

The Drink Tank Issue 232
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WindyCon: An Honorable Adventure

Flying into Chicago's luxurious O'Hare International Airport, I realized that I was the Fan Guest of Honor. Yes, I've been constantly reminding folks that I'm the FGOH for months, constantly, but it never really sunk in until the flight. I was one of the people who represented what the convention was supposed to be. It's weird. I got myself these weird heart palpitations that I usually only get when I've got to MC something like a Masquerade or a major movie at Cinequest. This was going to be a big weekend.

We got to the car pick-up point and they had arranged for a lovely sedan to take us to the hotel. I love it when I get to ride in a chauffeured car instead of a driven Taxi. That was awesome! They had bottled water and mints for us. That's always good stuff. We got to the hotel, they dropped us off, we checked in to the room and as we always do when we check into a new hotel room, we checked the television. It's an important part of the hotel room experience. You've got to see what their special in-house television channels. While they had their own 'Welcome to Westin' channel, it was nothing like The Hilton Biography channel you get at the Hilton chain of hotels.

The thing about modern flight is that they don't give you much in the way of food, so we headed across a parking lot which could have comfortably managed to park several Zeppelins and entered the Yorktown Mall! Being a Californian, I am nothing if not a Mall person. I love Food Courts more than most humans, and this one was stacked. Burger



King, Sbarro, Panda Express and Arby's. Linda loves Arby's, so we headed over and got the sandwiches. You have never seen a woman so happy to have a Beef & Cheddar. Se doesn't have one near her place like I do, so my joy was more muted. I increased it by walking across the way and getting a Cinnabon. Now, I know admitting this is something of a risk as it will serve only to paint us as White Trash, but to be fair, I am half-Mexican, and thus I would technically not qualify. We walked the mall a bit and then returned home. It was a nice touch. I must admit, I wish more cons had Malls right next door because that would be so awesome.

We returned to the hotel with tons of time left before we had to gather for the first

of my Guest of Honor duties. If we took a nap, as we'd only managed four hours of sleep, we wouldn't make it to the event, so we needed video. I bought me some internet and then signed on to Hulu and exposed Linda to Glee. It was a lovely episode, as it was one where the Gay Kid had a Diva-off with Lea Michel's prissy character by singing Defying Gravity. It was a great episode, a really strong episode from a show that produces some really great episodes. I really love it and I hope that the ratings are enough to keep the show running for a few seasons. Linda dozed off a few times, but during the Diva-off, we were all eyes!

The first event that was official, was a cocktail hour with the Guests and a bunch of the staff from the con and a few other folks who were above-the-title types. We're talking your Gene Wolfe, Mike Resnicks and so on. It was a nice deal. We sat at the table with the Foglios, Steven Silver, our Guest Liason, James Blaylock and his wife, and a couple of other fans. It was a really fun group. We chatted, had a glass of wine each, and we all got to tell our stories. This is something that all convention goers do: they have a period where they meet folks and get a few classics out to the table. Always fun. This was followed after a while by a lovely dinner. Linda and I both had what I think was a flank steak that was rolled up so it looked like we were eating beef knots. I've often thought of how one might be able to make a beef knot, and this was a start.

Even on Thursday, the day before the convention, there were people on staff, or simply hanging about, who were in costume. Lovely ladies in beautiful costumes. Kaija had

a lovely skirt which was certain in with the Steampunk theme. Or, since it's on Kaija, is it automatically a Gaslamp Fantasy-esque skirt? Hard to say. Still, it was a lovely evening with great people. We discussed fantastic literature and music and cons and zines and so much fun stuff.

After the dinner with all the wonderful guests, we headed off to the ConSuite where they were serving dessert. This has been the month of exceptional ConSuites. The Suite was large, with tons of people and some delicious desserts. Cannoli, Strawberry Shortcake, these little chocolate things, crunchy things, and they were all fantastic. More chatting, we got our badges, and then there were more costumes! The phrase 'Steampunk' pretty much instantly says 'Bad Ass Costuming' in shorthand. Maybe it's an anagram?



Of course, following all that action, the good food and the four hours of sleep the night before all led to an early night. We headed up to the room, put on a bit of Food Network, which led to fast sleep.

It was nearly 10am when we rolled out of bed. I was still exhausted. That happens. We milled about, Linda made some of the Starbucks coffee they had in each of the rooms. Linda had bought a bunch of little powdered donuts at the Target. They were tasty, though the powder gets everywhere. I'm still trying to get the little powdered sugar molecules out of the trackpad on my laptop. I took my bath and then Linda hopped in to her shower as I was searching Hulu for the day's viewing. I went through the movies and came up with a show I'd seen as kid and loved: The Secret Identity of Jack the Ripper. It was from 1988. Peter Ustinoff was

the host and they bandied about all the theories and argued five top suspects. This wasn't the first time I was interested in the Ripper, but watching it on channel 2 back in 1988, I was really hooked. I even subscribed to a Ripper zine back in the day. Linda got out of the shower and asked what I was watching. I don't think I answered because they were at the part about the dual murders. Yes, I

am aware this marks me as a potential serial killer, but really, I taught 3 to 5 year olds to play basketball. If that didn't drive me to murder, then nothing will.

