

The Drink Tank Issue 108



Letter Graded Mail

sent to garcia@computerhistory.org

by my gentle Readers

Let's start with John Purcell!

Okay. Here's a sign of the times:

Of the four fanzines that I'm loccking this morning, three of them are produced either entirely or in part by Chris Garcia. Yeeesshhh....

Well, to be fair, I'm the only one who's nuts enough to keep up this pace.

Well, I read Rotating Moderator, and it was fun, especially the fact that you had R-Laurraine Tutihasi involved. She's a neat little gal. We go way back to Minicons and Lasfapa and such back in the late 70s. If I can make it to Denver in '08, it will be way cool to see her again.

You better make it to Denver! I'll be there, that's for sure. I've already got my membership, I believe. I've gotten quite confused as to the cons that I've got memberships to. I know I'll be there because I've never spent a lot of time in Denver

DT #105: Personally, I think that Chris Garcia is a conspiracy. There can't be only one of him, can there? Right?



You're not the first to say so! Even Dave Burton, reasonable, clear-thinking FanEd that he is, said that I was a conspiracy, suggesting that I was, in fact, a rich brown hoax.

Eric in the Elevator sounds like great, great stuph. How can I lay my hands on a copy of this?

Not sure. I think he's got an LJ, so you could look there.

The Roswell crash site - and Area 51 - are two of my favorite conspiracy theory hoaxes. I really don't think that either one is reality based, but that's the whole fun part of these particular conspiracy theories. Now, the JFK conspiracy theories are much more interesting, especially the one that has

LBJ being one of the movers behind it.

Well, to be fair, LBJ had his hands in everything. I love conspiracy theory and I'm always looking up new ones (some of the 9/11 ones are creepily feasible). I dunno, something obviously crashed, but my guess has always been prototype US Airplane.

But alien spaceships crashing into the New Mexico desert? Naw...

Now, if you asked me if there really is intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, I would give you an unqualified "yes" for an answer. If they were stupid, they would have contacted us by now. The fact that they haven't is proof of their intelligence.

I certainly agree with ya on that point. I understand the physics that are always brought up as to why they can't be visiting us, but I also think we don't have enough of a clue about the full extent of physics to say either way.

DT #106: The professor I had in my Sociology 636 class last year (Fall, 2005) is a long-time Buffy fan. She freely admitted this in class - this is a doctoral seminar class, no less - and that she used to get really into the bloggings, chatrooms, and Buffy cons, still does, but to a lesser extent in recent years. I thought this was pretty

cool. My prof's a FAN!

There's a Doc Student I know whose dream is to become a TV Show's Fandom Consultant. That's a good gig, if she can get it. I had a couple of Profs who were fans and would talk about it once in a while. I was mostly out of fandom at that point, so it didn't get me much. In fact, two Emerson

Yeah, kids are looking for a place to belong, friends to hang and identify with, and so on. It is all about a search for self-identity, as you so noted. I think I was a lot like you in the sense that my teen-aged years went by relatively problem-free. My involvement with things like baseball, hockey, soccer, marching band, and playing guitar - garage-bands, natcherly - kept me pretty active and involved, so I really didn't lack for friends and things to do. This is probably the key to it all: get the young 'uns involved in things. Valerie and I aren't the greatest of parents, but we've got three great kids, and consider ourselves very fortunate to have them.

I had a great High Schoolhood. I understand that puts me in the minority. I was involved in all sorts of things, lots of acting, made some fun films, and had friends who did just about everything. I went to cons once in a while and I played

Heroes Unlimited. There was a lot of stuff that I did to keep myself busy...including watching lots of wrestling and movies. I've always said that I'd try and put any kid I have (and Evelyn counts, at least a little) in good standing so they can at least make a run at having good high school times. You gotta teach your children well...

This parenting-type talk reminds me: how is M doing? Haven't heard about her and the twins for the longest time. What's the word, hummingbird? What's the story, morning glory? What's the tale, nightingale? Have you heard about Hugo and Kim?

They've moved to Santa Barbara and are doing pretty well. M's first set of treatments are over and she responded very nicely. SaBean's in France at the moment, or so I've heard. To be honest, I haven't heard from her in a couple of weeks, nor M or Jay. Judith sent me a Christmas card saying "Hey, you should visit."

Well, heck with it. Now that I'm reasonably caught up on locs for now, it is time to do some school-type work. It's finals week, so gotta grade and stuff like that there.

