

DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE COLUMN Issue #8

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Greetings all! If you noticed in the last issue, I had visited six places in Passaic County, New Jersey. In this issue, I saw six more places in that county. If you would like more information, contact the following: The Passaic County History & Tourism Board, 930 Riverview Drive, Totowa, NJ 07505 (973-569-4040). I also went to other places: Bear Mountain, New York; New York City; and Washington, DC. In addition, this issue includes two science fiction conventions (SF cons) that I attended: Capclave, Hilton Washington, DC, North/Gaithersburg, Gaithersburg, Maryland, and Philcon or the Philadelphia SF Conference, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Friday, June 12, 2015: Not too far from my hotel in Wayne, NJ, I visited the Laurelwood Arboretum, 725 Pines Lake West (973-202-9579 or www.laurelwoodarboretum.org). Upon entering the Knippenberg Center, the very helpful staff of volunteers handed me a brochure and map of the property. Therefore, I was on my way to take a self-guided tour. The first area I encountered was the Sensory Garden where different flowerbeds displayed their bright colors, and I could faintly smell their fragrances. I also noticed a herb garden. Then I climbed a trail that went uphill, past a greenhouse and a pond, before walking on a trail that showed its share of trees, grasses, and plants, especially azaleas and rhododendrons. After resting in a gazebo, I walked another trail located parallel to a brook where I looked at another nearby brook, a few different trees: oak, magnolia, birch, pine, and dogwood, as well as a rock garden. I especially liked the rock garden containing bright flowers of pink and fuchsia in between the gray rocks. Along other trails, I glanced at plenty of lawns, plants, flowers, and of course, trees. The dominating color for the flowers along the trails was white, but here and there, I also viewed flowers in a few other colors: purple, yellow, pink, and bright red. Fortunately, this place also provided some benches to rest where I

saw birds, chipmunks, and squirrels going about their business. Finally, an easier trail called "Easy Way" displayed foxglove and a gentler downslope back to the visitor center. Overall, this place looked impressive and even more so when I remembered that volunteers maintained the 30-acre grounds of this former nursery.

Saturday, June 13: Back in the last issue, #7, I mentioned going to Ringwood Manor and a bit about the Cooper-Hewitt families who lived there and made their fortune by owning a nearby ironworks. On the date above, I visited the location of the former ironworks and company town: Long Pond Ironworks, 1334 Greenwood Lake Turnpike, Hewitt (973-657-1688 or www.LongPondIronworks.org). The ironworks started in 1767 by Peter Hasenclever, and this area produced iron for around the next 100 years. In 1771, Robert Eskine became the next ironmaster, and during his years as an ironmaster, Long Pond made iron products for the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War (1775-'83). Eskine was also a mapmaker for George Washington. Then in 1807, the Ryerson family owned the ironworks until 1853, when the Cooper-Hewitt firm purchased Long Pond. This firm built new furnaces and built up the village during the Civil War (1861-'65). Later, because of cheaper coal from Pennsylvania and other sources of ore from PA, the Midwestern states, and Colorado, NJ lost most of her iron industry. Therefore, in 1882, Long Pond no longer produced iron. The adjoining village survived, however, and the residents worked in other nearby jobs: lumber, farm work, mining, etc. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many of these jobs disappeared and residents moved away. In the 1950s, the State of NJ received Long Pond. Currently, visitors should stop at the Visitors Center/Museum. Here, they could see exhibits, pictures, and texts covering the history of Long Pond Ironworks in more detail. If you didn't have mobility issues, I would suggest taking the guided tour of the grounds. Most of the buildings were in ruins or barely standing, but listening to our tour guide explaining each ruin seemed to bring this village back to life!

Sunday, June 14: On this day, I experienced history at a gentler pace compared to the days before. The Hamilton-Van Wagoner House, 971 Valley Road, Clifton (973-744-5707) did not require me to climb any trails; I only had to climb a flight of stairs in this 1817 Dutch-Colonial house. Because nothing much belonged to the people who once lived here, most of the furniture and items reflected certain periods in time: Colonial, Federal, and Victorian. My very enthusiastic guide showed me the two Victorian rooms first: parlor and library. In the parlor, she played a disk on a 19th-century music box and pointed out a "Hackensack cabinet." She said she had seen other Hackensack cabinets in other places, but they were smaller. Another interesting item in the parlor was a floral-patterned carpet that the makers colored with dye that they made using plants, and others stitched this carpet together by hand. Among other rooms, my guide led me to a Federal-styled parlor and bedroom where she told me the origin of the term "sleep tight." Finally, we went downstairs to the Colonial-styled dining room and kitchen. Here, she demonstrated how some of the equipment worked, especially the toaster or "toe stir." What made my visit more interesting was when two other people and their young son joined me on the tour. With this, my tour guide explained to him how people in the past did things for work and leisure. I particularly liked it when she described to us how to maintain an icebox. Anyway, for what appeared to be a small building, I learned a lot about the everyday lives of people in the past.

