

INTO THE WIDE PURPLE YONDER *by* SUE MASON

produced for *Corflu 40* and *Conversation: Eastercon 2023* by Sue Mason, with assistance from Alison Scott, Steve Davies, Giulia de Cesare and Mike Scott. This will be available in paper or electronic form with proceeds to TAFF for a year, after which it will probably make its way to the pay-what-you-want TAFF eBooks page. *The Moose Rises*. Thanks to everyone who has voted in TAFF or supported it in other ways, and everyone who looked after Sue so well on her trip. All text, photos and artwork by Sue except where noted.

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From: sue@arctic-fox.freemove.co.uk [Sue Mason]
Date: 17 Aug 2000 08:00:00
Newsgroups: rec.arts.sf.fandom
Subject: Gone to America

Well, I'm off tomorrow morning. I'm in San Francisco from the 18th to the 24th with Doug, Tonya and Allen and Spike. I've been promised the Winchester Mystery house with Mary Kay, a winery, a paddle in the sea and the fleshpots of San Francisco and the equally intriguing fleshpots of the BASFA meeting. Then on to Seattle with Kate Schaefer until 28th.

After that, it's Toad Hall and Minneapolis and the State Fair until 31st of August when I go on to Chicago for the Worldcon. Karen Babich is putting me up for the night after Chicon. I'm in New York from the 6th to the 9th of September, when I fly home. Will there be a RASFF meeting while I'm in NY?

I'll try and stay in touch, probably via the Cabal and Alison Scott, at least until she deebles. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone, I just wish I could stay longer and do more. Excuse me, I have to go and bounce around the room again. Wheeeeeeeeeeeee!

This fanzine article is dedicated to all the lovely, lovely people, on both sides of the Atlantic, who helped organise me, not least the Plokta cabal for getting me on the internet in the first place.



Twenty-two years ago

Gosh. It's astonishing how much has changed in just a couple of decades. This was all done without the aid of a safety net, or a mobile phone. There was a much more rudimentary internet, Google was not ubiquitous, indeed I don't remember using it. The photos were taken with a camera, an analogue camera, by Moshe, Spike, Tom and myself. Most of the planning for my trip was done via rec.arts.sf.fandom on Usenet, RASFF was our fannish home. I used an internet provider called Freeserve, which provided free access after 6pm. But that access still tied up the landline phone, so you would go on and download your Usenet groups and work on your replies, then go back on-line to upload them, to the gentle chime of the phone.

But, somehow, it all worked. The trip report starts and ends with my Usenet posts.

I had to decide where I wanted to go. I was unemployed at the time, having just closed down the business I had scraped a meagre living at for the previous 12 years, still living at home and pretty skint. So time wasn't much of a factor. The Worldcon, in Chicago, was, so that was a pin I could use. I had always wanted to go to San Francisco, Seattle had eaten my brain, due to too many ShadowRun campaigns, Minnesota; a big fan hub, same with New York. I would have loved to do more, but, with the Worldcon, Chicon, in the middle of all that, there was a limit to how far I could go. It seemed like a plan.

I went to a travel agent to book flights. That seems so anachronistic now, but in 1999, that was how you did it, and jolly helpful they were too. The most economical way to San Francisco was to fly from Manchester to Schiphol in The Netherlands, then to SF. So that's what I did.

