



January 2017



Peter Weston 1943-2017

*There are very few fans whose deaths are mourned not only by their close friends and immediate family but by the entire fannish community, whether they considered themselves intimate friends or not. Art Widner was one, Dave Kyle was another, as was Peter Weston. It's no secret that Peter and I often had our differences of opinion. In my time I, perhaps deludedly, thought of myself as something of an iconoclast, and Peter's iconic status and his rather rigid tastes in sf (which I saw as unadventurous and basically the antithesis of what *I* thought sf should really be about) often found us at odds. He also publicly proclaimed himself not fond of many of the endeavours of some of my closest friends, who as it turned out just happened to be Ratfans. He thought we were rude, and in turn I think many of us were rather pleased to have disturbed what we saw as his fairly provincial moral standards. We *were* rude and immoral, for Heaven's Sake, and knew and often gloried in it. Last time I met him face to face Peter said I had always hated him, but that is not true. I socialized with him in the early days of British fandom, I wrote for and to his fanzines, and worked with him on the committee of Seacon '79 which I think he saw as his apotheosis as an International Fan, and he did a good job of presenting its public face.*

Mike Meara wrote this account of Pete's funeral on a fan group and has graciously allowed me to reprint it. Other people weighed in with their contributions which will be reprinted here subject to their permissions, mainly for the many people who may have wanted to attend the funeral and celebrate Peter's life but couldn't.

Warm Memories in a Cold Field

The morning was cold and foggy, but at least it wasn't raining. Pat and I set off from Spondon in good time, knowing that, satnav notwithstanding, we would probably get lost in Sutton Coldfield. And so we did. I have done this several times before, and am now expert at it.

Our chosen pub rendezvous, the Station, was as close to the eponymous rail transport nexus as one could wish, but was cunningly hiding *behind* it. Thankfully a car park was adjacent, and luckily a pay-machine that worked was only several hundred yards away. By the time I got back to the pub, the three familiar fannish faces (and their bodies) who had been waiting outside had sensibly gone inside and got a round in. Dave Langford and Martin Hoare had travelled only from Reading, but it was Nigel Rowe, currently of Chicago, who had surely come the furthest. Later we were joined by Malcolm Edwards, Rob Hansen, Mark and Claire, and Dave Lally. This latter had brought with him an ancient tome, its pages crumbling like those of Peter's beloved sf pulps. This was an early BSFA membership book, with Peter's name therein, and mine too, I am told. "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the BSFA?" Well, no or yes.

All too soon we had to leave this pleasant boozier and its excellent ale and head cremwards for the main business of the day. (We had passed it on the way in, and thus found it again without difficulty. No, really.) Parking was chocker, but we struck lucky, or maybe it was skill. There was already a large gathering queueing outside, including more fans: the Pickersgills, the Peytons, Tony Berry, Steve Green, Vernon and Pat Brown, Doug and Julia Spencer, Ian Sorensen, others whose names I am unsure of, and doubtless still others that I've forgotten. And Stan Eling, one-time Brum Group stalwart, now in his eighties, who for sad reasons I hadn't seen for more years than I care to remember.

We waited a long time in the open. It was cold and damp, but at least it wasn't raining. The hearse arrived. Bizarrely, it was a Jaguar. Peter would have liked that, as he used to own a fine example of the marque. Pat and I had a ride in it once.

Some five minutes late, things got under way. As the coffin was carried in, I speculated that some of its handles might be from Peter's personal collection. The batting order outside the door confirmed my guess that we were due a double-slotter, an hour's worth. Inside the deceptively spacious chapel it was SRO, and Pat and I were among the dozens of standers. I didn't mind: looking around, it was clear that many of the mourners needed a seat more than I did.

We each got a nice, card-printed order of service with some good photos of Peter in his later years. It would be a Humanist service, so no hymns, thank gopod. No audience participation at all, in fact. The music: Jupiter from Gustav Holst's Planets Suite to enter; Louis Armstrong's What a Wonderful World for the Quiet Reflection bit, during which I reflected on Peter's taste in music. Then All I Have to Do is Dream by the Everly Brothers for the Committal, finishing with Buddy Holly's True Love Ways to exit. In between the music were Tom Shippey on My Friend Peter, a poem read by daughter Alison, a eulogy from other daughter Lucy and a Poem For Grandad written and read by nine-year-old grandson Ted. (Although I was a bit rude and dismissive of Peter's musical taste up there, the common motifs of the three songs are positive thinking and optimism, which is Peter as we all knew him, so fair do's.)

After the interminable process of exiting and milling about, frankly I'd have preferred to retire to the pub again with the rest of the fannish contingent, but it seems I was the only one in favour of this, and getting pissed off-piste was anyway never an option for the driver (me). So instead we (and almost everyone else) repaired to the "do" at the Aston Wood Golf Club. This was in the middle of nowhere, but it's a Golf Club, right? Martin earned his front-seat place in the car by having the route already set up on his phone satnav app. "In nine hundred yards you will have forgotten what I just told you, so I'll tell you again when we get a bit closer, and again after that" seemed to be the basis of the algorithm. No wonder he calls her NavBitch.

At the Club there was a free bar, with plenty of soft drinks for the drivers. Eileen, who has a Black Belt in hostessing, came round to see everyone. She seemed to be holding it together very well, better than her daughters.

There was a display of photos, and of Pete's many awards, fannish and otherwise. Also a book in which we were encouraged to write a memoir. I considered mentioning *The Curious Incident of the Belly Dancer* at the 1977 Worldcon, but quickly thought better of it after Pat beat me surreptitiously about the groin. Also, a nice touch this, hand-made packets of seeds from Peter's garden, for us to plant in his memory. I have never tried to grow sweet peas before, and green fingers have I none, but we'll see.

After about an hour, dusk and the rush hour were both approaching fast, so we made our farewells and conveyed Nigel to his rendezvous with a cousin who lives in Darley Abbey, a village-turned-suburb on the north side of Derby. The A38 was cold and dark, but at least it wasn't raining. Nigel says he's trying to see more of what remains of his family; in the context of the day, this seems a wise move.

It was a good do, as these things go. Though I am no fan of funerals, I'm glad we went. Goodbye, Peter. *You* won't need to go knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door. Just turn the knob.

IN RESPONSE CLAIRE BRIALEY WROTE

Thanks to Mike for the report, which I saw shortly after we got the second of our trains home. Jim L's comment also hit the nail on the head: once we got to whatever you call the after-party at funerals, it seemed entirely plausible that Peter himself would walk in at any moment. Conventions often felt like that when he still might, and I expect that's not going to stop for a while.

Indeed, there were a couple of moments when some of us thought he had, and wondered whether Peter had a brother who might have been there. (Lots of relatives with whom the family had shared holidays and other good moments were mentioned in the eulogy at the funeral from Peter's daughter Lucy, but I don't recall whether a Weston brother came up then.) If not, one of his other relatives or in-laws or friends bears an uncanny resemblance to him in profile – and, unsurprisingly, when he talks.

It was also unsurprising that Peter seems to have been one of those people who is wholly himself with everyone: different groups of friends and colleagues and his family all reported and recognised familiar Peter-like behaviours and attributes in all aspects of his life – and the positive drive that came through even when he was arguing a point was something that his daughters and Eileen all mentioned as being a feature of his character right to the end. He clearly felt that he'd had a happy and lucky life, and he'd clearly worked very hard to make that happen.

It was notable that so many people from so many elements of Peter's life had felt it right to be there. As Mike said, lots of people were standing at the service in a big room; with typical Weston efficiency, they must have either estimated right for tables at the golf club or phoned ahead quickly after the service.

Peter and Eileen's eldest daughter, Alison, told a few more stories in welcoming people to the club, which also explained the displays they'd set up. Eileen, who worked round the tables later talking to smaller groups more personally, told us then that she'd asked Alison to ensure there was an emphasis on science fiction and fandom, given it was so very important to Peter and had informed and inspired so much of his approach to life. Tom Shippey had made this a feature of his speech as delivered at the funeral itself, and it was woven through what Lucy had said as much as the interests that drove Peter's business and involvement in 'auto jumble' fandom.

Alison mentioned that too, and his Rotary and Probus activities which had drawn other friends to the funeral, and the interests and enthusiasms and contributions that were common to all those hobbies; but Peter came across as an SF fan to the end, recommending books (new to her despite having been reading SF pretty much since she could read) even through the final weeks when she was helping him to sort out some more of his possessions.

I expect that most people from all the communities there went away feeling renewed in a sense that Peter had cared about what each of us cared about, which should make us feel even more sorry that he died. But the funeral did what they were meant to, I think: it enabled us to say goodbye and to focus on all the things about Peter we don't want to forget and which – like the mighty Weston dynasty, proposed in a convention quiz over twenty years ago as the race which shall rule the sevagram – will carry on now he's got things started.

Yes, I know that's rather sentimental. Many people will have stories about Peter, just as he had many stories to tell and did so very entertainingly, and not all of them will make him sound like a paragon and not everyone liked him. But I did, and I also respect and admire many of the things he achieved and inspired in SF and fandom. Lucy said that the only thing Peter was concerned about in dying now was that his grandchildren would forget him (I think most people knew that being able to support his family was very important to Peter). But I don't think they will, and I hope SF fandom doesn't either.

CLAIRE WROTE REGARDING THE BSFA MEMBERSHIP BOOK:

Rob H may be your man for this one, but we had a good look too on the train from Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield since it was – to my possibly odd mind – fascinating. It was certainly an early set of membership records; it included the first members with the early numbers, but it was difficult to tell whether it was the very

first since it had some details pasted in. Possibly it was the first version to be kept as an actual membership book; I did feel rather as though I should be wearing white gloves to handle it, and Dave Lally's already had to tape the spine to keep it intact.

