

A LEIGHTON YEAR

The following are extracts from some of the letters I've received from Rodney Leighton over a period of time. Where possible they are in chronological order.

Why am I putting them out to a wider audience? Because I feel that Rodney's often sharp insight and dry humour has been missing from fanzines – mainly due to his lack of technological facilities (ie, connectivity at his location and a lack of computer equipment) and like the man himself says later, there are times when he feels he doesn't have the motivation to write. So here are some little windows into the Leighton World. He may never get around to doing the next issue of The Leighton Look, a review and comment zine akin to Mike Gunderloy's Factsheet Five, but at least he now has a little bit of a web presence.

Rodney Leighton, #11 Branch Road, R.R. #3, Tatamagouch, Nova Scotia, B0K 1V0, CANADA

(undated extract)

Wilderness by Robert B. Parker. Intriguing book. The Susan-like character is sort of a bitch in the first part of the book; plot is rather silly but it is an interesting book. I think I will keep it to possibly read again someday.

Everville by Clive Barker. This is a fantastic book, no pun intended. It's not a fast read or that easy to read but I really enjoyed it. The concept of dreams being real and being able to dream things and people into reality is cool; the concept of the story being real and having to be told no matter what is, of course, an analogy for fate but I like it. Lots of stories in this novel; dark fantasy, horror; love and sex and pathos and great characterisations. Super book I will keep to read again someday.

April 3rd 2010. Forecast is for plus 20! Records are being set everywhere.

Poodle Springs by Robert B. Parker with some help from Raymond Chandler was okay; I thought it was rather amusing and kind of silly. I have read a Marlowe story or 2, I think... Good, but not great.

The Closers by Michael Connelly was intriguing for the cold case aspect but I thought it a rather pedestrian novel.

April 6th 2010. Just picked up a package of 6 books posted 24/02. Dunno why my mail carrier has stopped delivering the packages but what the hell; it's not far to the P.O.

April 12th 2010. Been to Fredericton, moving stuff. Habs made the playoffs, barely. Not expecting much there.

Running For Shelter by Michelle Spring. Amusing book with a kind of ditsy female P.I., and lots of side characters and events. I liked the book although I set it aside at page 184 (of a 214 page novel) and did a puzzle, went to bed, went to Fredericton. Fun read, good characters, okay plot: not compelling.

Red Tide by G. M. Ford on the other hand, was one I did not want to put down. Read it more or less straight through. Parts were rather silly ... Corso trying to run and the Coast Guard shooting his boat to death, for instance and I think the premise of spreading Ebola like that is kind of SFish but it is a

A LEIGHTON YEAR

very good book.

April 13th 2010. Just got package posted 26/2 with 5 Tom Sharpe novels, Pulp Fiction anthology and a James Patterson. Learned that mail carrier is having trouble with her hips; I don't blame her for not delivering these packages.

April 15th 2010. Well, we are having a snowstorm!

NHL playoffs started last night. It appears that CBC are going to broadcast 2 games per night. It also appears they are not going to broadcast Montreal Canadiens games. Rather weird that the taxpayer subsidised TV network would broadcast a series between two New England teams and not a series involving the only team in the NHL with Canada anywhere in its name. Given that the Habs are a lousy team and it would cause me anguish and despair watching them, perhaps it is for the best that I can't. Of course, if they win... I am thinking more and more that the results of games are predetermined. Don't know how they could do it but a lot of things seem to point that way. I find I can sit back and enjoy watching games that I don't care who wins. So I watched one, taped the other and watched part of that this morning and will continue with that plan for a while.

The Lovers by John Connolly was a pretty good book although I didn't find it as good as some of the earlier ones; I set it aside for various periods for various reasons. Still enjoyed it.

Lifeguard by James Patterson and Andrew Gross. Pretty good book with lots of twists; love and silliness and criminals. I read it almost straight through except that after 100 pages or so I did other stuff for about 2 days and then finished it. I watched a lot of hockey for a while; still watching quite a bit; my Habs are still alive! I seem to have totally lost the desire and the ability to write anything extensive about books. I was just writing something about a wrestling book to send to a friend who is a wrestling fan, and only wrote about this amount. Given that you have likely forgotten this book entirely and likely don't care what I thought about it beyond the fact that I liked it well enough to kee in case I want to read it again some day in a few years, that's all I am saying about it.

