

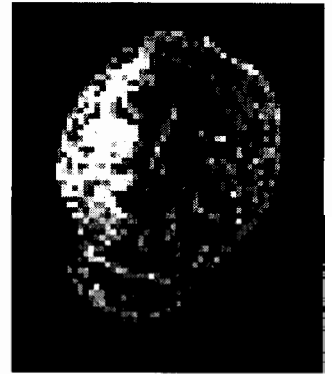
Travel & Tourism

I had such a good time writing about my travels in the last issue that I've decided to make Travel & Tourism a regular feature in **THE COBRA'S NOSE** until I forget, get tired of it, or just stop going places. In this edition, Guest Contributor Janet Herman will become faint in various health care facilities across the great U.S. of A., and Pat and I will become perplexed in a museum in Southern California. While on the surface, these adventures may seem to lack the zip, the *brio* of those recounted in last month's edition, they have their own considerable charms. Besides to be fair, for zip and *brio*, Canada is pretty hard to beat. In other Travel & Tourism news, Mom returned from her sojourn in China and Tibet undertaken in the midst of an international crisis safe and sound. Well done, Mom!

Museum of Mystery

...Or, What the Heck is Jurassic Tech?

If you want to get to Los Angeles from the Phoenix area, you get on the 10 West and about five hours later (longer if you drive like a girl) you're there. I've taken this trip several times since I moved to Arizona to visit my cousins Evelyn, John, Brett, and Danny, who all live in the area, and Pat was there most of last summer, and I love them and miss them and blah, blah, blah. But I'm not going to talk about them today, not when I can tell you about the museums. (cont. on page 5)



Discomposed, Digressed, & Diminutive. . . Janet Herman on Hospitalphobia



Does anyone out there have an aversion to hospitals as powerful as mine? I don't know why, but hospitals are a place where I cannot ever be. The first sign, which I didn't realize was the first sign when it happened, happened occurred when I was a child. But perhaps, I should start with a little background info since I'm a first time contributing columnist to **THE COBRA'S NOSE**.

Until recently I was a co-worker of our fearless Cobra leader's. But fortunately (for me), I managed to escape that brain-numbing environment and move on to bigger and better things--and if not bigger and better, at least colder. I've traded the glorious sunshine of AZ for the rain and snow of the Great Northeast (well, Pennsylvania). I'm the one whose house has been invaded by the thromble-footed spectre, or whatever he was called a couple of issues back (*Throbblefoot Spectre*--ooh, you are *so* haunted --ed). I'm pretty much the antithesis of our editor-in-chief. I come from a small family, I grew up in a small town, I went to a small high school, then studied engineering at a small college. Come to think of it, I'm pretty small myself if you go by McGovern standards (watch it, -ed). Actually, I prefer to think of myself as a rather tall munchkin. If I had been living in Oz, that witch would have been gone long before the house fell on her. Anyway, I digress.

I'm not sure how young I was when the first sign happened, but pretty young. Let's say seven. I had to have a shot of some sort and was so traumatized by the word "shot", that tears immediately flooded not just my face but the entire exam room. I had to be held down by my mother *and* my father (I think I could have escaped had there been only one parent around) while the nurse came at with the needle which I swear was twelve inches long. The nurse's technique for administering this shot can be compared to the scene in *Pulp Fiction* where John Travolta has to give OD'd Uma Thurman-Hawke an adrenaline shot straight in the heart, right through the breast bone. That nurse clutched the needle in both hands, which were raised above her head, (Cont. on page 4).

Before You Play Your Quarter in the Power Game

Here at mighty IKON Product Development and Fulfillment, the members of our sales force are assigned particular regions in this country and Canada. I can't be sure, but I'm guessing this concept isn't new to any of you. Even if it was I'll bet you wouldn't have too much difficulty sussing it out. Now, I know I'm addressing a superior demographic here, but it's not like we communicate exclusively in Esperanto or mathematical formulae or anything like that; which is to say, if we get it, others should as well. And if they don't, we get to laugh at them.

So, this guy calls IKON and asks about a product. I give him the schpiel about how our sales force is divided by region so may I ask where he's calling from? There's this pause, and it goes on for a while. Then the caller finally says, "North America."

