

NASFiC 2005: Christopher J. Garcia's Report

Having arrived back from Seattle a limo ride and a bath ago, I can say that I had a real good time. I had concerns about going to CascadiaCon with Gen and Evelyn, and while it had a few low points, it was mostly great. The con itself seemed to live up to expectations, and they weren't exactly too high to begin with.

Gen, The Little One and I flew to Seattle on Alaska. Evelyn handles flying really well, better than I certainly. Gen was a little bothered by having to entertain the kid while we were flying, and even before we got off the plane she had declared that I would be sitting next to Ev on the way back, which was fine with me. We had a few minor misadventures when we were at the Seattle Airport. I forgot that the bag I borrowed from my Mom was blue, so it passed us on the carousel a full ten minutes before I realized that it had been passing us for almost twenty minutes. This annoyed Gen, as did the walk to the shuttles. We also got the shuttle to the Radisson, but I hadn't known that there were two Radissons on the same street. I told the guy that we were going to the Airport Radisson and he took us to the wrong one. The Radisson folks then shuttled us over to the right one and things



were under way.

I left Evelyn and Gen at the room waiting for room service while I headed over to pick up my membership badge. This really showed me the main problem I would have with the convention. The con was spread out over the Convention Centre, the Hilton Hotel that was right across a small street and the Radisson Hotel that was a quarter mile down the street. The spread-out nature of the con made it hard to find a single place to sit and wait for folks to come by. Maybe I've been spoiled by BayCons and the DoubleTree in San Jose, but there was no sense of site to the con.

Once I arrived at the Hilton to register, I realized the size of the con did not justify the space. The place wasn't quite a ghost town, but even late night at Norwescon there were far more people milling about. And I was wandering around at 8:30 or so. The con was small enough to be held at the DoubleTree just down the way, though I think they had expected more.

Getting my badge, I headed through the parties, which were pretty typical, though good. The first night I simply walked around and stopped to chat with some folks, like Jay Lake. Mostly I wandered around and then headed back to the Radisson to get some sleep. I dropped over a bunch of copies of The Drink Tank Presents The

This Time, it's all about the NASFiC

The Drink Tank is edited by Christopher J. Garcia and written with a tonne of help. If you've got comments, drop a line to garcia@computerhistory.org on 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd, Mt. View, CA 94043. The Next Issue will probably have more NASFiC Mumbblings and a bit of Fun from Fremont Street! Listen Up!

SteamPunk Issue and they seemed to slowly flow away with folks over the weekend.

Friday saw me get up nice and early. I actually went out for a walk about 6am. I just went to the Hospitality Suite for the first time that morning. Even if every other area of the con had been an utter failure, I would still say that they tried to take care of the folks who actually showed up. The Hospitality Suite had some great food and themed movies and food each night. It was run by the good folks who do Anglicon, so each day had a theme like England, Jamaica, Australia or Scotland. They made some mean grub, especially the fine Beef Stew they did on Sunday. I went down and did some reading, mostly the previous issues of FaxCascadia, the Con Newsletter. I had a couple of short conversations and headed back to the room to help Gen get Evelyn ready for the day in the city.

After Gen and The Little One got off to the shuttle, I headed over to the Hilton. The biggest problem with the Hilton was that there were rooms that were off the main path and there wasn't a lot of signage and almost no mention in the programme book or pocket guide.

Oh yeah, I should talk about the pocket guide. It was awful. There were errors and inconsistencies, like varying degrees of italicization and bolding, but mostly, there were typos. Here's the worst of them: Heinlein kJkN"RII you ever wanted to know about Heinleinebut were afraid to ask". That is exactly how it is in the little green book. I'm not the best proof-reader, as all the readers of The Drink Tank are aware, but ever I think I would have caught that one. There was a whole page where some sort of replace must have taken place with r-space replacing initial b's. For Example- Technology Gone r ad where it should have been Bad. Every programme book and pocket guide have problems and typos, but these were beyond all reason.