Friday, July 17: From what I read about the Shepherd Lake section of Ringwood State Park, 1304 Sloatsburg Road, Ringwood (973-962-7031), and about its cold, spring-fed waters, I figured that, at most, I would only get my hands and feet wet at this lake. Instead, as I slowly walked farther and farther into the clear water, where I could see fish swimming about, I first went up to my

knees, then my waist, and by the time the water came to my midriff, I decided to immerse myself completely. Therefore, I spent most of the next hour swimming or relaxing in the water. Meanwhile, I noticed many families enjoying the lake as much as I did: Children played both in the shallow waters near the beach or on the beige sand of this beach. Then, I saw other people sitting, and some of them were either eating on the beach or sitting and eating in the grassy area behind the beach. This section of Ringwood State Park offered picnic tables, grills, and a bathhouse with rest rooms. Other parts of the lake included areas for boating with boat rentals and areas for fishing. Nearby, the park provided trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. They also had places for hunting in season. Speaking of seasons, in the winter, many people used these trails for cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. On the day I was there, I saw, besides the beach area, plenty of trees surrounding the lake, a gray stone chapel, and the blue sky above. Once I had immersed myself into the water—and that took less than a minute—I felt as though I could stay there all day, but after about an hour, I got hungry. Thus, I walked out of the lake, sat on a picnic table, and ate my lunch while still looking at this 74-acre lake high in the hills!

Saturday, July 18: The Clifton Arts Center and Sculpture Park, 900 Clifton Ave., Clifton (973-472-5499 or www.cliftonnj.org) had been a municipally operated arts center located in two renovated barns of the former US Animal Quarantine Station. Since 2000, the borough of Clifton has used it as an arts center devoted to visual arts. So far, they have played host to over 100 temporary art shows. Outside, the grounds displayed over 30 contemporary sculptures. Inside, the only permanent art works included a photomontage of pictures of some of the animals who used to reside here and an embroidered picture from Vietnam of flowers. When I was there, the Clifton Arts Center presented "A Humanist Vision: The Paintings and Drawings of Michael Lenson (1903-1971)." This artist painted and drew in a surreal style when most of his contemporary art colleagues preferred abstract art, especially in the 1950s and '60s. Since 1941, Lenson painted and drew most of his artworks from his Nutley, NJ home. Before the Great Depression, he had much of his art displayed in different NYC art galleries. During the Depression, he moved to NJ and became art director of WPA mural projects. He also painted murals for different buildings in NJ as well as for a post office in West Virginia. Later, he wrote an arts column from 1956 to '71, and he taught painting at the Montclair Arts Museum (MAM). In addition, the MAM and other museums in the USA have exhibited his art. I was impressed with seeing his drawings and paintings of subjects ranging from himself and his family to other people both real and symbolic.

Sunday, July 19: When I visited Ringwood Manor in March, I toured the manor house, but I only glimpsed at the surrounding grounds because of the ice and snow covering almost everything. On the date above, I revisited Ringwood Manor to take my time and tour the grounds. First, I stopped into the Ringwood State Park Office, 1304 Sloatsburg Road, Ringwood (973-962-2240). Here, I looked at a few exhibits displaying the flora and fauna of this state park via pictures, texts, and exhibit items of bones, feathers, and nests as well as leaves, wood, plants, etc. A few other exhibits showed items from the former ironworks. Then the staff gave me a map of the grounds. Unlike Skylands Manor, the grounds of Ringwood Manor didn't include too many flowers, but they made up for it in their landscaping of lawns, plants, and bushes as well as trees, ponds, and occasional flowers. I also saw stone and iron items placed around the grounds that the former owners, the Hewitt family, collected from trips to Europe, from old NYC buildings as well as reproductions of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman lawn art, and items from the old ironworks. What especially impressed me was the sunken Italian garden, a cedar garden, and a log cabin. Many of the stone items included statues, columns, urns, and benches. Among the iron items, I noticed lampposts, gates, chains, and weapons. Besides the log cabin (that

