



Notes from the
Underground
August 2006

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Notes from the Underground is a bi-monthly newsletter published by Several Unlimited. Dues are \$12.00 per year in the US, \$16.00 overseas, payable September 1. Submissions of articles, reviews, and artwork are welcome. All written submissions should be typed (or very legibly handwritten). Please don't send original artwork by regular mail. The deadline for submissions is the first of every month.

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Back issues of Notes from the Underground are available by written request to the Several Unlimited's P.O. Box. The cost is \$1.00 per issue, including postage.

In Hoc Signo Vincas,
Dee
Editor, *Notes from the Underground*

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Meeting Announcements

The August Meeting will be at Steve Dial’s house. The August Video Party will be hosted by Jamie Ritchey.

September Birthdays

Amy Denton	September 5
Erika Frensley	September 9

Editor’s Announcement

We are exchanging newsletters with the Prydonians of Prynceton as PDFs (via email). If any Several member would like a PDF instead of, or in addition to, their paper newsletter, please email me (Dee Beetem).

Several Elections will be held next month. Any clubmember is eligible to run for office. Feel free to Seek Power!

Message From the President

by Jamie Ritchey

The summer seems to be speeding by but I'll be glad when this heat wave diminishes. It's time for elections and all potential candidates should step up and let us know how they would handle their offices next year. We also need to discuss purchasing our tables for next year's Revelcon. The prices change soon. Have we decided to do it again next year or are we all too burned out to continue?

Several Officer Platforms

Jamie Ritchey (President): Hey, I've done almost nothing for several years now, and the club is still here.

Steve Dial (Secretary): I have been club secretary for eleven (11) years. To the best of my knowledge, no one has any complaints about my job performance. I am willing to continue doing this job.

Upcoming Events

ArmadilloCon 28, August 11-13, 2006

Doubletree Hotel North
6505 N. IH-35
Austin, TX 78752
Sponsored by FACT

For more information, call 512-477-6259

ArmadilloCon 27

P.O. Box 27277

Austin, TX 78755

Or send email: dillochair@armadillocon.org

GOH: Judy Czerneda; Toastmaster: Esther Friesner;

Special Guest: James Hogan

Downtown Aquarium

410 Bagby

Tickets 9.25 (rides separate)

We're also planning a trip to the Downtown Aquarium (home to white tigers as well as fish!) It's open until 10 (11 Fri-Sat) so week nights are possible if people would prefer that to a weekend excursion.

News and Reviews

The Orange Show

On Sunday the 30th a hardy band of Several (Tom, Margaret, Erika, Dee, Steve and his mom Charlcie) went to the Orange Show, a not-to-be-missed “naïve folk art” tourist magnet created by Houstonian Jeff McKissack. Not being tourists, most of us had never seen it. --Ed.

Review by Tom Wells

I'll admit, as a California boy, to being a FAN of Citrus -- Grapefruit Juice (& halves) were a staple while I was growing up & for many years thereafter, & keeping a pitcher of O.J. in the reefer is perhaps my sole contribution to a well-stocked kitchen. Considering Oranges as Artistic Inspiration, however, hadn't crossed my mind before.

Mr. McKissack seems, over the course of a diverse & interesting lifetime, to have received just such inspiration, to the enrichment of Houston's residents & visitors.

The fact that much of the museum consists of clever sayings written on walls enhances the appeal of the various little dioramas & statuary. The idea of linking America's steam-powered industrial development to the growth of our Citrus agriculture, & of both Oranges & the Iron Horse as bases for Energetic Vitality & Health, is endearingly inspirational. Since several of the installation's areas are suitable for presentations to small social gatherings, The Orange Show is not only a nice place to tour, but an asset to the local community. What a Fun idea!

Review by Steve Dial

I found the Orange Show boring. On some level, the collected objects could be considered works of art, but I was extremely under-impressed by them. I found it ironic that the Orange Show has two stages, but there were no performances on either one of them. Young children might enjoy running and climbing through the small buildings and stairs, but as an adult, I was not amused. The intense heat and sunlight had me looking for shade at every turn. Even in optimum weather, however, I still would have found the Orange Show boring. Frankly, I thought that Jack-in-the-Box was more interesting! I do not recommend the Orange Show to anyone over the age of twelve.

ApolloCon 2006, from the Art Show Director's Viewpoint

By Anita Haddock

Which was, pretty much, a viewing distance of ten inches – the distance between me and the computer screen! It's wonderful to work with people, both ConCom and volunteers, who created such a good reputation for the con that I had artists asking if they could participate! Since we're still a "baby" convention, this was a pleasant (and somewhat flustering) surprise.

Several of our artists are wellknown to conventiongoers (Alain Viesca, Theresa Mather), but approximately 2/3 of the ApolloCon attendees had never been to a Sci-Fi convention. I therefore had the opportunity to introduce new people to "new" artists, who went home very happy.

A new "rule" needs to be posted at the art show: If you want a piece of art, you must bid on it! Alain Viesca, the Artist Guest of Honor, would have taken none of his pieces home if we'd posted that rule. "Onyx Wyrn" went home with him, not because nobody wanted it, but because everyone was convinced that someone was sure to outbid them — so NO one bid on it! This left the ConCom with collectively dropped jaws, as that level of art show innocence hadn't even occurred to any of us!

At the Artist's Reception I discovered that a dragon could be made out of cotton candy. I sat across from Alain (pronounced A-Linn) and watched in awe as a perfect blue dragon came to life under his fingers. Unfortunately, cotton candy does not fare well in humidity, so it expired before he finished. I'm still hoping someone will publish photos of it, as there were several cameras in the room, but so far no luck.

