

DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS CONTINUES

by Dorothy M. Kurtz

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Greetings, I have some sad news: John Inman died on March 8, 2007. He was 71. Born Frederick John Inman on June 28, 1935, in Preston, Lancaster, England--at age 13, he first started acting on stage. This event took place in his former hometown of Blackpool, Lancs., England. Since then, he has performed in theaters and nightclubs as well as some TV shows and a few films. However, he is best known for his role as "Mr. Humphries" from *Are You Being Served?*, a BBC TV comedy series, telecast from 1973 to 1985 in the UK and shown in the USA since 1986. From 1997 to late 2001, I met him a dozen times. I usually saw him at his public appearances in the USA or in England when I saw him perform on stage. Afterward, I would interview him inside the stage door or in his dressing room. Many of those times in the UK, he followed his greetings of "Hello, Dotty," with a quick hug and kiss. I always found him to be a charming, witty, and classy gentleman. For years, he has been fighting asthma. Then in late 2004, he contacted hepatitis A; this forced him to retire from show business, and he spent the last few years in and out of the hospital. Finally, in the early morning hours of March 8, GMT, he passed away in the hospital. He leaves behind two nieces and his partner of over 30 years, Ron Lynch. Many people will miss John Inman!

On to other things--the picture above shows the Museum of Modern Art in Midtown Manhattan; it reopened in November 2004. The good news is that there are more display areas in this museum; the bad news is the adult admission going up from \$12 to \$20. (Somebody has to pay for the rebuilding.)

Again, I attended the Super Science Festival on the grounds of the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton, Saturday, May 19, 2007. Similar to last year's event, I saw different display tables that members of several organizations staffed to promote their interests, including the group I have been with: the Philadelphia Area Space Alliance (PASA). Inside the lecture hall, various speakers, with the help of videos and slides, covered different subjects in

science. On the other hand, I was disappointed to see in the schedule only one space presentation and that was for the next day: Sunday, May 20, 2007.

This past March, I took one of my twice-yearly trips to New York City (report below). Meanwhile, if you are interested in reading a NYC guidebook that provides plenty of informative text along with many color pictures, I recommend *Eyewitness Travel New York*, published by DK Publishing, Inc., ISBN 978-0756615338.

Thursday, March 22: Once I arrived in NYC and checked into my hotel, that night, I saw a Broadway show at the Marquis Theater: *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Starting with a character called "Man in Chair," this fellow loved listening to vinyl, long-playing records (LPs) from different Broadway shows. That night, he invited the audience to join him in listening, and imagine seeing, a 1928 musical comedy, *The Drowsy Chaperone*. The plot for the above named show was simple: An actress wanted to marry her boyfriend and quit show business, but her manager wished to prevent the marriage and keep her as his client. However, the musical numbers were funny, active, and colorful. Therefore, the cast gave it their all in overacting, singing, and especially dancing that included acrobatics from the leading lady. In addition, glittery costumes and bright-colored scenery added to the eye candy. Meanwhile, the Man in Chair would stop a scene and explain more about the show, the actors, or his own personal life. Thus, I spent most of that hour and 45 minutes laughing.

Friday, March 23: My first full day in NYC started with walking from my hotel to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), 11 W.53rd St., between 5th and 6th Aves. (212-708-9400). This was the first time I've been to the MoMA since its reopening in 2004. Some people who know more about modern art than I know about this subject told me that the MoMA's art collection wasn't as innovated as some other modern art museums. On the other hand, you won't find artwork from DaVinci, Michelangelo, or Rembrandt in the MoMA either. Instead, starting on the top floor, the MoMA presented some temporary exhibit areas. When I was there, the first exhibit area showed color pictures that a Canadian photographer, Jeff Wall, took of everyday events and people. Another temporary exhibit area displayed the works of comic abstractionists addressing issues such as global conflict and cultural stereotyping. Then, the next two lower floors exhibited MoMA's permanent collection of paintings and sculptures from the Impressionists of the 19th century to the most abstract art of the current times. On the third floor, I looked at designs in architecture and everyday objects. Another room presented photos from the old tintypes of the mid-19th century to color photos of the present, and a room displaying drawings completed this floor. Finally, the second floor covered more art in pictures and sculptures as well as videos and other media. Despite my lack of interest in most forms of modern art, except for the Impressionists, I spent about three hours in the MoMA, and it's worth visiting at least once! (Because this is a large museum, wear very comfortable shoes and pick your favorite area to see first.)

That night, I watched an Off-Broadway show at the New World Stages: *Altar Boyz*. Here, five teenage boys (four Christians and one other, a converted Jew) sang and danced their way to convert the audience to Jesus. So far, they've succeeded in Ohio. Nevertheless, could they repeat the same success in NYC? Even if the plot was very thin, those boys worked their souls to win converts with the help of 12 songs, some flashing lights, a backup band, and puppets. If nothing else, I found myself spending that hour-and-a-half clapping along.

Saturday, March 24: For this last day in NYC, I rode the bus down to Lower Manhattan and visited the NYC Police Museum, 100 Old Slip, between Water and South Sts. (212-480-3100). Located in a former police station, the museum included three floors of exhibit space. Beginning on the third floor, 9/11 Remembered presented videos and pictures as well as texts and dust-covered

items recovered from the World Trade Center explaining how the NYC Police Department (NYPD) helped out during that disaster. Another section on this floor listed the names of those from the NYPD who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. On the second floor, videos, pictures, texts, and exhibit items covered the duties of the different police bureaus and the history of policewomen. In another section of that floor, I saw displays of weapons and handcuffs as well as a sample jail cell. The first floor showed a full-sized police car from 1972, a few police motorcycles, and text giving the history of the NYPD along with pictures. This room also displayed small-scaled models of police vehicles from horse wagons to the latest land, water, and air vehicles. Another room exhibited communications equipment, and the last room presented past police uniforms and badges. This informative museum explained several facts that I didn't know concerning the nation's largest police force.

