

DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS CONTINUES

by Dorothy M. Kurtz
#6 Winter 2008/09



© L. Pezzuto 2008

For a paper copy: in USA: A legal sized, self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). In North America, outside USA: A large, self-addressed envelope (SAE) and one International Reply Coupon (IRC). Overseas: A large SAE and two IRCs. DIMENSIONAL PRESS, 230 Kings Highway East, #188, Haddonfield, NJ 08033
Email: dottymk@yahoo.com Web site: http://members.tripod.com/lp_web4us/

Copyright © 2008 by Dorothy M. Kurtz

Greetings, and welcome to the second issue that I only send to certain people automatically by e-mail attachment ("the usual"). As for other changes, starting with issue #7, my odd-numbered issues will include a report about Washington, DC, and Lunacon, the New York City-area science fiction convention (SF con). A NYC-area SF club called the Lunarians ran this SF con since the 1950s--hence the name Lunacon.

On September 11, 2008, Joan Winston passed away at age 77. Ms. Winston was a long time science fiction (SF) fan, especially of the *Star Trek* (ST) TV series. She was one of the committee members of the first major ST con (1972 in NYC)--in which she wrote about in her 1977 book, *The Making of the Trek Conventions*. Joan also co-wrote the book called *Star Trek Lives!* with Jacqueline Lichtenberg and Sondra Marshak. Here, she recalled her visit to the ST set during the filming of the episode "Turnabout Intruder." Since then, she has written other things and made several appearances at SF and ST cons. I first saw her in 1977 at a ST con where I noticed her enthusiastic personality. This enthusiasm continued during her other appearances at other cons where I've seen her. Therefore, that's how I would like to remember her: Joan Winston, 1931-2008.

The picture above is a poster promoting the IMAX film I saw at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia: *Wild Ocean*. If you would like a detailed travel guide to Philly that includes many pictures, I'd suggest purchasing the following publication: *Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Dutch Country*, Eyewitness Travel Guide, Dorling Kindersley, Inc., ISBN: 9780756626983.

I can finally say that I've been to Harvard. In reality, I spent a few nights on vacation in Boston, Massachusetts. While I was there, I visited Harvard University across the river in Cambridge, MA. The next day, I saw some of the sights along the Freedom Trail in Boston. Otherwise, I spend most of the

summer doing day trips in different places in the neighboring states of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Saturday, September 27: After arriving in NYC the day before, I watched an Off-Off-Broadway show, *The Bubble*, on the date above, at the Zipper Factory Theater, 336 W.37th St. Part of the New York Musical Theater Festival, this musical comedy took place in the Dot Com era in 2000. Here, a group of employee/owners of a fictional dot com company called Go4Itt.com, near Silicon Valley, California, celebrated their unlimited wealth potential--just like Enron and Worldcom. Meanwhile, a former environmental-lawyer named Matt moved to CA to obtain employment in one of the dot com companies and got hired by Go4Itt.com. During the show, Matt was torn by the desire for his share of this dot com's unlimited wealth and his concern for the environment--especially after he met Harmony, a woman who led a local environmental group. The fast-paced songs moved the story along, and some of the flashy costumes, especially on the Broadband Girls, made for some interesting sights. Of course, we all know what happened to the dot com companies, and Go4Itt.com was no exception. Overall, love saved what was left of it all--nothing.

Sunday, September 28: On this day, I visited the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), W.79th St. and Central Park West (212-769-5100). Because I had tickets to see the temporary exhibit that the AMNH presented when I was there, *The Horse*, I made a beeline toward this special exhibit area. Here, via pictures, videos, and texts as well as dioramas, fossils, and other exhibit items, I learned more about the role horses played in changing our world. In addition, the AMNH showed how horses have evolved and how they functioned in these times. Afterward, I took my time exploring the rest of the AMNH, one of the largest natural history museums in the world. (I've been to this museum a few times in the past.) Therefore, starting on the fourth floor and making my way down to the third and second floors, I looked at the bones of both extinct and non-extinct animals, animal dioramas, and other animal exhibits. The AMNH also displayed several past and current human cultures: Native American people from both North and South America, Asian people, African people, and the Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific People. Likewise, I became more enlightened about each of these cultures by way of dioramas, pictures, and texts as well as videos, exhibit items, etc. Nevertheless, the AMNH was so large that I didn't have time to see the rest of it. Thus, I will have to make another trip to this museum in the future (combined with a visit to the adjoining Rose Center for Earth and Space). Besides more human cultures and animal species, the first floor also includes plant life--past and present, as well as rocks, minerals, and meteorites. Whew!

Saturday, October 4: For this day, I arrived in Philadelphia and saw an IMAX film, *Wild Ocean*, at the Tuttleman IMAX Theater in the Franklin Institute. In this film, I observed how a feeding frenzy took place in the oceans off the coasts of Africa. As the sardines arrived, several other fish, birds, and marine mammals fed on them. Even humans fished for them as a main source of protein for some societies. This film also explained how governments and private interests joined to protect the ecology in the areas where these sardines migrated. Because this was a fast-paced IMAX film, I had the feeling that I was traveling in a fast helicopter, other aircraft, or underwater in a submarine. I never tire of IMAX films, and in this film, I looked at underwater scenes of several seals, dolphins, sharks, and birds diving down and hunting among the schools of sardines. Of course, this film also had scenes of fishermen catching many more sardines and of how the local people have interwoven these fish into their cultural lives.

