

The 1997 C.U.F.F. Trip Report

By R. Graeme Cameron

Nobody else is nominated, so I win the C.U.F.F. 'election' by default. My first task is to arrange transportation. During a phone conversation with my brother Stewart, who is stationed at an Air base in Ottawa, he suggests I fly the airline the Canadian military uses to transfer personal back & forth across the country (now that the air force no longer maintains any aircraft for this purpose), namely GREYHOUND AIR. Lo and behold, I acquire return tickets on the appropriate dates for only \$325.85. Cool! Mind you, I have to switch aircraft in Winnipeg (Greyhound not having any aircraft of sufficient range to fly all the way to Toronto) and brown bag it if I want anything to eat, but hey, cheap is cheap. I feel pretty smug about it.

As we all know, feeling smug over careful preparation for a Fannish event is a harbinger of impending disaster. I walk into work a few days later and someone comments "So I guess you're not going to Toronto after all."

"What?"

"GREYHOUND AIR is going out of business before November."

"You're kidding?"

"Nope!"

I take this very personally. Why me? Several frantic phone calls later I learn that CANADIAN AIR will honour my ticket at no extra charge. Even better, I'll be flying nonstop to Toronto and will be served a meal. Excellent! My smugness returns.

In September 1997 I put out the first of my 'FistiCUFF' bulletins offering items for sale. Might as well start raising money before my trip, every penny earned soonest is one less penny to worry about. This gives me the jump on most of my predecessors. Hah! Feeling even more smug.

Cleverly, I arrange to take the day I leave off work. But since I work evenings, I'll be working till midnight the day before, not arriving home till 1:30 a.m. Friday October 31st. My flight leaves only 7.5 hours later, but I figure I can get a few hours sleep and still arrive at the airport in plenty of time to catch it.

Okay, very simple, very mundane planning. Absolutely the sort of thing to be smug about, and equally absolutely the sort of thing not worth mentioning in trip reports because such info is routine, dull, and boring.

Except when things go wrong.

As I head off to work circa 2:00 p.m. on the Thursday before my flight, I finally notice the light blinking on my answering machine in reference to a call that had come in the night previously while I'd been at work. It is a message from Cindy Huckle, the Chair of Primedia, informing me they're reserving a slot in the programming schedule to allow me to present my "Space Babes Feminism in '50s B Movies" video lecture which I had previously delivered at VCON 22 April of 1997.

"See clips from the films that inspired the modern feminist movement! Gasp as women scientists assert themselves aboard doomed spaceships! Shudder in awe as heroines panic (but no more or less than the frightened heroes) in the face of unspeakable rubber monsters! Stare slack jawed with apprehension at

futuristic 'liberating' costumes! See men turned into drooling idiots! Find out why the 1950s are 'The Golden Age of Female Role Models!' (With carefully neutral commentary by R. Graeme Cameron.)"

Great Galloping Ghu! This means that I can't go to sleep until after I've cued 15 different videos to the beginning of the relevant film clips. Gack! This will take hours! How much sleep am I going to get?

FRIDAY OCTOBER 31ST, 1997

I arrive home from work circa 1:30 am. I pull out the appropriate videos and start using my VCR to cue them. I finish by 4:00 a.m., at which point I've been awake for 19 hours. I feel like a zombie. I know that if I succeed in falling asleep I'll probably sleep past my alarm clock and miss my flight, so I elect to stay awake and hope to sleep on the plane.

By the time I call a cab to the airport I've been awake for 21.5 hours. By the time my flight takes off, awake for 24 hours. And naturally I am unable to fall asleep on the airplane. Arrgh! The only situation of note during the flight is that there is *no* situation of note. So I get off the plane feeling tired *and* bored. Great start to my first day at Primedia.

Lloyd & Yvonne Penney had told me they would pick me up at the airport and drive me to the hotel as their contribution to CUFF. I am to expect Yvonne to make the contact. So I stand in the hall outside the baggage check asking every woman I see if they are Yvonne. No luck. I begin to worry. Then I notice a short, stocky, rather dapper chap with glasses. He sees me and asks if I am "The Graeme". Yes! It is Lloyd. Excellent!

We step outside. Yvonne is at the wheel of their car parked outside another door about a hundred feet away. She is watching the door intently. Lloyd starts waving like mad. No reaction. Yvonne is watching that door like a hawk. We run halfway down the sidewalk, the both of us waving our arms and shouting. Yvonne has her eyes fixed on that door. No way were we going to come through that door without her seeing us. Finally, when Lloyd pounds on the hood of the car, Yvonne gives a start and swivels around to look at us. I agree, it is rather unfair of us to come out the wrong door. Nevertheless I feel pleased, as there is something vaguely Fannish about the scene.

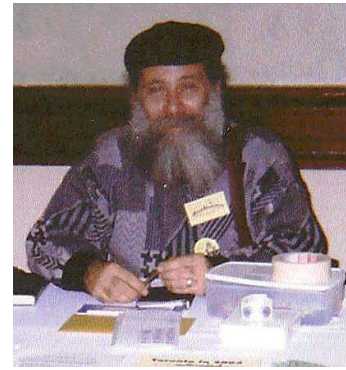
We then spend the next 75 minutes driving through Friday rush hour traffic. I feel disoriented. There are no Vancouver-style mountains to show me where North is... just an endless flat plain of myriad buildings. Even Lloyd and Yvonne are amazed at how much the area has built up since they last drove by. Lloyd points at a Royal Bank. "That was a field only a month ago." (Extrapolating backwards at the same rate, Toronto was but a Spuzzum-like village ten years ago....)

At least it is raining heavily. "Nice of you to welcome me with Vancouver weather," I say. This is to become my refrain throughout the weekend.

Lloyd and Yvonne fill me in on the local Fannish politics of the moment. Their tales strike me as typical, what with assorted unforgiving Fans mad at each other, etc., the usual.

The Penneys offer to take me out to dinner after I register. Cool! I check into the hotel, get a comfortable room on the 6th floor, drop off my stuff, then rush downstairs to register for the convention. Christine Sherman is manning the table. I overwhelm her with a flood of questions, mostly to do with the timing of my video lecture. Christine reprimands me sharply, telling me to slow down and shut up, one question at a time. I guess she is feeling pressured. Cindy Huckle, the Chair, standing nearby, is a witness to my gushing enthusiasm. She tells me my time slot is not fixed as yet, but that someone will inform me well in advance.