Many former (and current) BSFA members are listed, including Mike and others here, some at early unfamiliar addresses – later updated, and sometimes showing their career paths as well as geographical moves – and some with previously unspecified and occasionally entertaining middle names. Or first names, as it happened. Although I'd either forgotten or not known that the middle initial of Peter R Weston stood for Raymond until I saw the death notice.

DAVE LANGFORD OFFERED HIS THOUGHTS:

Martin was totally confident of steering blindfold to the pub right next to Sutton Coldfield station, having long ago spent a while commuting to the local hospital for work purposes; but in the event he couldn't find it in the desolate emptiness on what turned out to be the wrong side of the station. Some helpless milling around ensued. Fortunately Nigel Rowe -- who'd joined us at Birmingham New Street – unerringly led the party in the right direction. The "waiting outside" mentioned by Mike was because, thanks to a smooth and trouble-free rail journey, we'd arrived a few minutes before opening time at noon.

I had no idea Malcolm Edwards was even coming, and it was a mildly unnerving experience to meet him for the first time that day in the bog. He and Martin marked the occasion with garish ties (Martin's being hand-painted and very skiffy), others with boring old black ones. Dave Lally turned up with Claire, Mark and Rob, waving an ancient BSFA membership book and promising vast egoboo to fogey fans who could find their names in it. Alas, the numbering stopped at 1273 and (mysteriously I still remember this) I'm a Jophan-come-lately at 1350.

With lunch over and transit courtesy of Meara Limousine Services, we found a vast crowd waiting outside the crematorium. (*Skip list of fans mentioned by Mike Meara.*) That's nearly all the sensitive fannish faces I remember. Krysia Oborn turned up after us, though before they opened the chapel doors. When the funeral procession arrived I probably wasn't the only one to imagine a familiar Brummy voice muttering "The door handles on these hearses aren't too bad but the locks are really crap." Of all the wise words spoken during the actual humanist service, I heard only about a dozen and am looking forward to the condensed version of Tom Shippey's speech that he promised to send for *Ansible*.

Sadly Stan Eling, with whom I'd have liked a few words, didn't come to the later reception at the Golf Club, or if he did I missed him. Like Claire I kept noticing the presumed relative who at any distance looks uncannily like Peter: A Spectre Is Haunting Sutton Coldfield. This was also the first time I'd seen all three of his

daughters (and been towered over by two of them) in the same room. Chatted with Tom Shippey -- who was of course there in his fan capacity as well as speaker -- about various memories including Peter's *Andromeda* anthologies of yore, long-ago Novacons, and the also recently deceased Mike Dickinson (another nasty shock). Peter had thoughtfully boxed up all his fanzines for Tom; they'll eventually go to the SF Foundation and, Tom hopes, will all be digitized. I reassured him that the 21st century issues of *Prolapse/Relapse* are already online at Bill Burns's efanzines.com site; but a digital run of *Speculation* would be a splendid thing. (Later I discovered that the Fanac.org people have very recently posted page images of many issues of *Speculation* at their site, though there are a lot of gaps.)

The packets of seeds being given away offered a choice of runner beans, sweet peas or sunflowers. There was a note saying that Peter was jolly good at growing things, with the unexplained exception of onions: some arcane family in-joke perhaps, The Great Onion Disaster of 2005. I hadn't brought a proper camera but tried to take a few shots of the trophy table with my phone. Besides multiple Novas and FAAn awards and many photos, the exhibits included a golden Hugo rocket (without base) from the Weston foundry and a framed Dave Wood cover for *With Stars In My Eyes*. (Pause for Graham to shout "WESTON YOU BASTARD!") I scrawled something in the memory book, but not a Widower's Wonderful Verse as first hoped, owing to total lack of inspiration along those time-honoured lines. I blame the emotion and indeed the drink, not just the usual glass or two of wine but a free bar that showed no signs of running out even as darkness closed in and the party reached its end.

Martin could not be persuaded to attempt the gruelling half-mile walk to the local railway station, but Krysia Oborn (bless her) gave us a lift back to Sutton Coldfield. I don't know who gave me the foul cold that came on a couple of days later, but that too is part of the fan tradition. Goodbye, Peter.

MALCOLM EDWARDS CHIPPED IN WITH

I don't think that anyone has mentioned that Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn were also there. Ed had probably known Peter longer than anyone in fandom other than Rog Peyton (we found his BSFA membership in the book Dave Lally brought along -- he had joined in 1963). Ed mentioned that there had been a Birmingham group in the 1960s prior to the Brum Group we now know being founded in (?) 1971. Of course, Peter was instrumental in setting it up. Apparently Wikipedia disallows any mention of it.

Someone told me that Peter had a younger brother, who must have been the Peter Weston lookalike others have noted. I didn't identify his sister.

It seemed to several of us that three quarters of the guests would have found the emphasis on sf and fandom a bit odd, and not the Peter they knew from the Rotary Club, Probus (Rotary for retired people), and the world of auto jumbles (Peter's other passion). There was a nice story -- I think from Alison at the reception -- about Peter sifting through a table of apparent junk at one such event and finding a part he couldn't identify. He asked the seller what it was, and was told that he didn't know -- but there was a man with a table on the other side of the room who knew everything there was to know about car locks and handles, and he should ask him. His name ... Peter Weston. Peter's response: "*I'm* Peter Weston and I haven't a clue."

I think knowing chuckles were exchanged at our table over mentions of Peter taking over the chairmanship and newsletters of various organizations.

I talked to Greg (and to a degree Rob) at some length about how this felt like the end of an era -- perhaps the Weston Age of fandom.

Tom Shippey, Lucy and Alison had of course prepared their remarks, so there will be copies around. It must have been a particularly difficult day for Tom, as next to Peter his closest friend in fandom was probably Mike Dickinson, who he was planning to see this week. Mike's last couple of years sounded pretty grim -- he had been in a serious car accident and had suffered a split pelvis. Then lung cancer was diagnosed. Tom said that at the end he weighed less than nine stone -- which if, like me, you remember Mike as a tall and powerfully built man, was pretty shocking.

AS DID ROB HANSEN

I travelled up to Birmingham on the same train as Mark and Claire, but while they luxuriated in the opulence of First Class I was with the proles in steerage. One of said proles was Dave Lally, who spotted me while making his way through the carriages. He showed me the ancient BSFA membership book he had with him and I spent much of the journey poring over this, making several minor discoveries while doing so, such as the entry for Dr William Darroll Pardoe. William? I had no idea Darroll was his middle name. Lally had brought this along intending to xerox the page containing Pete Weston's name for the family but told me I could take it away with me afterwards and make my own copies.

At Birmingham New Street - much altered from the station I recall - the four of us caught a local train to Sutton Coldfield. On exiting the station we found a pub whose clientele included someone I thought looked remarkably like Dave Langford. It was only when I spotted others who bore similarly remarkable resemblances to other fans that I realised it **was** them.

I have nothing to add to what others have said about the funeral and the 'do'.

The golf club where the reception was being held was miles from anywhere and I had visions of a long and tedious taxi ride back to Sutton Coldfield station, but on the way to the reception I'd noticed a railway station a hundred yards or so down from the entrance to the golf club. Turned out this was two stops further up the line from Sutton Coldfield and we could actually just walk to it. Result!. When it was time for those of us whose tickets were fixed to leave we did just that. I travelled to New Street with fellow walkers Mark & Claire and Farah & Edward James, where I said farewell to them - the latter pair heading to Stoke, and the former to First Class. I forgot to get the BSFA membership book off Lally before leaving the golf club, of course, so I'll have to hope he brings it along to the next 'Ton.

All told it was a fine funeral and a good 'do'. I think Peter would have approved.

“A VERY PLEASANT WAY OF MAKING VERY LITTLE MONEY...”

by Curt Phillips

While listening to a radio program this afternoon I heard the new American President described by someone who knows him well as “the first post-literate President of the modern digital age”. Why “post-literate”? asked the program’s host. “Because Donald Trump doesn’t read books”, replied the guest.

He doesn’t read books. The man is rich and powerful and has managed – somehow – to become President of the United States, and he doesn’t read books. And apparently he sees that deformity of character as a virtue. I’ve been weeping for my nation for many reasons these past few months, but a person of accomplishments who *chooses* not to read books absolutely confounds me. Books are my life, and I can’t imagine how anyone could possibly live anything but the most stunted and soulless of lives without them. I don’t know what would have become of me had I not been a book person from a young age.

When I was a child it was somewhat difficult to get my hands on a book. Well, that's not strictly true as my parents did have some books in the house; A World Book encyclopedia they bought specifically for me and my sister; some book club romance novels that mom liked, some books on hunting and fishing that dad enjoyed, and a stack of the usual children's picture books for me - so I can hardly say that I was deprived. But it was clear that my parents hadn't reckoned on the fact that they had brought a book-a-holic into the world. It started when I was granted a 25 cents a week allowance when I was 7 or 8 and I discovered that 25 cents was exactly what was needed to buy two 12-cent comic books at the 5 & 10 cent store in town. The left over penny paid the tax - which I bitterly resented as I calculated even

then that I could have saved those pennies and bought an additional comic book every 12 weeks had it not been for that tax.

The problem with being 7 years old and trying to assemble a world class comic book collection on 25 cents a week is that inevitably there is an older cousin who visits periodically and demands to "borrow" your comics. In my case that cousin was Rocky Phillips, four years older than me and meaner than a snake. I didn't actually mind his borrowing my comics the first time since I - in my state of collector naiveté - assumed that he would read them as carefully as I did and promptly return them in pristine condition.

But I was wrong.

