

WORLDCON DIARY HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION

Note: With the release of [Breaking Silence](#), Janis started a tradition of thanking authors, film people, and other songwriters whose work had influenced her current CD. Because of this, she had the opportunity to meet some of her heroes, chief among them Orson Scott Card and Anne McCaffrey. When a new album comes out, she sends a copy to each person on her thankyou list, along with a note expressing her gratitude. That's how she already "knew" Mike Resnick and Sharon Lee.

January 12, 2000 Dublin Visited with [Anne McCaffrey](#) and her daughter Gigi today; they said I should go to something called *Worldcon*. When I asked what that was, Anne stared at me in dismay, then said "You *must* go, m'dear!"



June 2000 [Mike Resnick](#) is a very persistent fellow. He really wants to co-write a story with me. I can barely find time to answer my email, much less take that on with someone of his stature! He threatens to keep coming back to it until I say "Yes".

November 2000 Pulled out some of my old story efforts and dusted them off, but got too discouraged to finish reading them. Man, when I write garbage, I really write garbage.

January, 2001 Dublin Spent a lovely day with Anne, bookshopping, and she asked again if I'm going to Worldcon. Says I'll have the time of my life, that anyone who reads as much science fiction as I do should go.

February 1, 2001 Mike insists I go to Worldcon. Says once I've been I'll keep going back for more. But taking off an entire week to do something that has zip to do with work? I don't know. What if it's just a bunch of drunken revellers, like a record convention? What if I act like a complete idiot around Mike, who I haven't even met? What if I trip when we meet, like I did on my way to collect my Grammy?



February 10 Mike is unrelenting, enticing me with promises that he'll try to get me into the Asimov's breakfast with [Gardner Dozois](#) and [Susan Casper](#) and a host of my favorite writers. He says no one will mind if I behave like an idiot.

February 13 Mike says a lot of the writers will be familiar with my work. Yeah, right.

February 17 Anne promises I will not look like a fool. And Pat says that even if I do, "none of those nerd science fiction people will notice." Connie Willis will be there... maybe I could fall at her feet?

February 18 Mike swears I won't have to pay for a single meal. He doesn't know how much I can eat.

February 19 Then again, I could always eat before we go to dinner, so I don't disgrace myself by ordering too much.



February 24 Pat is urging me to go to the Con, she says I deserve something just for myself. I don't know; that's prime touring time. Besides, who knows what I'd do if I got to meet [Connie Willis](#)? Probably humiliate myself for all eternity.

February 27 Resnick got so annoying about the story that I finally said "Okay, fine, here's an opening line!" and wrote "I lost all interest in sex after I died." Son of a gun, he liked it.

March 3 [Sharon Lee](#) says she & [Steve Miller](#) will both be at Worldcon, so I would sort of know three people. Four, if I include [Nancy Kress](#). Oh, but all these people I've corresponded with through email probably think I'm tall and blonde and thin...

March 4 Pat keeps pointing out that if I play the Philly Folk Festival, I could just stay in town for "the pocket-protector convention". She's convinced the halls will be full of Klingons and Trekkies, and has forced me to learn how to work my camera.

March 6 Just finished *Sarah Canary* by Karen Joy Fowler. Was telling Mike how much I liked it, so he had to mention that she'll be at Worldcon. Along with everyone else in the universe, apparently. I'm still dithering.

March 8 On the one hand, it's a lot of money, it's prime touring time, I hate crowds, I haven't lost any weight, I have no clothes for the Hugo Awards ceremony, and why stay away from home one more week than I have to this year?

March 9 On the other hand, the last time I did something for myself that didn't involve business was 1989.

March 10 I'm signed up for Worldcon, the dates are on hold.

April 5 I am stupidly excited, going through my bookshelves with a vengeance because a lot of my favorite writers are going to be there. It's probably a little early to start packing - the damn thing doesn't start until August 29. I'll just make piles of books by [Joe Haldeman](#) & [Michael Swanwick](#) & [Stephen Baxter](#) and... wait a minute! when did I acquire all these books?!

April 6 And how on earth am I going to carry my them for autographing, with 3 bad discs in my back? This is getting very complicated.



