DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS CONTINUES

by Dorothy M. Kurtz
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Hello, and welcome to the last DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS CONTINUES. Starting next year, 2012, I plan to publish two columns per year called DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE COLUMN. The odd-numbered issues will cover places and events I've attended from March through August, and the even-numbered issues will include those places and events I visited from September through February. I plan to publish those columns in September and March, and I'll include two pictures with each column. If you have any questions, please get in touch with me by email, snail mail, or through my Dotty Kurtz Facebook page.

The picture above is from this year's Philcon (Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference). You can usually find me at the National Space Society/Philadelphia Area Space Alliance (NSS/PASA) table.

Speaking of science fiction (SF) conferences or conventions (cons), I first saw the Apogee Books display at the World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon) 2004 in Boston, MA, and I've seen these books at other cons. Apogee Books, 2116 B, Prospect St., Burlington, Ontario, L7R 1Y9, Canada (905-637-5737 or email: matthew@cgpublishig.com), publishes space related books. Their varieties of books include the early days of the space program to possible futures in space--and almost everything about space exploration in between.

Back in February 2011, I revisited New York City and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA). Because this is the largest art museum in North America, more than one visit is necessary. As I've said about previous visits to the MMA: 1) Wear your most comfortable shoes, 2) pick your favorite sections to see first, and 3) be prepared to want to visit again!

Saturday, June 4, 2011: Although I've passed by this building many times on my way to and from the nearby Franklin Institute (FI), on the date above, I finally entered the galleries at the Moore College of Art, Ben Franklin Parkway, between 19th and 20th Sts., Philadelphia (215-965-4027 or

galleries@moore.edu). Because the Moore doesn't have a permanent art collection, I didn't know what kinds of arts I would see. Nevertheless, the admission price was right: It was free! However, they did have donation boxes, and it was worth donating a few dollars. Throughout the year, the galleries at this oldest (1848) and only women's visual arts college in the USA showcased the works of many contemporary artists. Included in some of these galleries were works by students and alumnae from Moore. When I was there, I saw drawings, paintings, and sculptures as well as photos, quilts, and videos. One gallery focused on remembering the Nazi Holocaust, and another gallery showed artworks by students from different Philadelphia schools: elementary, middle, and high schools. My favorite gallery (It was really a hallway.) exhibited pictures and tote bags with environmental messages and facts. In another room, I watched videos of a rider's view of a train ride, a man climbing a tower in a mosque, a dancer, and other subjects. Another area presented a quilt with each patch having something to do with the Moore, Philadelphia, or art in general. Finally, on my way out, I noticed an area of knickknack shelves containing several items that one would find at a flea market.

Sunday, July 10: I've been visiting (and sometimes shopping) at Macy's, W.34th St, between 7th Ave. and Broadway, NYC (212-695-4400) since 1970. Through the years, I have stepped into Macy's briefly, but I haven't explored the store since the 1980s. Macy's has been the largest store in North America, and it took me several hours to glance at most of what this store had to offer. The 11 floors of this store ran from avenue-to-avenue or from Broadway to 7th Ave. and back. Therefore, I walked about 22 avenue blocks that day! Since the 1980s, I noticed that Macy's showed more DVD and video presentations of the products they were selling. What they did sell included plenty of other kinds of merchandise: things to wear from head-to-toe for men, women, and children. The women's sizes went from 0 to 24. On other floors, Macy's sold furniture, both indoor and outdoor, where you could furnish a tiny apartment to a mansion, fill it with art works and decorative items; and you could buy cosmetics, luggage, gifts, etc. The MMA has one of their gift shops here, and there has been a branch of the NYC Visitors Center as well. Down in the Cellar, this store sold house wares and NYC souvenirs as well as many kinds of foods. If you could handle the crowds, Macy's seemed more magical during the Christmas holidays with their animated store windows, decorations inside, and Santa Land. Anyway, no matter what time of year you visit, Macy's usually has frequent sales. Meanwhile, if you got hungry, different floors included popular fast-food chains and the Macy's Cellar Bar & Grill. My favorite place to eat, however, was in the Cellar level as well: Cucina & Co., where I could buy some of the food I saw for sale in the retail area. Then, I could take it to one of the many tables or counters nearby and consume what I bought. Overall, NYC would not be the same without Macy's.