My comics **never** came back in any condition. Even so it wasn't until I was on a visit to **his** house and happened to see one of **my** comics - cover missing, spine torn, pages soiled - that I fully understood that a state of war now existed between my cousin Rocky and me. I may have been younger and smaller than Rocky, but I had a decided advantage; I was smarter than I looked, and Rocky was rather stupid. And the conflict that then roared into being between us provided stories for our family gatherings that still echo through the mountains of Virginia and Tennessee to this day.

But I digress...

From comics I quickly moved on to books, including the usual children's series like The Hardy Boys, The Power Boys, Brains Benton, The Happy Hollisters, and others. I caught a big break in that I had a kindly Aunt – Doris Poe – who somehow realized that I was a book person, and who promptly began giving me books for every Christmas and birthday – and sometimes for no reason at all. My other relatives didn't follow this commendable practice, nor did my sister and parents. From that lot I got rather weedy presents for birthdays and Christmas such as hideous looking items of clothing – one Aunt Who Shall Not Be Named always insisted on giving me socks for Christmas, and then loudly explaining “I didn't have any idea a'tall what a little boy might want for a present, so I just got him something he can **use**”.

Hello? Did you not notice what Aunt Doris gave me a few minutes ago? You know, those **books** that I ran around the room yelling about?

Then when I was 10 or so my school librarian handed me an Andre Norton book called "The X Factor" and suggested I might like it. I didn't. It was a little over my head at that point and I told her so. So she thought a moment and then walked over to another shelf and handed me "The Rolling Stones" by Robert A. Heinlein - and my world was changed forever. It was that same librarian who later gave me - to keep - a paperback book called The 1969 World's Best Science Fiction edited by Donald A. Wollheim and Terry Carr, and thus not only introduced me to several excellent writers, but to the idea that I might start to build a personal collection of science

fiction books. Then she bought a subscription to The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction for the school library and at the end of the year she *gave* me the stack of back issues that had accumulated. Up on the shelf back at home they went, and the Collection grew.

One day when I was 14 my parents sat me down for a talk. They were concerned about my obsession with books and wanted to know when I was going to get over it and become a normal kid. "Look", I replied to them. "Most normal kids my age are out there right now smoking cigarettes, stealing liquor from their parents, getting into drugs, chasing after girls, and worse. Me, I spend my time and money reading books. Books about science and technology, about history and the future. But if you'd really rather I go out in the streets and run around with those "normal" kids, I'll give it a try."

They thought about it for a moment and replied, "we'll get back to you." But they never did, and my books and I were left alone from then on. Just a couple of years after this I brought home a girlfriend – an English girl named Lizbeth - and my parents relaxed visibly, confident that this new aspect of my life would either permanently distract me from what they saw as an unhealthy obsession, or else the girlfriend herself would soon demand that I spend less time chasing around after books and more time chasing around after her. Little did my parents know but I had managed to find a girlfriend who liked books too, and it became not at all uncommon for our dates to sometimes involve stopping at a newly discovered used book store or flea market for a quick look around. A couple of years after we graduated from High School, Liz and I were married, and for a honeymoon we attended a regional science fiction convention where we sold books at our dealer's table. What my parents made of all that, I've never known.

At some point in my book hunting adventures I realized that occasionally I would buy a book I already owned a copy of. Although doing this sometimes gave me the chance to upgrade my collection by swapping a better condition copy for a lesser copy, the real reason I'd buy books that I knew I already had was because – I soon confessed to myself – that when I see a great old book – usually a vintage paperback or an old fiction magazine - I am simply unable to *not* buy it if it's cheap enough; and since I'm a miserly coot and always have been, I search in the dark and dusty places where old books are found across America, and they're often found for only 10 to 25 cents. And so I began piling up duplicates. From there it was inevitable that I should become a *dealer*. I started – as mentioned above – by selling books at a SF convention on our honeymoon trip. Liz swears even today that she enjoyed it as much as I did. I kept that sort of thing (convention book-selling; not honeymoons) going for decades and found it to be a wonderful way to attend a convention in that when I'm running a table in the dealer's room I'm going to meet *every* other book person at that convention. I've made a great many friends that

way since that first convention in 1979. I met famed SF writer Nelson Bond that way, and soon discovered that Nelson was not only a writer but a bookseller as well. I've never been more than a hobbyist bookseller but Nelson – who died in 2006 – was a true antiquarian bookseller, with catalogs, international clients and a home full of books. We became friends and I spent many enjoyable afternoons in that home; talking about books and learning about the bookseller's trade from a master. It was Nelson who taught me two important tenets of the bookseller's life; 1) You always regret the books you didn't buy more than the ones you did, and 2) Bookselling is a very pleasant way of making very little money. Time and experience proved Nelson Bond right many, many times.

My favorite bookshop of all time was Henry's Book Nook, located in an old tobacco market turned flea market in Abingdon, VA. Henry Goodman was an old WWII veteran who came home from the war convinced that he had cheated death so often that he was just going to do exactly what he wanted to do until Death caught up with him, and what he wanted to do was buy and sell old books. It took Death almost 70 years to find Henry again, and before it did I'd known and worked with him for almost 20 years, first as a customer and then as a volunteer helper, an employee, a driver and a friend. Someday I'll write at length about the bookman Henry Goodman, but through Henry I found vast numbers of great books, learned a lot about book scouting in the southeastern United States, and spent many very good hours talking about books with a very good bookman. Henry was one example of something I eventually figured out on my own and which I've proven to myself many times; books are important and wonderful and fun, but the people one meets in the old book hobby and business are what really matter in the end. At least, that's how I've found it to be, and that's why I still spend most weekends and two or three afternoons a week exploring the small towns and less travelled roads of the southeastern US with my eyes always open for the next place I'll go hunting for old books.

I'm still collecting and my present goal is to collect complete sets of the British SF magazines of the 50's to the present (a far too neglected area of SF among American collectors) and with substantial help from sympathetic collector friends I'm slowly getting there. I added two more SF magazines to the Collection just today; the British magazine NEW WORLDS # 102, and the Canadian edition of the December 1944 SUPER SCIENCE, which I got in a trade with another collector. The Collection presently stands at about 40,000 books and magazines. They aren't all science fiction, of course. Mystery, westerns, and adventure stories are well represented, as are books on history, music, art, science, and just about any other volume that has ever leapt up from a box of dusty books in a flea market and cried “*there* you are Curt; I've been waiting for you!” I have a lot of books that I'll probably never read again - or at all - but they're *there* if I ever do want them.

But as I get older I'm now starting to think about what will become of my collection after I'm gone. The University of Georgia has inquired about its availability and that might turn out to be the destination. Or perhaps an as yet unborn grandchild will inherit the bookman's gene and my collection, or someone I haven't even thought of as yet. With luck that day will be a long ways off. But till my dying day I know that I'll never have to want for something good to read, and for me, that's a warm and comfortable bit of knowledge.

Curt Phillips

January 2017

(EDITOR; Prompted by Curt's excellent article I was spurred to share some of my own thoughts)

I was taught to read with a weekly magazine called Sunny Stories, which my mother bought every Thursday. It not only stimulated my reading interests but my interest in fiction magazines, which later translated into eagerly watching out for monthly sf publications at my local newsagents. One Christmas, when I was perhaps eight or nine my parents bought a massive softback *Bumper* book of adventure stories. They were crap at hiding presents and I soon found out where it was, in the family sideboard drawer. I surreptitiously read all the stories. By the time it was Christmas day, as I was proudly presented with it, I had already read it from cover to cover. Another Christmas they bought me a portable typewriter, but again I found it in their wardrobe before it had been packed and used it well in advance of Christmas. I suppose both reading and writing thus became associated with surreptitious, slightly daring behaviour with a frisson of excitement about possibly being discovered in some illegal act. Well, it worked for me.

As regards public libraries, like others I initially had child tickets and went for books like Hugh Lofting's Doolittle novels and Katherine Tozer's Mumfy novels and the usual Williams and Biggles and Bunters.

When I got my adult tickets, my first forays were not into fiction but rather into areas I might call Extreme Exploration. I devoured the exploits of Scott and other Arctic and Antarctic explorers, but also Picard and his bathyscope adventures and Jacques Cousteau's underwater cave explorations. Primarily though my interest was in early space technology and exploration, and we are talking Chuck Yeager here rather than astronauts and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Werner Von Braun, rather than NASA. It was little wonder that fictionwise I was mostly attracted to adventures on strange and hostile planets.

(A preview of Curt's article also bought this response from KEITH FREEMAN)

Strangely I was a late coming to reading - why I don't know but I do remember when I was seven a teacher sitting beside me and (patiently, I'd guess) teaching me to read. It was still a few years after this that I borrowed books from the (primary) school library. None bought (as far as I can remember) and collected. Then I got really into the reading habit - but mostly with books borrowed from the library. Eventually, with my tickets (1 fiction, 1 nonfiction) and my parents four tickets (fiction) I was happily taking out 3 or 4 books every 5 or 6 days (some, admittedly were actually for my parents). Then the head librarian (who, to tell the truth, I was a little scared of) took me to one side and suggested I turn in my junior ticket (gulp!) and he'd issue me with two adult ones... he'd noticed my junior book choices (W.E. Johns, Percy F Westerman etc) were being ignored as I was (as was allowed) taking out non-fiction on that ticket and (of course) adult books on my parents' tickets.

I still didn't collect books - though any that were bought for me (including Arthur C Clarke's first novel, Sands of Mara (thanks, Mum) and H G Wells War of the Worlds) were read (carefully) and kept pristine. As, in fact, were the odd BRE SF Mag I managed to get.