I caught all the fun I could, took a pass through the dealer's room, and headed

up to the Fanzine Lounge as soon as it opened. This was a highlight. When I got there, it was just me and Alan Rosenthal there. I helped them set-up a little bit, and the place really came together. I ended up spending a good deal of time in there, a little of it reading and more of it chatting. I managed to get a few good convos with Hope Liebowitz, Suzle and Jerry, Alan and I even got to see an ElectroStenciler and mimeo machine at work. It was a great place and Jerry and Suzle provided a bunch of great fanzines and I brought a few for folks to take and read. I got to get a looky-loo at an issue or two of Plokta (great and fun stuff) and Art Widner gave me a copy of YHOS, which I rather enjoyed. I tried to stop by at least once every day to see what was going on.

I had my first panel on Friday at 1. It was a nice one on Computer Science Fiction. This was the only panel I moderated all weekend. Eve Gordon was very entertaining, reminding me of doing a panel with Howard Hendrix, who happens to be one of my all-time faves to do panels with. The two of us made it on time and we got the ball rolling with a little discussion of what we did. Jordin Kare then joined us and we basically told a bunch of our fun little computer stories. We had a lot of fun, but it wasn't the type of panel you'd want to go to if you were looking for real info on computers in science fiction. We did get some good laughs though and the crowd seemed to like it.

After the panel, I headed into Seattle proper to have a late lunch with Gen and Evelyn and my Uncle Wayne. We walked around Pike's Place Public Market. It was a nice little place and on both my previous Seattle trips I had failed to get there. We had lunch/dinner at Lowell's, which was a wonderful place for shrimp. I had the great fish and chips with the Clam Chowder. It was a good chowder, but slightly too watery for my favour. I loved the popcorn shrimp. Gen had the Seafood Stew, which looked amazing.

The Most interesting Conversation I was a part of had to be at the bar with Jay Lake and Gardner Dozois and it featured the discussion of Roy Orbison Saran Wrap and many other strange strange things

We shopped a little and headed back to the hotel. We sat around for a bit and then I scurried off and went to hit a few parties. On my way, I ran into Lori White, Linsey Johnson and Rebecca Inch-Partridge. They informed me that Frank Wu, who I had not expected to see at all, was waiting in the lobby. I joined up with them and indeed, Frank was there, wild red hair and all. We started to wander around and hit the Potlatch party. I'm really interested in Potlatch, and since I said that I'd only do two traveling-required cons next year, and since I'm certainly doing TorFlu (as I have decided to call the Toronto CorFlu), it's a possibility that I'll make it up to Seattle again. We wandered around a bit, chatted with Julie Czerneda (who was quite nice), the aforementioned Howard Hendrix, and a bunch of folks at the various parties. I made my way home after 90 minutes or so to get ready for Saturday, which was going to be a big day.

In the conversations I was having with folks on Friday night, I heard the first negative comments on the Con. There were folks who wanted to do

programming, and who would have certainly been GREAT on panels, who were just ignored. There were people complaining that the facilities were sub-par as a whole, even if the parts were individually very good. A lovely young vision in a gorgeous red and black dress said "Well, it's not great, but we didn't expect it to be."

On Saturday morning, we got up early and headed off to the shuttle to get into town. We got there and immediately headed for the Aquarium. They do a smart thing with their lay-out, with all the touch pools and the other kid areas all right up front. The place isn't as great as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, but it's fun. We stuck around for the feeding of the seals (who were very cool and seemed to legitimately be having fun with their trainers) and then the otters. Otters are cute. They really are. The next March of the Penguins could easily be done about Otters. They frolicked and played a bunch with each other and they ate clams. There were also River Otters that were very much into running around their enclosure and sliding into the water. It was well-worth the money. We stuck around too long and

I missed the shuttle back so I didn't get to do the Pseudonym panel. On the other hand, missing the shuttle meant that I had time to get lunch with Gen and Evelyn at a place called Fisherman's.

