

DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS CONTINUES

by Dorothy M. Kurtz
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Hello and I think I can speak for most of us who live in the Northeastern USA: I am so glad it's spring! Three times I had to shovel snow this past winter. Spring is also a good time to go to Washington, DC, as I did; that's why the picture above is of the Capitol Building.

Back on July 12, 2009, *Locus* semi-pro magazine co-founder and editor, Charles Brown, died (1937-2009). You can read more details about him on the *Locus* web site. I met him at a few different World Science Fiction Conventions (Worldcons), and I've been an off-and-on subscriber to his publication. This semi-pro zine contains so many news items and other non-fiction articles about the science fiction (SF) world that in my opinion *Locus* is to the SF world what *Variety* is to the show business world. For more information, write to *Locus* Publications, PO Box 13305, Oakland, California 94661 or check the web site by typing *Locus* magazine on Google.

Another Publication I recommend is a SF fanzine called *File 770*, c/o Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Ave., Monrovia, California 91016, email: Mikeglyer@cs.com, or type *File 770* on Google. At the 1951 Worldcon, some SF fans in room 770 held a party that was supposed to be so lively it upstaged the worldcon itself--hence the fanzine name. This publication also has its share of articles of the goings on in the SF world.

I have a warning for those of you who have blogs on your web sites that are open to comments from other people. The photo blog of the Philadelphia Area Space Alliance (PASA) web site had a spammer compromise it. This spammer had stolen PASA's storage space for a reverse-address cell phone look up. It looked like the photo blog had a virus. If you want to protect your own blogs, I'd suggest you don't allow other people to post their comments there. Instead, if you still want to hear from others, set up a Facebook page. PASA did, and so did I under Dotty Kurtz.

Lunacon 2010, Rye Town Hilton, Rye Brook, NY, Friday, March 19: I started my Lunacon SF convention (con) weekend by attending a panel on (1) the Year in Science and Technology. Hence, a panel of people in the difference sciences covered possible breakthroughs from artificial cells to maybe finding solid planets in other solar systems. Later, in the (2) Con Suite, I ate the usual snack foods, drank soft drinks, and chatted with a fellow PASA member about cons, hotels, transit, and so forth. Then it was time to go to another panel: (3) *Star Trek* (ST) Rebooted. Thereupon, this panel of ST fans, some of them dyed-in-the-wool fans, gave their opinions of what they liked and disliked about the recent ST film from 2009. My last Friday panel was (4) Settling Space...Someday. Here, one of the panelists said, "Visiting the moon and calling it space travel is like going across the street to the store, then using that experience as claiming to be a world traveler."

Saturday, March 20: Lunacon's busiest day started for me by listening to artist Heidi Hooper and seeing her slide show at the following presentation: (5) From Laundry to Art. Ms. Hooper used to do art in metals until she lost most of the use of her right arm. Later, she turned lemons into lemonade by drawing pictures and using dryer lint of different shades and colors to complete her pictures--instead of paint. Then, she demonstrated her art technique. For the next panel, (6) The Teaching End and the Learning End, a group of educators explained how they applied SF to teaching their students lessons in subjects such as science, psychology, writing, art, and so on. I spent the next hour stretching my legs at the (7) Art Show room. In addition to seeing Heidi Hooper's dryer-lint pictures of animals, fantasy, and SF themes, I noticed that much of the art themes from the other artists covered fantasy by about 85% and SF and space for the rest. Around two-thirds of the art displayed paintings and drawings, and the remainder exhibited other mediums: jewelry, sculptures, and photos as well as quilts, ceramics, and other items. The panelists for the next panel, (8) Computers of the Future, had to move outside to a patio (At least the weather was good!) because last minute, somebody put a very loud band in the next room. Consequently, nobody could hear the panelists, and they had no microphones. Once we settled outside, the panel discussed how hard it has been to predict what future technology could do. They gave the original ST series as an example: Today's 3G phones can do a lot more than the communicators on ST. At the next talk, (9) Luna City, Here We Come, Christopher Carson of the Lunar Project gave a speech about how he has been outreaching to get people to want to settle on the moon first. He said that we have the technology and resources. Nevertheless, we need private money because too many past government space projects got their funding cut until those in power canceled those projects. Before going to dinner, I went to one more panel, (10) Blogging, Writing, and Fandom. Thus, this panel talked about the way some SF fans keep more in touch by email, Facebook, and Twitter than by snail mail, phone, or in person. Some panel members also wondered if the Internet contributed to the decline in con attendance.