18th August 2000

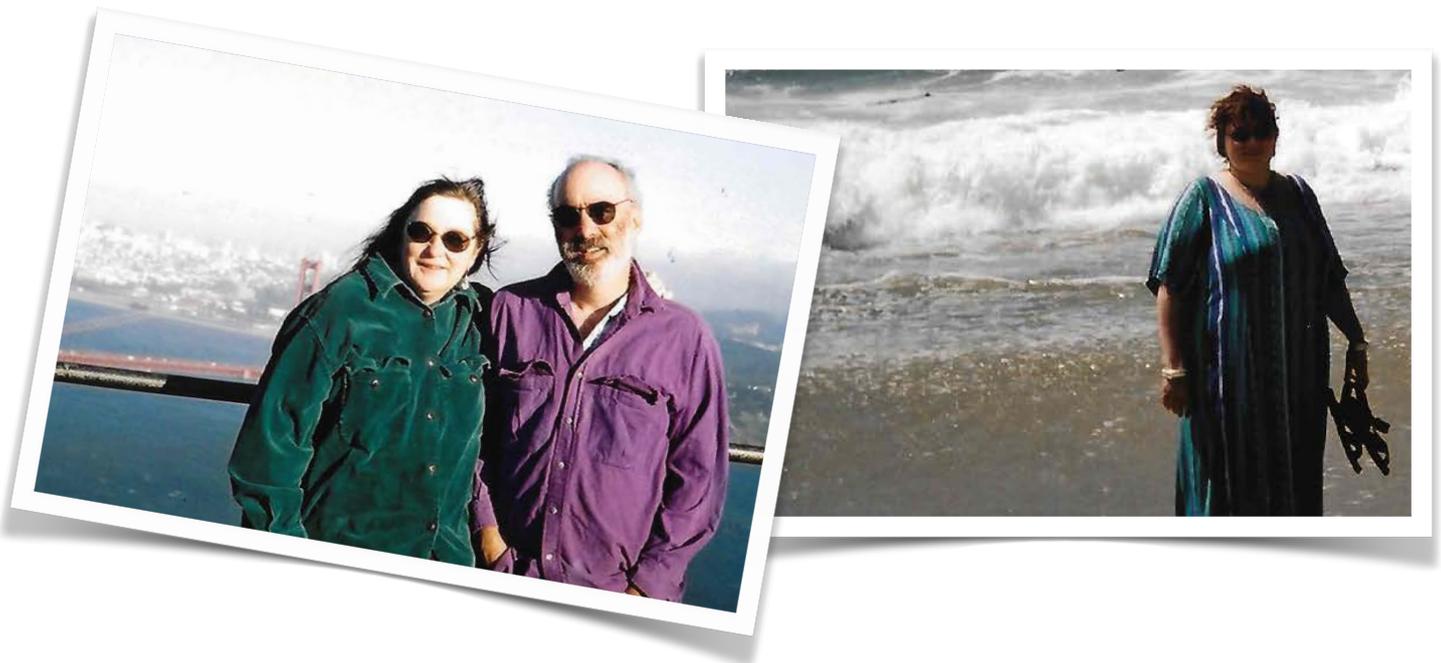
I flew over the top of the world. Up until then, the longest flight I had been on was about an hour (to Dublin or Jersey) and the flight to The Netherlands was the same, easy. The flight to the US? Quite something else. It went on forever, going over Iceland and glaciers, frozen blue sea ice, Greenland and Canada. And more Canada, and more. There is a lot of Canada, all of it, as far as I could see, empty.

By the time I arrived in San Francisco I was frazzled and immensely glad to be back on the ground: I get a horrible headache on planes, it's the air pressure, it clears as soon as they de-pressurise the cabin on arrival. I learned my lesson on this flight: on any other trips across the Atlantic, I broke my journey in Philadelphia or Chicago.

Doug Faunt, Allen Baum, Tom and Spike were my welcoming committee, so happy to see them, I don't think I had met any of them in the flesh before, but they were Usenet friends. I have a photo of me getting picked up, I look immensely stressed and wound up. And purple, I look purple in all the photos of my trip. Even my luggage was purple, therefore easy to spot on airport carousels. Tom, Spike, Bill Humphries and I go for Japanese food (on the grounds that I love it and it's easy to digest). I'm doing fine until Tom mentions that I have been awake for over twenty-four hours, so I nearly fall asleep in my sashimi as all the travel hits me at once.

19th - 23rd August 2000. California

Confession, some of these days/dates may be confused. I did so much in so few days, I think I have the chronology straight but feel free to correct me. I was staying with Spike and Tom then Donya White and Allen Baum. Donya and Allen drive me around the local area, out of town, this part of California is beautiful; golden hills of dry grass with wind turbines, vineyards, fantastic coasts but also deep, dark redwood forests, there are humming birds at garden bird feeders, little flying jewels. I tell them I'd like to go paddling, they start discussing canoes. No, not that sort of paddling. So, amidst the hyper fit surfers, volleyball players and joggers, there is a rotund Englishwoman with her sandals in hand, paddling in the Pacific. Bloody cold it is too; the surfers are wearing wet suits. But I did it.



The Golden Gate Bridge is glorious, I have a soft spot for suspension bridges, graceful arcs of cables hiding their strength, particularly the one over the Menai Strait, but this is a bridge of a wholly different scale, indeed it is golden in the evening light.

The city is beautiful too. Spike and I park at the top of Nob Hill and take the cable car down, then the local bus back to beat the queues. There is a photo of me on the bus, looking very hot, no it's not very flattering, no you aren't seeing it.

The trams in Blackpool are on the flat, the only other similar one I have been on is the one up the Great Orme in Llandudno, which



is cold and damp and Welsh, not like this. We walk back to the car from the tram stop, turn round and there is the bay below, sparking in the August sun, Alcatraz Island and the tall ships bobbing gently. SF weather is on its best behaviour, warm but not hot, glorious sunshine, perfect weather.

We go to Good Vibrations, a very clean and open sex shop. When I first got into buying comics, when I was a student in about 1980 or 81, I used to frequent a seedy sex shop near Deansgate (run by a highly dubious character D*v* Br*tt*n, who was done several times by the obscene publications laws for his nasty, Nazi themed comics). The comics were a front for the sex magazines and toys at the back, through the curtain. I would go through the long boxes for back issues of *Uncanny X-Men* or black and white Marvel UK *Captain Britains*, while seedy men in dirty macs came and went. But I got a good exposure to comics beyond the mainstream, I have a collection of *Bizarre Sex* and got very into *Omaha The Cat Dancer* and the like. And I was blissfully oblivious. Well, mostly.