North America? Well, okay. IKON is passing itself off as this big global deal lately, so I suppose "North America" is just barely not the stupidest thing I've heard come out of a

caller's mouth lately. Besides, "Have you changed your phone number?" is awfully hard to beat. So I probe a little further.

"Which part of North America, please?" I say, and am met with an even longer pause. Finally, "The Northeast."

This is enough information to get him to salesperson Matt, but now he's got my goat. "Northeast" indeed. He's behaving like one of those callers to "Loveline" (which I must emphasize I listen to for purely scientific reasons) who can't remember their aliases. Those conversations are great. They usually go something like this:

Dr. Drew, "Tom?"

Silence.

Adam Corolla, "Tom?"

Silence.

Dr. Drew, "Person calling himself 'Tom'?"

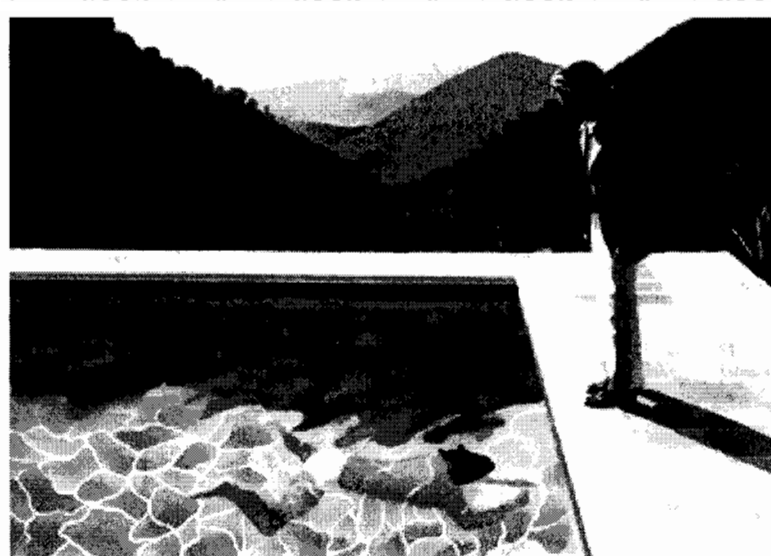
Caller, "Yeah!"

These dialogues are followed by five or six minutes of Adam Corolla ranting about how this is radio for crying out loud if you're going to make stuff up why don't you make just yourself a cheat sheet or write your pretend name on your hand or something I swear to God we have the stupidest callers in the *world*. This kills me, every single time.

So anyway, I painstakingly drag tiny bits of information out of my caller, and I'm getting an image of him looking like Elisha Cook, Jr. all shifty eyed under bright lights in a dark room...and I'm liking it, because if he is Elisha Cook, Jr., then I get to be Humphrey Bogart or somebody equally cool. Oh, I know—Geena Davis in *The Long Kiss Goodnight*. But the thing is, even though the stakes were miniscule—give me your name and state of residence (which was Maine, which explains a lot) or I won't let you talk to Matt—Elisha, by being such a paranoid weirdo, granted me psychic power (in the Adlerian sense) over him. This is the most ridiculous, pitiful sort of power to have, or to give. I know because I engage in these sorts of exchanges all the time, usually in the role of the paranoid weirdo. Or worse, as I realized when Mr Enigma told me that I'm so passive that people actually start to think of me as furniture. Though I wish that this was just a case of Mr Enigma being a putz, and it was partially that, I recognized the truth in what he said.

But I believe that a variation of Newton's Third Law works in human relationships as well as physics. If you exert pressure on a chair, it will push back and hold you up. If you exert pressure on a receptionist, she will ask you a bunch of questions and otherwise contrive to hold you up. And you should consider yourself lucky if that's all she does.

Just imagine what happens when you frustrate and annoy the peons who handle your food, and then try to laugh.