That night, I watched (11) the Masquerade. Similar to Philcon 2009, less than 10 people entered the Masquerade: eight. Five of the costumers wore fantasy costumes, and the other three wore SF costumes. None of the entries stood out in my mind too well. (As I said with Philcon 2009, maybe some of the cons should go back to having a masquerade party/ball until more than 10 contestants start entering the contest.)

Sunday, March 21: Because I got out of this SF con most of what I wanted from it, I only entered (12) the Dealers' Room on this day. As in past years, about half of the dealers sold reading materials: books, magazines, and fanzines. The other dealers sold other merchandise: jewelry, costumes, and accessories as well as DVDs, T-shirts, snacks, etc.

Thursday, April 15: I've seen the other two branches of the US Government while in Washington, DC: Executive with the White House Visitors Center, and Judicial with the Supreme Court. On the date above, I finally got to take a closer look at the Legislative branch by entering the Capitol Visitors Center, 1st. St. between Constitution Ave. and Independence Ave. (202-226-8000). In order to tour the US Capitol Building, I would have to book a tour in advance or get to the Capitol Visitors Center at its 8:30 A.M. opening time for timed tickets. Meanwhile, same-day-tour times have been usually available in the afternoon during less busy times of the year. (Also, one must keep in mind that during certain events, officials can close all or parts of the Capitol Building to tours.) Nevertheless, I became enlightened about both the Capitol Building as well as how the Senate and House operate by my visit to the Capitol Visitors Center. Starting with Emancipation Hall, I looked at 18 statues from different states. Each statue represented the contribution that person made to this country. The most famous statue, however, was a plaster model of the *Statue of Freedom*. This statue was a copy of the bronze statue on top of the Capitol dome. Inside the Exhibition Hall, I sat in on two cinemas that explained the function and purpose of both the House and the Senate. The nearby exhibition areas covered the history of the Senate and House during six different eras from 1789 to the present as well as the history of the Capitol Building via texts, pictures, videos, and exhibit items. I especially liked the virtual tour of the Capitol Building by touch screen. Here, I never realized how elaborate and colorful many of the interiors of the Capitol Building could be, especially on the Senate side and under the Rotunda. I could take my time and see each room, hallway, and the Rotunda in all its fancy glory; I couldn't do that on a guided tour. Therefore, seeing the Capitol Building this way might be better than the guided tour.

Friday, April 16: I'm sure you have all been aware of the PBS specials *Live at the Kennedy Center*. For this day, I toured the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2700 F St., NW (202-467-4600). While waiting for the tour to start, I watched a video, narrated by Caroline Kennedy, about the history of this place. When it was tour time, my guide first showed me the three main hallways. The Grand Foyer displayed plenty of red carpeting and very large, contemporary-styled chandeliers as well as different works of art, including the large sculpture of President Kennedy's head. (I thought the sculpture looked crude, but that's my opinion.) On either side of the Grand Foyer, I saw the two small Millennium Stages. (At 6PM every night, there is a free performance on one of those stages.) In the Hall of Nations, I looked at flags from different countries that the USA has diplomatic relations with, and the Hall of States showed flags from all 50 states. The highlight of this tour, however, was when I saw the three main theaters. Starting with the largest, the Concert Hall, I noticed more red carpeting and large chandeliers as well as a mostly gold-colored interior. The Opera House especially impressed me with its very elaborate chandeliers that almost reminded me of a snowflake pattern when I looked up at them, and the rest of interior was mainly red. Finally, the Eisenhower Theater presented a dominant blue and gold pattern to its interior as well as contemporary lighting that looked like wings. On the roof level were three smaller performance spaces: Terrace Gallery, Theater Lab, and the Terrace Theater as well as some great views of Washington, DC.