Then Lloyd and Yvonne point me in the direction of the 'Toronto Worldcon in 2003' table, manned by none other than the fabled degafiated Mike Glicksohn, he of the black beret and enormous salt & pepper beard. Mike and his former wife Susan Wood won a Hugo for their Fanzine *Energumen* back in 1973, the only Canadians ever to win a Hugo in that category. I am delighted, absolutely delighted to meet him. This alone makes the trip worthwhile.



Mike Glicksohn

I drop off my registration package in my room, make a quick phone call to let my Dad know I am in town and to set up a time to meet him on Sunday (I haven't seen him in several years), then head to the main floor looking for Lloyd & Yvonne. I spot Brian Davis coming up the hall, recognizing him from his photo in his *FIXED LINK* zine, i.e.: tall, slim and black, with moustache and glasses. I introduce myself. It turns out he had just driven in from Fredericton, New Brunswick, nonstop and was feeling rather tired himself.

It is particularly pleasant to meet Brian, as it is the Canadian UNITY Fan Fund after all, and here we are, a West Coast Fan and an East Coast Fan getting to know each other. The very purpose of CUFF!

As we stand talking, two Furrries (or costumers?) walk by, one dressed as a Wookiee, the other in a bear outfit. Subtle signs I am indeed at a convention. I begin to feel quite at home.

Lloyd & Yvonne show up and we head out for supper. Just as we leave, Lloyd says, "Look. There's Rob." I turn and see Robert Sawyer leaping into an elevator so jam-packed with fans he can't get all the way in. The elevator doors repeatedly open and close against his backpack. A victim of machine mastication (shades of **DAS LIFT**, the Dutch film about a killer elevator)! Leaving him to his fate, we go off to dinner.

We choose to eat at a nearby Swiss Chalet restaurant. Arrgh! Their "chicken in a bun" is better described as "a bit of chicken in a bunlet", but never mind the food, the conversation is the thing. We exchange assorted gossip and rumours, finally settling on the topic of the aging of Fandom and where will the new Fans come from? Ghu only knows.

Lloyd & Yvonne drop me back at the hotel at 7:30 p.m. I have now been awake for 34.5 hours. My head hurts. I find it hard to focus. I decide to rest a bit on my bed sipping cold tea and peruse the program book before running out to attend the Friday night festivities, i.e. the parties, orgies, and what-have-you.

The digest-sized program features a cover (uncredited) depicting an assortment of TV and film spacecraft hurtling toward Earth to attend Primedia. Very nice. The booklet includes profiles of the media GoHs, which is good, since I never find the time to watch the current shows and have no idea who these people are.

Turning to the program sheet, I see that it's time for the opening ceremonies. I should bestir myself and run down now! Afterwards at 9:00 p.m. begins "Roswell: 50th Anniversary Party", an opportunity to mix and mingle till two in the morning. At 10:00 p.m. is a panel on "Favourite Monsters." At Midnight various "Northern Frights" authors reading scary stories. There's lots to do! The fun is just beginning. Party on dude!

I look at the clock. 8:00 p.m. I've been awake for 35 hours. My head REALLY hurts. I remember that my migraines are triggered by stress and fatigue. I remember that my bouts of atrial fibrillation are triggered by stress and fatigue.

I ask myself, am I stressed and fatigued?

YES!

And so to bed, hoping to have recovered by the morning.

It occurs to me as I fall asleep that since I have so far attended no programming but instead spent all my time talking to people I must now be considered a pro in the art of con-going.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1ST, 1997

I wake up to a steady drizzle of rain outside; what passes for normal Vancouver weather continues in Toronto.

Seems I had a most difficult night, tossing and turning, falling in and out of sleep. But I feel much better now. Today is the big day! The Aurora awards! The Toronto 2003 Worldcon bid party afterwards! Yes, going to be glorious.

A quick breakfast and I head down to the lower floor where most of the activities are taking place. Mike Glicksohn is manning the 2003 bid table again. I take out a membership, then engage him in conversation. He plans to retire soon and dreams of indexing his publications. Any spare ENERGUMENs I could purchase or trade for? Nope, only his own copies left. (ENERGUMEN is surprisingly hard to find. I know two major American collectors who possess only the last issue as I do. The previous 15 issues are evidently being held close to the chest by collectors lucky enough to possess them.) But he might have some spare XENIUMs he could send me. I give him my address in case this be true.

Then I tentatively produce my working copy of my "INCOMPLEAT GUIDE TO CANADIAN FANZINES: 1937 TO 1998". He leafs through the pages.

"Hmm," he comments, "I didn't know there were so many."

Gives me a thrill to hear him say that. If one of the most important Faneds in the history of Canadian zinedom is impressed by the amount of research I'm doing and the results I'm coming up with then surely I must be on the right track.

At this point Lloyd & Yvonne come down a flight of stairs in the company of a big, burly man with a thin black beard and silver/black hair tied in a bushy ponytail. Another legendary, longtime fan: John Mansfield no less. He strides past and starts talking to Glicksohn, who interrupts him by pointing at me and saying, "And of course you know Graeme Cameron?"

John reaches out and shakes my hand. "I know of him."

I try to strike up a conversation. "Did you know you were the inspiration for the first VCON?"

"All I can tell you is my side of the story," he comments cryptically, then glances at his watch and abruptly rushes off. Hmm, must find out what he means.

I check out the dealer's room. A complete set of "Outer Limits" (the original 1960's show) bubblegum cards leaps off the table and grabs me by the throat. Zounds! My favourite TV show of all time! I once possessed the complete set, but gave them away to a very young nephew when I was getting rid of my "kiddy" possessions in an effort to appear mature. (I've never forgiven myself. My Aurora models! My Dinky toys...Arrgh! Have since bought most of them back at considerable expense.) The card set is only \$50. Hmm, maybe if I have any money left over at the end of the convention....

(I ran into a similar problem while running the dealers room at VCON 23 in May of 1998. The Oldfud's Collectibles table displayed a virtually complete set of Hugo Gernsback's AMAZING STORIES at an average price of only \$20.00 Cdn. each! Alas, I was short of funds. I could only afford two, the October 1926 issue with the Frank R. Paul cover which inspired 4E Ackerman to become an SF fan, and the September 1928 issue with the Scientifiction logo which later became the symbol of First Fandom. Ah yes, timebinding....)