the girls of the Hewitt family used to use for a playhouse), the manor grounds comprised other outbuildings: a blacksmith shop, a dairy building with a nearby water wheel, and an icehouse. The day I was there, a group of re-enactors acted as British soldiers during the Boer War (1899-1901). They re-enacted their "battle" the day before; on the day I was there, they pursued a more peaceful activity: a cricket match. Meanwhile I glanced at displays of the reproduction turn-of-the-20th-century tents that they slept in, the Union Jack draped over a cannon, and a picture of Queen Victoria. Anyway, I started my Passaic County trips by visiting Ringwood Manor, and I ended my trips to this county by visiting Ringwood Manor.

Sunday, August 2: As soon as I saw two teepees in the distance in this area surrounding by hills and nearby Bear Mountain, I knew I was at the right place: Bear Mountain Pow Wow, Anthony Wayne Recreation Area at Harriman State Park, Palisades Interstate Parkway, Stony Point, New York. (For more information, contact the Redhawk Native American Arts Council, 1022 39th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219, phone: 718-686-9297, or email: native@redhawkcouncil.org.) After I entered the Pow Wow grounds, I noticed several merchants surrounding almost three-quarters of this area selling many items: fur, leather, and buckskin as well as jewelry, dream catchers, drums, featherhead dresses, artworks in paintings and sculptures, etc. I also looked at a demonstration of painting on feathers. The remaining quarter of the Pow Wow perimeter included food vendors selling both regular foods of hot dogs, hamburgers, and cold desserts, as well as traditional foods such as bison burgers, venison stew, corn stew, fry bread, and so on. I had an early lunch where I did eat a very tasty bison burger. Afterward, I watched as a woman showed and explained about different birds of prey such as an owl, a falcon, and a few other birds. Later, in the main entertainment area, I sat as I listened to a storyteller, or teacher, tell of the beliefs of many Native Americans on how certain animals came to look the way they did. He also reminded the audience of the contribution of the Native Americans to food and some forms of government in our current society. Next, he introduced a Native-American motorcycle club who has done charitable works. Then, the dancers arrived, especially the Aztec Dancers. Each group of Native Americans wore traditional costumes. Nevertheless, the styles ranged from buckskin and leather in shades of brown to bright colors--even Day-Glo--in different materials: cotton, satin, lame, and so on, along with plenty of feathers. Overall, it made for a very interesting and educational event!

Saturday, September 12: This was the first time I ever visited this place in NYC: El Museo Del Barrio, 1230 5th Ave at E.104th St. (212-831-1272 or www.elmuseo.org). As NYC's main Latino art and cultural institution, this museum exhibited different artworks from artists of Latino decent or from artists in Latin America via paintings, drawings, and photos as well as sculptures, films, and other mediums. Much of the themes for this art reflected the artists' beliefs and communities as well as their hopes and dreams. When I was there, El Museo Del Barrio presented 1) Rodriguez Calero Urban Myths and Latter Day Santos, 2) Cut & Mix: Contemporary Collage, and 3) Presente! The Young Lords in New York. For the first special exhibit, Rodriguez Calero made collages from different materials to display her many surreal themes from the Catholic religion to hip-hop street culture in many vivid colors, pressed patterns, and gloss. She also made santos, a wood carved, Latino-folk art of figures from myths and religion. Some of them looked quite colorful. The second exhibit area, Cut & Mix, showed collages that different artists made of several themes--much of it from their Caribbean culture. In addition to using papers, pictures, and photos from prints and magazines, these artists also used materials such as linoleum, cardboard, and fabric. One of the collage pictures

almost looked Asian/Himalayan. So much so, that it could have been in the Rubin Museum. Finally, the third exhibit area presented photos and films about the works of a neighborhood improvement group, The Young Lords, who formed in 1968. One of the problems they solved in East Harlem involved the lack of garbage pickup from the NYC Sanitation Department. Therefore, The Young Lords organized the residents into putting the garbage in the middle of the streets. Within a short time, NYC's Sanitation Department made regular garbage pickups in East Harlem. Overall, I learned a bit more about the artistic life and serious issues of the Latino community.