May 12th 2010. Game 7 of the second round of the NHL playoffs; can my Habs pull off yet another win?

Love & Glory by Robert B. Parker is a weird book; some sort of literary thing, kind of a combination of Jack Kerouac and Andrew Greeley. I read it all but almost all of it was one chapter, followed by something in a magazine, or Fosfax.

May 14th 2010. It's a fine sunny spring day. I am just goofing around. No work yet. Looked out the window and saw the flag was up so I went up and found the door on the mailbox open; a book club package sticking out and a package from you shoved in the box. I don't know if this means she got her hips fixed or has some help or what. I had ordered a book from Dave Meltzer; mailed on May 6th from California. This package from you contained 7 books and was posted on 1/5. Two weeks, wow!

I've read *Potshots* a couple of times. I have been watching a hockey game or two almost every day but the playoffs have progressed to the semi-finals. My Habs made it! Their next series should start Sunday.

A LEIGHTON YEAR

Read *Potshots* again. I enjoyed it. Later I read *The Forgotten Man* by Robert Crais. Pretty good book although I thought it wavered in a couple of spots. Cole was a bit silly in this one; I guess I can understand the urge to find his father.

May 26th 2010. I have some work, but nothing pressing and I am doing things like cleaning the house, moving things around.

Sex & The Immortal Bad Boy by Stephanie Rowe was quite funny and amusing but then it started having all these scenes of adolescent necking and making out and these immortal beings who kill people and take souls and so forth are getting lost in each others' eyes and kissing and it's every damn chapter and about halfway through I abandoned it.

My Habs collapsed and folded up and went away. One playoff round left; I likely won't watch much of it if any. Goalie for the team which eliminated Canadiens is named Leighton. No relation of mine as far as I know.

June 14th 2010. Playoffs are over. I watched most of them. Got some work. Sister has now gone to P.E.I., to visit a friend. Hopefully something will come her way before too long.

Not having a computer and since she is computerised I took her to the village to use the computer/internet. She told me that the place has a used book sale; I went in the next time we were there and found 5 books I'd like. They charge a buck per book and I certainly didn't need any more books... although I did read 2 of them; *Four Blind Mice* by James Patterson and *Dead Watch* by John Sandford. More importantly, they take donations of books. They term them 'gently used books'. Not sure if they want library rejects but I will take some in and see. I did take a bunch to Fredericton; put books and some CDs in a box and dropped it in front of the anti-poverty store before I went to pick sister up.

Ancestral Vices by Tom Sharpe is quite hilarious. Vicious satire. Probably all the characterisations are true. Good book.

The Guilty by Jason Pinter. Pretty good book, intriguing plot with the killer being a descendent of Billy the Kid. I think the main guy was somewhat nuts and a weird bastard. Liked the book okay.

Went to New Glasgow; I talked to a guy in Zellers. I said: "Are you an electronics expert?" He said "Yes." I said "Do you have any DVD players which play all regions?" "Don't think you can get them here." Kid didn't know if the \$40 one would play things from Australia or England. Looked at the wires; I wasn't sure if it would fit my TV. My Oz friend is about to become a daddy for the second time and won't have time or money to send me wrestling DVDs... So I decided to hold off for a while.

July 11th 2010. Friday brought the first unexpected, out of the blue zine I have seen since, well, the zine you sent me a couple or 3 years ago. Came from Montreal. I don't know anyone there. Opened it up; a guy from the good old days of the late 80s, early 90s. Well, late 90s, in his case as well. I haven't heard from this guy in like 12 years. Huh. He has my current address. Not only that, the note he enclosed said: "I am back at it. Glad to see you still are too."

Say what? I just wrote to him with a request that he let me know what he has seen to make him think I am going small press stuff. Don't know whether I

A LEIGHTON YEAR

will get any response.

Zine is quite good, I liked most of it and it contains some SF type stuff and a story by 80s small press icon *Crad Kilodney*. C.P. Porc-Epic, Box 1148, Point-Claire, QC, H9S 4H9 – send \$10 for 3 issues of Porcupine Rag, or you could email pp@porcupinerag.com.

