DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS

by Dorothy M. Kurtz

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Hap it's been a full year since I started putting out this newsletter. I still have a lot to learn; most likely, I will have to make some changes here and there. One of those changes will be happening this year.

Because of the high cost of printing and postage, those of you on the usual mailing list who have e-mail will receive an e-mail by me to go to my web site to receive your zine. (If you still wish to receive paper copies, let Louise Davis know by snail mail at the address found in the title box; or you could e-mail me, and you will continue to receive paper copies.) To those of you on our usual list who don't have access to the Internet, don't worry; you will still be getting paper copies. Many organizations and publishers are finding it more economical to publish on the web.

Anyway, during this first quarter of 2001, I spent a few weekends in New York City and Philadelphia. I also visited Washington, DC, for a weekend; in addition, I took some day trips in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

A few months ago, I found another recommended guidebook to Washington, DC: *Dorling Kindersley Travel Guides, Washington, DC, 2000*, ISBN 0-7894-5546-3, published by Dorling Kindersley, Inc.

Meanwhile, I hope 2001 is just as active a year for me as 2000. For my readers, I hope I can interest you enough to want to visit some of these places and attend some science fiction conventions (SF cons) yourself.

2001: SOME MINI ODYSSEYS TO NEW YORK CITY

My first mini odyssey took place on Saturday, January 6. By riding two consecutive commuter trains (SEPTA R7 & New Jersey Transit), I arrived at New York City's Pennsylvania Station. After this, I checked into the Pickwick Arms Hotel to relax for a few hours.

That night, I saw the Broadway show *Swing* at the St. James Theater. Like the Broadway show I saw last year, *Smokey Joe's Café*, this too became an all-music and dancing show with no binding plot. The difference was that this musical played swing songs from the 1930s and 40s (instead of rock & roll and rhythm & blues from the 1950s & 60s). Most of the musical numbers displayed very active gyrating-jitterbug dancing. I'm sure this was beyond the talents of most dancers back in the swing era. Other musical numbers included softer songs and ballads sung by the leading actresses in this show. All in all, the music and dancing was so entertaining that it seemed like those two hours went by too fast.

Sunday, January 7, I visited the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 11 W. 53rd.St., between 5th and 6th Aves. (212-708-9400). I've been to the MOMA a few times in the past; although I didn't care for Abstract art, modern art consisted of more than that. Modern art also included Impressionist paintings; Post-Impressionist artwork; and 20th-century designs in architecture, furniture, and other items. The subjects in this last sentence are why I came to the MOMA. (Until 2005, however, the MOMA is currently in the early phases of a building project.) On the day I was there, a room on the ground floor showed the highlights of the permanent collection, and two other floors showed special exhibits. One special exhibit called Open Ends displayed artwork from 1960 to the present; much of the artwork presented Abstract styles. On the lower level, I saw vintage-film posters on display in addition to an Oscar the museum won. The MOMA received this Academy Award for presenting these films in its cinema (also on this level).

Friday, January 12, like last weekend, I rode those two consecutive commuter trains to NYC's Penn Station. Unlike last week, however, I stayed for two nights in a different hotel: the Vanderbilt YMCA.

I took a cross-town bus that night to the John Housman Theater and saw an Off- Broadway show, *Pete & Keely*. This musical comedy took place in 1968, and the characters of the title, a divorced husband and wife singing-duo ("America's Singing Sweethearts"), reunited for a TV special. Through the show's musical numbers (songs from the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and some songs especially written for this play), the audience learned about this couple's rise in show business. The leading characters sang songs about their married life (his womanizing and her battle with the bottle), their split-up, and what led to their 1968-TV special. I saw plenty of flashy costumes,

especially worn on Keely, designed by Bob Mackey. (Need I say more?) Again, the two hours of this show seemed to go by way too fast.

Saturday, January 13, I walked in Greenwich Village and stopped in to visit the Forbes Magazine Galleries, 62 5th Ave. and W. 12th St. (212-206-5548). This small museum had several rooms of items collected by the late Malcolm Forbes and his family. As I entered each room, I viewed toy boats, toy soldiers, Monopoly games, trophies, presidential papers, miniature rooms, Faberge Easter eggs, and fine art. In my opinion, one of the most selfless things a collector could do was to display his or her collection to the public. In this respect, the Forbes family was definitely selfless.

Later that day, I saw a film called *State and Main* at the United Artists Union Square Stadium 14 Cinema, E. 13th St. and Broadway. In the small town of Waterford, Vermont, a film crew from Hollywood arrived. In their quest to make a film in this picturesque New England town, some changes came about for some members of the film crew and the local townspeople. Overall, it turned out to be an interesting and funny film.