I walk back into the hall and up to the table representing the Judith Merrill Collection Library. Theresa Wojtasiewicz, editor of SOL RISING, the newsletter of the 'Friends of the Merrill Collection', is manning the table. I engage her in conversation and take out a subscription to the zine, but stupidly forget to check out a rumour I'd heard concerning their Fanzine policy. I know their collection contains runs of zines important to Fannish history (which is how Robert Columbo was able to research his YEARS OF LIGHT, A CELEBRATION OF LESLIE A. CROUTCH, Canada's leading fan of the 1940's) but the rumour is that modern zines either get tossed or stuffed into a drawer. Since I send them SPACE CADET, and am a fervent believer in preserving Canada's Fanzine heritage, I certainly hope this rumour is not true! I must find out.

The costume display and art show beckons to me next. I admit costuming leaves me cold, yet some of the costumes impress me, some being so ornate, so glittering with brocade, as to resemble court dress from Byzantium. I overhear two costumers in conversation. One gestures at the art show, saying "I'm only here for the costuming panel, not this other garbage." Ahh, the subgenres of Fandom. It seems Fandom is structured very much like the Indian Caste system, the one difference being that in Fandom each caste thinks it is Brahminic and all the rest are untouchables!

While perusing the art show proper I see the original "Titanic about to strike the dorsal plates of a submerged Godzilla" by Jean-Pierre Normand. A note states that prints are for sale in room 510. Immediately I hotfoot it to said room only to discover no one is in. Later, I promise myself, later. I will not go home without one.

I wait for the elevator. Who should pop out when the door opens but Cindy Huckle. I harass her yet again. "Cindy, Cindy, when do I do my bit? Is it still on? Can I do it? Huh? Can I?"

Cindy rolls her eyes. "Yes, yes, of course your video lecture is going to be scheduled. Don't know when yet. We'll let you know. I promise!"

It is now Noon. I elect to drop by the con suite. Only four or five people present. I should mention that I'm wearing two badges, the first of which states "THE 1997 CUFF WINNER" and the second of which reads "THE GRAEME, EDITOR OF SPACE CADET". The people in the con suite lean forward to read my badges and forever after seem to back off and keep their distance. Hmmm. Oddly, no one throughout the entire convention asks me what "CUFF" stands for or what "SPACE CADET" is. Hmmm.

I ask questions about the organization behind Primedia. I'm told, "Nothing incorporated yet, just an informal group. The only fan-run con devoted to Canadian SF Media." People sound slightly apologetic. Fans often do, when explaining to Mundanes, though surely these people didn't think the editor of something called "SPACE CADET" is a Mundane? Hmmm.

I try to join in the general conversation, but quickly find out the talk is dominated by one very large, very opinionated Fan (who has no opinions of his own, but insists on quoting what other people have said or written) whose technique is to talk very loudly and rapidly without allowing anyone else the chance to say anything till he runs out of breath. Then he sits quietly whispering to himself till he notices a lull in the conversation and surges anew. After twenty minutes of this I give up and leave. Insecure, socially inept and tactless fans can be a pain. I know, cause I'm one of them. But I have the added advantage of being so shy in the presence of strangers I normally keep my mouth shut. This gives lustre to my reputation as a conversationalist...

I pass by the open doorway to the room where Richard Biggs (Dr. Stephen Franklin on BABYLON 5) is giving a talk. The room is packed with fans. Very well attended indeed. The media aspect of the con is obviously a huge success.

I elect to sit in on the 1:00 pm panel "The Science Fiction of Science Fact" featuring Robert J. Sawyer and Michael Lennick, the latter representing SPACE -- THE IMAGINATION CHANNEL of cable TV which is produced in Toronto.

Sawyer is late in arriving, a consequence of his "heavy scheduling", non-stop from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. I go up to him to ask permission to take a flash photo. I also introduce myself. "Oh, so you're the Graeme," he says, shaking my hand.

Michael starts by showing a 15 minute TV segment on teleportation featuring himself and Robert. In it Sawyer quotes the opening lines from James Blish's SPOCK MUST DIE! novel: "What worries me," McCoy said, "is whether I'm myself anymore. I have a horrible suspicion that I'm a ghost. And that I've been one for maybe as long as twenty years." This leads to a discussion revolving around the idea that teleportation, conversion from matter to energy and back again, is in reality a form of death and rebirth. But, we are informed, it's not possible, teleportation is not feasible. Thoughts are not hardwired, but arranged in holographic patterns of energy in the brain. Gravity and magnetic fields are part of the individual human picture as well.

I think it is Sawyer who quotes the famous joke by Greg Bear, "Don't wear wool in a teleporter", i.e. else you may emerge part sheep, your DNA merged with that of the critter who grew the wool ala THE FLY. A member of the audience objects, "But hair, including wool, doesn't contain DNA." Someone else points out that hair roots do. Nobody can figure out whether a wool sweater includes roots or not. The joke is ruined by a need for further research. Ah well.

At one point Sawyer observes that animism plays a significant role in our lives. It is natural as a child to impart spirit to an object, a doll for instance, as it seems to answer a basic need, but this is not something we give up as adults. We treat Data (from the STAR TREK reality) as human even though it isn't. I think to myself, this will happen to aliens for sure if we ever contact any, and if they're sufficiently clever, they will exploit this. Hmm. I wonder if this has anything to do with Sawyer's new book ILLEGAL ALIEN?

Anywho, both Robert and Michael are very articulate and full of nifty ideas. The hour goes by too swiftly. As Sawyer rushes off to his next panel I tell him, "I hope to talk to you later, much, much later." He throws me a puzzled glance and exits quickly. Oops. What I MEANT to say was "I want very, very much to talk to you later" but it didn't come out that way. Oops.

It is now 2:00 pm. The awards banquet is in four hours. I decide to go back up to my room and take a power nap. This means I'll miss such panels as "The True North: Canadian SF&F", "The Great Canadian SF&F Trivia Quiz", and "Sexuality in SF&F" (how come 'Canadian' isn't part of this last title? Hmmm, sinister....), but I want to be alert and fully conscious during the Aurora presentations.

Just as I get off the elevator at my floor Dale Sproule and Sally McBride (Editors of TRANSVERSIONS) step on. "Graeme, we've got to meet later!"

"I'll be at the Toronto bid party", I say as the door closes. In fact I never run into them again. I wonder what it is they wanted to talk about? Entice me into writing a regular column for vast sums of money?... Naaah....