Serving Your Insult Needs

I have a relatively new co-worker who is an extraordinarily tall ectomorph, which is a Greek word which means "freak who doesn't gain weight no matter what or how much he eats" (which reminds me, welcome back from Greece Jamie Adams! and don't bother checking my definition with him because I'm absolutely sure it's accurate). He claims to have had a fascinating, multi-faceted career history. So fascinating and multi-faceted that sometimes I prefer to think he is a sociopathic liar rather than to compare what he has accomplished to what I have in approximately the same amount of time. Be that as it may, one of his achievements is a compilation of appellations for shiftless types, which was begun when he was in the Army and has been continued through to the present. He has assured me that any of these may be used without fear of copyright reprisals:

The High Priest of Do Least
The Proud Father of Don't Bother
The Warlock of Dry Dock
The Monarch of in the Dark

The King Lear of the Rear
The Guru of Don't Do
The Duke of Do Nothing
The Dictator of Do Later

(Cont. from 2) then *slammed* it into my leg with all she had. I couldn't walk for three days. That should have alerted me that something was amiss between the medical community and me, but here's the experience that really brought it home.

When I was sixteen my mother had a biopsy (nothing serious thank God, Buddha, Allah, and whoever else is up there—it turned out to be benign), and I was supposed to drive her home afterwards. Well, after hours of waiting, a nurse told me Mom was in recovery, and that I should go talk to her and help her wake up. Have any of you ever been in the recovery room of an outpatient center? It's a big room with lots of beds filled with lots of people who have just been cut open, pricked, prodded, poked, and every other invasive thing you can imagine. Some of them have tubes coming out a certain places, some of them have tubes going into certain places, and if the nurses ever got them mixed up I think there could be trouble. Everyone moans and groans. I think the nurses should pass out Demerol to all who enter this area whether they are patients or not. But I digress.

I went to my mother who was barely awake. I think she recognized me but maybe not. I told her she looked good (she didn't really, but who does after surgery?). Then I felt it—that sickening sense of fading consciousness. I tell Mom I don't feel so good. She tells me to sit down. I tell her I still don't feel so good. She tells me to put my head between my knees. I start to lower my head when my unconscious must have decided that I really would prefer to lie face down on the floor. I say it was my unconscious because I certainly don't *consciously* remember deciding to lie on the floor. In almost all cases, I prefer a chair or bed.

I can't imagine how my poor mother must have felt just then. I was supposed to be her comfort, her rock, her transportation home after surgery. Instead, I was sprawled on the floor. That kind of thing will kill you in Daughter of the Year competition. In fact, I think the moment I hit the floor Mom decided my brother was her favorite. Again I digress.

My mother must have buzzed for the nurse, because I suddenly saw white shoed feet under the bed. She said, "Mrs. Herman, what's the matter? Is everything all right?"

"It's not me, it's my daughter," was my mother's sleepy response.

"Well, where is she?"

"On the floor."

I still do not understand why I could see the nurse's feet and understand the conversation, but couldn't get up.

Anyway, the nurse got me into a bed and gave me cookies and juice, which made me wonder if they didn't steal some of my blood when I wasn't looking. I did have a mysterious needle looking mark on my arm. The nurse asked if there was anyone else who could drive us home. I told her I would be fine if she would just let us leave. I had to get out of the building.

Needless to say, she wouldn't let us go for quite awhile after that little incident, so I got to see other things that almost made me pass out again. Like a half naked old guy who peed, excuse me, urinated on the floor. There are others I don't want to get into as I'm feeling a little faint just thinking about them. We finally got permission to leave, and I'm happy to report we made it home with no problem.

If you think this was an isolated incident, you are wrong. A few short weeks later my brother, the aforementioned favorite, had an emergency appendectomy. He was at college a few hours away and my mother wanted to visit him (told you she liked him better). Always looking for a reason to skip school I gallantly volunteered to go with her. I may have even fooled her into thinking that I was concerned, but if it had been a weekend, forget it! Anyway, virtually the same thing happened. I managed to wish my brother the obligatory "Get Well Soon" then bolted for the parking lot, yelling over my shoulder that I'd wait in the car.

I'm not done yet.

I used to donate blood in college. The fraternities would compete to see which house could get the most people to donate blood in their name. The winner was usually rewarded with several kegs, paid for by the losers, which they happily shared with all the females on campus (my college had a 5 to 1 guy/girl ratio) (and a 500 to 1 nerd/non-nerd ratio, -ed). These blood drives usually took place in one of the fraternity houses



Cookin' with Cobra

For a tasty and refreshing summer treat, take yourself and your refillable 44oz. cup to the nearest Circle K, put about two inches of Coke Slushy in the bottom of said cup, followed by about two inches of Minute Maid Wild Cherry Slushy, then fill to the top with Dr Pepper. Mmmm!

houses or at the student union. Neither environ is hospital like, and I never had a problem.