Sunday, September 4: The Merchant's House Museum, 29 E.4th St. (between Lafayette & Bowery), NYC (212-777-1089), has been standing at what is nowadays the East Village since 1832. In 1835, a wealthy merchant named Seabury Tredwell bought the house; back then, this was a fashionable neighborhood. In later years, as the area changed, Seabury stayed in this red-brick, white-marble row house with his family and four servants. After his death, his daughter, Gertrude, lived here until her death in 1933. On May 11, 1936, a relative opened this house to the public. When I was there, the Merchant's House Museum celebrated its 75th anniversary as a museum by showing pictures of the house and photos of the Tredwell family. Then, I toured the house itself. Starting on the basement level, I looked at the family room and kitchen looking the way it might have appeared in the 1850s, including the latest innovation: a coal-burning stove. One of the unique facts about this place was that most of the items and furniture belonged to the Tredwell family. On the main floor, I

noticed the parlor and dining room decorated in Empire and Victorian furniture. Here, I saw gaslight fixtures, red drapes, family portraits, and a Greek-revival interior of door and ceiling moldings as well as Ionic columns. The upper floor included the bedrooms of Mr. and Mrs. Tredwell (Gertrude Tredwell's parents). Therefore, long before this neighborhood became the Lower East Side, and later, the East Village, I had an idea about how this area might have looked in its prime when wealthy merchants and businessmen lived here.

Thursday, October 6: As of the date before you, I could say that I've gone to Columbia University, W.116th St. and Broadway, NYC (212-854-4900). Of course, the reality was that I picked a cool but sunny day to visit this ivy-league campus located in the Morningside Heights area of Uptown Manhattan. Once I arrived, I entered the Visitors Center in the Low Library where one of the helpful student guides gave me a map of the campus and marked the nearby eating places, both on and off campus. After my lunch, I returned to the Low Library to start my one-hour, 1pm tour. This tour especially catered to visitors and not future students. (There are tours conducted at other times for future students.) Therefore, my two tour guides showed me the exteriors of several buildings on this campus as they told me the history of Columbia University as well as the history behind those different buildings. In addition, they also informed me about what famous alumni studied or taught in these buildings and what inventions happened here: splitting atoms, FM radio, etc. For my part, I noticed the different architectural styles of the buildings from the 1890s Neoclassical to some modern-looking buildings built in the 21st century. The highlights on this tour for me included seeing the interiors of the following buildings: 1) Low Library that was the main library for the campus until 1932. Since then, this Neoclassical building has been serving as a visitors center; it also included offices and presented events under its rotunda. 2) Next, the Butler Library was especially a treat for me on this tour because the administrators didn't allow the public to enter here on their own. On the tour, however, I had a chance to see the hallways and reading room of the main library. I especially admired a lovely mural showing a female figure in a Greek robe and carrying a shield to protect the students from the evil forces of greed and ignorance. At the next highlight on the tour, 3) St. Paul's Chapel, the public may enter for prayer, meditation, and viewing. Here, I viewed the elaborate woodcarvings in the choir stalls, rails, and altar; the stained-glass windows; the lighting; and the brick vaulting of the dome. Finally, at the end of the tour, I entered the Schermerhorn Building, and on the eighth floor, I visited the Miriam and Ira Wallach Art Gallery. This small museum displayed temporary exhibits. When I was there, they presented Xu Bing: Square Word Calligraphy Classroom. Chinese artist Xu Bing invented a way of writing English words using the 26 alphabet letters in a rectangular style that looked similar to Chinese writing. Via an instructional video and by studying examples of his work, I started to understand a bit of his method. Anyhow, by visiting Columbia University, you can feel like an ivy-league student for a day--no matter what you scored on your SATs.