Gratefully I settle down on my bed. Still raining outside. There's no heat (I didn't know you have to turn it on) and consequently the room is cold and damp. Slowly I drift asleep. I wake up briefly to the annoying sound

of dripping water. Ah good, I think, the heat must be coming on. Odd, still cold and damp though. I wake up again to a much more insistent drip. What kind of heating system is this? Egads! The wall above the bay window is leaking. Rain water is dripping in at an increasing rate. Thinking quickly I place the metal garbage pail underneath. THUMP! THUMP! Which is quickly transformed to a SPLASH! SPLASH! No more sleep, that's for sure. I complain to the front desk.

A super with five million keys jangling from his belt, like a character out of a situation comedy, shows up to laugh at my plight. "These things are sent to torment us, eh? Keeps me employed though." He helps me carry my stuff to another room down the hall. No drip. No noise. I fall asleep again.

At long last, it's time for the Aurora Awards Banquet and Presentation. As I get off the elevator Henry the 8th and one of his wives step on (costumers I assume). The door keeps closing on Henry (a very large man) as he appears to be hanging on to his 'wife's' back attempting to adjust her bodice, or possibly trying to rip it off. If the latter, that would be roleplaying old Henry to perfection.

A crowd mills about in the hall outside while last minute work is completed in setting up the banquet. I chat with Brian Davis for awhile, and then Lloyd & Yvonne Penney show up and graciously invite the both of us to share their table. Then the doors are flung open and there stands Cindy Huckle, wearing an elegant white dress and blouse, greeting each participant as they enter.

"Ah Cindy, " I blurt out going in, "about my Space Babes lecture..."

"Not now, not now! Now is not the time!"



Flying Saucer Centre Piece

Suitably chastened, I hasten to join the others at our table. It features a very stfnal centrepiece consisting of a Styrofoam FORBIDDEN PLANET-style flying saucer wrapped in videotape and accompanied by a plastic Superman and a #3 Thunderbirds spacecraft. Cool!

Going around the table from my left, "our table" consists of myself, Brian Davis, Lloyd Penney, Yvonne Penney, actor Bruce Gray (the ruthless investment banker from TRADERS TV show), Jodi Hancock, her husband Larry Hancock (representing the Friends of the Merrill Collection & co-chair of the Toronto in 2003 bid), Mrs. van Belkom, her husband -- a prolific writer -- Edo van Belkom (his most recent book NORTHERN DREAMERS, a series of interviews with Canadian SF&F writers), and David Stockman, whose name is familiar yet I can't seem to place him. I never do find out if he's a Fan or a Pro, or both.

Both Larry Hancock and Bruce Gray are very funny and entertaining. They put the entire table in a merry mood very quickly.

At one point Hancock becomes serious for a moment and wonders aloud, "How does one go about ordering wine?" The very second he finishes his question a waiter reaches over his shoulder and plonks down a bottle of white wine in front of him. Hancock stares down at the bottle, his eyes widening, and gasps, "Wow! That's fast service.... I wanted red though..."

During the course of making polite conversation van Belkom asks me if I'm up for an award. "No, not this year, but I've been nominated six times in the past."

"Six times? SIX TIMES?" van Belkom strikes the table with his fist. "I've published over a hundred short stories and several novels. What the hell do you have to do to get nominated SIX times?"

The others stare at me in awe. I shrink into my chair. "Well, it was just for putting out a clubzine..." I explain in a mumble. "BCSFAzine. Print run of a hundred. Nominated six years in a row while I was editor...." My voice trails off.

"Six times..." mutters van Belkom.

I could have added that I'd never won, but thought better of it.

When the buffet is wheeled in it is set up next to our table. Cries of protest resound throughout the hall as we are first to get up and load up our plates. The food is nothing great, but perfectly adequate. One of the dishes contains shrimp. Someone mentions they are allergic to shrimp, and nobody can figure out by appearance alone which dish to avoid. "That one!" I declare loudly, laughing inwardly that everyone has missed the obvious. Turns out I am pointing at the chicken dish. Oh well.

Our meal finishes and the horde of fans waiting outside is allowed to enter and fill the rows of seats for the awards ceremony. We of the banquet tables are seated between the stage and the row seating so we have the best seating of all. Even better, my table is on the left-hand side of the hall, so it is easy for me to leap up and scuttle close to the podium to snap pictures without blocking anyone's view. (Though I suppose the cameraman for the SPACE channel didn't appreciate my flash going off periodically. I like to think it added a journalistic touch to their coverage...)

The principal presenters are Marcel Gagne and Robert Sawyer. As best as I can recollect the sequence of presentation is as follows:

Cindy Huckle (Primedia Chair) and, I think, Ruth Stuart (of the awards subcommittee) unveil the awards, which consist of a black-painted wood base supporting stylized plastic waves representing the ever-shifting shimmering veil of the Aurora Borealis often seen in our Northern skies. When seen from above these 'waves' form the outline of a Maple Leaf (the award I'm talking about, not the actual Aurora Borealis...though it would be truly nifty if it did, come to think of it...). Normally the awards are crafted by Franklin Johnson of Edmonton, who has been doing them since 1982, but sufficient advance notice did not reach him in time this year, so the awards were fashioned at the last minute by Ed Charpentier, Primedia's AV chief. Also, the awards usually have colour embedded in the plastic to more accurately resemble the true Aurora, but due to the lack of preparation time this year's awards are made of clear plastic. They glisten nicely all the same though.



Jean-Pierre Normand

- 1) Jean-Pierre Normand wins for ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT for assorted book and magazine covers. He won in the same category last year as well. With a beard as black and curly as his hair he rather resembles Zeus.
- 2) Jean-Louis Trudel wins for BEST SHORT-FORM WORK IN FRENCH for his short story "Lamente-toi, Sagesse!" which appeared in "Geneses." This is his third Aurora award. He previously won FAN ACHIEVEMENT (OTHER) for promoting SF, in 1994, and FAN ACHIEVEMENT (ORGANIZATIONAL) in 1996 for SFSF Boreal.
- 3) Robert J. Sawyer (beating out poor Edo van Belkom among others) wins BEST SHORT-FORM IN ENGLISH for his short story "Peking Man" which

appeared in "Dark Destiny III: Children Of Dracula." This is his third Aurora award. He previously won one for his novel "The Golden Fleece" in 1992, and another for his short story "Just Like Old Times" in 1994.

4) "On Spec" magazine (first issue was in Spring of 1989) wins for BEST OTHER WORK IN ENGLISH. Robert Sawyer accepts on their behalf. This is their fourth Aurora award. Their first three victories came in 1990, 1991, and 1995.