Recently, I decided to do my duty once again. During lunch, a couple of co-workers and I went to a blood donation center which looks just like a hospital. After my usual argument with the attendants over whether I weigh enough to donate (told you I was small), I filled that pint bag in record time. I was waiting for my sluggish blooded co-workers to finish, when that familiar feeling overcame me. The phlebotomist sprinted to my side, pushed my recliner back, told me not to close my eyes, and talk. It's not easy to small talk when you are focusing on remaining conscience. I didn't know what to say. I'm sure she thought she was being helpful when she suggested that I talk about my kids. I told her I didn't have any. I'll bet she still thought she was still being helpful when she suggested that I talk about my husband. I told her I didn't have one of those either. Now I had to divert some of my staying awake energy to not getting depressed about the announcement to the whole donation center that I'm childless and husbandfree. The not getting depressed part did fine, but the other let me down—I passed out. But only for a little while, and at least I donated. The girl in the recliner next to mine cried and whimped out before they even gave her the needle. Anyway, I digress

So you see I cannot endure hospital-like surroundings. Which rules out children in my future, because you kind of need to go to the hospital for that and I just can't do it. You may be thinking that midwives help thousands of women every year have babies at home. Well here's my answer to that: a midwife cannot administer an epidural. What's the point of having a baby if you don't get an epidural? I am curious though, does anyone else have hospitalphobia? Does anyone know the cause? The cure? *Ɔ ɹɹ ɹɹ ɹɹ ɹ*



(Cont. from 2) Here's the lowdown:

- The Getty—plan to spend the day, and be on the lookout for a well endowed Roman property marker (I won't go into the specifics here, but if you don't point and giggle at it I don't want to know you). The guards, who are all the same height and pear shape and vary only in hue, are really snappish. "Six inch pointing distance," they say.
- The Museum of Tolerance—a bummer, but it's good for you so go anyway.
- The Huntington Library—sort of a miniature Getty. You can elude the guards for twenty to thirty minutes at closing time if you walk fast and don't flinch when they yell at you.
- The Los Angeles County Museum (LACMA to its friends)—I've only been to see the Van Gogh exhibit. You can find more eloquent descriptions of his work elsewhere, but I'll testify that you'd have to see the paintings in person to fully appreciate the intelligence with which they are painted. If you do one day have the honor of seeing them, I hope you will not have had to stand for extended periods of time in three separate holding pens before being admitted into the exhibition hall with a herd of philistines. Their guards are also a pain in the neck.
- The Museum of Jurassic Technology— After close to a year, I'm still mulling this one over.

I first heard about the MJT when I was in town to see Pat last July 4th weekend. He had read about it in one of the local periodicals and had heard David Bowie talk about it on TV. No other endorsement was needed for Pat, so Saturday afternoon we headed out to museum row and discovered the Museum of Jurassic Technology isn't even close to museum row, but in Little Pakistan. It isn't museumsque building either, but one of those sad houses that lost its yard to the widened road years ago, and which like every other house in Southern California could use a fresh coat of paint. Casually driving past you wouldn't notice it at all. Casually walking past—well, whom am I trying to kid? Nobody reading this is going to casually walk past, though others seem to time to time as we found out later. In any case, you will have to want to find it before you will, and even then it won't be easy.

We did want to see what was behind that ordinary brown door, so we pushed through it into a dark room. Cheap bookshelves with almost nothing on them demarked a sort of tiny lobby area, which was dimly illuminated by a lamp on a desk that sat just to the left of the door. Behind the desk sat a nondescript guy in a tee shirt who took our admission donation and claimed not to know anything about David Bowie's visit. Beyond him we were beckoned by a pompous male voice that said "ziggurats". The voice was narrating a slide show that did have a picture of a ziggurat in it, also pyramids and a Masonic temple or two. The theme seemed to be the history of the museum in general, with the Museum of Jurassic Technology serving as either its apogee or punch line, depending on how you look at it I guess. The show ended with a fanfare so grotesquely at odds with what we could see of the tenebrous interior it trumpeted we felt giddy, as if looking straight down from the top of a skyscraper, and we rushed inside.