Sunday, January 14, I attended the new Rose Center for Earth and Space, Central Park West and W. 81st St. (212-769-5100). Because I had advanced tickets for the planetarium show *Passport to the Universe*, I immediately picked up my tickets and made a beeline for the second-floor Space Theater (the former Hayden Planetarium). *Passport to the Universe* took the audience on a journey from the Earth to the other planets in the solar system and the Milky Way Galaxy. The rest of the show introduced the audience to the other galaxies in the Virgo Cluster and beyond as Tom Hanks narrated. Leading out from the Space Theater, the Scales of the Universe Walkway compared the Hayden Sphere with different objects along the way. (For example: a small globe along the walkway that represented the Earth was in scale size compared to the Hayden Sphere that represented the sun.) At the Big Bang Theater, Jodie Foster narrated as the public stood around a circular opening that showed an interpretation of the birth of the universe: the Big Bang. Another walkway, the Cosmic Pathway, chronicled the 13 billion-year history of the universe. On the ground floor, the Hall of Planet Earth described the formation of our planet via exhibits, videos, and computer displays. Down on the lower level, the Hall of the Universe covered astrophysics in four different sections: the universe, the galaxies, the stars, and the planets. Again, this museum presented these subjects via exhibits, videos, and computer displays. The Rose Center of Earth and Space easily took up a good portion of my day before I could even attempt to see the other sections of the American Museum of Natural History!

Thursday, February 1, I made yet another trip to NYC.

That evening, I took a bus to the Upper West Side and saw a film called *Chocolat* at the SONY Lincoln Square Theater, W. 68th St. & Broadway. In 1959, a small and isolated village in France kept to traditional values that included going to church every Sunday. It would also remain the same if the mayor, Comte de Reynaud, had his way. One day, Vianne Rocher and her illegitimate daughter came into town and opened a chocolate shop. Slowly, as if by magic, Vianne Rocher's charm and her chocolates bewitched the village's people. This film gave me a warm sweet feeling inside. (Of course, I'm somewhat biased because I am a chocoholic.)

Friday, February 2, I rode the subway out to Astoria, Queens, and visited the American Museum of the Moving Image (AMMI), 35th Ave. at 36th St. (718-784-4520). I've been here before the museum staff renovated this place; I still saw the usual exhibits: costumes, posters, props, wigs, make-up, cameras, and other equipment used in the making of a film or TV show. Since the renovation, however, I also noticed that the AMMI added more hands-on exhibit areas and videos. Thus, anyone here could learn about the different techniques used in putting together a film or TV show: sound effects, lighting, directing, special effects, and so on.

IN FEBRUARY, I'D RATHER BE IN PHILADELPHIA

During the next two days, after returning from New York, I decided to visit a few places in Philadelphia.

Saturday, February 3, I visited the Independence Seaport Museum, Penn's Landing at 211 South Columbus Blvd. (215-925-5439). This well-laid-out museum contained maritime exhibits, hands-on exhibits, videos, and interactive computers that explained life on the sea, under the sea, along the Delaware River, and along the New Jersey Shore! I saw special sections devoted to the former Philadelphia Navy Yard as well as the immigrants who arrived into Philadelphia between the later part of the 19th century and the earlier part of the 20th century. Included in the admission price were tours of the *USS Olympia*, a ship that saw action in the Spanish-American War; *USS Becuna*, a submarine from WWII; and Workshop on the Water where I watched boat builders at work.

Sunday, February 4, I decided to visit the American Swedish Historical Museum, 1900 Patterson Ave. (215-389-1776). Long before William Penn founded Philadelphia in 1682, in the 1640s, groups of Swedish settlers became the first Europeans to live in (South) Philadelphia. This museum covered the story of over 350 years of Swedes who settled or visited the USA. Designed to look like a 17th- century Swedish manor house, this museum opened in 1938. The first floor explained the story of life in 17th-century Sweden and the New Sweden Colony (in what is now Delaware and parts of Pennsylvania). The second floor showcased the accomplishments of Swedish-Americans and Swedes in the arts, sciences, politics, literature, and other areas.

Sunday, February 18, I paid a re-visit to Philadelphia where I attended the Merriam Theater and saw *Cabaret*. I've seen the film *Cabaret* several times, but this show proved to

be quite different. Keeping close to the original Broadway show instead of the film, Sally Bowles (played by Andrea McArdle of Broadway *Annie* fame) was British. Andrea's "British" accent seemed passable for most Americans, but I'm sure the British would find that her accent didn't quite sound right. Her love interest, Cliff, a struggling writer, was American. (If anybody saw the film, the nationalities of the leading characters were the other way around, and the leading man's name was different.) Other differences included more musical numbers; the supporting cast had bigger roles, especially Cliff's landlady, Fraulein Schneider; some of the cabaret scenes were much more risqué; and the conflicts were more intense. This all took place in 1929 and '30, in Berlin, Germany--just as the Nazi Party was coming into power. Germany started to become a bad place to be Jewish, as Fraulein Schneider's love interest, Herr Schultz, learned. This play also showed a darker ending than the film, especially for the Emcee. I found the story line of this version of *Cabaret* much more interesting.