Raining like hell today.

More Tom Sharpe.

Blott on the Landscape was hilarious, truly the best of the bunch so far. *Indecent Exposure* was okay, I enjoyed it, but read bits of it and then did other things. I started *Riotous Assembly* recently; noticed it is an earlier story involving the same folks in South Africa. Only 2 chapters into it so far.

Cue The Easter Bunny by *Liz Evans* was a good book; rather funny and a good plot and characters, with some weirdness tossed in. I liked it.

Death in the Cotswolds by *Rebecca Tope*. Wonder what this one is about. Apparently it didn't impress me much. Okay book but I read it a while ago and had to read the blurb on the back to recall anything about it. Still liked it though.

PS. I don't know if such a list exists; it wouldn't surprise me if the bastards didn't know themselves. But if you felt like looking at the CBC website and if you did find a schedule for NHL games and felt like printing that out and mailing it to me I would be pleased.

If you mutter, sod off, well, no big deal.

July 13th 2010. *Prince of Thieves* went from a not very interesting book to a so-so book to a very interesting book with a lot of intriguing sub-plots and very good characterizations. Nothing I would be inclined to keep to read another day, but a much better book than I had thought it was.

July 14th 2010. *The Husband* by *Dean Koontz*. I had read it before but I enjoyed reading it again, enough that I did basically nothing else for yesterday afternoon. Once upon a time I considered Dean the best author alive and read all his novels I could get my hands on and some of them I have read 3 or 4 times. But then he started putting out shit and I abandoned him for a while; some of the later, post 1999, books I have seen are good, some not. Going to the village today and will donate this one to the book sale.

July 22nd 2010. *The Food Detective* by *Judith Cutler*; a rather interesting novel. Brash, nosy, loud old broad; some excitement. Ok book.

Stone Cold by *Robedrt B. Parker*. Picked this up at a bank table for \$2. I believe this is one of the TV shows/movies you sent and I watched; if memory serves they took a lot of liberties with the script. It was intriguing to see 2 of the characters from Spencer novels appear; Captain Healy shows up

A LEIGHTON YEAR

regularly in Spencer and he is in this one a bit and super sexy Rita Fiore has shown up in a couple or more Spencers, offering lawyer things and sex and she appears here doing lawyer things and providing sex. Intriguing that Spencer, in later books, never touches a woman other than Susan, whereas Jesse Stone fucks 3 or 4 women in this novel, Rita included.

August 11th 2010. I am in the process of buying a new truck. Lots of shit with the old one. Went to work this morning and got rained out and came home and did some stuff and was headed to the post office and garage. Noticed the flag was up; a package from Chuck. And a card notifying there is a parcel at the P.O. Went and got that; went and found the garage was sold and no longer doing mechanical work. Went to the local dealership; got a price on a truck; came home and had some chilli and thought about it; went back and made the deal and went and talked to the local insurance agent babe. Package was 11 novels; customs sticker says 9 but there are 11. Lots of Parker.

August 21st 2010. It has been 7½ years since my mother passed away and I don't know if I am over it yet. Something I have never been able to figure out is that my desire to do reviews and my belief in my ability to do so seemed to die with Mum. She was always supportive of my small press stuff, because she used to say that everyone needed something of fun and interest and that was mine. Yes, I know, I did some shit. But nothing I was really pleased with. And even more intriguing... she didn't even like the music I used to review and my interest in doing music reviews and the ability to do so both vanished when she died; haven't done one since.

Writing anything is getting harder, even letters. No, I don't want to do any fucking fanzine. Case closed.

Simeon Stylites is a pseudonym for, hell, I forget his real name. Used to write really weird stuff. God knows what he saw.

Well, 'Canucks' is an amalgam of Canadian fucks...

The Wrestling Observer Newsletter is similar to Ansible in that Dave Langford writes 100% of it and it is news about SF and folks involved in such; WON is 99 or 100% written by Dave Meltzer and is all news about wrestling by whatever name; used to be all pro wrestling, now that is usually called "sports entertainment"; WON also covers Mixed Martial Arts and now that Linda McMahon has entered politics, he covers that as well. Issues are anywhere from 12 to 18 pages; every so often one is 22 or 24 pages and is deemed a double issue and sometimes, like this week, there are two 12 page issues in one week. I usually read about 50 to 75% of each issue, usually the day it arrives. But there are a lot of things in it I don't care about and I read all the reports on WWE and TNA, but I don't know why.