April 15 Australia Found some great first editions in a used bookstore; *Children of Wonder* by [William Tenn](#), plus two by [Pat Cadigan](#). In addition to the usual hunt for [Orson Scott Card's](#) stuff, though older editions of his are way out of my price range now. Wish Scott was going to the convention; at least I'd *know* someone.

April 20 I wonder if any of these writers have a clue how much they've influenced me? I think it started with [Madeleine L'Engle's](#) *A Wrinkle In Time*, and [Zenna Henderson's](#) *People* stories when I was around nine. My parents and science fiction formed my moral stance.



April 28 Home for eight days, which probably leaves me just enough time to pack my books and ship them to Tina & Nancy, who'll bring them to the festival. Pat's laughing at the "shit-eating grin" I break out in every time I think about Worldcon. In fact, she suggests I cancel everything between now and the convention, because I'm useless for anything else. What's she talking about? It's only ten weeks away! [Lois McMaster Bujold](#) is going to be there; I've been a fan of her Miles Vorkosigan series since Anne introduced me to it.

May 13 I get more nervous as the weeks roll by. I'm working hard on my [story](#) with Mike, though last night I made the mistake of having a drink before I wrote my next part. Today he told me I'd thrown in everything but the kitchen sink, which would be fine for a cookbook but didn't really work in a story about some guy trying to get his private parts back from the devil.



May 20 Resnick says we're having dinner with [Charles Sheffield](#) and also [Barry Malzberg](#). Doesn't he understand that I can't possibly meet these people in the flesh? I've been reading Malzberg since I was ten; no matter how many emails we've exchanged, dinner will be nerve-wracking.

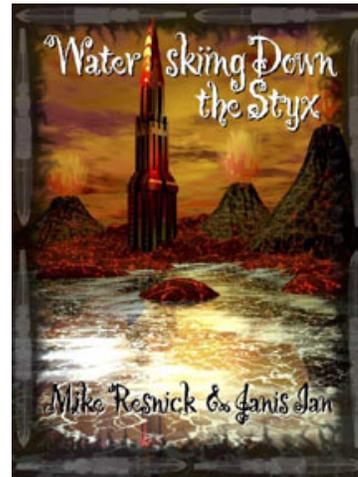
May 25 I wish [Nalo Hopkinson](#) were going to be there, her emails are so interesting and she seems so down-to-earth. Then again, as Pat points out, "anyone can be anything on line - just like your scifi books." Maybe she's actually six foot thirteen and weird.

June 7, 2001 Nalo *will* be at the Con, she's been nominated for a Hugo! Mike is nominated for 3. Hanging out with the swells here, me.

July 3 I keep checking the Worldcon site, hoping they publish the final line-up soon. How am I supposed to know what to go to?

July 10 Our story is to be published, on [fictionwise.com](#). How cool!! Mike wanted to know if I'd heard of the site; he hasn't seen my credit card bills from them these past years. Between them & [scifi.com](#), I've stopped worrying about running out of reading material on the road.

July 31 We're leaving on tour for a month. Books are shipped, I've called the hotel to confirm four times, and I think I can get away with stage clothes for the Hugos. Scott Card is going to be there for a day, so we're promised to try and link up for a hug. He's the only person I've met in the flesh, & a good friend. If they're all like Scott, I'll be okay. Argh.



August 3 I'm worried about shipping my Connie Willis books. What if they get lost? What if I get lost? I didn't want to go to college because I was sure I'd never be able to find all those classrooms....

August 5 They promise the final lineup will be online in a few weeks. [Esther Friesner](#) is the ceremony host. Mike is laughing at my excitement about meeting [Bob Silverberg](#). How can I meet Silverberg? the man's a legend.

August 15 I just need to calm down. I'm sure these are normal people, at least on first sight. They probably won't be rude, or laugh at me. At least, not in front of me.

August 22 The story is up on Fictionwise, and it even has cover art! I emailed Mike to say "You didn't tell me we'd have a cover!" He thinks I'm very funny. I meet him and Carol in six days.

August 23 It occurs to me that if I fell mysteriously ill, I could just go home instead. Probably no one would notice.

August 25 Played the Philly Folk Festival and had a big time; I almost forgot about Worldcon for a whole hour.