Then, during my days in the RAF I did, on several occasions, find myself with nothing to read (I think that should be in capitals) - NOTHING TO READ. That, I think, was the point when I started buying and hoarding books! I don't know what the name for "scared of being left without reading material" is - but I've got it and I think most collectors probably have (though they might not realise it).



DAVE COCKFIELD

I only know of two people who voted for Brexit in the referendum. Both did it to fuck up the Tory Party and give Jeremy ammunition to attack Cameron and the

government. Unfortunately, admire him as I do, Corbyn has had as much effect as Jeremy Thorpe playing the pink oboe.

Whatever the Brexit deal can anyone actually see any agreement being ratified by Parliament and of course 27 other European Countries? We now have to have Article 50 passed in Parliament to trigger the process. Scotland intend to apply for 50 amendments to the Bill, not counting those proposed by Labour and the Lib Dems. Everyone, including Theresa May seem to be doing a good job to prevent Brexit ever happening. It is said that miracles do happen but Brexit is one that is really far-fetched.

As far as Trump is concerned everyone I have met universally detests him.

The majority of the people in the US also appear to detest him. So how did he get in? Quite simply he lied to the unemployed, the poor, and the lesser off white working class promising jobs and prosperity. Along with all his bigoted promises these are patently unachievable.

*(EDITOR: There is also the point that many Americans live under the delusion that their soap operas, and cop shows, and *reality* shows are in fact all reality, and problems can be solved by a big strong ginger-haired Charles Bronson pussy-grabbing character who threatens to crack heads together and kill them if they don't go along with his wishes. Apparently he is going to send feds into Chicago if they don't cure their problems. Like feds have nothing better to do than investigate drive-by shootings and crack murders when they would be better off in Washington investigating high level corruption, bribery, corporate theft and sex scandals. Wait, what...)*

At the moment there are impressively large protests and marches happening railing against his bigotry, racism, sexual politics, and blind stumbling towards nuclear Armageddon. This is all very commendable but people get tired of seeing this on the news every day and eventually will become complacent. It also galvanises those that misguidedly support him.

I can't help feeling that it would be more effective to wait until he actually tries to do something terrible before protesting in force. At least then there would be the weight of hard facts against him and his government that would hopefully inflame the American public into positive action.

I see that he has just approved The Great Wall of Mexico. This is a white elephant that that will probably prove to be ineffective but will sure earn him the nickname of The Wall(y) of America.

Mike Meara might say: "We are all doomed". He may even be right. I just hope that he says it with an emphatic John Laurie accent so that we all pay attention.

Your piece about Christmas brought back some pleasant memories. I was an only child and until I was 14 we lived in a shipyard-owned terrace house. Today there is much talk about the Poverty Line but I would think that my family would be well below that if the same conditions we had applied today. However, despite an alcoholic and violent step father when drunk, I had a generally happy childhood so never noticed but looking back it must have been a harsh life for my mother.

The highlight of the year was Christmas dinner which could feed an army, not just immediate family. In total us and the relatives often amounted to 12 adults and 6 children. We had an old table that when expanded stretched fully across the living room and could seat 10 people. Somehow we managed amid the chaos and the whole affair lasted for hours and really brought the family together.

My favourite childhood toy was a rocking horse. One year my parents had it refurbished and gave it to me at Christmas as a new horse. Being too young to realise that it was actually the same horse I detested it and my favourite present became a pair of metal roller skates. Jam a Beano annual onto one and it became a wonderful object to sit on and jet down our 40 degree angled back lane at precariously high speeds. Another failure was a Scalextric set. We couldn't afford to run it from the Mains so had to settle for a large chunky battery to power it that only lasted a few hours, then had to wait weeks until I had enough money for another one. Thankfully there was always a new annual and the roller skates were indestructible. They were a truly wonderful and remarkable present.

It is great to see that a science fiction film has actually been nominated for a number of top categories in the Oscars. Arrival is a thoughtful and intelligent film adapted from a great story by Ted Chiang. It truly deserves to win the Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar. I think Denis Villeneuve deserves Best Director but that is very unlikely. La La land understandably seems a safe bet for Best Film.

A recent report says that you are an alcoholic if you drink 17 pints of lager a week. I guess I'm okay on 15 pints of ale and a couple of bottles of red wine.

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JOSEPH NICHOLAS

I disagree with your assertion, in *Vibrator* 35, that Trump will be impeached, or get bored and hand over to someone else, or otherwise not serve out a full term. You are correct that he entirely unfit to occupy the office of President of the USA -- he is ignorant, bullying, misogynist and narcissistic; so thin-skinned as to be in a state of permanent anger; a compulsive liar (he can't even tell the truth about the number of floors in his eponymous New York tower) who surrounds himself with other compulsive liars (for example, his spokesperson claiming that more people

attended his inauguration than any previous inauguration, despite the evidence to the contrary); more likely to decide policy on the basis of a Twitter tantrum than a briefing paper -- but these are precisely the attributes that suit the corporate interests with which he's filled his cabinet, because they will provide a useful distraction from their massively neoliberal and deregulatory agenda. Increasing the production and use of fossil fuels and denouncing climate change as a Chinese-orchestrated hoax are merely the opening moves in a programme that will seek to overturn or repeal anything and everything they consider stands in the way of their "right" to make a profit -- standards for air and water quality; controls on the emission of heavy metals from manufacturing plants and the release of radioactivity; minimum wage rates and paid holiday entitlements for employees; standards on mileage and emissions for motor vehicles; food safety and food processing standards (already much lower than the EU's); controls on fertiliser use and slurry treatment in agriculture; the list could go on and on (and probably will, as the programme is rolled out). Indeed, not only will the corporate interests which surround Trump want him to serve out a full four-year term, they will doubtless wish him to serve a second term as well, to give them as much time as possible to complete their demolition of all but the basics of the federal government. By the time they've finished, the austeritarian policies that have been followed here in the UK for the last seven years will look, by comparison, like the very essence of a post-WW2 welfare state.

Various letter-writers in *Vibrator* 34 mention the dead bodies that they've come across. To the best of my recollection, I have seen precisely two dead bodies in my 63 years of existence, but I can't be sure that the memory of the first isn't false in some respects. That would have been sometime in the early 1960s, when we were living in the village of Porton, outside Salisbury, and I would have been 9 or 10 years of age: one summer's day, playing in the local churchyard (yes: quite how one played in a churchyard, and with what -- never mind why -- is open to question), I saw a group of pallbearers emerge from the church porch, carrying a glass coffin in which laid a (presumably) recently deceased male. But: a glass coffin? Wouldn't that just splinter and collapse under the weight of the earth deposited on top of it? And why would glass coffins be used in a rural English church funeral in the early sixties -- surely that would have been far too "Hollywood" for that time and place? The explanation might be either that the body was displayed in a glass coffin during the funeral service and transferred into a standard wooden box afterwards; or that the whole thing was a fake, and the pallbearers merely using it to practice. (But then why not use a standard wooden box with an appropriate weight inside it?) Or that my memory is quite false, and that what I actually saw was something else entirely which my juvenile mind could only rationalise by the pretence that it was a body in a glass coffin.

The other dead body was genuine: a person under a train at Stratford Overground Station a few years ago. We arrived there to catch a train, saw that it had come to a stop just beyond the end of the platform, and then that there was a human-shaped object lying partly under it. At about the moment that I had recognised it as a corpse, a young woman on the opposite platform, closer to the site of the accident than us, went into hysterics. I suspected later that what she could see from her position, but what I had to work out from how much of the body was visible and how much under the train, was that the victim had been decapitated.

You had a mouse (in *Vibrator* 33); but what sort of mouse -- house or wood? House mice are larger and (because they are almost constantly weeing and pooing) smellier, whereas wood mice are smaller and more discreet. I think we may have (or at least we certainly did at one point) wood mice living in our garden, because on a couple of occasions we found dessicated (or mummified) wood mice corpses inside the house, in the first instance next to the sockets for the TV and hi-fi, although there was no evidence that it had tried to chew through the cabling, and in the second under the bath where, hidden by the side panel, it could have been for many years. The only other instance on which we've seen a mouse inside the house is the time a year or so ago when one came in to watch television with us, but shot off (from under the table to under the sideboard) once it realised that it had been spotted. I saw it again in the kitchen the following day, but it then got away by squeezing through the gap (a centimetre or less -- I said that wood mice are small) at the bottom of the under-stairs cupboard and (presumably) exiting into the void under the floorboards through a chink in the brickwork. At the time, part of the under-stairs space was being used to store paint; that's since been transferred to the exterior shelf unit outside the kitchen and the space in question blocked off, which perhaps has also blocked off the main mice access route to the interior.

As to the night-time noises made by mice, I recall one instance of what could almost have been a mouse express train in the void between the downstairs ceiling and the upstairs floor, presumably getting in there via the chimney stack (we have no fireplace). I was sitting reading in bed, with my back against the chimney stack; the mouse express train (its sound doubtless amplified by the echoes in the ceiling/floor void) roared along the length of the bed, turned sharp left at the bedroom door, and then roared off along the landing towards the bathroom. I assume that it was the corpse which I later found under the bath.

I can't comment at all on the Barcon report in *Vibrator* 32, since we of course weren't there (although we did spend a weekend in Norwich a couple of summers ago). We couldn't have attended anyway, since that was the weekend of New Scientist Live, four days of discussions and events in the Excel Centre organised by *New Scientist* magazine, for which we had acquired tickets as soon as they'd gone on sale in the spring. The magazine apparently sold 16,000 advance tickets, with an

estimated 20,000 people present on both the Saturday and the Sunday; not so much standing room only, as squeezing room only. If the magazine organises another such event next year, it may need one of the Excel Centre's larger halls. But perhaps I should stop without going into vast detail about the talks which particularly engaged me (Adam Rutherford on why 85% of Europe's population can claim descent from Charlemagne -- Hannah Fry on the promise and problems of big data - - Dorian Fuller on early agriculture -- Jim al-Khalili on Arabic science -- Bernard Carr on the anthropic principle and the multiverse -- Jo Marchant on how the Antikythera mechanism could explain the sudden appearance of mechanical astronomical clocks in medieval Europe....perhaps one just had to be there).