Saturday, May 26: It was Balticon time again, and as I do this time every year, I headed down to the Marriott Hunt Valley Inn, Hunt Valley, Maryland, about 20 miles north of Baltimore, MD. Thus, I attended one of my favorite science fiction conventions (SF cons). In my case, I started by attending the last two-thirds of this four-day con and visited (1) the Art Show. Here, I noticed that like Philcon 2006, there wasn't as much art displayed in this room as in previous years. What art that I saw showed about 85% paintings and drawings, and 15% exhibited other mediums: jewelry, sculptures, and other objects. Nevertheless, I was pleased to see a better percentage of SF and space art than in other years--about 35%, and the rest of the art presented fantasy themes. Next, I went into (2) the Con Suite. Thus, like last year, the Con Suite was in that former 1950s-style diner, and the con committee provided the usual snacks, soft drinks, and chances to chat with other SF fans. Finally, I watched (3) the Masquerade and noticed more costume entries this year than in the last six or more years: 21 costume entries altogether. I also saw more SF costumes than in the past few years--six SF costumes, and the rest of the costumers wore fantasy costumes.

Sunday, May 27: I started my most active day here by attending (4) the *Analog* Mafia panel. In this case, Mafia means Making Appearances Frequently In *Analog*, and this panel of SF writers talked about their past stories that appeared in the above titled, hard-SF/science fact magazine. (In hard-SF, the science is important to the plot, and most editors only allow one make-believe science rule.) Next, I entered (5) the Dealers' Room and noticed that about half of the dealers sold reading material of books, magazines, and fanzines. The rest sold other merchandise: toys, buttons, and jewelry as well as games, costumes, t-shirts, sculptures, CDs, DVDs, etc. At (6) Space Access, presented by Dr. Yoji Kondo, I listened as he explained about future space missions, especially the *Kepler* mission to find Earth-like planets and the Crew Excursion Vehicle (CXV). Then, he answered questions from the audience. For (7) How to Build a Solar System, Dr. Carey Lisse, via his PowerPoint laptop, mentioned the importance of studying comet structures and the answers that they may give to how solar systems were formed. Then, he showed a video of a spacecraft hitting a comet. Another person who used his laptop computer was John Ashmead for the following presentation: (8) Theory and Practice of Faster than Light Travel. First, he concluded that Faster than Light (FTL) is not inconsistent with the physics we know. Then he explained his reasons why as he talked about tachyons, the kinds of FTL used in SF, and the problems involved with FTL.

That night, I watched (9) the Sunday Night Film Festival. Similar to last year, I saw several short SF and fantasy films (from a few minutes to a half-hour). Many of these films ranged from mediocre to very good in their stories and production. On the other hand, I noticed exceptions. Two of the short films looked like weird abstract fantasies that didn't really belong to a

SF con but in a modern or contemporary art museum. Then there was an hour-and-45-minute feature presentation. Many members of the audience and I felt that this film was too long for the Film Festival. I thought the film was good when I realized the group who made this film consisted of amateurs who devoted six years of work into this production. It was a SF story involving future space travel, wars with aliens, human conflicts, and other stuff. Yes, it did remind me somewhat of some *Star Trek* episodes that I've seen, but it wouldn't be fair to compare it with a Hollywood production, as some fans might have done. Nevertheless, I would rather have seen it in the Balticon program as a feature film on its own and not part of the Film Festival. In other words, Balticon should limit Film Festival films to a half-hour at most. I got back to bed a bit late that night.

Monday, May 28: My final day started with listening to Dr. W.T. "Tom" Bridgman and his presentation on (10) *The Cosmos in Your Pocket*. Here, Dr. Bridgman answered why people should study astronomy, and he covered the practical side of astronomy. Afterward, a panel of SF writers wondered (11) *Does Space Opera Still Have a Place in Present Day SF Literature?* First, they mentioned that many space operas borrowed their plots and ideas from sea adventures and westerns, and second, space operas were about big things: star systems, planets, spaceships, and so forth. Some of the panel members felt that in the last few years, there has been a renaissance of space opera stories. Finally, at (12) *NASA's Return to the Moon* presentation, Chris Pino showed, by videos and charts, the steps that NASA plans to take to return to the moon--this time to stay. Then, Balticon 2007 was over for me. Meanwhile, I've said it before, Balticon has many tracks of programming besides space science. I highly recommend attending Balticon!

Another thing I recommend: my 2006 Washington, DC, column, *MY CAPITAL TIME*. This column covers the Library of Congress, the West Building of the National Gallery of Art (NGA), the East Building of the NGA, and the White House Visitor Center, as well as two black and white pictures.

In my 2006 New Jersey column, *THE STATE I'M IN*, I write about 12 places that I've visited in the Garden State, from Princeton University to the State House in Trenton. I also include four color pictures. Check my web site for prices and ordering information on both columns.

While you are on my web site, check out My Photo Blog to see some pictures I took of the Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) and Downtown Manhattan as seen from the Brooklyn Promenade. I also have a short write up about the BHS museum.

In the meantime, enjoy the summer and autumn; I plan to be back by winter. Goodbye!