Monday, February 19, returning to Philly, I saw a film called *The House of Mirth* at the Ritz 5 Old City Cinema. Based on a novel by Edith Wharton, this very colorful Gilded-Age-costume drama took place in 1905 to '07 in New York and Monte Carlo. A better title for this film could have been *The House of Hypocrisy*. Lily Bart, a not-so-rich socialite (who depended on a rich aunt to live in a high-society lifestyle) fell from society. Lily was approaching age 30, and because she wasn't independently wealthy, society expected her to marry a wealthy man if she wished to stay in society. Plagued with gambling debts from card playing, Lily turned to her best friend's husband, Gus Trenor, for desperate help. Gus led her on to believe that he invested her money in the stock market and that she made a modest profit. In reality, Gus invested his own money for her. Lily later learned this when Gus offered to make her his mistress. Shocked by this news, Lily refused his advances and started her downfall from society. Through it all (becoming the subject of gossip for other society women, falling into poverty, and then unable to support herself), Lily still managed to maintain her dignity toward her tragic end. This film was a good example of the cruelty of high society at the turn of the 20th century.

MARCH IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

For the first weekend in March, I rode the Amtrak Train to Washington, DC, and checked into the Hotel Harrington, 11th St. & E St., NW (202-628-8140). This hotel was a great bargain, and for the price, these were the best accommodations I've ever had in DC. It had clean rooms with private bathrooms and best of all--the location. It was only about two blocks north of the Mall. The room rates varied throughout the year, but they usually averaged a bit below $100 (before taxes). Of course, I reserved well in advance in this very popular hotel.

Saturday, March 3, I visited the third of the "Big Three" Smithsonian Museums on the Mall: the National Museum of American History (NMAH), Constitution Ave., NW, between 12th and 14th Sts. (202-357-2700). (Those other two museums are the National Air & Space Museum and the National Museum of Natural History.) The public once referred to this museum (unofficially) as "the nation's attic" and (officially) as the National Museum of History and Technology. Nowadays, the public refers to the NMAH as "the nation's showcase." This museum displayed a myriad of objects and exhibit areas having to do with the scientific, technological, social, and political history of the USA and its effects on Americans. Even their museum shop took up a good portion of my time. Here, I could buy a large number of items and publications having to do with American history and civilization. Like the other two "Big Three" Smithsonian Museums, I couldn't see it all in a day. A repeat visit or more was necessary.

Sunday, March 4, I visited a much smaller Smithsonian Museum on the Mall that took up a few hours of my time: The Freer Gallery of Art, Jefferson Dr. at 12th St., SW (202-357-2700). In a building made to look as though it came from the Italian Renaissance, the Freer Gallery showed a sizable collection of Asian art from Neolithic times to the 20th century. A few rooms displayed late-19th- and early-20th-century American art, and other rooms included some of the largest collections of art by James McNeil Whistler (1834-1903), especially the Peacock Room! This predominately blue & gold room became Whistler's attempt at interior design. In my opinion, this room ranked in the top 10 of the most beautiful rooms in the USA.

THE "OTHER" TOWN OF SALEM

Unlike the more famous town of Salem, Massachusetts--Salem, New Jersey, had no history of witch trials. Part of the reason might have been that a more tolerant group of people, the Quakers, led by John Fenwick, founded Salem, NJ, in 1675. Many years later, in 1820, Robert G. Johnson stood in front of the Salem County Courthouse and ate a tomato. Much to the surprise of the crowd of people watching him, he did not die. Until then, most people thought that tomatoes were poisonous.

Saturday, March 10, I learned the facts in the above paragraph and more about the town of Salem and Salem County, NJ, by visiting the Salem County Historical Society, 79-83 Market St., Salem, NJ 08079 (856-935-5004). In a house built between 1721-28, a guide took me on a tour of the different rooms. Although I saw some of these rooms furnished in an 18th-century style, other rooms displayed furniture and other items gathered from many parts of Salem County. The Historical Society also provided a self-guided walking-tour map of downtown Salem. This town showed a sizeable concentration of 18th- and 19th-century buildings, including the old courthouse where Robert G. Johnson ate that tomato. (Those of us who enjoy ketchup, tomato sauce, or a B.L.T. sandwich should feel some gratitude for this event!)