This year I got to go to the Masquerade, so I was entertained by most of the costumes and competitors (for I would never have the courage to go onstage and pose, much less "act out" a character!), and was flat out stunned by the three ladies from the Houston Costume Group, who came as 101 Dalmations' Cruella DeVille, Alice in Wonderland's Queen of Hearts and Ursula the octopus from The Little Mermaid.

All three days blurred together, as my horizon didn't change much. The only panel I heard about was Alain Viesca's demo of digital graphic art. Two of my art show "flunkies" attended—the graphic artist said, "I understand a lot more than I did about digital art," while the non-computer-oriented textile artist told me, "I don't know what the hell he was talking about, it was so far over my head, but it was impressive!"

The art auction gathered quite a bit of money for its artists—the top bid piece, not surprisingly, being the limited edition print of the artwork for the Program Book. Alain’s name for it is “Moon Milk,” but even by Friday evening I was hearing people call it “the Milk Fairy,” in reference to his Liquor Fairy series.

Sunday was memorable mostly in that the three loads of stuff that went IN to the art show had to come back OUT of the art show — and be packed into my car! Ack!! My thanks to Pat van Houte, who managed to stuff everything into my car at the hotel , and to Ken Gurton, who dragged all of it up the stairs and into my apartment!

So You Wanna Be a Super-Hero?

by Erika Frensley

SciFi Channel, Thursday 8pm (rerun Sunday nights)

It sounds like an embarrassing show – take a bunch of comic fans, pretend they’re superheroes, and test them a la Survivor or American Idol. But it isn’t – this is one reality show with a lot of heart, fun, and truth (yes, even in ill-fitting spandex).

Stan Lee is the judge, jury, and executioner of the (originally) 11 superheroes (now cut down to 7). Each person, with a superhero persona, attempts to pass the tests that Stan devises. These challenges test the person’s courage, compassion, determination, honesty – all the qualities of a superhero. To date, challenges have been:

1. Inconspicuously changing clothes and running to the arch – will the heroes ignore the cries of the lost little girl?
2. Battle guard dogs to get to the back door of a little old lady’s house – will the heroes cry uncle too quickly?
3. And smaller challenges – why are the heroes in the show? And do they really like their new costumes?

The contestants are a varied lot – investor, bodyguard, disc jockey, mechanic, fireman, software engineer, student, single mother, artist – not the normal cross section that you find on American Idol (yet the type of folks that we see at conventions all the time). Yet they all are trying to be a superhero – and to survive Stan’s challenges.

The most interesting thing about this reality show is Stan Lee. The contestants are trying to live up to Stan’s vision of superheroes, and Stan’s not afraid to tell them when they failed. Stan is livid with one hero whose only attacks are deadly; as Stan keeps telling him,

“Superheroes don’t kill people, superheroes save people!” Heroes who fail their first challenge are upbraided by Stan, “The most important thing was not getting to the arch quickly, the most important thing was the little girl. AND YOU IGNORED HER!”

Yes, this reality show is scripted like a comic book, and apparently some contestants are actors (it’s filmed in LA – who’s not an actor in LA?) But it’s great fun, and for a change, the contestants aren’t the ones trying to knock each other off the show. Give it a try, and in the (somewhat) immortal words of Major Victory: “Be a winner, not a weiner!”

Websites of the Month

Links Between Ancient Greeks And Modern Science Fiction

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/06/050607010820.htm>

Source: University of Liverpool

New research into the Ancient Greeks shows their knowledge of travel inspired early forms of fantasy and science fiction writing.

Dr Karen Ni-Mheallaigh, at the University of Liverpool's School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, is exploring fantasy in ancient literature, examining theories of modern science fiction and how these can be applied to texts from the ancient world. She is looking at the 2nd century AD writer, Lucian of Samosata, who wrote *True Histories*, a travel narrative that includes an account of a trip to the moon and interstellar warfare.

Dr Ni-Mheallaigh explains: "Fantasy writing in the ancient world is relatively unexplored from a literary perspective. The Greeks had an anxiety about writing pure fiction, so writers of 'tall' tales--such as Ctesias, Antiphanes and Megathenes - wrote in the form of travel logs, or backed up their tales with pseudo-documentary evidence, such as 'rediscovered' texts or invented inscriptions.

"Lucian was the first to admit that everything he wrote was untrue and could never occur. But his writing-is calculated to convince the reader that his adventures might be true. He plays a very clever game with the reader's mind, and, like all science fiction and fantasy writing today, allows the reader to ponder, 'what if?'

Guide to Springfield, USA

<http://www.mapofspringfield.com/>

prepared by Jerry Lerma and Terry Hogan.



A monstrously detailed map of the Simpsons' hometown – it shows the location of the Simpsons' house (of course), and also the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant, the Texas Cheesecake Depository, Duff Stadium, the Museum of Barnyard Oddities, and much more!

The creators say: Mapping of Springfield began in the Spring of 2001 when we realized that no adequate map of Springfield existed either online or in print. Initially, content came from the City Profile at The Simpsons Archive, then expanded by numerous viewings of The Simpsons. The placement of most locations is arbitrary, many are placed according to where they appear in relationship to each other in episodes of The Simpsons. Our intent is to preserve the comic spirit of Springfield, document its unique identity, and have fun at the same time.

The Map of Springfield has been added to the Harvard Map Collection of the Harvard College Library.

Calendar and Maps

August 11, 2006	Several Unlimited Meeting Steve Dial 6235 Cheena 713 771-6297
August 11-13, 2006	ArmadilloCon Austin, Texas
August 25, 2006	Video Party Jamie Ritchey 4729 Kinglet 713 729-8639

Maps