August 26 Master class this afternoon, then nothing to do but freak out for a few days. I wish I knew someone who was going to Worldcon some way other than email....But our story is #1!

August 27 Oh wow, lucky me! I never get to have breakfast the day after the Folk Fest, since

we're always catching an early flight. But today I had the whole day off, with nothing on my plate but checking into the Marriott. So there I am at breakfast in a dining room full of folkies, reading a book by [James Patrick Kelly](#), when I think I hear the word Worldcon coming from the next booth. I listen closer and sure enough, they say Con again. So I practically lunge over the divider and ask if they're going. Eek, they are! I subtly invite myself into their laps, and discover two staunch folkies named Dave Axler and Parris McBride. Both going to the Con. So I bombard them with questions - what are the writers like, is everybody nice, do a lot of them like music, how should I behave, do they know any famous writers personally? Parris starts laughing; it turns out she lives with [George R R Martin](#)!! They promised to rescue me if I get into trouble. I feel much better now.

August 28 Woke up nervous because Mike arrives today. Unpacked my books, arranged them neatly on top of the TV stand. Just in case I need one suddenly. Later Okay, I met Mike and he doesn't seem dangerous. In fact, he seems really nice. Cute, in a Hawaiian shirt sort of way. We're having dinner at Fez with some of their old friends. Hope I don't drop my bowl in my lap. Then again, it being Moroccan, it probably won't be noticed.

August 29 Breakfast with Mike & Carol & their friend Mary Martin, an 82-year-old retired plastic surgeon who's been to a zillion Cons. Afterwards, we snuck into what Mike calls the Huckster's Room, where they sell stuff and sign autographs. Huge! Mike is being so sweet; I'm just following him around like a duckling. I expected the hallways to be filled with giant lobsters and monsters from Planet X, but so far everyone looks like regular people. Maybe no one expects "real" writers to look the part, unlike what they expect from songwriters. [Richie Havens](#) looks completely like Richie Havens; one glance and you know he's a musician. After dinner we congregated in lobby bar, right in the center of the whole place. I got to meet Bob Silverberg and his wife, writer [Karen Haber](#). Now, Silverberg looks the part! Erudite, world-weary... just like I imagined. And [Gardner Dozois](#) & [Susan Casper](#) were nice, too, not at all intimidating. Mike is making everyone promise to look out for "famous skiffy writers" I can meet. I feel like a complete fool, but I'm having such a big time.

August 30 Everyone is having a big time springing other writers on me. ("Oh, Janis, say hello to [Rob Sawyer](#)...") They think it's funny to see me gaping like an idiot. Mike keeps telling them "I" have the number one story on Fictionwise this week, neglecting to mention that he wrote half and came up with the title. It's worrisome; I'd be horribly embarrassed if any of these writers thought I was actually going to try & be a real author. I take my own work very seriously, & I'm sure they do, too. Underneath the nerdy exteriors.

I had a funny moment when I stood in line waiting to get [Greg Bear's](#) autograph. His wife saw my name tag, tapped his shoulder and said "Honey, it's Janis Ian." He continued writing, and she said again "It's Janis Ian, honey." Then he looked at me, and she said "You know. The real one." He was actually excited to meet me! I got my copy of Blood Music signed, and we took pictures. I don't think I acted like too much of a jerk.



Of course, Mike pointed out Connie Willis to me and I nearly fainted. She looks just like a Connie Willis should look. He asked if I wanted to be introduced but I muttered something about having an urgent appointment with a cigarette and fled. What the heck am I supposed to say, meeting someone who influenced me that much?

I ran into Parris and George (can you believe I'm calling these people by their first names?!) - he looks like a giant teddy bear. No teddy bear about his work, though! Then to Rangoon with Barry & Joyce Malzberg, Nick DiChario, Robyn Herrington, [Gregory Benford](#) & a bunch of others. It's so funny to meet these people and hear them referred to as "Bob" or "Greg". When Mike introduced me to Marty Greenberg, who's edited about a billion anthologies I've read, I couldn't figure out who he was until I said "Oh! Martin H Greenberg, the editor!" I keep seeing their bylines instead of hearing their names.