I am also trying to clean up the old truck a bit in case I put a For Sale sign on it.

The latest issue of *On Spec* is not as good so far as the other one; I skipped one story entirely and wasn't too impressed with others. On the other hand, the first story – *STILL* by Greg Wilson – made me cry at the end, which is either extremely ridiculous considering it is a story about puppets or else it is a powerful story. That issue tells me that R. Graeme Cameron won an Aurora for editing WCSFAZine – and Garth Spencer is still doing stuff, mostly on

A LEIGHTON YEAR

the web. I don't hear from Steve George very often, he's totally gafiated and stopped writing. Well, he writes, but it's mostly for glossy electronic magazines. I think I told you that Cliff Kennedy died in 2001? Dale Speirs still does his thing as far as I know. Don't know anything about the others. I think Crad Kilodney may have died. The latest Broken Pencil has an interview with a guy who tries to make a living selling zines on the streets of Toronto. Crad did that in the 80s.

I don't know where Canuck comes from; it's not an insult. I believe it was pejorative at one time but now is a very accepted term; shows up all over the place.

It's a hell of a hot day; got to meet the boss to pick up my cheque and then go to the bank; do some other stuff. Mail this while I am at it.

August 22nd 2010. *On Spec #80*, the first I had seen in years, had 9 short stories, I liked them all. *#81* has 7, of which I skipped 2, 2 were OK, 2 were so so and 1 was good. I believe I mentioned it in the last letter.

The Murder Bird by Joanna Hines. Good book, lots of twists and good characterizations. I figured out who the killer was long before it was revealed, but that's not unusual. 6 out of 10 if I were rating the things.

I read *Hush Money by Robert B. Parker* some years ago; finished reading the copy you sent a couple of hours ago. Enjoyed it – probably one of the better Spencers.

Sister seems to believe she is going to live where she is for quite a while and is thinking of divesting herself of some of her things which are stored here, including various bitty bookshelves. I had been thinking about putting them in the shed. I have bunches of books in boxes. I thought, why in the hell do I have books sitting around in boxes when I could put those bookcases up? So I dig one out yesterday and emptied a box, so now I have one shelf ³/₄ full of Spencer novels.

August 23rd 2010. Flag was up on the box today. Went up and thought "Christ, the box is full!" It was only after I got back to the house that I noticed there was a delivery note which was for the package of 6 books you sent, mailed August 16th. Air mail?!

There was a bunch of junk, 3 items went straight to the recycling bag. Book from Doubleday which turned out to be one I did not order, or perhaps fucked up. And a big fat book from a guy in the States who thinks I should do reviews. Bah!

August 26th 2010. I went off today and looked for a new DVD player. Woman told me that she did not think players which will play all regions are available any longer but I could try a store called The Source. Went in there and the helpful young guy told me that they used to carry them but he didn't think they did any longer and looked in his computer which agreed with him. He said they are available if one orders directly from the manufacturer; no one in this area carries the things. Ok. I asked him if I had a DivX machine if that would be advantageous if a friend was recording stuff off the Internet.

A LEIGHTON YEAR

He said yes. Asked him about why some disks play fine and others won't play at all; his opinion was that either those that won't work were recorded in a region that my player won't handle, or were recorded in PAL or something. So the cheapest one he had was over 100 bucks; so I went next door and bought one for \$50, on sale, at Zellers. Came home and hauled out the old man's TV and hooked them up. Read most of the instruction book. By God it worked. Except there was no audio. Fuck. Tried some things and finally figured it out.

Anyway, it is a Sony DVP-SR400P. Besides commercial DVDs it will allegedly play DVD-RW/R; – – – Shit, here's a piece of the box. Also DivX, so if you want you can try that.

Later... Book says the player cannot play some DivX video files that are longer than 3 hours.

August 29th 2010. Dead on 30 degrees C.

Riotous Assembly by Tom Sharpe. I quite like these books, very nasty funny. I have been passing these on to sister; don't know if she has read any or not.