5) "Solaris" (a venerable Quebec SF magazine, its first issue -- under the title "Requiem" -- came out in 1974) wins BEST OTHER WORK IN FRENCH. They also won, under various editors, in 1990, 1991, 1992, (possibly in 1993 -- I don't know who won in this category that year), 1995, and 1996. Jean-Louis Trudel accepts for them.



Larry Hancock

6) And now Larry Hancock takes the stage to present the FAN ACHIEVEMENT (ORGANIZATIONAL) Aurora. The contestants are: Warren Huska (Toronto Trek 10), Lynda Pelly (MonSFFA), Capucine Plourde (Klingon Imperial Diplomatic Corp), Rebecca Senese (Space-Time Continuum), and Yvonne Penney (SF Saturday).

As Larry Hancock tears open the envelope Yvonne bows her head, clenching both fists tightly beneath her throat, her eyes shut, eyelids quivering. Larry calls out her name. Yvonne's eyes fly open in shock. "Oh shit!" she gasps. Lloyd hugs her delightedly as the room bursts into applause. She gets up and goes to the podium, or rather, stands beside it holding the microphone, since the podium is so tall it would hide her from view if she stood behind it. She looks very happy indeed as she makes a brief but gracious speech of acceptance. But alas, as she returns to the table her expression of happiness fades to worry and tension. After all, her husband is also up for an award, and what if he doesn't win? Mind you, Lloyd previously won in 1994 for FAN ACHIEVEMENT (ORGANIZATIONAL) re Ad Astra, so at least they are now even. Still, it would be nice to go home with his and hers awards....



Yvonne Accepting Award

To make matters worse, as far as prolonging the suspense goes, there is a break in the proceedings to allow Allan Weiss of the Friends of the Merrill Collection to give a fine, heart-felt tribute in memory of Judith Merrill who had passed away a month earlier (Sept 12, 1997). Weiss finishes by throwing out a sort of clenched-fist salute and pleading with everyone to commemorate Judith by pledging themselves to a lifetime of radical political reform and struggle. What?

This said to a bunch of SF Fans? The most conservative, backward-looking, escapist-minded, to-hell-with-reality, we-just-want-to-have-fun group of social misfits on the face of the planet? Fat chance. Nice try though.

7) Finally, time for the rest of the awards, starting with FAN ACHIEVEMENT (OTHER). The nominees are: Judith Hayman (filksinging), Lloyd Penny (fan-writing), MonSFFA ("Plant Nine From Outer Space" video), Capucine Plourde (KIDC website design), Norbert Spehner ("Dracula Opus 300", Ashem Fictions, Bibliography), and Larry Stewart (entertainer).

Lloyd and Yvonne hold hands as the envelope is opened. Lloyd wins his second Aurora! Lloyd and Yvonne hug excitedly and he bounds up to the podium (though Yvonne had let go by this point, I should add). He seems in a bit of a daze. Pausing for a moment, he stares down at the award in his hand, then thanks everyone for giving him "the stealth Aurora" (a reference to its clear plastic), which gets a laugh. In the course of further comments he puzzles a few people by stating that he receives about 150 Fanzines a year, as if to imply that's

why he is getting the award. In fact, he is being rewarded for his fan-writing TO those zines, more specifically for his letterhacking, he being the Canadian equivalent of Harry Warner Jr.



Lloyd accepting award

So what's the big deal? Well, Lloyd's entertaining blend of Fannish news and commentary helps bind the Canadian Fannish community together, and helps remind fans elsewhere there IS a Canadian Fannish community. He is a large part of the pulsing lifeblood of Cdn. Fandom, and without such as he, this precarious phenomena would weaken and wither into isolated, random spurts of activity (rather like my bouts of Atrial Fib -- which you must admit is stretching the pulse analogy to an absurd degree. Rather proud of this, actually). Anyway, as the 1997 winner of the Canadian UNITY Fan Fund, I heartily applaud Lloyd's victory.

8) Next comes the FAN ACHIEVEMENT (FANZINE) award. The nominees are: "The Diplomatic Pouch" (Capucine Plourde for KIDC), "From Beyond The Oort Cloud" (Aaron Yorgason), "NorthWords" (James M. Botte, Bertrand Desbiens & Mark Lefebvre -- Society For Canadian Content), "OSFS Statement" (Lionel Wagner of the Ottawa SF Society), "Sol Rising" (Theresa Wojtasiewicz -- Friends of the Merrill Collection), "Warp" (Keith Braithwaite - Montreal SF&F Association), and "Under The Ozone Hole" (Karl Johanson & John Herbert).



Bruce Gray celebrating Penney's double victory

1994, 1995 and 1996, all in the BEST SHORT-FORM WORK IN FRENCH category. Jean-Louis Trudel accepts on his behalf.

At this point I'll mention that various teams of presenters work different awards, but that each and every award is presented in both French and English. Bruce Gray, who grew up in Canada, is very much moved to see this, and says as much while helping Marcel Gagne and Richard Biggs present the last award.

As Biggs starts to tear open the envelope, the "Space The Imagination Channel" camera man creeps in very close, the end of his lens moving to within inches of Bigg's groin. With a nervous smile Biggs asks, "What are you doing?" The audience laughs. From my perspective I can see the camera guy is just trying to shoot a closeup of Bigg's hands opening the envelope, but it does rather look as if he is zooming in on Bigg's assets.

UTOH won four times previously. The fact this means I lost four times to them has nothing to do with my keen interest in the award this time, of course. I am merely curious in a dispassionate and entirely objective manner as to whether they will finally be crushed like a... er, I mean, whether their winning streak is about to be broken by a worthy competitor. And in fact, tis so, Editor Theresa Wojtasiewicz wins on behalf of "Sol Rising", the newsletter of the Friends of the Merrill Collection. The newsletter won once before, in 1992, when Larry Hancock was editor.

9) Yves Mynard wins BEST LONG-FORM WORK IN FRENCH for his novel "La Rose du Desert". This is his fifth Aurora, having previously won in 1992,



Robert J. Sawyer and his two Auroras!

10) The envelope is opened, the name read out, and Robert J. Sawyer wins BEST LONG-FORM WORK IN ENGLISH for his novel "Starplex" published by Ace. This is his fourth Aurora, and his second this evening. He's a very happy man.