Saturday, April 17: The last time I visited this Smithsonian Institute (SI) museum was in 2001. Since then, the SI officials closed and renovated the National Museum of American History (NMAH), Constitution Ave. between 12th St. and 14th St., NW (202-633-1000), and reopened it recently. Starting on the third floor, I saw a temporary exhibit room showing mostly pictures and texts of holiday displays from parades and stores from 1920 to about 1960. The more permanent areas exhibited popular-culture items from mainly TV shows and films, string musical instruments, and a large dollhouse. Other areas covered military

history with a collection of uniforms, metals, and weapons as well as military vehicles, videos, and other items. Then the section about the US Presidents explained via texts and pictures as well as videos and personal items about the lives of the presidents during and after their terms of office. The second floor exhibited some of the first ladies gowns and personal items from Martha Washington to Michelle Obama. Another room displayed everyday life in the 19th century for three different groups of people: industrial workers, Jewish immigrants, and African-Americans by texts, pictures, and tableaus as well as videos and audio-presentations. In another area, I saw an 18th-century house with rooms furnished in the different eras when different people lived there from the 1700s through the 1940s. A small document gallery and a soon-to-be-opened African-American history room completed this floor. The first floor had many more exhibit areas. By way of exhibit items, videos, and texts as well as tableaus, period rooms, and pictures, the SI included the following themes: Invention, Science in American Life, and Julia Child's Kitchen as well as Lighting, Power Machinery, and Money. The two biggest areas were America on the Move and On the Water, covering land and water travel. Artifacts in the central hallway of this floor completed most of the museum. (You do need to visit a few times to really cover almost everything here!)

Sunday, April 18: Another SI museum that I haven't seen since its renovation a few years ago was the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), 8th St. and F St., NW (202-633-1000). Starting on the third-floor mezzanines, I looked at paintings, drawings, statues, and photos of famous sports figures on one side and show business celebrities on the other side. Galleries on the third floor showed important people of the 20th century from many occupations: politics, show business, and sports as well as writers, artists, and others via paintings and drawings as well as photos and sculptures. The main reason to see the third floor, however, was the Grand Hall. Completed in 1868, this section of the NPG displayed colorful designs on the floors, walls, and ceilings, especially the stained-glass central dome and the stained glass windows. (This building was originally the US Patent Office. Since 1968, the SI used this building for its two museums: NPG and the American Art Museum (AAM)--I'll see the AAM on a future date.) Next, the second floor contained the largest collection of US presidential images outside of the White House from George Washington to Barak Obama. For the rest of the second floor, temporary exhibit rooms showcased certain artists' works of paintings, drawings, or sculptures of people the artists knew: friends, family, and acquaintances. The temporary exhibit room on the first floor presented paintings, drawings, and sculptures of Elvis Presley because it would be his 75th birthday if he were alive. Other rooms showed images of 21st century celebrities in politics, sports, show business, and other fields, but the largest section on the first floor included images of Americans from the 1600s to 1900. Thus, I could place the faces of people that I've read about in history books. A Recent Acquisitions hallway showing pictures of more celebrities, past and present, finished my visit.

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In my MOSTLY MATINEE TIME 2009 column, you can read about a show I saw in Philadelphia: *Goodnight, Gracie*, as well as three films I saw in New York City: *Star Trek*, *Moon*, and *Julie & Julia*.

My latest New Jersey column, THE STATE I'M IN #4, includes the 12 visits I made to Atlantic City in 2009/10. Here, I went to different places from casino/hotel buffets to sightseeing attractions.

Finally, in my photo blog on my web site, you can read and look at pictures of other places I've been to, including my 2008 trip to Massachusetts. Goodbye for now!