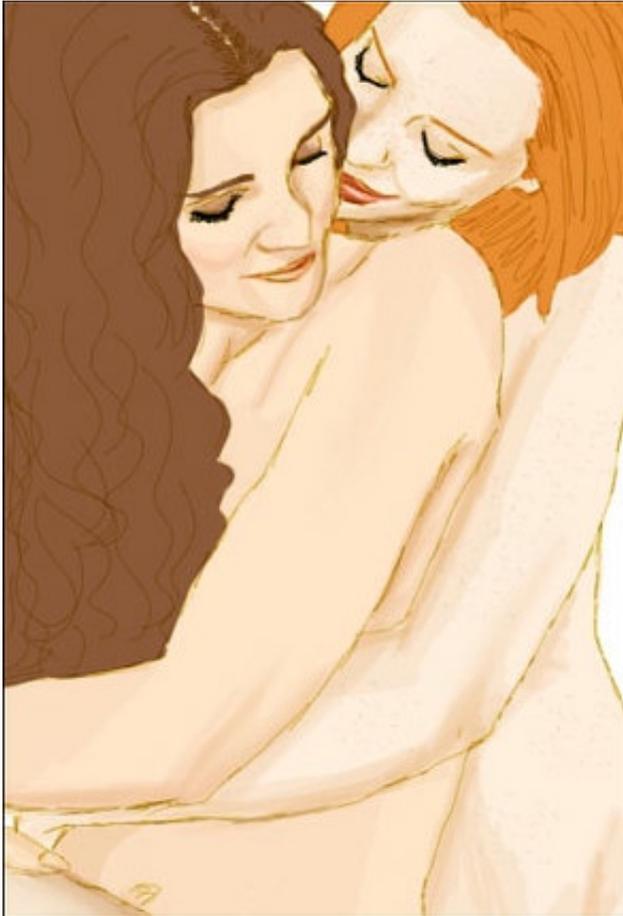




The Drink Tank Issue 89: In The Mix

Chris For TAFF



There are always little clues that are dropped. It's not always easy to find them, but they're there for you to find, if you try hard enough. A couple of phone calls to New York provided me with clues.

I called to talk with M on Saturday and it was a wonderful conversation. She was chipper and sounded far less medicated than the last time I called.

"So, am I to understand it that you and Miss SaBean have been reliv-

ing former glories?"

She laughed. Giggled! Positively purred!

"Yeah, it's been so wonderful to have her back."

We talked on that a little and M explained that the issues that were there years ago were no longer and that the two of them were closer emotionally and that Jay understood far better and played along...the lucky bastard.

We were talking and she asked me about TAFF and WorldCon and when I'd be out to visit. It was the type of conversation that we'd had a hundred times before. When I hung up, I had a weird feeling.

I called in drunk on Tuesday and figured I'd give them another call. I got Jay. The two of us haven't really had a long one-on-one chat in ages, but here was the perfect time since M was out getting the first of her hormone therapies with Judith. SaBean was conked out asleep in her room for once.

"M's been talking about buying a spread. Maybe on the coast by Santa Barbara. Close enough so you could drive." Jay said.

"I'd love that, especially since you know how much joy there is for me in SB."

He talked about places they'd looked at on-line and how much they'd cost and the little details that made me sure that there was something I needed to ask.

"So, the prognosis is that bad, huh?"

Jay paused. I knew that I had hit the nail on the head. For some reason, as much as we all worry about SaBean, they all try to cover me from the harshest news items. They even kept one of SaBean's over-doses a secret. I never knew about it until she wrote it up in *The Drink Tank*.

"The treatment she's on has a 75% five year survival. About half make it ten years."

That's what was behind all those happy words flowing out. There was a looming matter that someone had to tell me but no one wanted to. I laughed a little.

"Those are great odds. I'd bet those."

"You'd bet anything, Chris." Jay said, both deflated and relieved. "M said that you didn't need to know yet."

"Of course I don't, but I want to."

We talked a little more about the specifics and M got back and we talked a little too. They're all really doing well, even with the heaviness set up in the place. M's declared that they'll be staying in the US, and that a place by Santa Barbara will probably be their ultimate choice. She's asked if Judith and SaBean want to move in if they go and they both said yes.

We're a tight bunch, we all love each other, but the next few months and years might be the hardest on us ever.

With that news...

I've got a date.

I told M about it at the end of the call and she was very excited. She said that any girl who would ask me out and say 'Well, we may as well make our first date a drinking date' is the kind of girl she would approve of me seeing.