Sunday, October 5: In my quest to see fine American art in a lovely building, I entered the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), 118-128

North Broad St. (215-972-7600). Dating back to 1805, the PAFA has been the oldest art museum in the USA. The main museum building opened in 1876 in all its Victorian-Gothic glory. Inside, the interior looked equally impressive with its red walls with gold trim and blue ceilings. As for the art, I observed sculptures that the artists carved in the 19th century of men and women from both biblical and Ancient Greek stories. Most of the artworks, however, showed paintings from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries of people, places, and objects. Here, I saw portraits of some of the most influential people from the late 18th century and early 19th century as well as the not-so-famous people from those times. A few of the paintings looked so realistic that they could almost pass for color photographs! As I glanced at the other galleries, displaying 20th-century art, the styles ranged from almost passing-for-color-photographs to complete abstract--and many art styles in-between: Impressionist, Cubism, and so on. Between the interior of the building and the artworks, I spent a pleasant few hours at the PAFA.

Friday, November 21: For 2008, the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (PSFS) played host to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference (Philcon) at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ. Upon arriving, I entered the (1) Convention Suite (con suite). After a few minutes of talking to a few other SF fans, the con suite staff set down some snack foods and soft drinks. This room also offered a view of the rush-hour traffic on nearby Route 70 from a large window. At the first panel I attended that night, (2) Non-Chemical Spacecraft Propulsion, the panel members discussed alternatives to chemical spacecraft propulsion and its pros and cons: ion, nuclear, magnetic, laser, ramjets, hydrogen, and so on. Meanwhile, most of the panel agreed: It's always SF until someone goes out and does it. (One of the panel members is a fellow Philadelphia Area Space Alliance [PASA] member, Earl Bennett.) Next, I sat in on (3) the Opening Ceremonies and PSFS Meeting. Thus, the convention chairman (con chair) mentioned when some SF fans first organized PSFS in 1935 and about the first Philcon in October 1936. Then, he and the PSFS president offered tips for first-time con attendees and gave awards in writing and other subjects to some SF fans. My final event for this night was (4) Meet the Pro's Party and Artist Reception. Here, I ate more snacks and finger foods (Fingers taste good!) and drank more soft drinks. Although I didn't meet any writers or artists, I did talk to more SF fans.

Saturday, November 22: Philcon's busiest day started for me by (5) taking an Art Show Tour. Our group's tour guides, a photographer and an artist, turned this tour into a part tour and part talk between themselves and our group about the different styles of art, what art is, and what they like and dislike. I noticed that about 75% of the art presented paintings and drawings, and the rest showed other mediums: sculptures, jewelry, pottery, glassware, and so forth. As for themes, around three-quarters of the art exhibited fantasy themes, and the rest showcased SF and space art. Then, I attended the following panel: (6) To Engineer is Human. (PASA member Earl Bennett was on this panel, too.) Here, the panel discussed the differences between engineering problems as shown on SF TV shows, especially ST, and real life. For example: In real life, many engineering projects don't work the first time, and the engineers learn from their failures. At the next panel, (7) Does SF Inspire Invention?, the panel members mentioned what technology we have in the present that SF writers first wrote about in SF stories: spaceflight, moon landings, cell phones, and so on. Much of the above, however, was because most SF writers, compared to other kinds of writers, read more science books and journals. (Another fellow PASA member, Mitchell Gordon, was on this panel.) For the final panel I attended, (8) Space and Time Magazine, the panel members explained the history of the magazine from its founding in 1966 to the current day. This has been the oldest continuously published small-press magazine for SF, fantasy, and horror.

Then, the panel told the audience what they looked for in submissions for stories and art.

That night, I saw (9) the Masquerade. Out of 11 costume entries, only two were SF costumes: two robots and a "Photon Warrior." The rest of the costumers wore fantasy costumes.

Sunday, November 23: I entered (10) the Dealers' Room. Therefore, I noticed that about 70% of the dealers sold reading materials: books, magazines, semi-pro zines, and comic books. The remainder sold other merchandise: jewelry, videos, DVDs, buttons, bumper stickers, t-shirts, etc. (I bought a SF magazine and a book.) Afterward, I attended a presentation and talk called (11) The Kepler Mission and the Search for Earthlike Planets by Patricia Boyd. Thus, by way of her PowerPoint and with the help of the singing group that she's a member of, The Chromatics, I learned more about plans for the March 2009 launch of the Kepler spacecraft. In addition, by songs and PowerPoint, she and her group enlightened the audience about how to look for extra-solar planets, defined the Doppler shift, and covered other astronomy subjects. (In the 1990s, a group of NASA scientists formed an a cappella singing group called The Chromatics; likewise, they sang at SF cons, and they recorded a few CDs.) Later, the final event at this con for me was the next panel, (12) The News from Mars. (PASA member Earl Bennett moderated this panel.) Here, with the help of a globe of Mars, the panel covered what the three Mars rovers have been up to, what discoveries the rovers and Mars orbiters have found, and about future Martian missions.

Now it's time to plug some of my publications, and this time, I have a new zine called DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: CLOSER TO HOME. This 16-page publication covers my favorite places within 150 miles from where I live. Most of the places mentioned are in all five of NYC's boroughs; different neighborhoods in Philadelphia; a few places in Washington, DC; and Atlantic City, NJ. Check my web site for more details.

You can still order my 2008 Washington, DC, column, MY CAPITAL TIME. Here, I visited the Supreme Court, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Naval Heritage Center, and the Decatur House. Get in touch with me for a copy.

In my New Jersey column, THE STATE I'M IN, I cover the 12 attractions in the Garden State I visited last year from the Golden Nugget Antique Market to the Battleship New Jersey. Write or e-mail me for more information.

Finally, before I depart, go to my web site and click on photo album to see three pictures and a write up of three places I visited in Pennsylvania. Goodbye and Happy Winter Solstice!