(EDITOR: I didn't get a chance to interrogate any of my mice, Joseph, but there were news reports of an influx of edible dormice into the home counties about the time. The ones I fleeting saw struck me as browner and bulkier than regular mice. If I could have caught one I might have tried eating it.)

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NIC FAREY

Solid as ever mate, with enough of you to sate the Charnock (G) jones of this reader, and the usual plethora of loccers with little to say and many, many ways of saying it.

I'm in a high-percentile agreement with you on the execrable piece of ordure that is Kim Jong Don. He really should be shot (which will, as you say, not happen), but there are other seriously fuckin' nasty pieces of work including but not limited to McConnell (M) and Ryan (P) who are higher on the list. I'm at the point where the TV show *Designated Survivor*, dissed by many but enjoyed by us (mostly because Keifer Sutherland) is looking like an exercise in wish fulfillment.

Your antipodean correspondent Edmonds (L) made me initially think that it might actually be a larf to re-read E.E. Smith, but the swiftly arriving second thought reminded me that, no, it really was a load of misogynist shite, not even up to the modest or possibly even non-existent literary standards of the 'Foundation' series. I am, of course, as highly biased as you'd expect any unrepentant Van Vogt fanboy to be. Damon Knight can suck a bag of dicks, which he may well be doing in some eternal hell, if there's any justice.

On a more pleasant topic, I am happy to confirm the thorough niceness of Val Purcell, although the actual TAFF candidate himself does bear a rather disquieting resemblance to Stephen King and may therefore be expected to subject European fandom to various kinds of horrible psychological mutilation not necessarily limited

to forcible impregnation by alien clowns, or abduction by mysterious characters in dodgy vans (Hoare (M), Hodgesaaaargh (D)). I will naturally be voting for him, and I'll be sending a list of names.

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LEIGH EDMONDS

You never know, this Trump character might turn out to be better than I/you/we/everyone thinks he will be as President of the Free World (as I am told). Let's wait and see what actually happens. If he has perfected new ways of robbing the poor to pay the rich and stuffing up the world economy while doing irreparable damage to the environment, let's actually see it happen. Given the right wing fascistic support he has, we're not going to get in his way or slow him down and I'm just mightily relieved that he's not my responsibility. (I didn't vote for our rotten PM either, but since he is one of us I do feel a little responsible for him the same way one feels responsible for Uncle Dick at the family reunion after he's put away more than a few too many.) I am not hopeful about what is about to occur during the Trump reign but, as my mum used to say (along with lots of other mums no doubt) 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. Let's hope we don't choke on it.

Your Christmas reminiscences were touching in a way. You seem to have much stronger memories of your Christmas experiences than I do. The only thing I really recall was the night I got the Airfix kit as a present - an experience that has marked me for life. These days I'm reduced to giving myself scale model kits for Christmas because I'm the only one who knows what I doesn't already have in the boxes I call my Treasure in the garage. Sad, really.

I had a rather shitty day today, which I'm about to tell you about in brief. There's a point to this which I'll get to in a few paragraphs.

I had to go down to Melbourne today to get a jaw scan for some expensive dental work to be done next week. I had the form and I knew where to go so it was going to be a straight forward task. I'd even checked to see if they would be open so soon after the new year, and they said they would be. After that I planned to go out to interview Merv Binns about the early days of Melbourne fandom, which promised to be interesting and enjoyable.

It started going wrong when I arrived at the address of the scanning place on the form and found a great wall of particle board where the door used to be. Fastened to it was a sign saying that they were closed and they weren't opening again in that location, ever. The sign added that if I wanted to, I could go to one of their suburban branches. I was not thrilled. I'd already had to ride on a tram crammed full of unhappy looking folk and the humidity was making me feel sticky and uncomfortable. Still, I doubted that there would be any benefit in breaking my way

through the board in the hope of finding a working scanning machine inside, so I had no option but to find one of their suburban branches.

It turned out that the best location was close to the Malvern railway station and that was on the line to Oakleigh which is close to where Merv and Helena live. Things were looking up. Getting to Malvern was not difficult, and finding the branch there was not too difficult, although it was a fair walk and the sweat was pouring from me by the time I found it. I had to wait around for a bit and it took two goes to get a good scan, so that took up most of the morning. The only thing to be said for the time I spent there was that it had air conditioning.

As I left there I looked at my watch, it was 11.30 and I still had plenty of time to get to Merv & Helena's place. So, swim my way through the humidity back to the railway station and to the platform where I had got off, to catch the next train to go the few more stops out to Oakleigh. You know that feeling you get when the train you need to catch pulls out of the station just as you arrive on the platform? No worries, the next one will be along in ten minutes and I've still got plenty of time. So I pulled out the book I was reading and occupied myself until the next train came along and I got on. It took me a few stops to realize that I had got onto a train on the Frankston line rather than the one that went on the line through Oakleigh. That was fairly easily solved by getting off the train going away from the city and crossing over to the other side of the line to catch the next train going back towards the city. But, you know that feeling when the train you need to catch pulls out of the station just as you arrive on the platform?

So I was stuck there for another ten minutes before the next train arrived. The lines diverge at the Caulfield station (I can send you a map if you like ...) so when I arrived there I had to find my way through the underpass between the platforms to the line that goes to Oakleigh, and you know that feeling when the train you need pulls out ...

Eventually I got to the Oakleigh station. Now there is a bus that runs from there right past the street that Merv and Helena live in and it runs about every ten minutes. Already I had visions of it pulling out just as I was approaching so I decided, bugger it, I'd take a taxi. And this is where the payoff comes for Vibrator readers who have stuck with me thus far.

I had read and taken to heart Nick's comments to me about not being a stiff and perhaps paying a small tip to taxi drivers that you printed in your current issue. So, I told this sullen looking driver where I wanted to go and he was not too cheerful about it because it wasn't far. We exchanged not a word on the trip but I was determined to put into practice what Nick had taught me, so when the meter said \$7.80 I waved a \$10 note at him and said, and I can't believe I did it, 'Keep the change.' He printed me a receipt for \$7.80 (for tax purposes, you understand),

shoved it in my hand, wished me a good day in an 'I couldn't care less' tone, and drove off.

As I stood there on the footpath I felt, well, somehow used, unclean and definitely un-Australian. I didn't like it.

The couple of hours I spent with Merv and Helena was interesting and good fun. I learned lots of interesting things about early Melbourne fandom, some of which are printable, and we looked at old photos. Soon enough it was time to head home and I decided to continue the Farey experiment so Helena phoned for a taxi which arrived very quickly. The driver was affable and interesting and we became good mates in the period of ten minutes it took to get back to the station. Due to the traffic congestion and the maze of roads getting back to the station the fare came to over \$10 so I couldn't just wave a \$10 note at him and say keep the change - and I thought a \$50 note might be a bit excessive - so I stiffed this driver and paid the amount on the meter by credit card. He didn't seem to mind, we said a cheery farewell to each other and he drove off, and I felt cleansed of my previous unAustralian activity.

While I was feeling elevated by the rosy glow of patriotic fervor I found my way to the platform to go back to the city and, you know that feeling when the train you need ... It hadn't been my day.

But, I'm not totally without cultural awareness training and if I should ever get to Las Vegas I will sit in the front of Nick's taxi and he can tutor me in the etiquette of tipping taxi drivers. I'm not looking forward to it, but in the interests of cross-cultural good will I'll deal with it.

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ROBERT LICHTMAN

While I might disagree with your "Dear America" letter's belief that our "parade of Presidents... have always seemed to have been guided by a supreme lack of self-interest" – that was only marginally the case for the second Bush, who comes closest to our current clown in being willing to bend the truth to his own ends (in Bush's case, avenging his father's non-victory in the first Gulf War, in that Saddam Hussein remained in power) – it is certainly the case, as you say (and although one hoped it would cease once he took the oath of office, we see it continuing every day now that he's actually our President), that Trump's primary interest is in lying (and not all that creatively) to protect his mighty ego, no matter what collateral damage may be visited upon those who call him out.

What's incredible and almost unbelievable is the petty easily refuted nature of his lies – that he would have won the popular vote if not for millions of illegal aliens

voting for Clinton, that the size of the crowd at his inaugural was bigger than Obama's, and so on. But those are, really, just side shows for the actual potential damage he's endorsing in the daily procession of executive orders he's signing – orders that undermine our democratic system, that undermine our long-held reputation as a country that welcomes all immigrants (although, don't look too far back on that one), orders that will actually end up killing people if implemented fully (mainly women, mainly in poor countries, who won't have access to prenatal and other medical care).

I can't go on; it's too depressing. I certainly hope you're right on page three where you write, "Trump's downfall will come from within not without," and provide possible scenarios of how this might happen. It's still very early in the game – as I wrote, he's only been our President for five days – but so far he seems unchanged and unstoppable. The media, and by this I mainly mean the *New York Times* and especially its Op-Ed columnists, that being what I mostly read, have been very good in calling a spade a spade ("he lies!") – and as their reward alt-right nutcase Steve Bannon (oh, excuse me, "Trump's chief White House strategist" per Politico and others) has called the media the "opposition party," ignoring that there are Democrats out there who could equally claim the title. I've especially liked what Chuck Schumer and Bernie Sanders (he latter not, of course, technically a Democrat) have been saying.

I said I was going to stop. Moving on...