She's a nice girl, a teacher actually. 24, non-white (though exactly what she is is a difficult area and I'm betting she's at least two different things) and a little bit shorter than me. While the other date that I set up a while back hasn't happened yet, though she did email me yesterday) I'll give this a shot and see what happens.

How To Win at Poker

***by
Mike Swan***

I'm a decent poker player. Chris may be able to win tourneys (and I've played against him enough to know that his method of play is perfect for house games) but I can clean up given the right amount of starting scratch.

Here's the first thing: play big. If there's a 3/6 dollar table, skip it. Play 10/20. In other words...BE A MAN!!! The action will be smarter and the chumps who will always just call will sit elsewhere, scared off by the numbers. I've been at many big number tables where I've had nothing but pros

at the table and I've always done better than I have when it's me and the dentists in for some convention.

Next, try and find a hook. If you know a guy likes to play bigger when he's on the button, constantly raise him. If there's a guy who only plays when he's the big blind, always fold. The key is to not let the others run the table. If they're finding that they can't get action playing their way, then they'll start to make stupid mistakes.

Here's a good one: always play a particular hand. It doesn't matter what it is, but choose something that worked for you once and play the hell out of it. For Chris it's 2-7 off suit, the worst hand in Hold-'em. Somehow, he manages to win with it quite a bit too. I like 9-10 suited. I'll never fold 9-10 suited. I've folded Big Slick without blinking before the flop, but 9-10 suited and I'm on.

There are people who have super-computers for brains. I hate them, but you can always outplay them. They'll play for odds, so a straight draw will be a stonger incentive to play than a middle pair. They can be combat-ed by playing pairs and trips only and folding for no good reason.

You should plan on losing three hands in ten and winning one. You gotta make that one count.

If you're a woman and you've got the boobs, there's no harm in showing a little cleavage. It worked for Jennifer Tilly.





If you asked me what my favourite Film Genre is, I'd have a hard time figuring out which to say. There's always Sci-Fi. Horror is a personal fave, as is the Western. All of those genres have definite failures along the years. The one that I think I love the most, as far as film goes, is Noir.

Noir grew out of 1930s French Cinema and 1920s and 30s American Pulp Detective stories. Phrases like gams, roscoes, and piano wire all took on new meaning. It was a fine time for film when Noir was strong. There were

legendary flicks like *The Maltese Falcon* (one of the greatest films and the best ever set in San Francisco) *The Big Sleep* (Bogey and Bacall, baby!) and *Double Indemnity*. It's hard for me to think of any other genre that produced three films of that level. Sci-Fi? Nope, only 2001 and *Star Wars* come close to that level (maybe *The Day The Earth Stood Still*). Westerns have *The Wild Bunch* and *The Sons of Katie Elder*. Horror doesn't have anything in that range. Noir films like those and *Laura* and any number of other films of the 1940s and 50s were excellent.

Sadly, it's a genre that is hardly ready to be reborn.

Every attempt at Noir since about 1980 has failed, or if it has succeeded it has been through the melding of the genre. *Blade Runner*, which would be on that list of Science Fiction films if it was really an SF film and would also be on the list of Noir films if it had been a real Noir film, is a MashUp of the two that flourishes in the connection between the two. The film *Body Heat* is a Noir, but really it's just a sex thriller. Films like *Palmetto* get the style right, but blow it when it comes to mood.

Noir, along with its evil women, its shadowy lighting and many twists, relies on plot. Somehow *The Big Sleep* manages to be great without a resolution that makes sense, but mood takes it a long way.

**Letter-Graded Mail
sent to Garcia@computerhistory.org
by my Gentle Readers**

If John Purcell, the guy who's leading off my lettercol this week, were a plant...what kind of plant would he be?

Chris, I am now sitting at the computer on Saturday morning, still soaking in the news about rich brown. I remember rich from a handful of conventions years ago, and find it so hard to believe that he's suddenly gone. I will try not to let the news get in the way of this loc, but it will certainly curtail the length. Along with the rest of us in fandom, I will miss rich.

I wish I'd had the chance to meet him. It's been a big blow. I recently looked over the Memorial pages that folks put up when Bill Rotsler died and it seems very similar.