Typically, I like to move through museums at a fairly high rate of speed so I can see everything at least once and still have time to revisit my favorite spots a few times if I like. This technique works better in art museums than science types because in the latter you usually have to stop and read at least several sentences and up to a few paragraphs before you understand why a particular object has been chosen for display. In the Museum of Jurassic Technology, you can do all that reading and you will have no idea. For instance, in a room devoted to Folklore is a glass box with a man's shoe in it tipped up on a sort of easel. Its laces are undone. A card in the box explains that in some Eurasian cultures a groom's shoelaces are left undone so his virility (so to speak) will not be bound (so to speak) on his wedding night (so to...no, wait, that's right). Now while I admit that this could be the highlight of a whole chapter in an Anthropology text, it would hardly rate as the lamest ever entry in a volume of *Ripley's Believe it or Not*, and certainly wouldn't seem to merit its own glass box and neatly typed paragraph. And believe me, this was one of the more coherent entries. But before you get to thinking MJT's purpose is to make the Guinness Book of World Records in Niagara Falls look like the Smithsonian in comparison, consider some of the shoe's neighbors.

- A diorama which depicted some guy's theory of time travel through the manipulation of certain natural harmonics, which was proceeding well enough in its own cockamamie way until the last couple of steps—the penultimate of which was obscured by the darkness of a burned out light bulb (a common problem in the MJT), and the last of which was represented by a partially lit chamber with a plastic egg sitting on a white column, nestled in a bit of sand.
- A box from which emanates the sound of barking. When you look through a peephole on the side of the box, you see a tiny desert landscape with a coyote's head mounted on the right wall, and black and white film footage of a man tied to a straight backed chair, barking, projected against the "sky" on your left.
- The history of trailer parks told with little tableaux and verses of scripture. (Cont. on page 6)

- Three of four of those microsculptures that you have to look through a magnifying glass to see—like Snow White in the eye of a needle—plus a shrine to their creator. This part was actually pretty cool.
- A multimedia presentation that detailed the discovery and alleged capture of a species of South American bat which emits vibrations not for echolocation, but to temporarily disrupt the solidity of objects in its path so it can fly right through them.
- And much, much more.

The museum population peaked at about ten, all with the same confounded look on their faces, all speaking in the same ardent whispers. The supercilious narration about the ziggurats was endlessly repeated, and was sometimes joined by the warbly voice of a female singer from early in the century who had an entire room devoted to her legacy, which made the ambiance all the more uncanny. Pat and I were nonplused by what we had just seen and heard and went to the admission desk to get some satisfaction. The non-descript guy had been supplanted by an energetic young woman with blue hair who hovered over a young blond intern who wore glasses and a baffled expression, and who was later revealed to be Swedish. She was teaching him how to use the cash register.

"If you have any questions, just ask me," she told him. "And if you don't have an answer to a question, just say you don't know."

"We have questions," we said.

"Did that guy really think he could time travel or was just some sort of a lark?" (me)

"Why do you have a box with a coyote's head and guy who barks in it?" (Pat)

"Are we supposed to believe that bat story?" (me)

"You know, I don't know!" she said merrily, then turned to her intern and pounced on this learning opportunity. "You see? Just tell them you don't know!"

The front door opened and we could see the non-descript man trying to persuade a dubious vagrant to come in and have a look around.

"Jurassic?" slurred the vagrant. "That's like dinosaurs, right?"

"Yes!" said the non-descript man.

"...but Technology is like modern, right?"

"Yes!" said the non-descript man.

We looked again at the blue haired woman, and Pat said,

"Who made that barking box? Why was it made?"

"It is what it is," she replied.