Primedia Chair says a few words of thanks, then the winners pose with their awards for photo-taking. I get assorted shots, such as Bruce Gray hovering between Lloyd and Yvonne flashing victory signs with both his hands, Sawyer alone proudly holding both awards, and a picture of Dennis Mullin of the Aurora Awards subcommittee looking very relieved things have gone so well.

I then go up to Jean-Pierre Normand to congratulate him on his victory. As we shake hands I ask him how I can get a hold of that beautiful Titanic/Godzilla print of his. He tells me to come on up to the Boreal Con*cept party he and Anne Methe will be throwing in their room once they get up there. Great! As I start to leave I am accosted by Cindy Huckle (for a change, up to now it had been the other way around). "We've decided you can do your Space Babes bit in the Melville room at 11:00 AM tomorrow."

"There will be a TV and a VCR set up and ready to go?" I ask. "Can't do it without them."

"Of course, of course, don't worry about it." But I do, I do.



Still celebrating!

Going out the door I see Brian Davis and John Mansfield leaning against the corridor wall outside. Turns out John is boycotting the awards, refusing to attend, and is only now being filled in by Brian on who won. Camera in hand, I go up them and ask if I can take their picture. I snap a shot of the two of them together.

It is now circa 9:00 PM. I go up to my room to rest for awhile, and to phone my Dad to arrange for a time for us to meet tomorrow. Dad picks 1:00 PM. Sounds good.

Now it's time to party! My plan of action: hit the Con*cept party first in order to purchase the print I want, then go over to the 2003 party where I hope to talk to Robert Sawyer at long last, with David Sproule, with hopefully a host of others, fulfilling my mandate as the

CUFF winner, contacting fans, mingling, being assailed by groupies... Oh what visions of fun dance in this fanboy's head as I ride the elevator.

Jean-Pierre greets me as I enter his room. It is very crowded with people sitting everywhere, including the floor. I am somewhat surprised (though I don't know why) to see John Mansfield and Brian Davis deep in conversation with others at the table by the window. I resolve to steel up my nerve and approach John again, though this may take a while.



Dennis Mullin looking relieved

Meanwhile Jean-Pierre sells me a print (out of a limited edition of 200) of the Titanic about to strike Godzilla's fins. It's beautiful. I especially like the deep blue of the water which well emphasizes how cold the scene is. He also offers me a print of the "Seaview" and I snap that up as well. I praise the realism of both pictures.

"But I got one tiny detail wrong," bemoans Jean-Pierre. "I put HMS Titanic (HMS = His Majesty's Ship) on the bow, but further research revealed it should actually be RMS Titanic" (RMS = Royal Mail Ship). I assure him it doesn't matter, 99.9% of all viewers will assume HMS is correct. (Later I discover that the bow caption on the actual ship read simply "Titanic". No prefix at all!)

Pleased by my response, he hauls out his portfolio from underneath the bed. He does the kind of hard-edged, photo-realist art that I especially like. His spaceships are of a style somewhat reminiscent of the British artist Christopher Foss. And he does more than just spacecraft, as I pour through the covers he's done for "SOLARIS" and "ON SPEC" as well as covers for assorted novels, I find his attention to detail with old sailing ships and aircraft (albeit posed in fantasy or SF situations) to be nothing short of fantastic. So I suggest he expand his market by contacting the various aviation and maritime history prozines that proliferate in the States. He seems intrigued by the idea. I hope something comes of it. (And by the way, his Godzilla print recently graced the cover of "G-FAN", the slick semi-pro Godzilla Fanzine out of Manitoba.)

Inspired by my interest, Jean-Pierre pulls out his photo collection showing his many SF models. Hordes of them. Shelf after shelf after shelf of assorted monsters and spaceships. I am impressed that he has so many. He is impressed that I recognize most of them. We get along hugely well.

Eventually Jean-Pierre moves on to other guests and I angle closer to the table where Mansfield is holding sway. I almost literally stumble over Gabriel Morrissette, the creator (along with Mark Shainblum) of the cartoon comic character ANGLOMAN, who is sitting on the floor autographing the first published collection of same. I note that he is illustrating each copy with a quick drawing of Angloman interacting with the home city of the purchaser. I decide to acquire a copy to sell for CUFF. I tell Gabriel I'm from Vancouver. Evidently he knows Vancouver well. He draws Angloman standing in drenching rain and staring down at his feet saying, "Eu... Slugs!... We eat that in Montreal..." In conversation with Gabriel I soon learn that he knows local SF writer & fellow BCSFAn Don DeBrandt quite well, having done illustrations for two scripts written by Don for Marvel Comics (I can't remember if he confirmed they had been published).

Finally I slide into the corner table with Brian Davis and John Mansfield. Determined to win Mansfield over, I comment that despite winning CUFF unexpectedly, I am now fully prepared to accept responsibility for it.

"And so you should be", he replies. I am being warned, I guess.

He then states he isn't going to tell me how to run CUFF but...

We spend a couple of hours talking about CUFF, how to define it, and how to run it. Do I accept conrunners? Writers? Writer wannabees? Professional writers? Do I accept large donations? Say, \$1,000 providing the recipient wins?

"I'll take money from anyone," I declare, "but the award is strictly for Fanzine writers & Faneds who are nominated properly and voted upon properly. No exceptions." [I later change this policy to include ALL fans.]

Basically, I'm sweating blood. I feel like I'm being judged, like I'm on trial. I gush forth a volcanic flood of Fannish earnestness in an effort to prove to John that not only do I deserve to win CUFF, but also that I am qualified to administer it. After two hours of what feels like very intense questioning John relaxes somewhat and I feel I have come close to mollifying him.



Brian Davis & John Mansfield

John changes subject slightly and comments that the items I am offering for sale to raise money are too narrow in scope, too Fannish in character, to appeal to general Fans. I need to broaden the base.

"Well, how to get stuff?" I ask. "I'm selling mostly goodies from my own collection."

"Just ask," he replies. "I'll demonstrate." He turns to Ann Methe, co-host of the room party, and asks her to give me one of the magnificent black t-shirts illustrated with Vampires that she is selling on behalf of Con*Cept. By Ghu, she gives it to me!

Now John is a big, bluff, very forward kinda guy with a military background. Simply asking for what he wants comes naturally to him. Me, I'm shy, too timid by instinct to think of imposing on anyone. But, I must admit, his method gets results.

Dennis Mullin, one of the two AURORA administrators, enters the room. The subject of our conversation switches to the Auroras. John has a theory how UNDER THE OZONE HOLE beat BCSFAzine four times in a row.