All the best,

John Purcell



Filk.Com

I've discovered something strange: I like filk music. I've known this for a long time, but I always said things like 'but, you know, only in small quantities.' This turned out to be untrue.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've been listening to the Filk.Com radio station all day at work. While there's some solid repetition, I'm always entertained and have amused a few of my co-workers with the singing I'm sometimes drawn to performing.

There's a lot of computer filk on the station and I'm going to have to go out there and track a few of them down and see what I can get from them for the big Computer Filk issue.



A RESPONSE TO THE INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF THE ART OF FUNERARY VIOLIN

Rohan Kriwaczek's history of Funerary Violin is a delightful book. It's a well-researched, well-presented, and often funny account of more than 400 years of the great tradition of Funerary Violinists.

I became interested in Funerary Violin around 1999, when I started surfing the net every day at work to keep from going insane from boredom. I have several sites on my

old computer's bookmarks that relate to Funerary Violin, including the wonderful old FuneralPlay.Net, which seems to have disappeared somewhere around 2002. While Kriwaczek covers the Guild of Funerary Violinists very well, and European Funerary Violins in general, he fails to mention the proud traditions of American Funerary Violin which actually outstrip the revelations of the Guild of Funerary Violinists.

The earliest Americans who took up Funerary Violin were located in Massachusetts and Rhode Island around 1740. They didn't get a lot of work as this was the Puritanical part of the Colonies, but they did play several important funerals. It wasn't until the 1770s that Funerary Violinists began to get more work, starting with Danon McCoy in Boston. He was an unknown, playing at one of the smaller city cemeteries until he was asked to play at the funeral for three of the victims of the Boston Massacre. The first record performance in American history (that researchers were able to find) was a short blurb in one of the Boston newspapers that announced that Mr. McCoy had played "movedly well and touched the hearts with sorrow before the most fiery speeches that followed". Mr. McCoy was the first American Funerary Violin star and worked throughout New England until his death in 1805.



The only known photo of Raus Hauser: the Child Genius of The Richmond School ca. 1870

I remember coming across Dr. David Dowling's site before he left University of North Carolina in 2001. There, he talked about the three great American 'schools' of Funerary Violin. He spent a great deal of time talking about the Richmond School, started in the 1730s and continued to pump out Funerary Violinists until the mid-1840s. Thomas Jefferson is said to have studied with 'Richmond-trained' Funerary Violinists, though he never practiced at actual funerals...or so it is believed. Other well-known practici

The rich Southern traditions allowed for Funerary Violin to thrive



Ville Wilson's photo of Annabelle Coruso: a Neo-Funerary Violinist who will only play 1860s Sompert-Blish violins.

even while the Catholic Church was suppressing Funerary Violinists in Europe. The Georgia School was founded in Savannah around 1813 by the famous English Funerary Violist Louis Luden. The two most famous 'graduates' of the Georgia school were the Sompert Brothers.

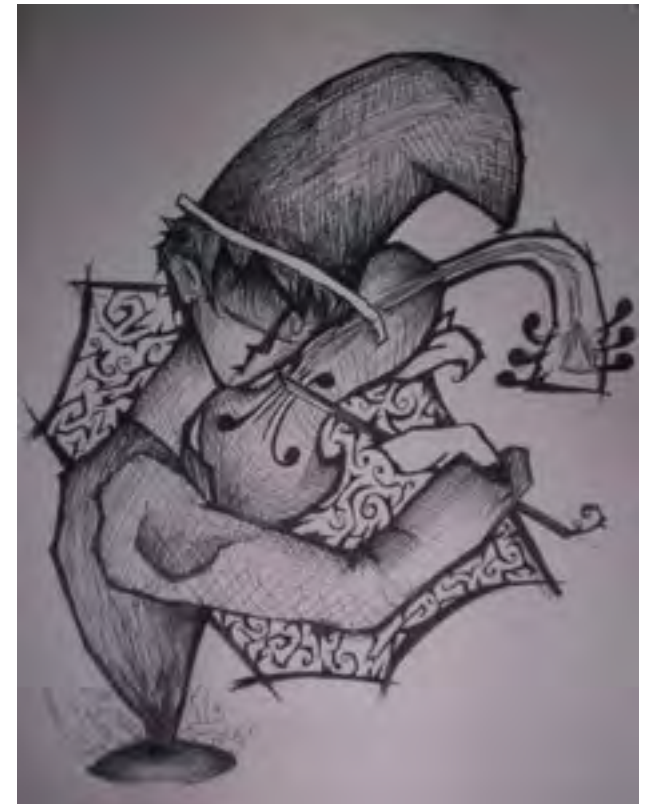
Lucian and Alastair Sompert were two of the most talented young violinists in the State of South Carolina when they were sent by their parents to Savannah in 1857. The two of them were far above any of the others in their 'class' and each was apprenticed to an older Funerary Violinist within their first year. According to Dr.

was sent to "the finest violinist in the Confederacy: Lt. Sompert." Somehow this request to play at a popular Colonel's funeral went to both, where the two argued and then both began to play and each refused to yield the floor to the others. This led the two brothers to feud for the remainder of their lives: some 80+ years.