Haight Ashbury still smells of dope and we pass the house the Mamas and Papas lived in, sadly, the sixties are over, Gerry Garcia and Jefferson Airplane no longer walk these streets, but their music still floats through the air. Palace of Fine Arts and the Exploratorium with Tom, I love interactive exhibits, they bring out the kid in all of us and this is a brilliant example. Coit Tower is also impressive, towering over the city and the murals, of working class scenes are outstanding, a fine example of altruistic patronage.

Art Deco architecture is just so elegant. Café Riace in Palo Alto has excellent food and a nymph with a front loading washing machine on her head (yes, really, I adore her, apparently some locals are more hostile).



Palo Alto is a remarkable place, the Rosicrucians have a mock Egyptian temple there, as you do. The incomparable Mary Kay Kare picks me up in a pink open top sports car to take me to the Winchester Mystery House, which is eccentrically mad in a reassuringly British way.

The people showing us around seem to think it's old. While on the tour of its many, many rooms, we crowd into a small room, a kid in the party, only six or seven years old, stands in the fireplace, on the tiled hearth. The tour guide says "Oh don't stand on the tiles, they're very old!" Old my foot, my house, a nondescript terrace, is older (checked Google, I am correct).

Mike Ward and Karen Schaffer hold a party for me, on Sunday 20th according to Rich McAllister on RASFF. I don't think anyone has ever held a party for me before! BASF also make me feel welcome by hosting a meeting at a pizza place, my first of several US pizzas, Kevin Standlee organises it, I've met him at a UK con with Cheryl Morgan. Local SF groups are rarer in the UK, they do exist, such as Reading and Warrington, but they're smaller, much less organised. Of course, California is bigger than the whole UK, with fewer people in it. And fans do like to socialise.

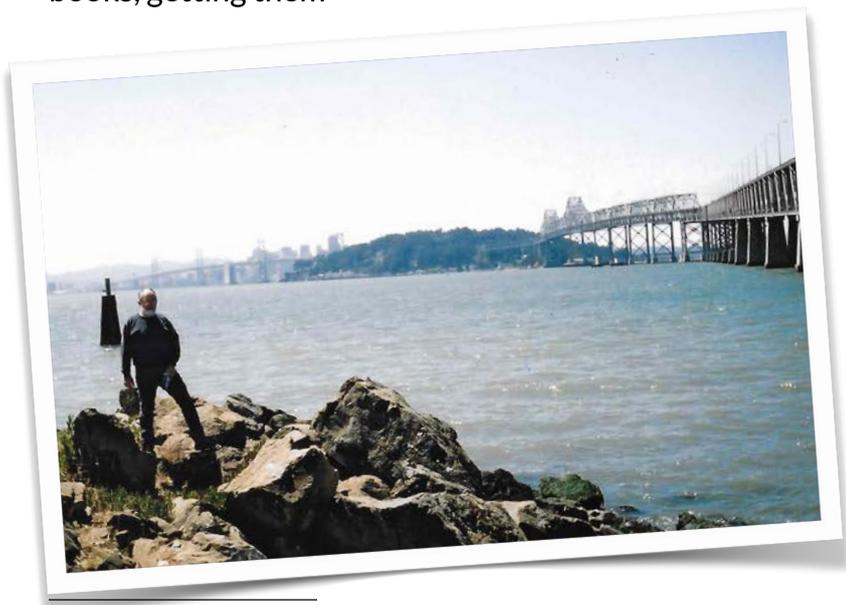
Over to Doug Faunt and Lynne, Doug takes me to the other side of SF, more working class than Nob Hill, to the Change of Hobbit which has a cat! Huzzah! Books may have been bought. Philly cheese steak for lunch (because we are in California, obviously). The place is full of workmen in hard hats and high viz. it's fantastic steak, much better than you would get in a low end café in the UK, but it's American cheese. Which is something. Not cheese. But definitely something.

We go around Berkeley, Bay Bridge and Port. Lynne cooks dinner, chicken, I think it's the first home cooked food since I arrived, it's very good. Doug also has cats, I approve of this arrangement. I try to watch TV, my original notes say – ha.ha.ha, no, maybe not, but to be fair, I don't watch TV in the UK either. So instead I start a newly purchased book, called *A Game of Thrones*, it's a bit of a door stop but might be good? And I loved *Fevre Dream*. I have been in the US for a few days and have already managed three



books, getting them

home is going to be fun. Via the miracle of modern technology, I use email to contact UK, the wonders of the world never cease to amaze me. I've specifically noted this in my diary of the trip. SF fans are notoriously early adopters of tech. Me? Mm, not as much. It's 2023, I still have a Nokia. Don't laugh, when your mobile has no battery or signal up Yr Wyddfa*.



*Before a certain Mr M. Scott, of a neighbouring parish, makes a pedantic comment, yes, I know about the usefulness of GPS and online maps. If your phone has a charge, cool, but my Nokia battery lasts about a fortnight between charges.