AT THE HOME OF WILLIAM PENN

Contrary to popular belief, William Penn (1644-1718), founder of Pennsylvania, didn't name "Pennsylvania" or "Penn's Woods" after himself! King Charles II of England owed some money to William Penn's father, Admiral Penn. The elder Penn died before the debt was paid. Meanwhile, William Penn, a converted Quaker, chose to accept land in North America instead of money from the King. The King wanted to name the land "Pennsylvania" in honor of Admiral Penn. William Penn wanted to start a new colony that tolerated freedom of worship, ethnic diversity, and fairness to all people. He founded the city of Philadelphia and sold land to new settlers. Although he chose 8,400 acres of land 26 miles north of Philadelphia along the Delaware River for himself, he only lived at Pennsbury for a short amount of time (1682-84 and 1699-1701). After Penn's death, the estate fell to neglect. Penn's descendents sold the land in 1792, and a series of different people owned the land. In 1932, the state of Pennsylvania received 10 acres of land, including the foundation of the Mansion. From 1933 to '42, the state reconstructed the plantation, including the Mansion. Since 1939, the public could visit this estate, and when I visited, the estate contained 43 acres.

Sunday, March 11, visitors such as I toured the buildings and grounds at Pennsbury Manor, 400 Pennsbury Memorial Rd., Morrisville, PA 19067 (215-946-0400). The Visitor Center presented a short video about Pennsbury Manor. In the reconstructed 1683 Mansion, costumed guides explained the different rooms and mentioned that the Pennsbury Manor Mansion contained some of the largest collections of 17th-century furniture and antiques. The outside buildings housed the workers and animals, other buildings housed needed food and supplies, and the grounds included the floral and kitchen gardens. As I toured the estate, I learned more about William Penn and the complex life he led as he balanced himself between being a land-owning gentleman and a Quaker.

FROM SOUTH TO NORTH ON THE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN

Saturday, March 24, I made a final weekend trip to New York City. Unlike the last few trips, I traveled by Greyhound Bus from Philadelphia (instead of those two commuter trains), but I still stayed overnight at the Vanderbilt Y.

Soon after arriving, I took a city bus to the southern part of Manhattan and boarded the *Staten Island Ferry*, Whitehall St. (212-487-8403). Since 1810, a ferry service took passengers to-and-from Manhattan and Staten Island. Although this was not the *Love Boat*, this was still a good bargain, if not the best bargain in the city: it was free! Along the way, I saw some great views of the *Statue of Liberty*, Ellis Island, and the skyline of Lower Manhattan.

Sunday, March 25, I rode a city bus up to the northern part of Manhattan to the Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park (212-923-3700). This branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened in 1938. In a building built to look like a medieval monastery, the Cloisters displayed artwork of the Middle Ages (from about 1000 CE to around 1500). The inside views showed the museum's collection of medieval sculpture, metalwork, tapestries, stained glass, manuscripts, and panel paintings. The outside view, looking across the Hudson River to the New Jersey Palisades, looked equally impressive.

Because I have some extra space in this issue, I think the following information can refresh your memory. To those of you who are reading a paper copy of this zine and later manage to get access to the Internet, check out my web site at--http://members.tripod.com/LP_web4us/index.htm

DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE PREFACE is now on-line. If you don't have Internet access, however, you can still order (second addition) paper copies for $3 each (North America) and $5 each (overseas in USA funds) to the address in the title box. (Please write cheques or money orders out to DIMENSIONAL PRESS.) DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE PREFACE has 18 pages, including a front color cover. It may answer some of your questions about me (or at least what I did before I started writing the regular issues of DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS).

Last year's issues of DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS contained information on where to find the following sources for travel and other things. Volume 1, Issue 1: listed some guidebooks and periodicals about New York City as well as sources about SF fandom and cons. Volume 1, Issue 2: suggested some periodicals and a source to write to for more information about visiting Philadelphia in addition to a guidebook about Canada. Volume 1, Issue 3: listed a guidebook to Washington, DC, and a source to obtain information about visiting New Jersey. Volume 1, Issue 4: suggested two guidebooks for London.

As I said in Volume 1, Issue 4--none of these sources paid me to advertise them. They were "my listings" (done by my research) and not "their ads."

I'm no relation to actress Swoosie Kurtz or fantasy author Katherine Kurtz. Although I've never met Swoosie Kurtz, I have met Katherine Kurtz a few times at different SF cons. She seemed like a nice and personable lady. Anyway, other than a few short pieces of fiction in some magazines, I have never read Ms. Kurtz's books. I am not a big fan of fantasy fiction; my taste runs more towards hard science fiction. My favorite SF magazine is *Analog*.

Again, to those of you who don't have Internet access and want to read my web pages, send a letter with your request to Louise Davis at the address in the title box. She or I will send you a copy of my web pages.

For the next issue (due to be out in July), I plan to attend a SF con in New Jersey, take my annual mini-trip to Canada, go to Balticon, and take a few day trips to Philadelphia.

See you in the summer!