There was a site about the Biloxi Funerary Violinists that I haven't been able to re-find using the Wayback Machine. Basically, Lucian Sompert went to Biloxi in 1865 and set up shop with Mr. Marcus Blish and they were turning out cheap violins. Eventually, Sompert gave lessons to a Portuguese

Dowling, Lucian was apprenticed to James Highfigure, a young Funerary Violinist who was considered something of a rebel. Alastair studied directly under Louis Luden, by that point already in his 80s. When the Civil War started, both were assigned to the Confederate Army to play at military funerals. Once, an order

fisherman named Poalo Noya, who began giving lessons himself, mostly to former slaves. I can't remember what the numbers were, but it was something like 200 Funerary Violinists were trained in Biloxi over the next fifty years, something that Mr. Kriwaczek refuses to mention. Perhaps this is because the Biloxi version of funerary violin was designed to work on the less than sonorous Sompert & Blish violins, which have managed to become very collectable, including being appraised on a recent Antiques Roadshow for almost twelve thousand dollars!. Or



A 1950s imitation of a supposed 1917 Picasso titled The Funerary Violinist



perhaps it is because of jealousy as the only surviving text in Sompet's own hand describes the sorry state of European Funerary Violin.

There were other stories, like how the Biloxi Violinists spread out across Texas and Mexico, influenced the Mariachi tradition. Several also made their way to Alaska where one struck it rich and moved to San Francisco, establishing a small community there which ended up becoming very important during the 1906 Earthquake, playing hundreds of funerals, including the mass funeral for the victims killed at Agnews State Sanitarium in Santa Clara, which had a marker dedicated to the funeral, featuring an engraving of violinist Marcus Dabb, until Sun Microsystems took over the campus in 1996.

So, the history of the American Funerary Violin is still unrepresented in a single serious work. I can remember that there were a few other names mentioned, like Udo Hasge who played so masterfully at the funeral of Charles Wesley Emerson that he was

Emerson College's official Funerary Violinist until the 1940s. There's even a painting of him hanging in the Emerson Library.

Supposedly American Funerary Violin died out because of the advent of silent film. So many musicians were needed to play in movie houses, often for a piece of the gate, that most of the practitioners left the field and became accompanists for silent films. This

left only the hardest of the hard core, including the extremely aged (and still very bitter) Sompet brothers and a few of the last remaining Biloxi violinists. There were no regularly employed Funerary Violinists found during the census of 1950.

There are Neo-Funerary Violinists, but they tend to be simply dabblers and Goths who are looking for a darque passtime.



AhwahneeCon



A Con Above

The First AhwahneeCon Progress Report is out and it's a short look at what we'll be doing with the greatest Con ever to be held in a National Park (though Grand Canyon was a popular one back in the 1960s). There's a lot of fun stuff, including a look at what will be done with the funds that will get passed along to the Society for the Restoration of Half as well as other fun bits and pieces.

This one, like the first Pacheco Progress, doesn't take nearly as many swipes at the opposition *cough*phoenixisevil*cough* but it's a fun little thing. I'm working on a word find and an article on Science Fiction in Yosemite.

What's really funny is that there's a solid Science Fiction connection as many authors have told me

that they had this or that idea while they were visiting. Poul Anderson supposedly came up with one of his book concepts on a trip there. That shocked the hell out of me when I heard that. Supposedly several members of LASFS would take trips up there once every couple of years. I didn't know that until I was at LosCon this year, hanging up fliers.

So it's a natural (pun only slightly intended) that we host a WesterCon there. In fact, this would be the first con in Yosemite Valley ever! That would really be a ground-breaking con and would allow us to say that we created a fandom through a WesterCon! Which is the last one that could make a claim like that?

And that's that for yet another issue of The Drink Tank. I'll be working on the next issue after I've managed to buy the gifts for my Uncle, Aunt and Mom. Really, I've got nothing. I have no idea what to get any of them. Why, WHY!, must they be so difficult?

Other than that, I'll be watching Evelyn, playing games and watching loads of DVDs. I'm working on two reviews for Some Fantastic and they're both taking far longer than I expected. Who would have thought Forbidden Planet would be so hard?



Paolo Noya: Founder of Biloxi School