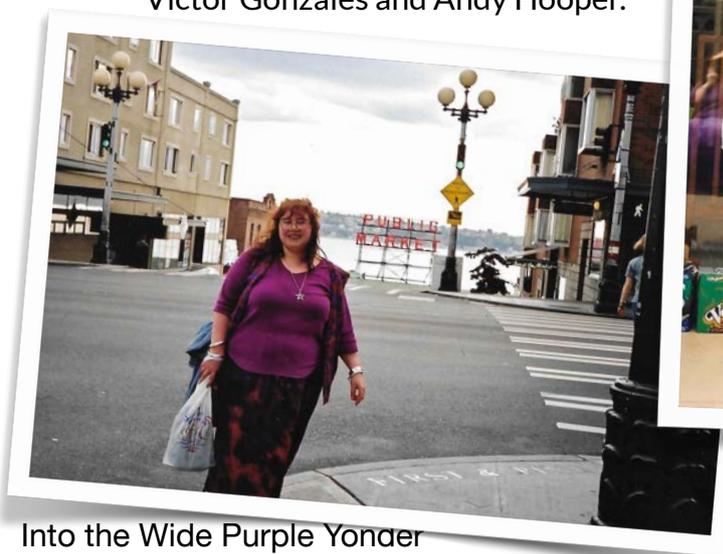
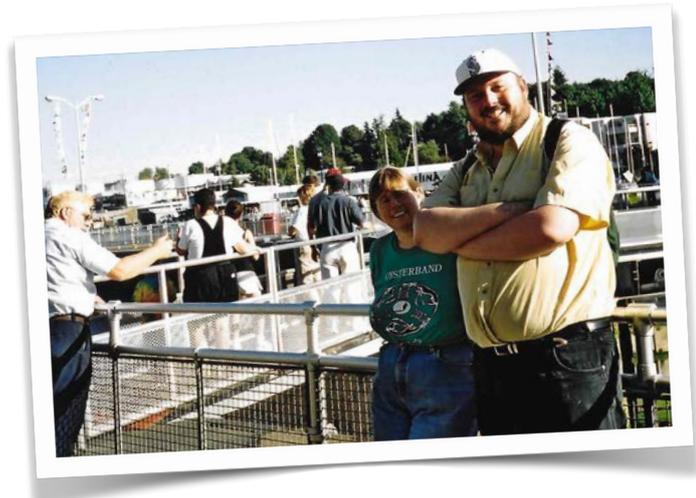
23rd August 2000. Seattle

Ah, Seattle, see, San Francisco is beautiful, breath-taking, stunning and all those adjectives. But it's too beautiful for me, too warm, too much. Whereas Seattle, as soon as I stepped off the plane, felt right. Well, it's the weather for a start, reassuringly damp. And the scenery, which is Scotland or my beloved Wales, but on steroids, it looks very similar from a distance, but when you get closer, the mountains, the rivers, the trees are fifty percent bigger. If I was going to live anywhere in the US, I think it would be Seattle.

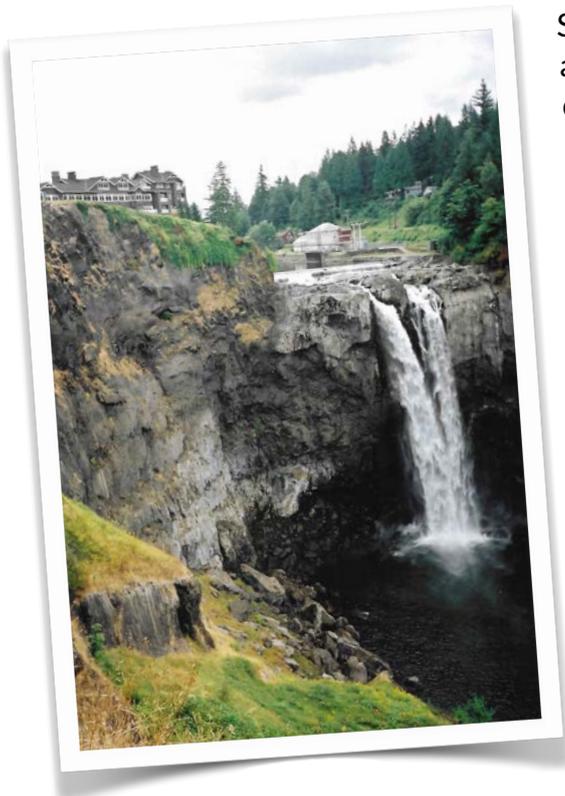
Locals are friendly too. Kate Schaefer and her family were my principal hosts, I was sleeping at Vonda McIntyre's house which was just up the same road as Kate. We go to a salmon ladder at Ballard Locks and watch them in a chute and Kate buys enough salmon to satisfy even my appetite for the fish.

Andy Hooper took me on a trip to Archie McPhee and to see the Fremont Troll (I don't think I had admitted that part of my desire to visit Seattle was due to an over exposure of ShadowRun, which had made parts of the area feel spookily familiar; oh, look that's where we embezzled a bank, and that's where we got flamed by a dragon, you know, the usual stuff). It's hard to remember how fantastic Archie McPhee was back then, nowadays, through the wonders of the internet, it's easy to find niche, geeky stuff, back in 2000? Much less so. I stock up on stupid things (such as bacon shaped sticky plasters) for the fan auctions at Chicon.