Even though I was four months older than you on my first birthday – I was born near the end of August 1942 – I don't recall feeling much at my first Christmas, either. Buried in a box somewhere in my back room are some photographs of me on that occasion. From what I recall of my facial expression in them, the presence of a small but heavily decorated artificial Christmas tree doesn't seem to have made much of an impression. When I was older and had friends and went to their houses around Christmas and saw great big *real* Christmas trees, I retroactively knew why.

I don't remember too much about early Christmas presents, but the ones I do recall included a tricycle, a wooden wagon, a Parcheesi board game, and an electric train. Some non-functioning pieces of the latter are still around, in their original box (not collectible because duct-taped to keep it together), also out in the back room. Unfortunately, it's insufficiently together to pass along to one of my grandsons when they get old enough.

Thanks to Owen Whiteoak for his explanation of the "knockers" and "arthritis" connection. That it was a "running gag" makes perfect sense, since without that context it wouldn't be very funny at all. Owen writes of his mother "lying in a hospice awaiting the inevitable," which also isn't funny – and he has my advance sympathies for when the inevitable happens, but also my hope that she might pull through for now and postpone that inevitable for a later date.

Philip Turner's caveat – "Most of it is not worth recording; or even remembering after they sober up, especially during the festive season." – is 100% appropriate to my (as he puts it) "Lichtman's Law of Fandom," which "states that 'Everything two or more fans do together is fanac.'" That he's quoting what I wrote in *Banana Wings* is encouraging as a bit of fanzine cross-pollination, which gives a sense of interactivity in these latter days rather than every fanzine existing in a vacuum of its own.

In his letter Paul Skelton suggests that you might have used Bill Bryson's book as a source for your pieces on Sacco & Vanzetti and Charles Lindbergh – which you firmly and correctly deny, having had no prior knowledge of the book before Fred Smith's mention of it. He goes on to suggest, "Mind you if so I suspect it wouldn't be the first time it had been used as a source for some fanzine material as the Lou Gehrig information in it could have been the source of such material Andy Hooper wove into a piece he wrote about Ray Bradbury's Worldcon trip that year which appeared in a relatively recent *Trap Door* I believe. That's 'relatively recent' strictly in number of *Trap Door* issues, of course." Looking at Andy's piece, I find that Lindbergh is only mentioned in passing in the context of magazines on sale in June 1939 at a Los Angeles newsstand where Bradbury was working prior to the first worldcon: "*Time* magazine featured Charles Lindbergh on its cover on June 19th; the aviation hero was now the face of the American isolationist movement, and privately held very pro-fascist views." Andy will have to speak up for himself as to his sources, but yes, that was a fairly recent issue of *Trap Door*: #30, December 2016, a mere three years ago.

Thanks to Nic Farey for his explanation of what the "spaghetti bowl" means in a Vegas context: the intersection of a number of highways in the downtown area. I had suspected it might be that given his occupation. We have a similar situation here with the intersection of three different interstate highways (80, 580 and 880) in the vicinity of the Bay Bridge. It's referred to as "the maze," and for the unfamiliar it certainly could be one.

Continuing with Nic, I enjoyed and appreciated his "year end financial report," suitably complex to reflect the interestingly ad hoc nature of the financial life of a cabbie. I particularly noticed his appreciation of "Some fares who know the form may pay by credit card but tip cash, since they know that's essentially untaxed and therefore better for the trouser." I do that sometimes in restaurants, but not reliably – always do it, though, with the person who cuts my hair since I know she has to pay rent for the chair she's using that takes a bite out of her fee, and it's not cheap.

On the back page you write, "I hope there is a next issue since it will complete three solid years of less-than-solid publishing and will mean I can issue a third Combined Volume." I look forward to reading my words in that issue, and to getting

a copy of that third volume.

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JIM LINWOOD

Many thanks for Vibrator 35 which arrived at 5pm instead of the usual morning delivery; the postman having been held up by the snow.

Your reminisces of the winter of 1946-47 brought back a vivid memory of mine. Just out of toddle-hood my gran took me to see the flooding of the nearby Nottinghamshire village of Colwick which lay in the floodplain of the River Trent. To celebrate my recent mobility I leapt into the flood waters, splashing about in my new wellies thinking that the seaside had come to Nottingham. My Gran was horrified and waved me to come back to the dry patch on which she was standing but I just carried on into the deeper water. Suddenly a policeman appeared beside me, grabbed me and carried me back to my Gran. He told her that I was walking towards a manhole whose cover was blown and that he had probably saved my life.

Robert's comments on Charles Lindbergh being a racist reminded me of Philip Roth's brilliant alternative-world novel, *The Plot Against America*, published in 2004. In the real world Lindbergh travelled to Germany in the 30's, became an admirer of Hitler and was even presented with a Nazi medal by Goring. In Roth's novel Lindbergh defeats Roosevelt in a landslide 1940 presidential election, negotiates a peace with Hitler and begins persecution of the Jews. The story is told from the point of view of the 7-year old Philip Roth and how Lindbergh's anti-Semitic purges affected his family. The novel, which seems to be neglected by the fannish community, is far better than Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and highly recommended.

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MARION LINWOOD

Jim has sad memories of a childhood Christmas when his folks ate his pet rabbit, Snowy; so now we always have a veggie Xmas.

On Trump I can say no more than David Attenborough did.

Your comments on 2016 celebrity obituaries are so true – it's worse as one grows older. Peter Weston's death was so sad, particularly as he was younger than me. He was always friendly to us. I specifically remember him telling Jim about what a lot of energy it took chairing the Brighton World Con in 1979. I treasure Eileen's comments on the difficulties of being a Con wife with small children to feed with just a kettle in the hotel room while Peter was being very busy.

RICHARD LUPOFF

Many thanks for the latest Vibrator. Much fascinating material here. I'm afraid that there's virtually no chance of Trump's being impeached, since impeachment (under our constitution) must be done by the House of Representatives. There's a strong majority of Republicans in the House, and their conduct to date is that they choose loyalty to their party above the interests of the nation (or the world).

No, the USA and this planet in general are in for a dreadful four years. I imagine that some of the people who voted for Trump are already beginning to experience buyer's remorse, and many more of them will do so over the coming months and years. E.g., latest polls indicate that the overwhelming majority of Americans want to keep the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") either in its present form or as amended in some way. But the Republican Party orthodoxy calls for repealing the ACA outright, and that's what the Republican-controlled Congress will in all likelihood do.

I'm sorry to tell you this, but as Bob Dylan says, "A hard rain is going to fall!" Or maybe Tom Lehrer is more accurate in predicting that, "We'll all go together when we go."

I'd like to comment further--V35 deserves it--but I have to get rolling. I had a heart attack on September 1, 2016, and have been involved in a cardio rehab program. Due for a session in half an hour, and it will take me that long to walk to the clinic!

Still, here's wishing you and the rest of our circle of friends a better year in 2017 than we had in '16!

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LLOYD PENNY

Many thanks for issue 2.0.34 of Vibrator. I do not like the looks of that front cover, as no doubt that's a monstrous hospital machine that had its way with you, and scrubbed you out quite intimately. It might be the same level as me waking up in the middle of an operation, but I will continue to read, and see who's got the worse health story.

Dialysis. So many lights, beeps and boops, there might as well be a slot to put your coins in, pull the lever, and see if you win the jackpot. I have friends who are nurses, and other friends who have had far too much time in a bed...they all say that while many people go there to be healed or cured, some do go there, not expecting

to walk out. It can be a very depressing place. My latest times were a car crash and a couple of eye operations, but at least Yvonne drove me home each time.

I cannot say America the Damned. I will say America the Cursed, and they brought it on themselves. They kept wondering what might happen if the worst possible candidate won, and they are about to find out. So will the rest of us, unfortunately. I read an article recently that said with the right-wing nonsense happening in the UK and Australia, and the ultimate dystopian reality happening in the US, Canada's Justin Trudeau and German's Angela Merkel may be the last of the progressive leaders. Dark time ahead for all, by the looks of it.

The local...we've tried our best to eat and live a little healthier than we have, and it seems to be paying off in weight loss and a little more energy, but age marches on, and we still have to deal with a bit of arthritis here and there. I know we are lucky if those are our only complaints as we age.

How are you doing with the polymer fivers? All of our bills here are many of polymer, and we are having some unique problems. We were told the polymer can't tear...oh, yes, it can. They can also stick together, and heat will shrink them. Paper is starting to look good again. At least on yours, Churchill is hiding.

We've never had mice up here on the 17th floor, but I used to have them in my dumpy little apartment when I was going to school. I would handle them by using a flat-bottomed lunch bag, and a smear of peanut butter. Mice don't like cheese, but they sure like peanut butter. The peanut butter goes on the upper crease of the bag on its side, the bag rights itself, and the mouse is effectively trapped, happy with its peanut butter. Take the bag downstairs for a bag lunch for a neighbourhood cat.

Facebook's gotten me in touch with cousins and more distant relatives, and I can credit a good portion of our social life to finding out about events on FB. It does take some time to keep up with, time I could better spend writing letters of comment. I hope you are right about the non-importance of Trump and Brexit, seeing how much damage they could do. Let's hope no more hare-brained ideas come up before those two enter the history books as bad ideas.

Well, the end is nigh. Of the zine, I mean. Our best to the Charnock family, and we hope your new year is happy and healthy, it's got to be better than 2016. It could barely be worse. It's just past the end of December, but chuck my letter in at the end of the local, many thanks. See you then.

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FRED SMITH

My apologies for the delay in replying, occasioned as much by sloth as by the interruptions of the Festive season. So, I may well have missed your deadline for the

next ish. In addition, my good intention to loc right away has gone out the window and, since I failed to make any check marks as I read it, I've forgotten most of it. Not about to re-read it either because of the strain of that small typeface!