Friday, November 18: It was the 75th anniversary of Philcon, and I attended this SF con at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ. Thus, it was fitting that I should first listen in on the following: (1) The 75th Anniversary of Philcon--Where We've Been. While the panel intended it to be a talk among them, it mostly turned into an interview with Robert Madle because he did attend that first Philcon on October 18, 1936. He told us what he remembered of those events back then. In addition, he and the rest of the panel mentioned the changes in cons since the early days. Next, I sat in on a panel that included Earl Bennett, President of NSS/PASA, called (2) The Sky's the Limit: Amateurs and Astronomy. Here, the panel discussed what discoveries certain amateur astronomers made, the equipment they used, and other related

subjects. At my final Friday event, (3) The Future Isn't Going to Slow Down, the Vice President of NSS/PASA, Mitchell Gordon, sat in on this panel with a few other people. Therefore, this group wondered how SF writers, facing the many changes in technology in just these last few years, could write SF stories without those stories becoming too dated. Mitchell suggested not using brand names in stories.

Saturday, November 19: The busiest day for Philcon started for me by attending a panel about (4) Space Art--Capturing the Universe where the panel explained the changes in space art through the years. Thus, they mentioned how space art has been getting more scientifically accurate than in the past because of the space probes sent by NASA. After this, I relaxed a bit at the (5) Con Suite. As with other Philcons, I sat in a living-room setting where the con committee offered snacks and soft drinks, and I chatted a bit with other SF fans. Then, I entered the (6) Art Show room. The first thing I saw was that the art show room has been getting smaller each year. Nevertheless, the proportions of art themes stayed pretty much the same: about 75% fantasy art and the rest of the art showed SF art. The most popular art included paintings and drawings, about 80%, and the rest exhibited other mediums: jewelry, mirrors, Lego models, and so forth. Later, I toured the (7) Dealers' Room where I noticed that the proportion of dealers selling reading materials of books, magazines, and comics, remained the same: about half. The other half of the dealers sold other merchandise: games, T-shirts, jewelry, costumes, etc.

That evening before dinner, I listened in on another panel that Earl Bennett was on, (8) Out of Space: The End of NASA's Manned Space Program. Here, the panel said that the manned space program is on a hiatus; it has not ended! Then, other panelists mentioned space missions in low-Earth-orbit for these last 30 years, a company called Space X, and speculated about the future of Humans in space. After dinner, I saw the (9) Masquerade. There were 15 costume entries for 2011. Three of them wore SF costumes, and the rest of the entries wore fantasy costumes.

Sunday, November 20: I started this last day for Philcon by attending the following: (10) Science and Art--Conflict or Creation? Here, I heard an interesting statement from artist Karl Kofoed: "Art is the left hand of science." Other panelists saw no conflict at all. Next, Mitchell Gordon was one of the panelists at the following panel, (11) Think Like a Futurian. Therefore, he started this panel by telling the difference between a futurian (one who rises from SF to envision a greater world) and a futurist (one who studies the future). (Mitch has been a member of the World Future Society for years.) During the panel, somebody said that the future will not only be different from today, it will be different from the way we think it will be. Finally, I ended my time at Philcon with this talk: (12) The 75th Anniversary of Philcon--Where We're Going. Thus, the panel mentioned the problems that Philcon and other conventions had: shrinking attendance due to many more cons going on compared to ten or 15 years ago. Nevertheless, the panel said that Philcon has been doing more marketing, and not just communicating, to others about the con, and they invited the audience to join the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (PSFS).

This may be the last time I plug my own Dimensional Press publications, especially DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS CONTINUES. Feel free to read them online or download them from my web site.

While on my web site, you can check out my columns, especially MOSTLY MATINEE TIME. The latest issue, 2010/2011, includes what I wrote about seeing a show in Philadelphia, *White Christmas*, and three films in NYC: *The Social Network*, *The King's Speech*, and *No Strings Attached*.

My latest New Jersey column, THE STATE I'M IN #5, includes the sights to see in Sussex County, NJ, from High Point State Park to the Lafayette Mill

Antique Center. By June 2012, I should have #6 available to read online or you can download it from my web site. Here, you can read about some of the sights in Morris County, NJ, from Macculloch Hall to the Dover Flea Market.

Finally, you can check out my Photo Blog; I've included some visits I have made to neighboring states, including Connecticut. You can also read any comments I've made on my regular blog. Anyhow, goodbye for now. I'll be back with my new column in September 2012!