I love boats, ferries, mucking about near water in particular, local fan Grace takes me across to Bremerton on a ferry to do some old fashioned mooching around interesting shops, I buy a silver bangle I still wear today, with her friend Rhonda. Another party is held for me, full of Seattle stalwarts, such as Victor Gonzales and Andy Hooper.



Into the Wide Purple Yonder



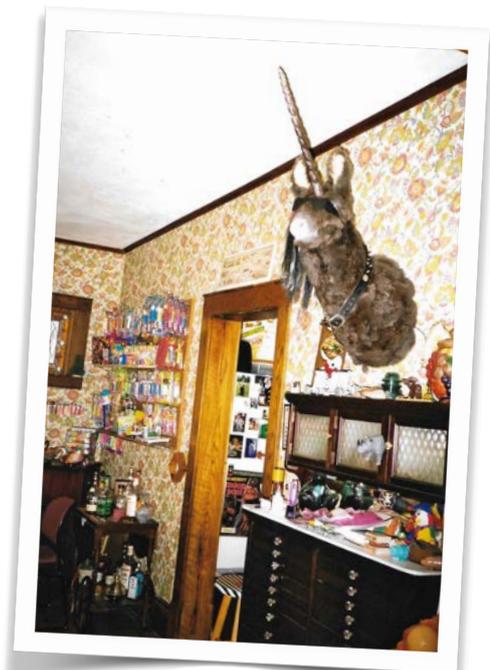
Seattle runs at my pace, love it here. I feel happy and secure enough to set out on my own downtown, I buy hippy clothes in my size (the internet has made it much easier, but in 2000, finding trousers short, wide and bohemian enough for me was a nightmare. I still have them and, occasionally, still wear them) and wander Pike Place, buying some tat from the first Starbucks store for a UK friend who collects their mugs. I plan on getting public transport home but I'm tired so Kate comes out to rescue me, we spend a lovely evening with her family and kids.

Jerry and Suzle take me on a tour of the countryside, out to Snoqualmie Falls and various Twin Peaks tourist destinations. It confirms my opinion of the area as Scotland-on-Steroids; such familiar scenery, just 50% bigger. Lovely though. I explain to Kate that people keep showing me 'old' buildings which

just aren't very old, so she drives me around the fantastic kitsch buildings left over from the fifties and sixties; the Hat and Boots gas station, the Twin Tepees Restaurant, the Pink Elephant car wash. That's more like it, the Hat and Boots is particularly bonkers, therefore, particularly fantastic. It's, sadly, no longer a petrol station, but the hat and boots have been preserved for posterity, there's a man's cowboy boot for the men's toilet, and a matching women's for the ladies. The Twin Tepees is closed due to a fire and demolished not long after, which is a real shame, they all should be valued more. Vonda is a lovely host, she gives me a beaded sea anemone, which I still have, blue and white seed beads, complicated and beautiful, much like her writing. I never get to go up the Space Needle; the cloud is too low to make it worthwhile, some days you can't see the top of the Needle, I only see Mount St Helens in all its glory as I fly out on my way to Minnesota, another large fannish hub.

27th August 2000, fly to Minnesota

The weather in San Francisco was delightful, about seventy degrees, warm, not too hot, sunny, pleasant. Seattle felt like summer at home, cool, damp, familiar. Minnesota... oh. I get off the plane and I can't breathe. Well, obviously, I can, but the air going into my lungs is the same temperature and humidity as the air coming out, it's very disconcerting, very strange indeed, I am a creature of temperate climes. Flying over the state, it's freckled with lakes, I'm told the state bird is a mosquito, I can quite believe it, all that



water. I'm also told it gets pretty bloody cold in winter, downtown Minneapolis has the Skyways, covered, elevated links between shops as it is as inhospitable in winter as in summer. Geri is my host and has one of those fantastic wooden houses, all glowing in the summer sun, and full of interesting things and people, including a stuffed unicorn head, Pez collection and, importantly, a cat. Cicadas chirp madly in the night.

28th August 2000. Minnesota State Fair.

My notes say 'Oh my poor feet'. It was definitely an experience. For UK readers, imagine a county fair, double it, double it again, add a full fairground, add every May Queen in the UK and you are getting the picture. Also add every fried food van you have ever staggered past on a Friday night, take away the burgers/hot dogs/kebabs of dubious pedigree. Replace them with things-on-a-stick. Often deep fried things-on-a-stick. Including poor unassuming pickles. According to my notes I sampled pretzels, popcorn, venison sausage on black bread, doughnuts, candyfloss and won a white shell bead necklace which goes green on my skin. I also drank copious amounts of milk, which was part of a Cunning Plan sponsored by Doug Wickstrom to get as many branded Minnesota State Fair cups as possible for the Minicon Party at Worldcon.



Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Mark Richards, Lydy Nickerson, Eileen Lufkin, Laura Krentz, Dean Gahlon, Doug Wickstrom, David Schroth, Laurel Krahn, Sue, David Harsh

I found Geri's notes on the RASFF archive, 19 local fans joined us (including Patrick Nielsen Hayden, all the way from New York), Beth Friedman, Laurel Krahn, Dean Gahlon, Laura Krentz, Lydia Nickerson, David Schroth, and the aforementioned Doug Wickstrom. I found the Fair both charming and bewildering; in some ways it was very familiar, in particular the country arts and crafts. There were competitions of home-made cakes and jams and biscuits which were just like the village fête, large vegetables, strange shaped vegetables. In the UK, the pictures made from seeds and corn would have been of corgis or Tellytubbies, not baseball players or GW Bush. But they would have had the same naïve charm and taken the same amount of patience and skill.



We wandered the Midway (fairground) Patrick and Beth, Lydy and David had a ride in a ball on a bungee cord which did its best to launch them into orbit. No, thank you, it would knock off my pickle hat, I declined, politely.

Instead of the May Queens there are the Dairy Queens, Minnesota is a big dairy state. Every county has one and, once a day during the fair, there is a parade of floats, with the Dairy Queen at its head.

And speaking of heads – in a pavilion is a

Now, as previously mentioned, summer in

fridge, with transparent glass walls.

this part of the world is quite something, about 100°F with 100% humidity. A bit on the warm side. In the fridge sits the young lady who is queen for that day, she's most likely the prettiest girl in the school, slim, long haired, dressed like a prom queen. Also in the fridge is a guy in a parka. And gloves. And a balaclava. And

he has a knife. He carves her. Carves her head. No, this is not a

WickerMan/Midsomer moment. He

carves her likeness out of a slab of

butter. Yes. Really. The heads of the

previous days' Dairy Queens watch

on in blank eyed appreciation. It's

quite something to behold.

Apparently, they used to hand out

crackers with the curls of carved

butter on them to the audience. But

Health and Safety regulations put paid

to that. Didn't do anything to allay my

sense of creeping horror. Nor Patrick's

neither. I think he was more weirded

out than any of us.





Now with pickle hats: Mark Richards, Sue, David Schroth, Beth Friedman, Doug Wickstrom, Laurel Kahn, Laura Krentz, Dean Gahlon

31st August 2000. Chicago

Fly to Chicago, as a guest of the Con, I get met at the airport and put up in a swish room at the Fairmont, with a king sized bed, complete with mint on pillow. And a TV in the bathroom. Which is, by UK standards, well weird. When I turn it on, they are at Minnesota State Fair, talking to people in front of the butter sculpture of Princess Kay of the Milky Way. I am being stalked by it. As is Patrick Nielsen Hayden who accosts me in the fan lounge: his NY cool can't cope with disembodied dairy queens.

The con is in the Hyatt which is a huge warren but I find the fan lounge, with comfy chairs and stuff to read, which is a sanctuary. It also has people I know from RASFF, I've never met them in the flesh but it's good to see familiar faces, including but not limited to Joyce Scrivner, Neil Rest, John Hertz, Marilee Lyman, Janice Gelb, Brenda Clough, Tom Galloway, Sharon Sbarsky, Evelyn Leeper, Laurie Mann, Kate Yule, David Levine. And British fans, including *Plokta* Cabal members, Mike Scott, Steve Davies and Giulia De Cesare.

American cons run slightly differently to British ones, and one of the most obvious is the Fan Lounge. Where over here in the UK it's the bar, of course. There was a bar in the hotel, the longest free-standing bar in the US, apparently, which I explored in the company of Terry Pratchett. We met on an escalator, going in opposite directions and spent a very happy hour or so drinking gin there (which meant that we were both somewhat sozzled when we staggered to the Hugo rehearsal. I was presenting an award, Terry was a nominee).

I announced the Fan Art Hugo without incident (sobered up by then); the lovely Joe Mayhew won, posthumously. I had never met him but felt I knew him through his interactions with the *Plokta* Cabal and his sense of humour, which shone through in almost everything he drew. You meet all sorts of famous people at cons. To be fair, I'd know Terry since 1988 when he was a guest of honour at a convention in Manchester with a grand total of 24 members. He was my plus one at the pre- and post-Hugo bash

as, by some oversight, he didn't get an invite. Fellow writer John Meaney and his talented and creative wife, Yvonne were there. And John's brother.