We got dressed and headed back to the Mall. I really think this is a great set-up for a hotel with a con: there's food and fun and lots of parking. FREE PARKING! Over at the Mall, we wandered a bit. I love walking about with Linda. We went to Hot Topic so I could ogle the Jennifer's Body t-shirts with Megan Fox and the New Moon shirts with Bella on them. We then headed over to a pseudo-diner called Ed Debevic's.

This was interesting.

This is one of those places with a theme, a 1950s diner that also adds the bit of having surly waitressing. It's actually a lot of fun. Our server was Bubbles. I'm thinking that's not her real name. We sat down and I ordered chili 5-ways. Now, where I'm from, you can expect raw onion, cheese, and crackers. Here, they served it with all the above, beans (which are a part of all official chilis as far as I'm concerned) and macaroni. That's a little weird, but it turned out nicely. It was very tasty. Bubbles came back to our table, leaned forward and rested her elbows on the table, making a little platform for her chin from her hands.

"So, how do you two know each other?" she asked.

"Well..." I thought about the proper way to answer.

"He claims to be my boyfriend." Linda said, with that smile I love so much.

We finished lunch and headed across the street to the AMC theatres. The place was

deserted, which is weird for a Friday around Cali, but here, it seemed normal. The skeleton crew got our tickets, and we sat down to watch Pirate Radio. It wasn't the kind of film that would seem to work with a weekend steeped in Steampunk, but it was a lot of fun. Especially with Rhys Ifans and Phillip Seymour Hoffman and Bill Nighy all in the same film. It was just a lot of fun. The girl who'll be the female lead in *The Prince of Persia* was in it, but I can't recall what she looked like. It made me sad as the one shot of her I've seen made her seem awesome. The theatre wasn't as comfortable as I'm used to out of the AMCs, but still, the movie was good enough that I didn't mind sitting through it in non-reclining seats.

We went back to the room, and Linda changed into her first Steampunk outfit while I watched more of the Ripper. Saucy Jack and the Dear Boss letter and all that was the treat of that segment. After a bit, Linda and I headed into the Dealer's Room. For Linda and I, Dealer's Rooms are dangerous. I can go through a month's rent in a Dealer's Room in the bat of an eyelash. I chose to stare at the lovely costumes. One big difference between Bay Area cons and WindyCon's Dealer's Rooms was the presence of DVD dealers. Almost none up this way. You could get all sorts of awesome little-seen DVDs at WindyCon. Luckily we picked up one of the *Zatoichi* films that we hadn't seen. That makes me happy. We walked around and found some lovely jewelry for Linda and I kept pumping into folks either reading or talking about Gail Garriger's *Soulless*. It was almost spooky. It did give me a nice entry into the conversations since I loved the book and

could chat about it almost intelligently. I love when that's possible...partly because it's so rare.

Linda bought the new book from James Blaylock and the good people at ISFiC Press. It's *The Shadow on the Doorstep*, a collection of short stories with a great Phil Foglio cover. I would have bought a copy, but if I started that spending phase, it would be hard to stop.

I had a panel to do, but before that, I figured I should mingle with some of the good fans of Chicago. As soon as I walk in, one of the fans from Chicago who I knew was sitting at one of the tables. It was Mr. Neil Rest, who I always try to make a little time to sit with. He's lived in the Bay Area, so we talked about the median arbors in the middle of the big streets around here that are invisible to those of us who grew up in the area. I only know of them because when someone crashed into one once and it was reported in the Police Log of the local paper. We chatted for a while until I realized that the two of us were on a panel that was only 4 minutes away;. We scurried over to the room, a very big room, which was attended by about 25 or so attendees. It was a fun panel called the



Technobabble Quiz.

Now, I've done the Technobabble Quiz a few times, notably at the 2002 and 2009 WorldCons. Steven Silver, who I had subjected to the panel in August, was the Quiz master while Tom Smith, Jodi Nye, Me and Neil Rest were the panelists. Steven's questions were hard, and I actually came in last, behind even the audience. I did manage to break Tom Smith, one of the fastest thinking comedic minds in fandom with a gag about Chris Farley being one of the gods of the Scandinavian past. It was a fun panel, these game shows always are, and we got some good laughs.

Continued in Exhibition Hall Issue 4: available on eFanzines.com on Dec 1st-ish