Case Histories by Kate Atkinson. Hmmmm. Wonder what this is about; read the book a month or more ago. Ah, very good book, good characterization. Don't think I would agree with Stephen King that it is the best mystery of the decade but it is good; it is one of those books in which I hated some things and people; the ex wife bitch really pissed me off. Intriguing that I couldn't recall a thing about it until I started leafing through it and then realized it is a good enough book to hang on to, maybe read again some day.

All Fur Coat by Andrew Holmes. Also read ages ago; let's see. Oh yeah, this is the one that switches from first person to third person chapter to chapter which pissed me off. Story was ok; this one goes to the book sale.

The Straw Men by Michael Marshall. I recall reading this book some time or other; I thought it seemed familiar but couldn't recall much about it. Rather intriguing mix of sociological treatises and horror novel. At one point I exclaimed out loud: "Get on with it for Christ's sake!", as the guy, CIA operative no less, was pondering the evils of human minds, and immediately I said that there was: He took too long working it out ...it was David's ...and he shot Bobby in the back of the head. Pretty good book overall; that bit is on page 453, I abandoned it for brief periods form time to time but liked it overall.

Back Story by Robert B. Parker, a Spencer novel I have read previously, seem to recall writing about it one of those zine things. I enjoyed reading it again albeit once into it I remembered quite a bit of it.

All The Colours Of Darkness by Peter Robinson; bought for a buck at a store. One of the good Inspector Banks novels although I thought that Banks was very naïve and rather dumb in this book, especially for a veteran police officer. Warned off by the secret police and sent other warnings and after leading them to a couple of people he still doesn't suspect that they might have bugged his cottage or are watching it or him. Really! Gee, one would almost think that after these people blatantly attack two people after Banks had seen them one would be a bit cautious and suspicious. Good book though.

A LEIGHTON YEAR

Aftermath by Peter Robinson. It's an intriguing, convoluted novel with some really good twists. Banks is rather ruthless in this one although the internal affairs subplot makes the cops out to be rather insane. True in this world I guess. Cop gets killed; another one kills the killer and has to go to trial and is killed while driving drunk. A deceitful young woman leads to a horrible childhood, a deranged person and half a dozen murdered teens, an abused woman gets involved and, well, it is a good book and I did like reading it but to be honest a couple of weeks after I read it I have trouble recalling much about it and have to do checks and it's time to go off and try to earn a few bucks.

August 30th 2010. Currently I am spending 5 or 6 hours a day trying to earn some money, half an hour cutting firewood for winter after next, an hour or so after lunch piling that wood up and putting this winter's wood inside and then mostly resting. Currently having a fucking heat wave; the firewood may be ignored for a while.

It's another Monday. Wonder if the old bitch will bring me any mail today.

Take care, take it easy, but take it. (Old Nova Scotian saying)

October 6th 2010. The most noticeable thing about the DVDs so far is that they won't start at the spot where they are shut off. (*The DVDs consist of AVI files which RL can now play via a DivX & multi-format DVD player.*) I watched, well, I started to watch *The Dish* and noticed that there was a black margin on the top and bottom of the screen; watched enough of that to see that it was a boring docu type thing involving the infernal waste of money known as the space program and abandoned that movie. *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* had a slightly larger margin. I enjoyed that one, some really creative ways of murdering people and the standard bumbling British cop was fun.

The Ninth Judgement by James Patterson & Maxine Paetro. Quite enthralling novel with too damn many sub-plots. This is a Women's Murder Club tale, so it says, although the club had nothing to do with it as far as I could see except one of the sub-plots was that reporter Cindy started screwing Sgt. Boxer's partner and both were wondering if they should be jealous of the other and chief coroner Claire told the media that women with children should start carrying guns and the killer was killed by a young woman who took that advice. Lesbian couple; both with abusive husband, one is stealing jewellery, husband of the other is the killer of women and children; took me a long time to figure that out and I thought that she would get killed but that didn't happen. Lots of twists; some humour; a bit of sex; couple of love stories. The scene with Lindsay Boxer driving around San Francisco topless was rather bizarre. Good book, one to keep.