Friday, October 9: If it was Columbus Day Weekend, it was time for Capclave, the Washington, DC, three-day, SF con. I only attended for two days, and the next essay should tell you why I did what I planned. Thus, I started this con by entering 1) the Con Suite. Sharing a room with gamers, this con suite offered the usual snacks, soft drinks, and chances to either sit and read, or talk with other SF fans. Then I sat in on the first panel for me: 2) Science Literacy in Fandom, where Inge Heyer, Sam Scheiner, Bub Sparhawk, and Doug Fratz mentioned that there have been people in the developed world who still thought the sun revolved around the Earth—or that humans and dinosaurs coexisted. They also said that most hard SF stories must follow the rules of science—except for one or two “throw away” science rules. Of course, somebody mentioned the SF/science fact magazine *Analog*. Overall, the panel agreed that having a good story with good, well-rounded characters was just as important as keeping the science correct. At the next panel I attended, 3) Retro Nostalgia SF, Martin Berman-Gorvine, Michael Dirda, Doug Fratz, and David Hartwell tried to define retro nostalgia SF. Somebody recommended reading *The Death of Captain Future* by Allen Steel, and somebody else mentioned Steam Punk SF as well as the stories by Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. One definition from the panel was that retro SF was the future as imagined in the past, and another person on the panel said that the TV show *Wild Wild West* was a good example of the above description, as well as *Tom Swift* series of books.

Saturday, October 10: I started this day by visiting 4) the Dealers' Room where about two-thirds of the dealers sold reading materials of mostly books and magazines, and the rest of the dealers sold other merchandise: costumes, accessories, and jewelry as well as t-shirts, tote bags, and other stuff. Next, I sat in on the following panel: 4) Future Technologies, where Inge Heyer, Bud Sparhawk, Charles E. Gannon, and Thomas McCabe wondered what someone from the year 1,000 CE would think of the current times. Somebody on the panel said that the Romans were great engineers, but the Ancient Greeks were better philosophers. The panel also discussed gradual change in technology compared to rapid change that has been happening more recently, as well as what new jobs and professions came about due to high tech—and what jobs were going away. Then the panel wondered at what point high tech could stop making us human. Finally, at 6) Building a Spacefaring Civilization, Thomas McCade, John Ashmead, Mike McPhail, and Gary L. Oleson started off by talking about the Space Race of the 1960s and the great dreams and aspirations it created. They also wondered what went wrong. Some speculated that it was politics, Vietnam, the winning of the Space Race by beating out the USSR to the moon, and the costs of the space program—even though NASA's budget took less than one percent of the Federal budget. This led to one of the panelists suggesting that one of the ways to interest the public to go to space would be finding ways to make money with space, and to have people who want to live and work in space—not just visit. As for how much money space might generate for some industries, it could be about 24 billion—and that's just for one company! Somebody else mentioned spinoffs, but investors would only be interested in a target for investment. We would also have to get rid of the space junk in orbit and inform the public about things one could do in space that couldn't be done on Earth. Therefore, some

space tourism may pay off.

Sunday, October 11: The reason I didn't stay at Capclave for Sunday was because I traveled on the DC Metro to visit the Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art, Jefferson Drive at 12th St., SW, Washington, DC (202-633-1000). In a building that looked like it came from the Italian Renaissance, I toured different rooms that exhibited art in the forms of paintings, sculptures, and decorative objects as well as jewelry, manuscripts, and other items from China, Japan, Korea, the Islamic world, and other areas of Asia, dating from Neolithic times to the current day. I also noticed a large collection of "oriental-styled" American paintings painted by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) and a room that Whistler helped in designing the interior: the Peacock Room in all its blue and gold glory containing shelves holding a large collection of Asian ceramics! When I was there, the temporary exhibit area presented pictures and items from Ancient Egypt (even though Egypt is in Africa). In the middle of the building was an outdoor court that included a fountain in the center. During warmer months, peacocks roam about the court. Overall, this was a very relaxing place to visit because most visitors gave priority to the "Big Three" Smithsonian museums: the National Air and Space Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the American History Museum as well as the National Museum of the American Indian. Nevertheless, this museum is the ideal place to visit after you have visited the bigger Smithsonian museums on The Mall.