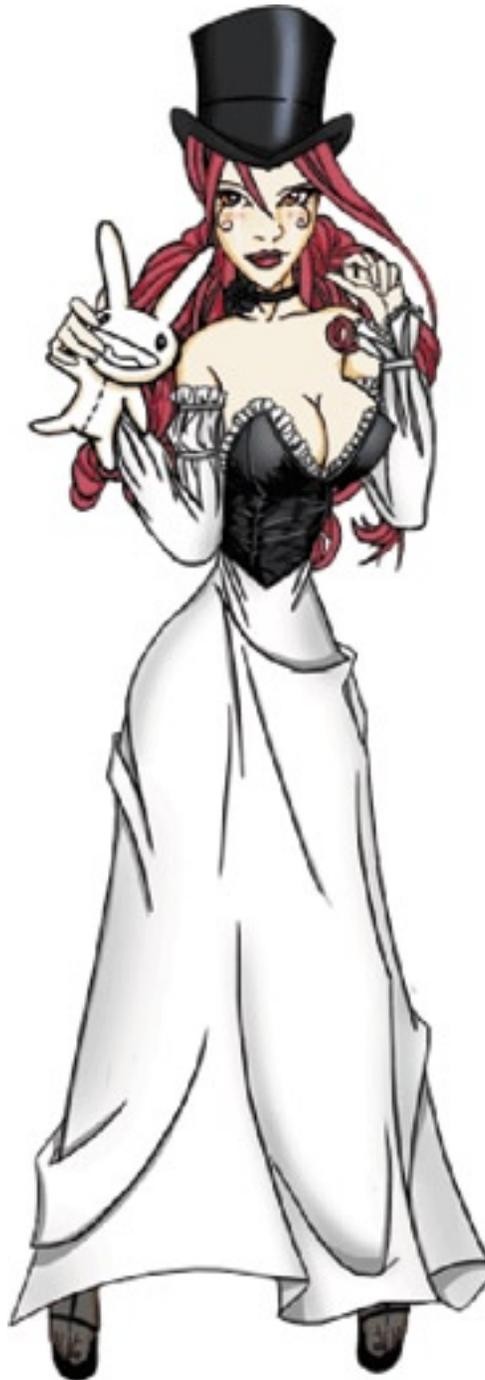
Good luck and best wishes on your TAFF candidacy. I am proud to be one of your nominators, and honored that you asked me. Like you wrote in response to Ted White's loc in ish #88, the wave of fanac you're riding right now indicates how popular you are at present. "Now is the time" sounds like the perfect campaign slogan for you. Besides, I don't think anything could possibly slow your production schedule down - unless you suddenly found yourself in a deep, sexually active

relationship. No matter. CHRIS FOR TAFF!

Me? A relationship? Ha! Well, maybe with the sea... As far as now being the right time, I certainly agree. It's going to be funky, that's for sure, and now there's the new Cafe Press shop (www.cafepress.com/chrisfortaff) that'll provide fun wear for the race.

Frank Wu's update on Guidolon the Giant Space Chicken raises an interesting question that Frank grapples with: will he sell out to simply get the film made? I don't think he will. Judging by all that he's written in your zine, it sounds like Frank understands the inner workings of these people enough to avoid making this pitfall. The two of you are in a much more cutthroat industry than I am (teaching, which has its own cutthroat tendencies), and so should be very aware and careful to read *ALL* of that dreaded fine print before inking any deals. Maybe a sponsor will crawl out of the woodwork to finance Guidolon. Keep us abreast of developments, Frank; we're waiting on bated breath while we dip our chicken nuggets in honey mustard sauce. (I didn't know chickens had nuggets. That explains all that clucking in the hen house.)

MMMMMMM...honey mustard.



Teaching is brutal. The concept of tenure is enough to make me want to pull my hair out. Still, entertainment is a difficult road. You really have to be strong to work in it. That's why I'm only on the sidelines.

Quickly, Chris: tell me when you need that rock and roll article. I can easily write up a brief rock and roll biography for that issue - a few pages oughta do it.

Probably not until the Fall, but more likely Winter.

As for your 88th issue (good cover promo for you for TAFF: body slam if you don't vote!), I really don't have much to say, but I do have a brief tale to tell about one of the two trips my family has made into Mexico.

Back at Christmastime of 1999, my family was driving down to Phoenix from Marshalltown, Iowa, because the high school marching band was invited to be in the Fiesta Bowl Parade (which meant free admission to the game!) on January 2, 2000. We were well stocked with goodies and supplies just in case the Y2K crash occurred and stranded us in either New Mexico or Arizona (alas, didn't happen). When we got to Las Cruces, NM, we crossed over the border with some on-line correspondent acquaintances - does that make them virtual friends? - for

lunch and sight seeing in one of the nearby towns. Needless to say, it was like slipping across a boundary in the Twilight Zone; we were amazed at how muddy and dirty it was compared to New Mexico. The whole upshot of this side trip was that I got food poisoning from the chicken I ate, which made me miss being at the game and on the field at half-time to help hold up this gigantic American flag. Oh, well. I survived to tell this brief tale.