"It's simply a matter of timing," he explains. "They publish an issue in the month before the voting deadline and jog every potential voter's memory. Simple."

Dang ! Why didn't I think of that? I take the lesson to heart, and months later, upon learning SPACE CADET is nominated, fully intend to issue my superduper enlarged issue #10 well before the September 15th, 1998 deadline for the 1998 Auroras. (Hah! I say again: Hah!)



Glorious victors left to right: Lloyd Penney, Jean-Pierre Normand, Yvonne Penney, Robert J. Sawyer, Theresa Wotjasiewicz & Jean-Louis Trudel

Dennis leaves for awhile, then comes back with voter breakdown for today's Auroras. We go through the results, with much chortling with glee and "Aha!"s from John. I keep my mouth shut. I don't understand what I'm looking at. I'm vaguely familiar with the idea that after the first round the lowest score is taken and divided among the higher, but the lists of data on the two sheets presented to us make no sense to me. No doubt a simple explanation is all that is required, but I am too embarrassed to ask.

Next Dennis surprises me by admitting the Awards subcommittee still hasn't given William Gibson his

1989 and 1995 Auroras (for "Mona Lisa Overdrive" and "Virtual Light") because they don't know how to contact him. Since Gibson lives in Vancouver, Dennis was hoping I knew where to reach him. Well, bad timing. Gibson just recently moved from his modest house in Kitsilano to an upscale district elsewhere in the city, and nobody in BCSFA has a clue where exactly. So I suggest Dennis try contacting Walter & Jill at White Dwarf books, as Bill drops by from time to time to check out the competition, and can readily pick up the awards there... (I don't know if this worked out or not as yet.)

I decide to go upstairs to get some back issues of SPACE CADET. On returning I give one to Pierre, then four to Brian who wants to trade his FIXED LINK with me. About an hour later Pierre comes over to the table and says he enjoyed reading my review of MARS NEEDS WOMEN in SC #8. Do I have any other issues? So I give him three more. He offers \$10. I am reluctant at first, then accept it as a 'donation'. For CUFF, I mean. He may have been expecting change. Oops. I tell him about my Space Babes lecture and he promises to attend. Excellent!

I then show the outline of my INCOMPLETE GUIDE TO CANADIAN FANZINES to John. He has fun looking through it to see if I had missed any of his favourites. I gather from what he says that he either he has a considerable collection or simply a good memory of the zines he's seen over the years.

Finally John reveals the story behind his contribution to VCON 1. The traditional version is contained within my history of BCSFA, the relevant chapter appearing in BCSFAzine #236, Jan 1993. Part of it reads:

"In October 1970 a BNF (Big Name Fan) by name of John Mansfield sent word that he would be passing through Vancouver. Club members Daniel Say and Robert Scott (who may have been President at this time) went to meet Mansfield at the Hotel Vancouver. There he treated them to a slide show depicting several SF conventions. Inspired by this, within two months, or before the end of 1970, Daniel Say announced the club would put on their own SF convention early in the coming year..."

But apparently the true story is that John, while staying with fellow fen in the student dormitory at UBC, proposed to help the UBC/BCSFA/SFU club put on a convention. Daniel Say, whose ego is easily as big as the planet, maybe bigger, refused his offer, saying they didn't need him. John predicted disaster, which did not come to pass. The convention was a success.

An interesting post script is the collection of slides depicting VCON 1 which I borrowed from Steve Forty who in turn had borrowed them from John. I had assumed this meant that John had attended VCON 1 and taken the slides. On the contrary, this was a set of slides collected by Daniel Say and sent to John Mansfield to prove that Vancouver fen didn't need John's help in putting on a con. Ah, Fannish politics. Tis forever thus. But enough digression –

It is now very late. I am too tired to seek out the Torcon bid party. So to my room and to bed.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2nd, 1997

By 10:30 AM I am waiting outside the 'locked' Melville room where Primedia's GoH Chris Wiggins is regaling fans with anecdotes about his film and radio career. Peeking through the gap in the doors I can see that the Melville room is large, with a 100 or more seats, and a speaker's podium. Cool.

I scan a chalkboard to see what notice has been given. Nothing. How will people know? A woman brushes past, chalk in hand, and writes: "Program changes: 11 am - Feminism in the 50s B movies (new). Noon - The 13th Knight demo (moved)." I stand there admiring this, then realize, wait a min, it doesn't say where it is!

At this point Larry Hancock (Co-chair of the Torcon bid) wanders over and read the sign. He says, "You realize you've been given the check out time slot?"

"Yep," I reply, boldly lying, and experiencing a sinking feeling.

"I just attempted to give a presentation -- ("*Worldcon: Toronto in 2003*" - *How does one get involved with a large convention? Get the inside info on Toronto's bid to bring the World Science Fiction Convention here in 2003.*") -- starting at ten. I gave up at 10:15. No body showed up. This is the second time this has happened to me at this con."

The sweat is beginning to pour off me now.

"Oh, and by the way, did you know that Convention is planning to leave it to the CUFF winner to organize next year's Convention?"

My jaw hits the floor. Always a kidder, is Larry Hancock.

Finally the Chris Wiggen talk ends and people pour out. I walk in to an empty Melville room. I stand there, worrying, mightily worrying. Then a techie crew bustles in carrying a large screen. Oh no! Do they think I am going to give a slide show? Panic! No, turns out to be a large screen projection TV VCR combo. Cool. Only problem, they need an extension cord. Somebody runs and gets one. Oops, it doesn't fit the VCR. Arrgh! 10 minutes gone already.

The techies have a long, slow conversation on how to resolve the problem. Meanwhile I'm sweating bullets. My talk is timed precisely for an hour. 15 minutes are gone and I haven't even started! Which tapes will I have to leave out of the program? Fact is, I'm the victim of typical techie theatrics. Techies are indispensable at cons, and by ghod, they mean to prove it whenever they can. Finally somebody pulls an adaptor out of their pocket, plugs it on to the cord, plugs that into the VCR and says, "All set."

I pull myself back together from the puddle of panic I'd become and turn to face the audience. Five people sit there. A young guy with a camera, an older man looking somewhat puzzled, a young girl, an older woman with a fierce expression on her unsmiling face (a feminist?), and, thank the ghods, Jean-Pierre. I pitch the entire lecture at him, knowing he at least will appreciate it.