Friday, November 20: Another month, another SF con, and this time, it was Philcon. Despite not having too many space-exploration talks, panels, or presentations, I did get something out of this con. Therefore, I attended my first panel, 1) My Costume's Done, Now What?, where Diane Kovalcin, Byron Connell, Lee Gilliland, Kyle Williamson, and Stephanie Burke reminded the audience that putting together the costume was only half the job. How you presented that costume on stage was a whole other thing, and sometimes nothing was worse than doing a bad presentation in a great costume. Thus, they suggested rehearsing. You shouldn't make your presentation too long: about 30 seconds for an individual and about a minute for a group or less. Nor should your presentation be too short: zipping on and off stage quickly. They also explained the differences between workmanship judges and presentation judges: Workmanship judges checked your costumes up close in the green room and gave points for their own awards, and presentation judges gave points on how well you presented your costume on stage. If you haven't brought your own music, the tech crew could provide music for you. This panel also told the differences between presentation costumes and hall costumes: Presentation costumes only had to hold up long enough for that short time on stage, while hall costumes had to be more durable and not intrusive while the wearers walked around the con, and they should be able to do body functions when wearing them. Next, I listened in on 2) SF in the Headlines. Here, Meredith Schwartz, Ian Randal Strock, Mary Spila, David Walton, and Darrell Schweitzer discussed how post-2000 technology could change SF stories. To them, George Orwell's 1984 future had arrived, only a few years later. Nevertheless, libraries should keep much materials on microfilm and paper in case of computer hacking. Somebody also mentioned that according to Robert Heinlein, the *Boy Scout Handbook* was the best survival manual. For something different, I went to the 3) Meet the Pros reception. While I didn't meet any professional writers, editors, and artists, I did get to talk with other SF fans while eating some snack foods of vegetables, cheeses, crackers, and dips. Finally for the night, I took a small part in a talk about 4) Philcon Reminiscence. While the two women leading the talk, Debbie Lieven and Suzanne Rosin, have been going to Philcon since 1989 (Debbie), and in the 1990s (Suzanne), I have been going to Philcon every year since

1980—except for 1983, due to the flu. Then, they wanted those of us in the audience—Philcon attendees, to tell the Philcon committee what we (the attendees) liked or didn't like about Philcon. They also suggested contacting Philcon by email around May when the Philadelphia SF Society elects a new chairman and programming director. What I didn't know was that after the 2001 Worldcon (World SF Convention) in Philadelphia, many members of the Philcon committee retired from running cons because they were "burned out." Since then, there have been many new committee members running Philcon. In the meantime, many newer cons in or near the Philly area have given Philcon competition: media SF cons, comic book/anime cons, costuming cons, filk singing cons, etc. This could explain why Philcon attendance has been lower than in the 1980s and '90s. On a lighter note, we did talk about the many interesting people we met through the years at Philcon, both fan and pro. (I met Jack Williamson, a SF author who coined the term "terraforming" in the 1940s.)

Saturday, November 21: On Philcon's most busy day, I entered the 5) Art Show room where I noticed that around 80% of the art presented fantasy themes, and the rest showed SF and space art, especially space and technology art by Burt Aulisio, Mair Daliessio, and James Woodend. About 80% of the art displayed paintings and drawings, and the rest exhibited other mediums: jewelry, pottery, and Christmas ornaments as well as tiles, knitwear, accessories, and specially Legos. Here, I saw a Lego spaceport, a *Star Wars* theme area, and a few other theme areas. Next, I sat in on the following panel: 6) Getting the Scientists in SF Right. Thus, Inge Heyer, Dr. Paul H. Shuch (Dr. SETI), Katie Gardner, Michael L. Brachman, and Jay Wile discussed the typical image most people have of a scientist: a white male with messy white hair, big glasses, lab coat, pens in a pocket, and a clipboard. The female scientist didn't fare much better either: hair pulled back and plain looking. Otherwise, she looked a lot like her male counterpart. They also talked about the TV show *The Big Bang Theory* (TBBT), and especially about one character from the show: Dr. Sheldon Cooper. Although many of the panelists said that they all knew a "Sheldon", they also mentioned that most scientists were not like him. Meanwhile, the scientific community had mixed feelings over TBBT: Some of the people who worked in science didn't like the stereotype characters in the show, and others thought the show was funny regardless. This panel also defined the differences between a scientist and somebody in applied science (engineer): A scientist would come up with a theory, and the engineer used what the scientist came up with for a practical use. Now with TV shows such as *Star Trek* (ST), many viewers would see female characters that were both good looking and in the sciences. This could prove helpful when trying to convince middle-school-age girls to take more of an interest in science. Soon it was lunchtime, and I brought along a sandwich to eat in 7) the Con Suite. In this living room setting with a big window overlooking Cooper River Park, I ate my lunch and a bit of candy provided in this room by the con committee. They also provided other snacks, both sweet and savory, and soft drinks as well as a chance to talk with other SF fans and listen to other interesting conversations. (Yes, I eavesdropped.) After lunch, I listened in on this panel: 8) Incorporating New Scientific Discoveries Into Our Writing, where David Walton, Alexis Gilliland, Dr. Paul H. Shuch (Dr. SETI), Jon McGoran, and Alex Shvartsman wondered what scientific and high tech discoveries would change us. They also questioned how these changes would affect SF stories. Then they mentioned such discoveries as smartphones, AI, and the Internet as well as 3D printers, clothing with sensors, and the Higgs Boson particle. Some of their questions included the following: What current science theories might go into applied science for practical purposes? How would this affect SF stories? The panel also brought up past SF stories that mentioned some of the current technology we use: a pocket secretary (SIRI), the ST communicator (smartphone), and distance learning (Internet).