Prince Of Thieves by Chuck Hogan is something I started some time ago; got distracted by better books or didn't like it that well, I forget which. Set it aside at page 16 or so. Picked it up again recently; now about one third through it looks to be an okay book.

(undated fragment) Went to Truro to get my driver's licence renewed; encountered a snooty bitch not very civil civic servant and an aggravating debit card machine and then went to Zellers and bought some DVDs for \$5 each. Just finished watching *Shimmer* Vol. 1 Women's Wrestling. Man that is a

A LEIGHTON YEAR

great DVD. Actually I still have one match to watch. Excellent wrestling. One interview thing was okay. Haven't watched the other one. Then I went and got some groceries and used the self service checkout for the first time ever including paying with the debit card and did most of it myself and thus kind of redeemed myself.

October 15th 2010. Finished watching *The Big Bang Theory* shows last night. I liked these; parts were rather lame and boring but parts were quire funny. In fact, I happened to get a TV Guide (a rare event for me) and noticed that the show was on local TV this week; I have watched all those so far. Not sure how many other I will watch; all the fucking commercials are annoying. I would not object to seeing a disk of season 2.

Tecknologically: machine claims that is not a word or is misspelled, ah; k instead of h.

October 26th 2010. *Messiah by Boris Starling*. Quite a book. A religious treatise combined with horror plus murderous intent, family life and values, marriage trouble and personal insights. Some neat twists. I don't know why it is listed as a psychological thriller unless it is due to all the physiological matter. Lead guy is kind of weird; a very troubled man. Book was kind of boring to start with but got much better. Not a keeper but enjoyable.

Sold my old truck yesterday. Pouring down rain today.

October 27th 2010. It's one of those days that I can barely stand which comes along every once in a while. So I watched some of *Foyle's War* this morning; it was pretty good. Last night I watched *Cool World* which was fun, I even laughed out loud 3 or 4 times. Picture was full screen. This one says disk cannot be reused so it goes into the garbage. I was thinking about this, and remember you telling me you can buy these things for 13¢ each or something like that?

Have I ever told you my middle name is Lawrence?

Water is running for a bath; more later.

It wasn't Dark Angel, but Angel Dark. Dark Angel was a wrestling character; babe and a half, now dead, murdered by her husband.

I was going to expound on this topic some but this machine is driving me insane.

November 3rd 2010. Monday I went to Truro to by a part for my saw and some other things. Bought some stuff from Zellers; went across the street and bought a bunch of KFC. Headed home and found the bill for the house insurance; offer to renew it is called. In the house I discovered that the gravy from the KFC had spilled and was all over the bag; fortunately nothing else was spoiled. House insurance has gone up \$130 from last year. Fuck. I rarely even look at receipts; looked at the one from Zellers and discovered I'd been charged full price for the clothes. Hell. Well, it's not worth the \$12 or so to drive back down there. Then, rather than just sticking it in the box until income tax time as I usually do I looked at the receipt from the same

A LEIGHTON YEAR

place and discovered it was the wrong one; I got one for the other guy who was there. Took care of that with a phone call. Called the insurance agent; said to her:

“You have the house valued way over what it’s worth.”

“Well I don’t know what you know about construction costs, blah, blah, blah.”

I said, “Listen, this is a personal property thing... It is a percentage of the house value: 75%.” It doesn’t matter that I could probably replace everything in the house for less than 10% of the \$122,000+ they have listed, or that \$160,000 something for this house is ridiculous. She offered to change the deductible from \$500 to \$1,000 which would ‘save’ me about \$90. I said: “I guess I have to shopping.” Wasn’t her concern.

I am behind on work; got overpaid or I should say paid for work not yet done and I am going to be some time yet getting it finished; problems there. And the fucking Canadiens were shut out last night by a lowly team.

But: *The Knarley Knews* appeared yesterday!

Foyle’s War was an interesting experience. I think I mentioned that the first episode started out well, became so boring I almost abandoned it and then was not bad. I liked each episode more and found that I became involved with some of the characters, so to speak. Sam, the chick with the greatest name ever, ‘Honeysuckle’!, became more of a player; damn she’s good; in episode 5 when it was set up to look like she was killed I damned near cried; in #6 when she was in a locked room with a bomb and was running around crying for help and like that I was, out loud: “Get on the phone, Sam, for Christ’s sake!” I never did take to Foyle as a person so much. But I liked the last episodes quite a bit in spite of this not being anything I would normally watch. I didn’t like them enough to want to watch them again.