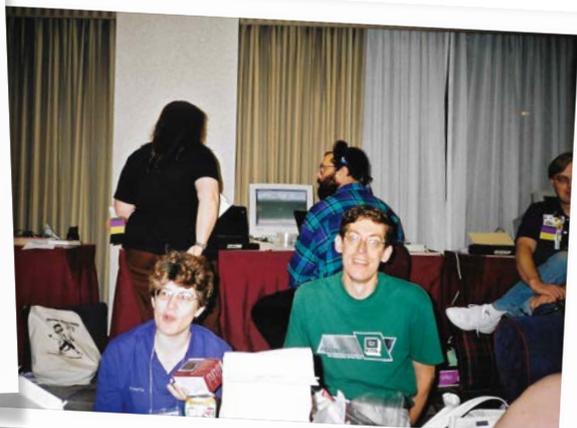
Now, John's brother I didn't know, but he's really nice and as he was living in the US, he'd decided to join his brother at the Worldcon. All good so far. When he arrived, he found that he had been upgraded to a suite. And a fruit basket. And flowers. All from the con committee. There was a note with the flowers, saying if Mr Meaney could find time to be on any program items, just to say the word. His first name is Colm, a pretty common Irish name. But that, of course, made him Colm Meaney. Except he wasn't the Colm Meaney they thought he was. Not the beloved, talented actor known in fannish circles for playing Miles O'Brien in Star Trek. So Colm called the ConCom to let them know that, yes, he was Colm Meaney, but, no, he wasn't the Colm Meaney they thought he was. They were very gracious and told him to keep the flowers. And fruit.

There were quite a lot of parties, the US model of convention encourages them as the hotels are much more relaxed about corkage than UK ones. One evening, John, Yvonne, Colm, myself and a cadre of mostly Canadian SF writers, including Robert J Sawyer, were trooping from room party to room party like plundering, beer-fuelled reivers. In a corridor we met with Michael Dorn, but not the Michael Dorn you are thinking of, this one is another fan, not a beloved and fantastic Star Trek actor. Photos of Colm and Mike together were taken for posterity. I don't have a copy, because these were photos. Not taken on a phone, taken on a camera. Processed in a lab. On paper. All the photos in this report, some by me, some by Spike and Tom, Moshe, Geri and other friends, have been scanned. It seems so old fashioned now, but in 2000, phones didn't have cameras in them.

The Canadian/European/Antipodean cohort decided that Americans didn't know how to drink. They were too polite? They would have two drinks and move on, so it was our honour bound duty to drink all the Con parties dry for them. It was a public service. No need to thank us. All those mugs of milk and pickle hats were being put to good use at the Minneapolis fans Minneapolis in '73/Minicon. The Midway was in the loo. Geri and friends run a great party, years of experience.



Steve Davies was involved with the newsletter, and we had just the best fun ever, particularly the night shift.





Chaz Boston Baden was running the show, the newsletter was the Chicago Moon Times and Steve, Pat McMurray and Jan van 't Ent were familiar faces. I also knew Teddy Harvia, Joyce Scrivner and Erik V Olson from online, but most of the team were new friends, we even had a cuddly mascot, Stuart the Mouse. And we had such a great time, which is a sign of a well-run newsletter; everyone is a volunteer, we're here to have fun too, producing a good newsletter is the cherry on the cake.

The rum helped... Lynn V Baden's daughter had just returned from visiting family in Cuba and had brought back a couple of bottles of over-proof rum (the legality of which was questionable). Chaz doesn't drink, so we felt it necessary to help with the disposal of contraband. Goodness, it was delicious. Every evening it would get

to about two in the morning, I would declare that I was off to bed, then someone would suggest an amusing fillo and I would stay up for another hour or two, drawing it. Sadly, I can't find copies of the newsletter online, it may have all been a fever dream, induced by too much rum? [Thank goodness for fanac.org - see <https://fanac.org/conpubs/Worldcon/Chicon%202000/Chicago%20Moon-Times.pdf>] Pat Lawrence was our voice of sanity and an oasis of calm amidst the chaos. We had a quiet thank-heavens-it's-not-our-problem party to watch the Masquerade, Giulia and I had both worked on Masquerades in the UK and The Netherlands, it was a relief to only be audience. We watched it on the hotel TV, another cool technological advance.



Into the Wide Purple Yonder

After the Worldcon finished, I spent a couple of days with Karen Babich (and, more importantly, her cat, Xerxes). We visited my namesake, Sue the tyrannosaur at the Field Museum, which has some absolutely brilliant north-west native American art.

Lake Michigan is somewhat mind blowing, not sure lakes should have waves? Or tides? But a beach is a beach, so I managed another paddle. Still with Steve and Giulia, we went up the John Hancock building, as the sun went down. Karen, as native guide, recommended not spending \$15 to go to the viewing platform, instead to spend \$15 on a cocktail in the bar, on the floor below. Sage advice, the views were indeed fantastic, but I had a moment in the ladies loos; I don't really like great heights. I walked into the cubicle, did my business, came out and was presented with an entire glass wall opposite me, where the sinks were. Huge rush of vertigo, I would have been fine if I'd noticed this feature on the way in, it was just the total surprise, as though someone had stolen the wall while I was otherwise occupied. Even the sinks were glass. I had to have another cocktail, for medicinal purposes, you understand?

6th September 2000. New York



New York, I am in you! O'Hare airport has plastic seat covers which whizz out with each new flush. This is very weird. There's a pair of brand-new stockings on the floor of the cubicle too, even weirder. And there is a huge gap around the door of each toilet stall, weirdest of all.

