part of the docks, leaving me behind on another. I was leaning over looking into the water for fish, but I leaned too far.

It was very surreal after that. I remember I was crying under water; of course, no one could hear me. I seem to recall crying for a few minutes. I don’t remember ever passing out, but don’t know how I later came to safe ground.

Luckily, someone did see me fall into the lake. I can tell you it wasn’t my brothers. Apparently, a man pulled me from my watery grave and had to perform CPR to get me breathing again.

I have come to believe that it was a lucky thing I was born under Leo’s constellation, ‘cause it gave me a few extra lives. My brother Charlie caught hell for that day, which I still kind of snicker at. I got my older brother in trouble — growing up, isn’t that what sibling rivalry is all about?

That’s the story of my first drowning. It’s not something I plan on doing again.

**LARRY DUNNE**  
Melrose, Massachusetts, U.S.A.  
www.tyromag.com

## William Tenn Almost Ran Me Over

I was leaving the dancing area on First Night, and stumbled across a large crowd of people gathered around a hall. The board read: “William Tenn, Have We Got a Rabbi.” Well I was in luck! It was just starting!

Right at that moment, a man on a scooter rushed past me, yelling, “Excuse me, coming though!” I jumped out of the way just in time. It was really a close call! I walked to the door, where I noticed people shaking hands with the man on the scooter. Slowly the realization dawned on me that this man was William Tenn. What a funny first meeting.



EMILY THOMPSON  
Amherst, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## Looking back,

I can see a forest of firsts — who can pick just one to write about ...?

The first book my brother forced on me was Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*, but the first author who hooked me on reading SF was Clifford D. Simak.

One day I picked up my first Finnish SF magazine from a bookshop; in it was a notice for the first SF writing course I took part in. For that course I wrote my first SF story — and an editor of a fanzine asked if he could publish it, my first published SF story.

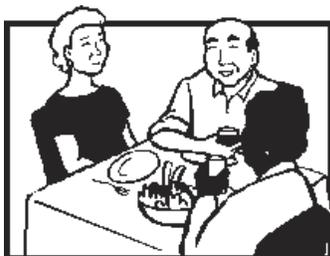
I went to my first SF fan meeting, and afterwards I would be one half of the first Finnish SF fan marriage. Before that there was my first con, a smallish Finnish Tamcon.

A couple of years later we went to my first Worldcon, in Brighton, and a year later to my first Worldcon on the other side of the Atlantic, and still a year later my first Boston Worldcon.

There was my first SF story published in a book, there was my first author introduction to a book, it was John Wyndham’s *Cuckoo’s Egg* — or was it Clifford D. Simak’s *City?* As we all know, memory is just the motion of light on water. And the firsts keep on coming, new authors with first books read, first stories written for an English SF writer group, first movie of *Lord of the Rings*...

I wish I could say SF was my first love. It isn’t. But it’s the biggest — so, it is the first one this big, right?

ANETTA MERIRANTA PIRINEN  
Cambridge, U.K.



At Con, First  
Things First.

## I remember the first

time I visited the cinema — taken by my parents, as a small boy of seven or eight, to see a film the identity of which I no longer remember (probably a Disney animation).

My parents had a habit — which they would repeat whenever they took me to see subsequent Disney fare — of arriving after the lights went down, so that one had to try to find one’s seat in the dark, guided only by the feeble torches of the ushers and the irritated mutterings of other patrons who’d got there while the lights were still on and didn’t see why they had to ensure being trodden on by latecomers.

(This being the very early 1960s, it was a period when cinema in Britain still commanded large audiences and auditoria were usually quite full — although no one could then have foreseen how soon this period would crash to a close as television suddenly expanded its technology and range of programmes to become more than a curio in a corner of the living room.) Arriving after the lights had gone down meant that the programme had already started — adverts, a supporting feature, trailers for next week’s attractions, whatever. My parents, familiar with this sort of thing, just ignored it — while I, a small boy, was transfixed by it all.

Huge pictures! Moving! With sound! In colour! Inevitably, as they dragged me along, concentrating on the steps and telling me to watch where I was going, I tripped and fell.

Gashed leg. Hurt Joseph. A Joseph who spent a large part of the subsequent film whimpering quietly to himself and not enjoying it very much at all.

I imagine that the people sitting next to me didn’t enjoy my performance either.

Which is why, the moment I was old enough to go to the cinema on my own, and ever since, I have made a point of arriving before the lights go down and the programme starts.

It inevitably means that I’ll have to sit through adverts for products I’ll never buy and idiotic trailers for films I’ll never want to watch, but at least I won’t be treading on other people’s feet and tripping over my own.

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## The First Time I Entered a Ribbon-Collecting Frenzy

Ghod, it seems like Loscon 30 in 2003, when between Chaz Baden's growing set of horizontal ribbons he gave out in bunches to a likely suspect, "Ben, would you pass out the *Sunnyvale Visitor's Bureau* ribbon?" Chaz must have passed out over 30 different ribbons of various colors, with great phrases (Space Cadet Recruiter, Vanilla But Not Narrow, Evil SMOF, Beefcake, etc.). Loscon 30's chair, Michael Mason, had used his powers for good/evil to order up a variety of ribbons, from the standard committee titles to types of quarks ... Michael boasted that he'd have the most ribbons by the end of the convention. I jokingly set out to beat him.

It was only a matter of minutes before I was caught up in an obsession. I had helped pack the truck and claimed my "Volunteer," was on the "Committee" and helped out as "Staff" for the "Art Show" and "Dealers." I even managed to collect a ribbon made up by the forgotten "Tech Crew," who vowed not to give one to the chair for forgetting a ribbon for them. It was a lovely ribbon of duct tape and thinly sliced electrical tape painstakingly laid out. I gathered up all of the Chaz ribbons but one, 'cause I didn't qualify as "Cheesecake."