Got the work situation changed around; going to leave the block I am on to finish in the spring and move out closer where I don’t have to walk so far and the trees are smaller. I suspect I can make more money; well, I was looking at working 3 weeks or so for no income and 3 weeks on the other block should give me something better. Not much, but better than nothing.

November 5th 2010. Raining like hell.

Storm by Boris Starling is a good book. I liked *Messiah* ok, well, I sent you something about it. This one has some of the same characters; lead this time is Kate. Basis for the story is childhood abuse, lousy parents and worse and Greek mythology. A ferry sinks, Kate kicks some woman into the sea to allow others to possibly escape; later she has lots of trauma problems and live problems and the killer turns out to be a guy she trusts completely. Lots of twists although it was rather obvious who the killer had to be. I may keep this one to possibly read again.

A LEIGHTON YEAR

I seem to recall reading *One For The Money* by Janet Evanovitch at some point. First of the Stephanie Plum novels, ditsy broad that she is. Kind of amusing.

I just discovered that I have some disks that you sent me some time ago, one of the *Jesse Stone* episodes and other things, that I have yet to watch. I see that Tom Selleck is in a new TV series on CTV called *Blue Bloods*. *Big Bang Theory* is all over CTV during the week; I think the thing is one every night. Watched some of it last night; but I can't be bothered dealing with all the commercials and such.

I should perhaps mention that I now have about 30 novels you sent that I have yet to read.

All of this is by way of explaining my actions and so forth. I do love getting things in the mail; I do enjoy accumulating books. My interest in writing anything about them is almost non-existent and continues to diminish; I suspect that ere long I will simply type the title and author and comment on whether I liked it, or not.

If other seasons of *Big Bang* are available from wherever you got the first one, I would be happy to watch them on a disk. If there were further *Foyle's War* episodes I wouldn't mind seeing them. If you have the *Nero Wolfe* TV shows in some sort of format that can be transferred to DVD I would appreciate that, too. One of my sisters had cable and taped some of them for me, I saved a few. I was not too happy with some aspects of them; Dalton as Archie was ridiculous.

Having typed all that I went and had a smoke and went to the box and found a magazine and 2 DVDs. *Big Bang Seasons 2 and 3*. Posted October 30th. Gosh.

November 6th 2010. End of Daylight Savings Time. We are having a major rainstorm, 2 days and counting.

I really should do some long neglected housework but instead I sat down and watched all 23 episodes of Season 2 of *Big Bang*. Some of those are shows I watched on CTV this fall; watching them this way is much better. It was fun without the fucking commercials, for one thing. Some of the situations are beyond weird. I was wondering why it was that Penny was showing less skin in some of these and then I noticed that the show was PG instead of the TV 14 it used to be. Whatever, it's still a fun show.

A neighbour came and bought one of my old saws for \$400. Thinking about the probability that the CBC will broadcast Buffalo vs Toronto tonight regardless of the fact that Ottawa is in Montreal and thinking I would like to have some Word Game puzzles and some cigars I went to the village, got a puzzle book, no cigars since they didn't have any but some pipe tobacco; and some papers, cost \$34-something. Gave the kid \$40 and gave him back the \$5 and told him to give me a lottery pack that had some winners in it. 3 games; \$2 won on the 2 played so far. The other yielded \$2 as well. Sensible thing would be to turn these in and gain a buck and call it quits. I only buy these things once in a blue moon and usually if I win anything ...most has been \$12 ... I turn them in for new tickets and continue until they run out. Probably do that this time as well.

A LEIGHTON YEAR

November 16th 2010. I really enjoyed season 3 of *Big Bang*. The concept of a babe like Penny screwing a nerd like Leonard is hard to believe, but it worked; most of the shows were funny.

Grift Sense by James Swain. First novel I have ever read that I can recall that the main character is the same age as I am. I didn't like the guy much but I did enjoy reading the book. Fairly fast paced with a lot of characters and twists.