Wow.
The joint was right on the end of a wharf and



The Very Nice People at the Info Desk Who Never Seemed to Get Annoyed With My Constant Stupid Questions

they had a great view of all the ships and even the Cruise Ship that my Uncle was sailing out on that afternoon. I had the Clam Chowder, which was rich and thick and almost forced me to change my religion to one that would allow me to make it my Lord. I also had the Fisherman's platter, which was very good with an amazing pair of coconut shrimp. It was an amazingly good meal. Even The Little One, who hates everything, loved the place. I came back to do my panel on Technology Gone r ad. This was in a room at the Radisson that you kinda had to know was there to get to. The leader of the discussion was writer and atmospheric scientist James Killus! Great name. We talked about all the things that technology had done over the years and it wasn't a great panel, but we had a fun little conversation. I mostly cracked jokes. I headed back to the room and Gen and Evekyn got back a little later after having walked all over Seattle.

I headed into the Saturday Night Parties around 9, right as Gen and Evelyn were settling into sleep. I headed over and found Lori and company pretty quick. I was basically planning on visiting the Anticipation party and getting some Spruce Beer and then heading out and away. I got really sidetracked. I ended up going to the Anticipation party and chatting with Daniel Kimmel, a film critic and quite a funny guy. We basically talked movies, and then got into telling jokes. Funny guy, Daniel, and we amused the room in general. I then moved on and discovered the folks wandering the halls. Jay Lake had a posse that included some Tor editor named Anna. I had met her at Westercon a while back, and she took ever'body out for drinks on Tor! We chatted, quite loudly, as the bar was closing. I got to meet a few very nice people, like Carrie Vaughn who has a book coming out on November 1st, and Lara Wells, who did the excellent cover for Wheatland's Zeppelin stories. We all headed up to the SFWA party and chatted there. I headed out and found myself in a party hosted by LACon IV. Lot's of fun.

The FaxCascadia was a great little newsletter. You have to say that CascadiaCon had some weak printed elements, but the daily was not one of them. It was a solid thing and while it didn't feel like most con newsletters, it was informative, entertaining and just plain good. I spent a bit of time reading them as I caught the bus back to the Radisson and a bit of sleep.

The next morning I knew I had my big day. I stuck around with Gen and Evelyn in the hotel room and we watched a lot of cartoons. Once Gen and Evelyn headed off for their Puget Sound boat tour, I made my way to the con hotel and instantly found myself in the Exhibits area. This was tucked away in the corner and was a pair of small rooms. The first room had a selection of Hugo Statues, a bunch of Japanese fanzines, which were very cool, and Kevin Standlee's little display. That was a great thing showing the history of the Fan Guest of Honour. I know he put a lot of effort into putting it together and he had a lot of great



material, including a number of photos of Kevin in a pink dress and the dress itself on a mannequin. There were badges and photos and the like from all along Kevin's fannish career. This was really good.

The other room was good, really good. Ed Stiner put together a great series of displays from the Science Fiction Museum in Oregon. He had all sorts of magazines in display cases, including issue 10 of Fantastic Four and issue 17 of Spiderman.

There were board games and props and photos and paintings and a small little theatre. I'm biased, since I'm on the board of advisors, but I really think Fandom should get on getting the Science Fiction Museum a permanent home.

My first Sunday panel was Museum Earth with Donna McMahan, Alma

Alexander and Larry Niven. This was a great panel with a lot of thought. Niven was good, though he didn't talk as much as Alma or I did, but he added a lot of great insight. In particular, we discussed the need to decide at what point we needed to save things for a future group to study. For example, would we set aside an area where Gang Culture is preserved? I instantly got an idea for a short story out of that, but since I don't write fiction anymore, I'll give it away. It was a very good panel and we made some seriously good points. And Larry decided that a culture that he wanted funding to preserve was Beverly Hills in the 1950s while I'll be writing a proposal for a Mexican Jew sanctuary. A really fun panel and easily the best attended of all the panels I did, probably due to Niven being along for the ride.

I voted in the NASFiC site selection. I voted for San Jose. I hear you say that San Jose wasn't in the running. They launched a write-in campaign and they managed to get 20 or so votes in just one day. They had a concept that was setting up WorldCon with a Relaxacon right before in San Jose. This was a marvelously good idea that I'll



Artist Guest of Honour Liz Danforth, who was just a delight to have met at CascadiaCon

talk more about later.