In the final count, Michael Mason had all but 2 of his own ribbons, plus a few of Chaz's, totaling 24. Not bad, but I'd hustled up 37, including the handmade one. I'd raced and cajoled and begged and, well, a couple of things I cannot mention here to bring together my collection. I hung my heavily leaden badge from the back brim of my hat; it stretched nearly to the floor. I preened for the numerous photographers (see me somewhere on [www.boston-baden.com](http://www.boston-baden.com)) and carried on like a Prince of Peacocks until I noticed how sad Michael was, who even with the power of Convention Chair couldn't match my prowess. I sighed, de-ribboned my hat, and started helping to load the truck. After all, it was now Sunday evening and we had to pack up the convention and give the hotel back to the spectators.

I'd do it again in a minute, like right now, here at N4. What am I waiting for? Goodbye!

**CHRISTIAN B. MCGUIRE**  
Chair, L.A.con IV, the 2006 Worldcon  
Co-custodian, Fan Photo Gallery  
<http://scifiinc.net/scifiinc/gallery/>  
North Hollywood, California, U.S.A.

## Sitting here as Bob Devney tries

to close down the zine, I'm in the writing space I'm most comfortable with ... sudden death overtime. It doesn't make me any more brilliant, but it gets my attention.

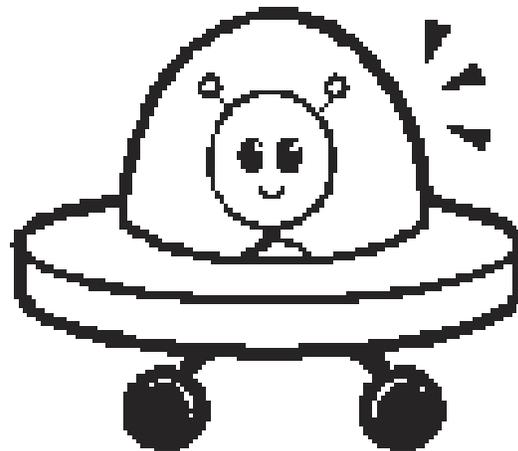
About firsts. My first con wasn't a Worldcon, but it was a NESFA con. It was a Boskone, but I forget the year. Bujold was GOH, and I'd just interviewed her for SFRevu ([www.sfrevu.com](http://www.sfrevu.com)), and I think she was probably my first interview for the zine. I could ask EJ McClure what year it was, because I met her in the dealer's room ... and wound up marrying her some years later. I could ask Sawicki (see Steve Sawicki's entry in this zine) since I met him the same day, but I don't have to since he's looking over my shoulder insisting it was 1994. [Editor's note: sorry, guys, it was 1996.]

SF has been good to me, despite early prognostications by adults. In elementary school, where I read my first SF story (*Missing Men of Saturn*), I was warned by the principal that I should spend less time reading and more with people. "Books will never replace friends," I was warned.

That's true enough, I've found. But as it happens, and it happens every Worldcon, through books you can meet and make friends with the most interesting people ... many of them real.

**ERNEST LILLEY**

Somewhere near Washington, DC, U.S.A.



# ADVENTURES of CORTNEY & GEARY

## At Their First WORLDCON 1969

### ST. LOUISCON

BY CORTNEY SKINNER & GEARY GRAVEL



**NOTE:** Though Age 19618 at the time, Cortney & Geary are being portrayed at their approximate mental age of eleven (metric)...

THE CHASE-PARK PLAZA, BUILT IN 1920-1930 AND IN GREAT NEED OF RESTORATION IN 1969

Jet to Chicago!

Only Cortney's 2nd airplane ride since taking a Ford tri-motor to Put-In-Bay in 1958

OOO-WHEEE!

THAT EVENING, IN THEIR HOTEL ROOM THAT OVERLOOKS THE POOL, THEY PONDER THE IMMENSITY OF ATTENDING THEIR 1ST WORLDCON

THEY ATTEND THEIR FIRST (& ONLY) MASQUERADE MAKE UP & DRESSED AS



WHAT ARE YOU?  
...I OUNNO

HEY, DO YA THINK WE COULD MAKE IT TO THE POOL IF WE JUMPED FROM HERE?

SURE! The boys listen to the amusing running commentary of ISAAC ASIMOV DURING "Captain Celluloid vs. the Film Pirates"



THE MASTER OUPER'S IN A STUPOR!... HEH

"MUSTANG" THE BRISQUE ALL-NIGHT HOTEL LUNCH COUNTER LADY ASKS IF THE BOYS ARE HUNGRY AT 2:00 AM

CORTNEY'S 1ST SF ART SHOW! HIS STACK OF DR. ZAIUS AND ROBOT ART AWAITS HANGING ON THE PARELS. A FAN APPRAISES HIS ART.



HMM... INTERESTING HEAP.

YOU BOYS WANT SOME EATS?

LATE AT NIGHT JUST BEFORE RETIRING, GEARY FINDS A BAT IN HIS HOTEL ROOM!

HE COMES DOWN TO THE ALL-NIGHT MOVIES TO TELL HIS PAL CORT, & WHAT IS ON THE SCREEN? DRACULA!

N-NO... THE FRESCA'S JUST FINE M'AM...

(CHOKE) WE HAVEN'T EATEN FOR TWO DAYS BUT WE SPENT ALL OUR MONEY ON COOL HICKSTER'S ROOM STUFF!



BAT EGGS IN HAIR!

HAVE A SEAT WATCH THE MOVIE!



WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

CATCH THE NEXT EPISODE IN 2039