New York looks impressive in the afternoon sun. I'm not really a city person, I really don't get the charm of them, the bigger they are, the dirtier and less appealing, in my experience. I prefer small towns, villages, green and growing places. But there's no doubt it's imposing and, particularly Central Station, beautiful.

Moshe Feder is my host, we travel out to his house on the underground and buses. It's my first experience of a Kosher kitchen, which is fascinating, we have take-away Chinese food and it's much more interesting than the UK shops, chicken blood for example, tastes like liver, I very much like liver. He takes me to Tor

Books, where he works, in the Flatiron building, an iconic early skyscraper. I get to stand at the 'prow' in Tom Doherty's office and get given several books, they also kindly ship my book haul home for me, including the books I've accrued during the trip. They go by slow boat, but it's a big weight off my shoulders, literally. Ben Yalow takes me on a circle tour of Manhattan by boat, as previously mentioned, I love messing about on water. It's a very good way to see the city, particularly on a sunny day and particularly because my feet (and voice) are giving out after nearly three weeks of walking and talking. Worldcon was especially hard on my voice; I hosted a docent tour of the art show with just a whisper, people had to crowd in close to hear me. Ben is a font of knowledge about the sights we pass, including the hospital where his mother worked, they are planning to name a wing of it after her. I can't find it on a map now, but there is

a school named after her. Ben's mum, Rosalyn, was a Nobel Prize winner. <https://www.nobelprize.org/womenwhochangedscience/stories/rosalyn-yalow> <https://yalowcharter.org/>



Lise Eisenberg and I go to the newly refurbished Battery Park, I pet the Wall Street Bull and am suitably impressed by the Post Office building, New York has a plethora of notable architecture. Dinner that evening is NY pizza in an old place with huge pizza ovens at the back, rumour, of course, says that the Mafia use the pizza ovens to dispose of the troublesome. The pizzas are, however, top rate, the best I've had in the US. Don't tell the fans in Chicago, but I prefer thin pizza to deep pan. My poor

abused feet won't make the short walk to the ice cream parlour for dessert, Bill Wagner has to drive me. Ginger and chocolate ice cream, my notes say, and more importantly, laid back cat. I truly navigate the world by felines.

Vicki Rosenzweig meets me after work, under the World Trade Centre, yes, that World Trade Centre. Gloriously sunny day, we eat pears and pretzels and go to the Hayden Planetarium with Lise and then to the IMAX cinema for a film on astronauts. I find IMAX screenings rather overwhelming, but it certainly works for this subject, about the ISS. We don't manage the Guggenheim, Central Park, oh so many, many other NY sights, but my energy is really flagging after three weeks of walking, talking (plus a Worldcon). Not to worry, NY is easy to get to from the UK, thinks I. Then of course, 9/11 happens, almost a year to the day after this, and everything changes. New York fandom hold a party for me at Moshe's. Moshe and Lise, the Nielsen Haydens, VJ Bowen (Velma), Bill Wagner, Ben Yalow, Avram Grumer, Mark Richards, Danny Lieberman, it's the perfect end to my visit. We discuss fans, fandom, TAFF, all the important things in life. I fly the next day, happy that the seat next

to me is free. We go over the UK at night, the sodium lights make it look alien and strange, over Llandudno and Colwyn Bay, the Orme and piers very recognisable, over my house in Cheshire, Mum's house in Derbyshire, to Schiphol in the Netherlands, I could do with a parachute, to cut the journey short. But then it's only a little hop home, purple luggage still in tow.





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From: sue@arctic-fox.freemove.co.uk† [Sue Mason]
Date: 11 Sep 2000 10:07:52
Newsgroups: rec.arts.sf.fandom
Subject: I'm Baaaaaaaack

Well, here I am. Home once again. The cat is purring on the arm of the chair, the computer is purring on my lap. There is a pile of washing the size of a small State in the kitchen, waiting for me to get up the energy to wash it! I got home to discover that my pal Annie had not only bought me milk and bread but orange juice, salad, salmon steaks, fruit and a bottle of Waggle Dance. She's a good friend. Two rolls of film went in to be developed today and I'm sure the Plokta cabal will post any worth seeing to the net when I get them back on Thursday. I had to order a copy of A Storm of Swords (the latest George RR Martin in the Song of Ice and Fire) as there were no copies to be had in Altrincham. I'll just have to console myself by reading the proof of The King's Peace which Patrick kindly gave me when I was at the Tor offices.

I'm tired, footsore and glad to be home. I've had a marvellous time. Met some wonderful people, seen some beautiful sights and travelled more in the last three weeks than in my entire life before my Taff trip. Thank you to everyone who put me up and everyone who put up with me. Thanks also to my sponsors (Vicki, Victor, Alison, Claire and Mr 'Rocketman' Langford) and to everyone who voted for me, supported me and contributed to the fund in any way. It's been three weeks I'll never forget. Sue.

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† This is not Sue's current email address. Don't try to use it because it will bounce