My second panel was interesting, as it was all about preserving history and featured Spring from BASFA and Artist Guest of Honour Liz Danforth. It was somewhat similar to the previous panel, but with a less Science Fictional bent. Everyone on the panel had some history background,

and we all had good stories to tell. The crowd was quite a bit smaller than the panel immediately before it, but they were also a few of the folks who came to the Museum Earth panel. A nice discussion.

Then I had a break and headed up to the Fanzine lounge where I found that Art Widner was about to start a fan history slide show. I couldn't resist that, as Art is one of the guys I most respect and he's really entertaining. The room didn't have the projector set-up, so there was a 20 minute delay in getting things ready. The slide show itself was great, mostly of photos from the famous trip to Denvention that Art drove. It was great and there were about 10 total people in the audience, but I've been to big con history panels with BNFs from previous days that drew far fewer.

After a nap and getting some time with Gen and Evelyn, I headed for my only Movie Panel. We basically went over every film that got released and said a few things about them. The consensus films were Batman Beyond and a few documentaries. I also pointed out a few films that weren't mentioned (What The Bleep Do We Know and Abel Edwards) and we chatted. One

of the panelists, Mimi Noyes, runs a site called mediababe.net or some such, wore an awesome corset and coat combo. We disagreed on some stuff, but we all had a lot of fun opinions. I called it a night after the panel, but only after swinging by the Hospitality Lounge to grab some Beef Stew. MMMMMmmmm...Beef Stew.

Monday was the wrap-up day. I had a Noon panel on The Battle for Fanzinia that wasn't really attended and was mostly just a few folks chatting. I wish there was more interest in the fanzine area from general fandom, but there's been a lot of disregard on both sides. Sometimes it's hard to be a fan.

We had to leave a little early and took a flight that made me miss one panel, but it was a nice flight, and Gen ever decided to sit next to Evelyn, so I could read Newton's Cannon. It was all over and as soon as I hit San Jose soil, I started writing this.

Honestly, there were issues. St. Louis won the next NASFiC rights, but really, I'm worried. The fact is most people see NASFiC as WorldCon writ small. That's not always a bad thing as long as NASFiC has something special to offer. The RelaxaNASFiC concept was a solid one, and one that we should consider for future bids. When WorldCon is

in Australia, and I believe the bid is for 2010, we should find a way to make NASFiC distinctive. San Jose's idea was a good one, making NASFiC into a warm-up with some programming and having it be more about setting up WorldCon, kinda like

Toner will be next year for the LACon. That's a solid idea. Having it as a FanHistoricon would also work. Give NASFiC a specialty, that's how you do it. I love the idea of having something for North American fans when WorldCon is out of the reach of many of them, but just doing a NASFiC on the attendance and with the staff levels of a large regional is just too hard. Future bidders should look at that fact and find something to work with.

I never got the feeling that the Convention Committee was inexperienced. In fact, looking at the list, there are many folks whose names I recognise from WorldCons passed. The fact that Seattle hadn't hosted a major Con (talking WorldCon/NASFiC level) since the 1960s says something. The last Seattle WesterCon (which was the first time I stayed in Seattle) had some problems, though I rather enjoyed it.

The other issue is the attendance on Labor Day, and this goes for both NASFiC and WorldCon. Dragon*Con and Burning draw away fans and it isn't going to get much better. LACon IV is going to be a week early. I say that an earlier week, Fourth of July, is the better weekend. It's got to be a week with a day off, and since we don't have

bank holidays in the US, we're stuck with three weekends in the summer: Memorial Day, The Fourth and Labor Day. Memorial Day has a number of large regional cons. Labor Day has those two big deals, but the Fourth only has WesterCon, and a change with WesterCon timing might



The Inquest for Fan Guest of Honour Capt. Kevin Standlee

help it break through. It's something that needs to be thought about, especially since the weekend is when the first WorldCon took place.

There were some weak points to CascadiaCon. They are, as I see them:

- 1) The Pocket Guide. Just too messed up and they even had a thing where they listed participant's panels by number, but gave no list of panels by number.
- 2) The distance between the sites. Yeah, I know the story of the Interaction hotels being miles from the SECC, but still, it's always best to have everything in a reasonable distance, even if it means slightly smaller space.
- 3) The Two GoH no-shows. Not the fault of the committee, but still, it's hard to overlook.
- 4) The Website wasn't very good as there were errors and it wasn't easy to find the info I was looking for. It's looked OK, but I spent a lot of time trying to figure out the hours and location of Reg and they also didn't list Panelist bios. Little things like that really help me when I'm researching panels.