That night, I watched 9) the Masquerade. This has been one of the smallest

costume contests in the last few years: only eight entries. Two of the costumers wore SF costumes: a time traveler and a humorous *Soylent Green* salesperson. (Look up on Google *Soylent Green* for yourself.) The rest of the costumers wore fantasy costumes, and except for a steampunk costume and a costume with blue lights, the other costumes didn't stay in my mind too well.

Sunday, November 22: As this con started winding down, I entered 10) the Dealers' Room. Here, I noticed that about half of the dealers sold reading materials of books, magazines, and semi-pro-zines, and the rest sold other merchandise: jewelry, t-shirts, games, etc. Meanwhile, some tables included the committees of other SF cons selling their memberships, and others took bids for upcoming Worldcons, or certain organizations promoted their causes—such as the group I joined: National Space Society/ Philadelphia Area Space Alliance (NSS/PASA). At my first panel for that day, 11) What We Don't Know, Tobias Cabral, Mark Wolverton, Earl Bennett (President of NSS/PASA), John Ashmead, and John Skylar tried to ask the big science questions of the 21st century. Some of the subjects covered zero-point energy, microbiology, dark matter, and population. Concerning population, the panel talked about the right amount of people for different situations: working in a company, being in an organization, being on an aircraft carrier, and other situations. They then mentioned how microscopes and telescopes changed our outlook on the world, as well as accidental discoveries such as Alexander Fleming with penicillin, and of how scientists preserved their progress: Even if they were wrong, they were heading in the right direction. Finally, the last event at Philcon for me was the following panel: 12) Essential Non-Fiction. Thus, Carl Fink, Darrell Schweitzer, and Tobias Cabral told the audience what kinds of non-fiction books could help SF writers in keeping their science correct. They also covered other non-fiction books: reference books, SF encyclopedias, and Ben Bova's *The Science in SF* as well as the science essays in the *Magazine of Fantasy and SF*, *Analog Science Fact and SF*, and other sources. In fact, somebody on the panel said that in the 1970s, there weren't too many SF reference books, but currently, the number of SF reference books could fill a library. Another member of the panel suggested reading Richard Feynman's essays, and pointed out that some of the literatures mentioned at this panel were online. Other books recommended were biographies and autobiographies from explorers and astronauts as well as Robert Zubrin's *A Case for Mars*. Anyway, the days of a lone scientist or engineer or both building a spaceship in his back yard have been long gone. In addition, it was doubtful that spaceships would be clean and pristine as shown on some SF TV shows and films. Most of all, one should research, research, and research!

I was a bit saddened to hear of the death of baseball player, Lawrence Peter "Yogi" Berra on September 22, 2015. In the last issue of this column, Issue #7, I learned a bit more about him, his famous sayings, and his outlook on life when I visited a museum honoring him. One of his sayings was "It ain't over, 'till it's over!" Well, now, it's over for him (1925-2015).

Now I'll give the reason why this issue was late: By the time you read this, I will have returned from my California trip in December. I plan to have a full report soon in my blog, another version with some SF emphases in a fanzine, and a third version with the emphases on public transit that I hope to sell to a newspaper or magazine. Meanwhile, the next issue of this column, #9, should come out in July 2016.