However, a couple of things come to mind. Further to the "dusty days of old" discussion brought up by Joseph Nicholas and yourself and my comments regarding same, Philip Turner talks of re-reading some of the Hal Clement books. Apropos of all that and, since I mentioned L. Sprague De Camp as one of the giants of the "Golden Age", a strong desire came over me to re-read *The Hand of Zei* his second "Krishna" novel. I had read it when it first appeared as a four-part serial in ASF (Oct.'50-Jan.'51) but remembered little about it. No longer having the magazines I got the Kindle version which has the advantage of larger type but, naturally, lacks the wonderful Cartier illos. Enjoyed it again anyway. Lightweight, cheerful stuff, typical of De Camp. Doesn't require deep thinking!

Generally speaking I'm pretty fortunate, healthwise but a week ago I suffered an "incident". I fell out of bed! In a very vivid dream involving diving out of a small boat I dove head first out of the side of the bed. Luckily the floor stopped my fall but gave my head quite a bang. No blood, but a large red spot made me look like Jupiter. This developed into a scab, rather spoiling my beauty and forcing me to wear a cap to avoid disgusted looks by the lieges.

Not disgusted (or sickened) by John's "Bloodbath" by the way but, while I found it all quite interesting, it's not exactly the kind of subject that appeals to me.

Not much more I can comment on (from memory!) except that I would gather that you have in fact read that Bill Bryson book that I mentioned last time. evidenced by the stuff about Lindbergh, his flight and the kidnapping, etc. Anyway, look forward to your next iwsh and will try to make more relevant comment.

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STEVE STILES

I'm just not in the mood to draw or fool around with photoshop today, so I thought I'd write you a LoC on Vibrator 2.0.33 on this, the fourth day of this new period in American life as we now speed merrily back to the pre-FDR era, laying the groundwork for the upcoming serfdom of later generations not fortunate enough to be born into the ruling class (the new "Incorporated" tv series covers this all too possible future reality in a frighteningly believable manner).

I like my cover. I'd like to turn it into a huge acrylic painting some day, maybe measuring 6' x 6' or larger. Too bad we don't have the wall space, with lots of art

already competing with lots of bookshelves. My only quibble with this picture is that it seems slightly fuzzy; I should've sent it as a jpeg since Vibrator is mostly an online fanzine and tiffs are mainly for print, although Bob Jennings can't open those and will accept only jpegs. He's not the only one with that issue; It gets confusing: just the other day I had a problem with an editor who had prejudices dealing with art scanned at less than 1200 dpi, and, just to complicate matters, there are times when my scanner discards whatever I set it at and reverts to 72 dpi.

With the sadness of Doug Fratz's unexpected death not long after we hung with him at worldcon, followed by Peter Weston's passing shortly after I had reread his "With Stars In My Eyes," I am again reminded of my own mortality; these days when I wake up in the morning I'm grateful. (Usually.) Elaine and I liked both those people a lot. I can only hope that I can equal Terry Hughes' courage when my time comes (and that Ted White doesn't get to write my obituary). My first hand experiences with death came in my early teen years when I was a hardened New Yorker growing up in a tough Manhattan neighborhood; I had already decided my father didn't love me and so had done my best to shut down my feelings. Besides, "I am a rock, I am an island" was the touchstone we kids swore by back then and there --- shields up; at all costs do not let reality touch you! So that when a leaper landed head first on the sidewalk some feet behind me I shrugged and walked on, finishing my chocolate ice cream cone. And then there was that windshield decapitation, the realization that that wasn't a hood ornament I was looking down at as the bus taking me to my first Philcon drove by. Luckily I had been weaned on Tales From The Crypt, plus from that day on I'll always remember to buckle my seat belt.

As for Sartre, reading him on the trip to Newcastle socially screwed me up for my first day and a half at Tynecon 3. I will stick with Colin Wilson, or until I reread him.

I sometimes see Facebook videos of high school or even college students being quizzed and not knowing anything about the Civil War or whether the United States fought against Germany or Russia during WW 2. I would hope that the state of U.S. education isn't that bad and that those youths who were interviewed were simply hopeless morons selected to display their stupidity for laughs. In my day, by cracky, we were taught about the Sacco and Vanzetti trial in high school, either in history class or Art Appreciation where we learned about Ben Shaun. Now that our society is headed back to Herbert Hooversville, I wonder who will get legally lynched this time-- possibly some member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe when the pipeline leaks and contaminates the North Dakota reservoir. I've been working on a graphic history project that sheds light on American history that most likely most Americans are unaware of; like how, down through the years, the U.S. government has graciously relieved various weaker countries of the burdensome task of selecting their own leadership. There are certain annoying bits about working on this gig that I

won't bore you with, but I'm soldiering on with it in the belief that in some small way I am lighting my candle against the gathering dorkness.

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JOHN NIELSEN-HALL

I am very disappointed with my loony lefty nephew in Vegas. Crikey, you can do spreadsheets on smartphones these days! It should be the work of half a second to record not only tips, but all income. I'm glad I don't get to do his 1040. If I was marking his financial report, I'd only give him around 30% and a "Could Do Better".

I'd also like to point out to Nic that I have held a driving licence since 1967 and managed to put a Buick in a Kentish ditch even before that. Years of CV? Why, I managed to smash my motor up only last year, must be about the fourth time in the last fifty years. He couldn't pay my insurance premium even with his tips!

This was a rather thin issue, but enjoyable none the less. I hope you will continue to battle with all adversity and continue to produce *Vibrator*. It's become a monthly tradition now. A bit like a period.

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TARAL WAYNE

I'm not sure whether the UK should be looking down its nose at the US after voting for The Brexit... though I admit that I'd be more likely to wager the Brexit will work out okay than Donald Trump as President. The Brexit is unlikely to hurt anyone but the United Kingdom, and it is arguable that Trump could bring about an existential crisis through war, economic collapse or environmental backsliding.

Earlier this evening, I wrote a loc in which I actually talked about the books of three different authors. You won't find me making that mistake again, soon.

Anything two fans do together is fanac? As I recall, a news item in late 2016 involved a fannish couple in Southern California who murdered the young woman's parents. Therefore, murder is fannish, by no less authority than Robert Lichtman. Be careful at conventions from now on...

Nic's letter opens with an allusion to *Vibrator*. But by calling it "Sex Toy" is he unwittingly revealing a deeply laid conspiracy? Is *Vibrator* really an alter ego of *Broken Toys*, and vice versa? Only you and I know, but we aren't talking, are we?

Strange as it may seem, *Sex Toys* may be the only variation on *Broken Toys* that I didn't think of, and I've used several. *Lost Toys*, *Stolen Toys* and *Forgotten Toys* are all among my more obscure fan publications. How did I miss *Sex Toys*? I wonder if I

was unconsciously avoiding the less-innocent subtext, or just avoiding comparison with another short, frequent fannish zine?

The subject of who deserves Hugos for past achievements is a painful one. Canfield is certainly an outstanding case in point – one of four or five serious injustices in that category. The problem is that the Hugo is for the previous year's work, not for lifetime achievement. If it was for the artist's entire career, then logically it could only be awarded once, which would leave us with the problem of all those times that artists have won second, third, fourth, fifth, etc. Hugos. As a result, Grant's merit must be judged by the previous twelve months, not by his most active period in the 1970s. His contributions last year to *Trap Door* are all we ought to consider. The same problem arises with other artists I could name ... myself included. Our best days are behind us, and we shouldn't rightly be judged by by-gones. I haven't been serious about getting art published in fanzines for the last couple of years.

I almost wonder if taking a break from my monthly publication schedule was a good idea. One I threw myself out of gear, I've pretty much done nothing but idle.

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DAVID REDD

Thanks for an issue which you said was a slog to produce, but which was nevertheless worthwhile. I don't follow you (or anyone else) on Facebook so it was all new, good.

Trying to be cheerful is hard going. One personal if trivial example. I've suffered writer's block since about 2004 (visiting Blarney Castle that year, I must have kissed the wrong stone). Recently I've tried to beat the block by taking little bites at a near-future story about threats to food and soil, but besides not making the words sing I suffered another problem. After putting the ms aside to cool every few months, each time I come back not only are the good lines not as good as I thought, my worst threat in the story has been overtaken by something even worse. E.g.,

Early draft: global warming could destroy us in a couple of centuries.

Later: our soil will give out after only a hundred more harvests.

Recently: other mammals declined by half in forty years, so may all go in another forty.

There were lots more like that, some more trustworthy than others but basically all requiring me to rewrite and update. I can't keep up. Billy Bragg said he stopped writing protest songs because politics is moving too fast, and he's right. It's not just my loss of narrative skill, it's the near-future story as a moving target. The USA's

elected dictator has been in office just a week, and the doomsday-clock people have moved the hands half a minute closer to midnight already. I hope that's a step-change not a trend, because if that rate continues we'll only last six weeks of him. Not much point in me revisiting my story in that case, but Vibrator might just squeeze in two more issues. (Reminds me of G Harry Stine's trend curves in ASF half a century ago, showing human abilities becoming infinite around now. Maybe his upward graphs weren't predicting the Singularity at all, but really showing our progress hitting a brick wall and bouncing off.)

Well, so much for your "elephant in the room" happy new year editorial. Is it just January SAD? A friend of mine, in the middle of our usual grumbles about the state of everything, gasped most unusually for him, "Can't we talk about something else?" and I can't disagree. I hope your personal/family health circumstances improve and 2017 turns out better after all. Lloyd Penney is sage as usual when he advises "Be good, and be around to create that further issue."