As far as the things that they got right

- 1) Hospitality- Great service and a friendly atmosphere
- 2) The Daily Newsletter- Very well-done.
- 3) The Fanzine Lounge- a great place to sit and chat or read or whatever.
- 4) Liz Danforth- A great and personable GoH who made a lot of effort to get out and meet the fen.
- 5) The Exhibits- they were given a great space and they were so nicely done that they certainly deserve mention.

And, as far as my personal low-lights

- 1) Only had a minute or two with Andy Hooper and not getting to talk to several other prominent area fans like Randy Byers. I really should try and get up to Seattle more.
- 2) Didn't get to go on the Seattle Underground tour nor to Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe. Both had been highly recommended.
- 3) Only spent an hour or so sitting the fan table with Michael Siladi. I was being pulled in too many directions to make it happen. Mea Culpa, Mea Maxima Culpa.

And finally, the Personal Highlights!

- 1) Getting to chat with Art Widner and David Kyle. First Fandom isn't going to be around forever, well maybe Forry will as none of the trials he's been through seem to have beat him, and getting to talk with them really made me realize how far fandom has come, how much it's changed and that I really should try and talk to these guys more.
- 2) The Seafood. I can't possibly say exactly how good the seafood was at The Fisherman's or Lowell's. Just so good.
- 3) The Museum Earth panel. I really felt like I held my own and the panel went really well for all of us. I was told that it was much like a panel that might happen at a Potlatch, which makes me more and more likely to attend next year.
- 4) Making it through the weekend without killing, or being killed by, The Little One and Gen.



And so that's that. NASFiC's done come and gone and I'm ready to get back to over-producing. The next issue should have a few other views of CascadiaCon and some reactions to my reactions.

Emailed Words of Comment from My Gentle Readers That Happened to Have Been Sent to Garcia@computerhistory.org.

We'll Start Off with the Canadian

Dream, Lloyd Penney (and why didn't anyone tell me it was pronounced Etobicoch instead of Etobicoke?)

Dear Chris:

Gonna sneak around while you're in Seattle, and I will catch up with the Garciaazines I have in the hopper. That's The Drink Tank 41, Pork Authority Plus, and Storm. I'm being ambitious today, so here goes.

You'll have to tell me if you ran into Alex von Thorn and Marah Searle-Kovacevic in Seattle. Both are from Toronto, and both had important roles to play with CascadiaCon. They are also among the only surviving members of the Torcon 3 committee to actually go on to work other Worldcons or other major conventions.

I kept my eyes open, but I imagine Alex was buried up to his neck in programming issues. I did run into a few folks from your neck of the woods though and there were a lot of Canadians.

Tell us about the Fanzine Lounge there...I hope it will influence future lounges.

I mentioned in my report that it was great, but I barely even mentioned Steve Forty's collection of old Gestetners, including one from the 1920s that was beautiful. I was in awe when I watched them running. I'm trying to get BayCon to let me run a Fanzine Lounge for next year and I got a lot of ideas from the CascadiaCon version.

I love to screw up hotels' floor limits by paying for my hotel room in cash up front, They hate it, but can't argue with the cash. The only hotel that actually rewarded us for paying in advance was the New Orleans Hyatt. (Every time I turn on the news...I hope and pray that the old New Orleans, the Big Easy, can return. But, the destruction is so widespread, I have to

wonder.)

The worst joke I heard anyone make at CascadiaCon (not including the ones that Gardner and Jay were making) was "Well, this is final punishment for NoLaCon." I admit, I laughed, but I felt dirty for doing it.

A fannish blog directory is a good idea, sez me. Got enough on my plate right now, but I hope someone will take off with that. It won't get me blogging, but it might help people get together.

Cheryl Morgan comes close because she cruises so many different Blogs and posts on the EmCit.com Blog with the highlights. I might just put it together if I can find someone to host it for me.