Then we went up to the CFG suite, which is an oasis of calm Mike & other Cincinnattians set up each year. Debbie Oakes, the "door dragon", was very welcoming even though I didn't know anyone but Mike & Carol. People were playing cards, watching TV. Afterward Gordie Meyers had Mike's listserv party in his suite, where I got to meet John Teehan who runs the list. Both were nice & peaceful after all the hubbub.

I invited [Susan Shwartz](#) & [Jo Sherman](#) back to my room for a drink, & we checked out each others' websites. They were so funny; one of them looked at all the books I had stacked up & said "You really *are* a fan!" I wonder if some of these writers think I'm just slumming or something. They don't know I live & breath this stuff. How else would I come up with ideas like *Acousticville*, or *On the Other Side*?

On the way back, someone grabbed me and said "Janis. Meet Lois Bujold." I stood there like

an idiot with my mouth hanging open as the poor woman tried to shake my hand, then managed to say "Wow... Miles' mom... wow..." and fled to my room.

August 31 Went to a wonderful panel about Jane Austen's influence. Afterward I got unnerved by the amount of people crowding around Connie Willis, so I left my copy of *Doomsday Book* in my bag without getting it signed. I wonder if this is what other songwriters mean when they say I've influenced them? Do people get in this kind of panic when they meet me?! ...Nah.

Did a PBS interview by Donna Drapeau with Mike. Odd to do one with no makeup on. Must be fun to be a regular writer, no stage clothes, no equipment, no eight months travel a year. On the other hand, I looked around at a roomful of writers at one point and thought "Gee. I'm the hippest-dressed person in the room." Hah! first time in my life I've been hip!

I'd promised to go to the Warner's dinner with Nalo, who was worried she wouldn't know anyone there. Met [Ellen Klages](#) and a bunch of others. Betsy Mitchell, editor-in-chief of **Warner Aspect**, was the hostess; there was the *de rigueur* never-ending belly dancer, and great food. Her son Shawn Gardner got positively bored after a while, so I had a good time showing him how to make "dead chickens" out of a cloth napkin. By the time we'd finished, he was making turkeys and rocs. This business of meeting people you admire is getting very exhausting. I called Pat, half-asleep, to complain that she hadn't warned me. All she wanted to know is if I'd gotten any pictures with giant lobsters or robots yet.

Later Escaped to the tranquility of the CFG suite, but it was crashed by 3 belly dancers. Who went on for a really long time. Loudly. I thought it was hysterical; they draped Mike in veils & shimmied around him, while he tried to explain the ins & outs of book promotion to them.

September 1 Saw a giant lobster walking through the lobby & grabbed a photo for Pat. No robots yet. I went to the [Asimov's](#) breakfast - everyone was really nice! I'd already met Sheila Williams because her daughter was running around dressed as Ozma, so I took a photo. Got to meet [Bob Eggleton](#), and [Scott Edelman](#), [Steve Baxter](#), a bunch of others. It was fun being at someone else's awards party, not having to worry about whether I was getting one or had even been nominated. Susan Casper was sweet, telling me very seriously "Look, if you're gonna write, just don't start out thinking 'I'm gonna write as well as Connie Willis'. You won't, so forget it and just write." She reminds me of [Ellie Greenwich](#).



I can't get over how open all the authors are. They feel like folksingers.

Stood in the Asimov's line for a while waiting to get an autograph from Connie Willis, with Gardner motioning me to jump the line, but it got late and I had to go meet Scott. I'm a little relieved, actually; I don't know what I'd say to her. *All My Darling Daughters* changed the whole way I look at a song.

Scott & I actually stole 2 hours alone for lunch. What a relief. I've been feeling completely overwhelmed; it was great to sit down with someone I *know*. I asked him did he think Willis would sign my book, and he thought I was nuts for worrying about it. (Although he phrased it much more politely.)

Mike's set up a meeting with Marty Greenberg & DAW books about a pretty exciting project. We'll see what pans out, but if it does, I'm going to have a very big time. Then I went to pick up my books from where Stephe Pagel had been holding them all, at the [Meisha Merlin](#) table. Unfortunately, the box was heavier than I thought it would be. A wonderful man named Kurt Siegel saw me struggling, remembered hearing that I had back problems, and insisted on carrying them all the way to my room!