On Paul Skelton's letter, yes agreed, that Penguin cover for "Mission of Gravity" was the worst possible art-library choice for a high-gravity planet, short of choosing the Cottingley Fairies. But we can't blame the mis-match on Yves Tanguy (d. 1955), only on the attitude of someone at Penguin as you say.

The other actual mention of skiffy this time is Leigh Edmonds reading between the lines of "Grey Lensman", fine. I suspect that Doc Smith knew exactly what he was omitting from the narrative; don't think he had too many illusions about his all-American superheroes – he just used them because they facilitated such great battle scenes.

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TALES OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER

by Nic Farey

BURN, BABY, BURN

As predicted, the utterly fearsome hangover which usually follows the celebration of Harry Bell's birthday competes with a choking miasma of curry farts to drastically impede the production of this month's essay, and only some polite and gentle urging ("Fucking get on with it, Nic") from Ye Ed serves to jump-start the last remaining brain cell. It would be all too easy (though possibly accurate) to blame my

mate Ken Vaden, who brings gifts including some 100 proof Nevada Moonshine, the always welcome presence of hardcore drinking companion Tee Cochran Taylor (who, I tell you, can stick it away at professional levels) and the somewhat late arrival of genuine TV star Rick Shipley, who *talks* a good drink and seems at least half-langered even when he isn't, prompting those of us who are to up the ante in the sort of challenge that reminds you of rutting rhinos testing each others' right to dominance over the herd.

In anticipation of after-effects, I asked for and was granted a rare Saturday off, reasoning (with little actual reason involved) that it would to be a fuckin' doddle, really, _to get in the shopping, cooking, partying and that in a three-day weekend and still have enough nous to punt this latest installment of page-filler for the fiercely on-time Sex Toy, without any necessity for a highly relaxed Editor to exercise mild cajolery. And, of course, it didn't happen that way at all, did it?

I did work 6 days straight heading into this. Lucky Cab has an amenable policy whereby if you work on your day off you can do as many (really that should be "as few") hours as you like, although to get a bonus-qualifying shift credit you need to work 8. It's a habit of some drivers (lately including me on occasion) to work on payday Fridays, when we'd be going into the yard anyway to collect our checks. Not being overly worried about the shift credit itself, as I'm not given to taking much time off, I set a target of working until either 1 o'clock (for the credit) or \$200 book, whichever came first. Thanks to a couple of decent rides, I was back at the yard, check in hand by noon. Thankfully (and not entirely unexpectedly) January's second paycheck was all right, unlike the first one of the year which was piss-poor. The latter wasn't unexpected either, since I'd taken a 6-day break over Xmas, not that there'd have been much business anyway. There was nowhere near enough on that one to put away half the rent, but I managed to make that up over the following couple of weeks in tips, since January's a mad busy month, what with CES the first week and *five* (count 'em) sizeable conventions /conferences the week after that.

The 6 days straight, though, knackers me up more than a bit, so I'm well ready for my days off when they get here. Y'know, as if 60 hours a week isn't enough? After my Xmas break I worked 8 days in a row, which led to my first real feeling of job burnout and the title of this column. Lucky's directive for the 2016 Xmas (mostly the same as the year before) was that extras were required to work their scheduled days, but could do a short shift if they liked. Being a shift driver now, I had the option of not working at all from the 22nd to the 25th, and I also requested off the 26th and 27th since my youngest was in for a quick visit, and we also wanted to do our 'Waifs & Strays' Boxing day bash. So I go back to work on the 28th, a Wednesday, which is my Friday, but I'd already decided that I'd work through until my next "weekend" to play a bit of catch-up. The Thursday was an utter waste of fuckin' time. I did 8 for the credit, logging just 7 rides for \$90 book, so I doubt I'll be

doing the equivalent day this year, it was too depressing. The Friday was all right, New Years arrivals coming in since most of the properties require a two-night minimum. By Monday (6th day in a row) I was really feeling like I'd had enough and, somewhat unusually for me, *not* looking forward to going to work, thinking that I must have slammed my head and sundry other body parts into any and every passing brick shithouse wall. We took a pass on our local First Thursday gathering since I was too shot to do much of anything except take the few increasingly ponderous steps to the fridge and wearily open the door to extract another Newky from within and try to have it do its work before I fall into desperately needed slumber. The gorgeous, pouting Famous Author(tm) J L Farey not only puts up with all this, but heroically (heroineically?) maintains a happy home that I'm well grateful to return to of an evening, a day older and a day more knackered every time.

I've always been the sort of bloke who unreconstructedly buys into the "provider" role, which is one of the reasons I usually look forward to going to work (the other being that I genuinely enjoy the job), and it's never not timely to remind myself how fuckin' lucky I am to be generally more than content with both my early morning and late afternoon destinations.

The TA has been on the warpath a bit of late, we think to help justify their continued existence after last year's audit and report, the summary of which was more or less "this lot are a shower of shite and could well be got rid of". They've got a couple more officers out on the highways and byways and are writing tickets like billy-o, some of them easy nicks like rolling a stop sign, especially at the Linq where there's a four-way stop on a diagonal intersection, the protocol of which which proves incomprehensible to most civilian drivers and more than a few of us professionals. I've taken to using what I suppose is a version of the "Dutch reach" to avoid the roll-through, although still contending with, especially, Californian drivers (we tend to say that 'CA' stands for "Clueless Arsehole") who apparently operate under an alternative fact system whereby "Stop" means "Ignore this sign, it is merely decorative" and "Taxi line only" means "Park here". TA has also been cracking down on the long-haulers, perhaps to get them used to the idea that new meters supposed to be installed by next year are going to give the rider up to three choices of route, and once the choice is made the driver will be required to follow that route. I suspect we're in for a few larfs when that happens, not to mention a significant number of drivers getting the arse because they'll have to learn that there are in fact ways in and out of the airport which do not involve going through the tunnel to or from the freeway.

Another apparent crackdown has had a bit of a nicer consequence. Like all professional drivers, we're federally regulated to a 12-hour maximum shift, although there's a sensible enough "taxi exemption" of sorts which states that we can continue beyond 12 hours if engaged on a charter which has commenced at a

"reasonable time" before the scheduled end of shift. Previously on my 5 shift, the company's rule was that we gas up not before 4:30, then return to the yard to do our money drop and paperwork. Now, and similarly for the other shifts, we're instructed to gas up between 4:00 and 4:15 and be back at the yard by 4:30, clocking out as soon as we enter the drivers' room. This means getting home a bit earlier, and all in favor have already said "Aye!"

I've got two years in on the taxi lark now, and just renewed my permit for the year and my DoT medical certificate for another two without any problem except having to listen to the doctor bang on about my smoking the whole ten minutes of the exam and add a parting shot that "fortunately your wheezing lungs are not an impediment to driving a taxi". For the \$45 he gets for every punter, I'd like it a lot better if he kept his gob shut.

THE LICHTMAN-DELAYED EXECUTIVELY ORDERED GLOSSARY

Held over in part from the last issue due to inexplicable problems in travel from certain Middle Eastern parts:

Bag of sand : 1,000 pounds sterling.

Charter : An extended trip, often (and usually) with several stops.

Dutch reach : A technique designed to avoid opening the car door into the path of an oncoming cyclist, it involves getting the door handle with the hand furthest from it, forcing the body to turn and hence giving you a look at what might be approaching. My version for the dodgy Linq four-way stop is to take a deliberate look left which reflexively (for me) means bringing the free pickle to a full stop.

Extra : "Extra board", a driver without an assigned shift.

Pot of starters : A jar of Vaseline, which may be problematic in the environs of award-winning Charnock (G), but potentially desirable in the cool hands of temple maiden Ivanka, although many people say Tiffany does it better.

Shift credit : The underlying basis for bonus payments, which you only get if you've worked a certain number of full shifts during the relevant period. The bonuses aren't insignificant, and are paid out twice a year, July and December. These are times when work is typically slower (December especially), so the dosh is a welcome help to get through. I was talking to a driver the other day who'd missed the threshold by 3 or 4 shifts, giving rise to a certain amount of arse, as you might expect.

"Wednesday is my Friday" : The sort of thing a lot of people in Vegas tend to say, since we're a 24/7 town and work shifts are organized accordingly. My scheduled days off are still Thursday and Friday.

--- Nic Farey (Las Vegas' answer to Hunter S. Thompson)

So much for culture, eh? This has been the third anniversary issue of the new Revived Monthly Vibrator. Yes, I have battled through for three years despite being studiously ignored by such majestic critics and commentators on science fiction fandom as Andy Hooper. I am tempted to tag *to no real effect* on that description of my own fannish endeavours, but then I remind myself that in those three years I have won two FAAn awards and the last of the Nova Awards. I would really like to give up now and, as they say, dedicate the rest of my life to my wife and family, and I would but I know my sad correspondents would continue bothering me with their monthly locs and probably simple refuse to let me roll over and die. Thanks, you guys.

Normally somewhere around here I have something say about Donald Trump, but you will be grateful to hear even I am becoming bored by chronicling his criminal and psychopathic tendencies. As Trump himself has found it is sometime too easy to mock the psychologically unstable. They are best left to condemn themselves out of their own mouths.

Just room perhaps to pay tribute to the passing of Mike Dickinson, stalwart Leeds fan who died of cancer this month, overshadowed perhaps the passing of PRW, but he will be equally missed. Condolences to his family and long-term partner and support Jackie Gresham. Mike and Jackie lived locally at one time and we met up, quite often, mostly often at Rob Holdstock's frequent gatherings where Jackie and Chris Atkinson would do the time warp again, while Mike watched on pretending to be in earnest conversation with Tom Shippey.

Write to me at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. This issue was proofread by the mighty Pat Charnock. Next issue might just be published at the end of February, even though it is a short month.