Pork Authority Plus...several of us have had the idea of how long Worldcons will go on, given declining literacy levels, and rising costs to get just about anywhere. If the Finnish government could be persuaded to finance a Worldcon, Finland would certainly get my vote.

Here, Here! All in for the Finns! I'd love nothing more than to have a WorldCon coming at me live from Helsinki. I'd do everything to help them win it, but I think it's at least ten years off.

InterSection was enough for some people, InterAction was too much, but InterDiction and InterJection? The author of this article is not going to be allowed into Great Britain with these ideas.

Good point. I also messed up on the layout so I gotta fix it!

Storm...Hurricane Katrina has caused more damage than any of us imagined. NO is effectively uninhabitable, and two broken levees are making sure that the city is under water, as much as 15 feet in some places. We are getting some gasoline price gouging here; a litre of gas is about C\$1.25. Do the litre to gallon math, and then the currency conversion, and it comes to about \$4.75 a gallon. So, no one in the US should complain if they're getting gas for about \$3

a gallon; US gas prices are artificially low, anyway.

That's true, I'll admit it (and the same could be said of movie ticket prices, which I always complain about even though I know when adjusted, almost every other country in the world is far more expensive) but it still hurts when you've been scraping by and have your fuel bills double on you.

By the way, found out the other day that the US brings in more petroleum from Canada than it does from Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. Now to see if Dubya can become a true leader as the US goes through its worst-ever natural disaster, or will he just slough it off to other members of his cabinet.

You know, I think Bush is doing an OK job with it, but FEMA and some of the other agencies are failing, obviously. Bush has pushed through two large aid packages, both of which are far larger than I'd ever expected. Still, there are major problems and they all seem to stem from a FEMA management team that just doesn't know how to deal with a massive storm. The response to the 1989 Quake was far better, and so was the response to Andrew.

I can imagine CascadiaCon is not quite the party its organizers had hoped for, especially with the New Orleans disaster, but the work begins. The Red Cross organizations of many countries, including Canada, have offered assistance. The United States has always been generous when other countries have had to deal with natural disasters; now to see if the country is big enough to accept some help in its own time of need. I hope it will say yes.

All done, and caught up! Hope you had a great time in Seattle, and tell us all about it!

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Ladies and Gentlemen...Peter Sullivan!

Hope that the NASFiC goes well, both generally and for you. I wouldn't expect you to be able to go back and decipher your notes from your last NASFiC to "compare &

contrast." But do NASFiCs have a distinctive "feel" to them, or are they just like a slightly smaller Worldcon with slightly fewer people with weird accents? (This last being a concept that can cover Brits, Aussies, Europeans and even those guys from the Nippon 2007 concom.)

I found my notes from my first NASFiC: Day One- Mom's carrying me in this embarrassing Snuggli. How am I supposed to hit on teh hot corset chicks in a Snuggli? Day Two- Through Hissy fit when I discovered new tooth. Day Three- Wow, I'm almost as tall as Harlan Ellison!

I suppose, at least in theory, a NASFiC should be higher status than a Worldcon, in that it doesn't happen as often. How clear are the WSFS rules on what Worldcon locations trigger a NASFiC? Would a Tijuana Worldcon trigger a NASFiC? (This one's not actually too far fetched, in that if a bunch of San Diego fans got Worldcon-hungry, moving over the border might make hotel and convention space much cheaper.) Or Mexico City? Panama City (a la Corflu)? Bogatoa? (These last three are definantly theoretical, unless there are some large undiscovered fan groups out there that we don't know about.)

Mexico City does have a growing fannish community, though it's mostly media.

Gasoline at \$5 a gallon? UK petrol prices are heading towards £1 a litre (they switched from pricing in gallons to pricing in litres the last time prices soared), which works out at \$6.50 to \$7 a gallon, depending on what exchange rate you use. (Also, I think the US gallon may be slightly different to the English one.)

Enjoyed The Pork Authority Plus, although I think it should really have been called The Drink Tank #1084, to keep the numbering in sync.

The Drink Tank Issue 42 was written by Christopher Garcia, Lloyd Penney and Peter Sullivan. The Next Issue will be a more general look at what folks thought of NASFiC, so if you don't care, don't read!