I had envisioned lecturing from the podium in a professorial fashion before a packed house, but instead I spend all my time on my knees changing tapes. This makes it hard to raise a laugh.

(I cannot, at this point, find my notes on my Space Babes Feminism lecture. The gist of it, however, has to do with my observation that almost every SF B movie in the fifties and early sixties is graced with the presence of a beautiful, tight-sweatered female scientist or assistant, the subject of embarrassingly juvenile ogling by the male leads, who frequently lecture said males on their lack of maturity and the need to take women seriously as equals. My premise being that the founding members of the modern feminist movement, first active in the late sixties, had been inspired by these B movies as teenagers at the drive-in while dating their gonad-driven boyfriends. To "prove" this I show artfully selected scenes from 15 movies including THEM, THE THING, ROCKETSHIP XM, FLIGHT TO MARS, CONQUEST OF SPACE, MARS NEEDS WOMEN and THE ANGRY RED PLANET. In a future issue, assuming I find my notes, I may print a written version of my lecture.)

About every five minutes somebody pokes their head through the door and asks, "Is this the Martial arts demo?" Does it bloody look like a Marshal arts demo? I'll give them a bloody martial arts demo...Yes, I am irritated, but struggle on gamely...

By the end of the show my audience doubles in size to ten! However the influx ignore me and talk loudly among themselves. I end on AELITA, leaving out CURSE OF THE DEMON, QUEEN OF OUTERSPACE, and PROJECT MOONBASE. Yet even the truncated version seems to please the original five. It is a success of sorts.

Relieved that my ordeal is over, I wander into the dealers room, hoping to pick up that complete set of 'Outer Limits' cards I spotted yesterday, but that particular dealer is no longer present. While I am browsing, a chap enters to announce the promised Martial Arts display -- ("*Members from the Toronto production of THE 13TH KNIGHT will perform a demonstration of martial arts incorporated into their play currently running at Ontario Place.*") -- but in a curious manner:

"Attention! Starting now! Martial arts demo in the Melville room. Warning! Chairs do not face this way! They face the other way! You will understand when you enter!"

I hope so, because nobody understands what he's talking about at this moment, that's for sure!

I go back to my hotel room to rest.

At 1:00 PM my dad shows up and we sit and talk for a while. Then we head out for a late lunch. Consequently I do not get back till 5:30 pm. This means I've missed the Convention/Auroras committee business meeting which ran from 2:00 to 3:00 PM, and the closing ceremonies, which were at 4:00 PM. Oh well.

When I try to enter my room, the electronic lock refuses to let me in. Seems the hotel assumed I had checked out like most (all?) the other fans, but of course that is not the case. I go down to the front desk to explain...

I am dead tired. So I just repose on my bed watching TV for the rest of the day, and rather than try to hunt down the dead dog party, if any, I call it an early night.

So, I never do get to talk with Robert Sawyer. And since I work evenings I didn't get to meet him at that White Dwarf Book Signing he and Robert Charles Wilson gave in Vancouver only a few months back, or the time a year or more ago he attended a FRED gathering. We seem destined not to converse. Still, it's a small world. Sawyer and my father used to belong to the same Osbourne computer club a long time ago.

At any rate, Robert gets SPACE CADET, so hi Rob! Someday we'll have a conversation!

MONDAY NOVEMBER 3RD, 1997:

Up at 7:00 am.

I take a long hot shower to relax. Just as I'm thinking of getting out, I hear a shrill, intermittent beeping. What the hell? Door bell? Phone?.... Holy shit! The smoke alarm!

I turn off the shower and run naked out of the bathroom. Just as I suspected, there's no sign of smoke. The moisture from the shower set off the alarm. I dance about beneath the smoke alarm, still naked, waving a towel back and forth. After several minutes the alarm stops. I let my arms drop. Then I say ARRGH!

Because the curtains are wide open! I have visions of observers standing in the parking lot below witnessing my gamboling about in the nude and thinking "Hmm, another Holiday Inn business traveller on a Monday morning binge."

However, as I am on the 6th floor of the tallest building in a landscape of car parks, warehouses, restaurants and other low buildings, maybe nobody noticed.

Later, just before going down for breakfast, staring out the window over the parking lot, a TD bank on the other side, I notice a colossal woman of about 300 lbs plus in jeans and muumuu come waddling out of the bank machine toward the hotel. Ahh, I think, at least one other fan is still here. She walks past a big rig, then turns and hoists herself into the cab, starts it up and drives off. That'll teach me to assume stereotypes. Not every ample woman is a fan! Some are truck drivers...

I wait in my room till check out time, watching, among other programs, a children's show with live rats, hamsters, guinea pigs, hedgehogs and such, interacting in a human fashion ala WIND IN THE WILLOWS including messing about in boats and going down in a little diving bell. Very cute. It sure beats watching a Dung Beetle special..... (Old time SC readers will recognize the reference to my Ditto 8 experience)

Then I grab a cab to the airport. I ask for the flat rate the hotel brochure says cabbies offer to their customers. Does \$38.75 sound like a flat rate? I have my suspicions. Good thing I hadn't picked up that set of bubblegum cards, I wouldn't have been able to afford the cab ride to the airport if I had!

I arrive at noon. My plane leaves at 5:00 pm. It's a struggle to stay awake. I buy four magazines and a couple of pocket books to help myself remain conscious. At times I get up and wander about the airport terminal. There's a bizarre display for Coca Cola, a huge coke bottle made of hundreds of rings of green glass layered atop each other and surrounded by 7 or 8 clear plastic TVs showing a timebinding selection of classic coke commercials. What this says about the modern world I'm not sure. Certainly nothing to do with aviation, which is the sort of monument I'd expect at an airport...

But then the Vancouver terminal has a magnificent sculpture by Haida artist Bill Reid, so I guess I don't know what I'm talking about.

Finally on board. Flying toward sunset, into a band of blue and orange, for hours. As night falls, I can turn my head to my left and see a crescent moon and the planet Saturn level with my eyes. A sensawonda experience.

No pretty girl to talk to. I snooze a lot.

Landing at Vancouver, coming in low over the Georgia Straight. At the last minute the aircraft wobbles violently as if buffeted by fierce winds, wing tips nearly scraping the runway. We level out mere seconds before actually touching down. The passengers break into spontaneous applause in their appreciation for the pilot's skill and the fact everybody is still alive. Fortunately it all happens so fast there was no time to feel fear. It certainly does add to the feeling of being happy to be home though!