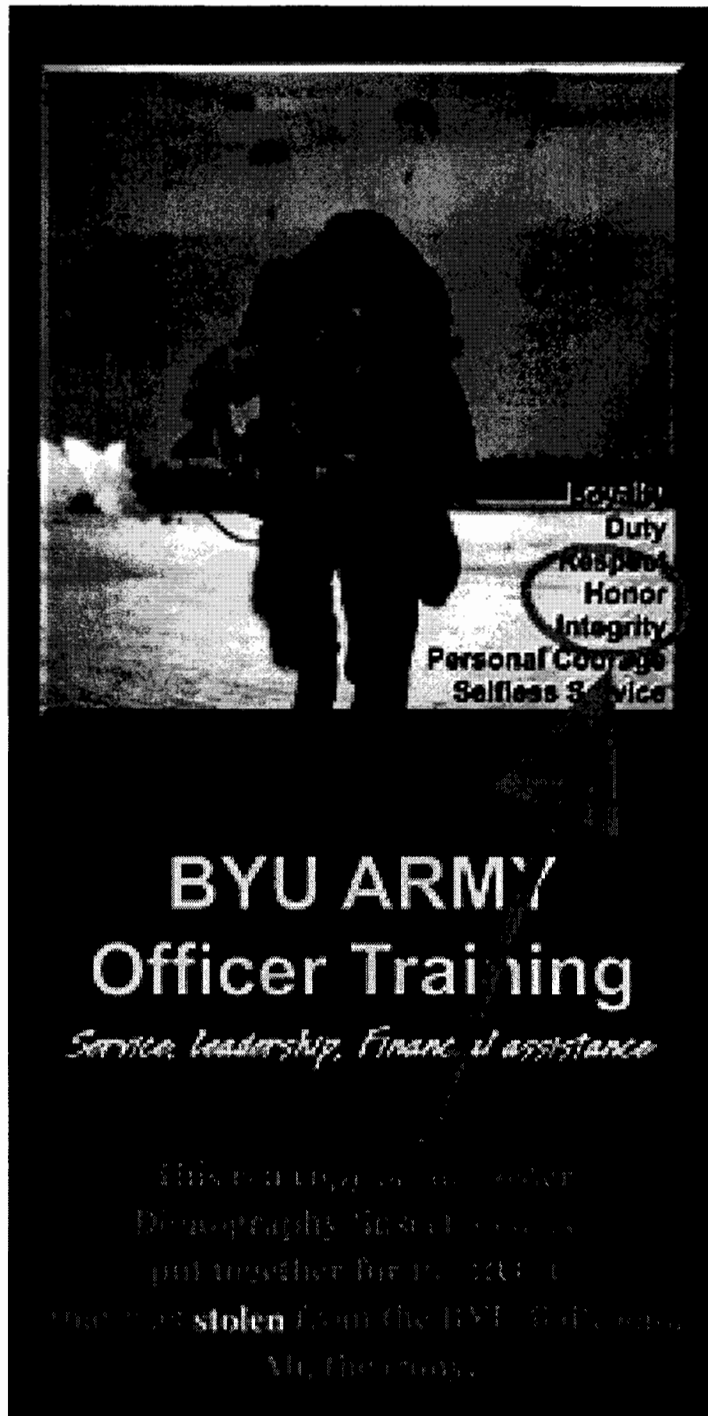
"Were you here when David Bowie came?" said Pat.

"I heard about that just today. Somebody in back was talking about it."

Well, that cleared things up immeasurably. We bought little pins that had the museum logo on them, so the Swedish intern at least got something practical out of the exchange, and returned to the eerily normal looking museum exterior.

For the past eleven months, the Museum of Jurassic Technology has been my personal yardstick for the peculiar; but what *is* it? A con? A grand delusion? Performance art effortlessly, ineffably strange?

It is what it is. བཤམ་པའི་མཛུ་བ་



The culprits are suspected to have been growing beards without the necessary paperwork, and to have been sock free when they committed the offence. If you have any knowledge of their whereabouts, please give them my name and address because I'd like to recruit them for the editorial board of **THE COBRAS NOSE**. —ed.

Congratulations, you've reached the end of Volume 8! Please feel free to comment on it or any other thing by calling me at (480) 966 2705, e-mailing me at either shmcgovern@ikon.com or thecobrasnose@yahoo.com, or writing to me at Cobra Headquarters/ 2128 E 10th St #3/ Tempe, AZ 85281.

Next month, you can look forward to reading about My Luncheon With Eddie, and A Very Adams Memorial Day.

I officially dare Lee Follett to give Mikhail Baryshnikov a noogie and say, "I have a *real* degree from the University of Toronto." Please join with me in celebrating the safe return of Sue and William Zierle from Hawaii. Aloha.