Wow. That sucks. I only go to TJ and maybe Nuevo Laredo, you know, the touristy Mexico.

Ted White writes interesting letters. For instance, I never knew that hops are related to marijuana. No wonder heavy beer drinking results in getting the munchies (being silly here). I kind of liked the taste of beer, especially after a game of softball or soccer; an ice cold beer definitely hit the spot. Of course, anything cold would do, but we'd all have a couple and call it a night.

I learned to love Whiskey before I ever even tried beer. I'm not sure why, but I have a feeling it might be the burn.

Ted also talks about Ann Coulter, and I'd have to agree about her being skinny. About the only good thing I can say about her is that she looks good in a short skirt - you said

this in ish #87 - and that's about it. I realize that this is a rather sexist statement, but I can see how some people (like my wife) can argue that Ann Coulter is empowering women to express themselves and not be afraid to stand up to the criticisms of others. She's a strong woman, and that is a good thing to model. Now her *politics...* well, that's where my wife draws the line. I just thought I'd share this tidbit of input from my wife because it gives the viewpoint of an intelligent woman (Valerie) on a controversial figure (Ann). Nuff said.

I can see that, but at the same time I seriously fear there's a bit of 'I might or might not mean it, but I'll damn sure say it loud and at any microphone you point at me!' about her. I won't argue that she's a strong woman, and that is a powerful thing.

Two good issues, sir. Thank you muchly, and now it's back to working in the 13th issue of *In A Prior Lifetime*. See you there!

Can't wait to read it, as always. IAPL is always a good read.

All the best,

John Purcell

That pretty much does it for now.



When thinking about writing, I often think about the way in which a computer would put together a story. When I was writing fiction, I'd sit down and stare at the pad or the screen and actively try and write like a computer might write. That sounds weird, I know, but there's something to it.

Computers have been used to create 'art' for years. Some of the earliest demos were computer animations using spots on memory tubes to make pictures. The Whirlwind was shown on CBS' *she Now It Can Be Told*. The way you tested printer

capabilities was to have it print a copy of the Mona Lisa. There were decks of punched cards that produced all sorts of art things, but it was never the Computer that was doing the Art. The computer was just a tool.

Until a fellow named Harold Cohen. Harold was an artist who was used to being exhibited at places like The Tate and Barbican museums. He was classically trained and a genius. One day, he ran into a bunch of computer-types including Ed Feigenbaum from Stanford's AI Labs (better known as SAIL). He started to think about ways to incorporate computers into art. One of the ways was through programming the 'rules' of traditional painting into a computer. Harold, along with Feigenbaum and others, programmed a system called AARON which was a robotic arm that would draw the outlines of images and choose the arrangements. The machine was the artist in that it selected forms and set them into the picture, but it was only able to use a set of forms that had been pre-determined and entered. The debate over whether or not this was art has raged on ever since, though recent upgrades to the AARON system currently allow it to find forms via video feeds. The original AARON is now in the collection of the Computer History Museum. How else would I know about it?



The first time I can think of that a computer was used for writing was in the early 1960s. CBS again wanted to feature an MIT invention. The machine was called TX-0 (or Transistor-experiment computer 0) which had been around for a couple of years. They had arranged for the computer to learn a certain set of rules which would allow it to write a Western. There were certain rules like a Robber had to wear black, he could count his stolen money, the sheriff draws his gun, the robber drinks, all sorts of things. The Westerns it produced were two to three minutes long each and were very simple. One found the machine caught in a loop where the Robber was pulling his gun from the Sheriff's holster and the Sheriff was spinning his revolver. Weird.

The theory that I used to try and take on was that computers can only work with a set list of things. I've always been accused of using too many

themes and references that no one would possibly get. Not that I wrote everything like a giant in-joke, but that I expected everyone to be Dennis Miller and get my refs left and right.

So, I started writing like a computer.

All I would do is give myself a short list of things that I could talk about it. I'd include a random thought or two, but I'd only allow myself to use a few small things.

Of course, it was all for naught. No one ever bought any of my fiction, but I could write a crap load of Non-fic and everyone wanted that!