The writers seem to look forward to this all year 'round, seeing old friends, making new ones. It feels *just* like a festival - only no rain, no mud, and plenty of good food! Mike got me into the **Bantam** dinner tonight, courtesy of Anne Lesley Groell, and it was the highlight of the Con so far. There I was, across from Mike & Carol, sitting with Charles Sheffield, [Nancy Kress](#), Roger McBride Allen... wow! They all knew it was my first Worldcon, so they told hilarious behind-the-scenes stories about Harlan Ellison. I laughed and laughed. Afterward I just hung around the lobby. It's amazing how many of these writers know *my* work. Spent some time with [Greg Frost](#) & [Ellen Datlow](#), whose anthologies have been a major part of my reading. There's a ton of writers I haven't met yet; [Janet Kagan](#), [Selina Rosen](#), [Walter Jon Williams](#), [Robert Charles Wilson](#) - but there's always next year.

Yep, I'm already signed up

September 2 Early breakfast with Sharon & Steve - a major mistake at a convention, I discovered as I struggled out of bed. Nobody thought to warn me about the energy it would

take, racing around like this. I was complaining about being so much more exhausted than I get on the road, while everyone else seemed bright & chipper. Sharon said "You see, you're on the road most of the year, while we're sitting at home chained to a word processor. This is the one week a year when we get out!"

Went to one of Mikes' readings. He gives away the short story manuscripts, signed, as he finishes reading them. Cool for the fans. That's another thing that keeps striking me, the overall attitude toward fans. I've always hated the pop sensibility of total insulation for the artist; running offstage into a limo, fleeing the gig, avoiding them at all costs. That's why I started staying after shows to meet people & sign things. Here, the Hugo Awards are voted on by the fans. The Worldcon is for the fans. It's amazing how available most of the authors stay, and how friendly they are when a stranger comes up with a question or request. Really gratifying to see some of the biggest names in their field, being humble and aware that if not for these people, they wouldn't have a career. I haven't heard a single snickering aside. Pop music's lost that, and it's a shame.

Gardner told me in no uncertain terms to Be At the Asimov's Table At One to meet Connie Willis, so I went, knowing if I didn't he'd razz me for the rest of my life. (He's good at that; when they roasted him the other day, he put jelly beans up his nose to see how far across the room he could throw them. So much for the haughty auteur....) So I stood there quietly until he noticed me. Son of a bitch, he just grabbed me and walked me up to her, saying "Connie, here's someone who really wants to meet you."

Well, she turned around, saw my name tag, and said IT WAS AN HONOR TO MEET ME. Me! A songwriter from New Jersey! And she was so nice, and so kind, that I found myself trying to tell her what her work had meant to me.

Except... as soon as I began telling her, I started to tear up. Halfway through the second sentence, I started crying. I was completely and utterly undone; I had to excuse myself. Went outside and sobbed for a full ten minutes. I even called Pat, because I thought maybe that would calm me down, but I couldn't get out more than a few sentences. So I rode with it, marvelling.

I mean, that's what happens to me. People start crying in *my* autograph line. People get overwhelmed when they meet me. It's not supposed to happen the other way around! And it was so very humbling. Because I'd always thought in my secret heart that it was just a bit strange, someone fainting or bursting into sobs when they met me. It left me slightly uncomfortable, worried that I couldn't fix it.

But here I was in exactly the same position, and I suddenly *got it*. I finally realized what those people really mean when they say how much my work has affected them. And it made me feel so good, and so bad, all at the same time.

By the time I'd pulled myself together enough to walk back through the Huckster's Room, everyone in the place had heard the story. I guess my nose was still pretty red. She was very considerate, telling me to come back later with my books. I hope I can learn to be that gracious with my own fans when they fall apart.

September 3 The Hugo Awards last night were a mixture of great fun and great let-downs. I guess it's almost as hard seeing your friends lose as it is losing yourself. I'm flying out early this morning to get back to Pat for a couple of days before I leave on tour again.

October 1 I offered to trade CD's for books with all these authors, & am driving Pat crazy with all the cartons arriving at her office for me. But I mollified her with a picture of myself & a giant robot. Not to mention the giant lobster.

Anne was right, bless her heart. I had the time of my life.



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