Chameleon by Mark Burnell was ok; I didn't think it was really good but I read it all

I recently had one of those periodic spells of thinking about reviving *The Leighton Look*; once on paper, once via you on the Internet. Each one lasted about 15 minutes and ended up with Fucked if I want to do that.

One of the hazards of old age is memory loss; sorry about the redundancies.

Reading over, I did turn the \$6 win on the lottery into tickets, both of which came up empty and that's the end of that run.

This fucking thing looks a lot like *Look*, doesn't it!

November 18th 2010. Gotta go to the village; might as well mail this.

November 21st 2010. Had the first snow of the season. Ugh! I hate that stuff!

Funny Money by James Swain was pretty good. Some silly glitches in this book, most notable being that in the previous one it is stated that Tony's wife died 18 months previously; in this one the guy who he worked for in that book appears, it is referenced as being something he did 18 months ago. Kind of a stumblebum but this one was quite funny and even has some sort of pro wrestling with reference to promotions and there is even a scene with women wrestlers and Tony hits the ring and gets into trouble and then gets into the woman, one of the wrestlers and then becomes her manager. Some cool twists; this one is more violent than the last one.

November 22nd 2010. One of those lousy days when I have trouble standing; more trouble at work; one job keeps dragging on, getting depressed and blah, blah...thinking: I hope if she leaves anything in the box it will be something interesting. I go and find junk mail, seed catalogue, bills, a note from Doubleday which is hard to believe it is so badly written – and 2 disks from you mailed Nov. 16th. Tried them both. Springsteen in Barcelona WORKS!!! Yah! Except it seems like a NY concert they did. Well, I have only watched a little bit.

TV version of Peter Robinson's *Aftermath* was a good show. They damned near rewrote the entire book; I could see that it was based on the story but

A LEIGHTON YEAR

there were certainly a lot of changes. Didn't do any harm; it was fun to watch.

Got the job finished; went off yesterday to start a new one. Lot more travel involved. Crappy day but I got a start on. Saw broke. I came home... could have gone a different route except I forgot my wallet...and changed clothes, got the wallet, went to Truro. Part cost in excess of 300 bucks! Fuck. Looked at the price of a new one. Added everything together and figured it made more sense to buy a new one.

Came evening and I went to feed the fire and a part fell out of the furnace. Shit. It's a real bastard to get in. Called the guy who installed it; he wasn't home. So I stayed at home this morning until he came and did that, and then I went to the village.

Cost \$40. But while he was here I got him to look at a bit of a leak I have had for a while; water tank is leaking, could blow anytime so he is going to get a new one and install it sometime next week. Another \$300 or \$400 down the drain.

December 14th 2010. Mid afternoon. We had a little gale last night and lost the power... it was off until 20 minutes ago. Two books came Friday, carrier left a notice, I went to the village and got them. Book and DVD set today; exact same size package in the mailbox. Woman is trying to confuse me more than I am already. Fucking power just went off and back on in a second.

December 19th 2010. Once or twice a year I take a fit and buy a packet of lottery tickets, usually a 3 tickets for \$5 pack of scratch and lose. Sometimes I win a ticket or \$5; trade it in for new tickets and run it out. This time the first packet generated two \$5 winners. Should have taken the 100% profit and called it quits but half the reason for doing this is a bit of fun. Got 2 more packs. One of those turned up another \$5; one a \$2. Traded in the \$5 for another pack, 2 of which had \$2 winners. So now I have \$6; more tickets at the next opportunity.

December (undated) 2010. *Three For The Chair* by Rex Stout is a bit of a misnomer in that the middle of the 3 short stories – *Immune To Murder* – involves a diplomat who invites Wolfe to a fishing resort in the mountains to cook trout for him and he kills a guy who had been fucking his wife and is allowed to walk due to immunity. Part of this story has Archie fishing for trout; naturally he catches the largest trout ever and even keeps it on the line while hauling the corpse out of the river. I don't know if this one was on TV but Archie would have loved for it to be. Wolfe recognises that the diplomat's trout are not fresh and that an emerald given as a gift is worthless and works out who the killer is. In *Too Many Detectives* he joins forces with a bunch of other private eyes and keeps Archie out of the loop and poor Archie gets jealous of Dol Bonner and in *A Window For Death*, Wolfe solves 2 murders, one 20 years old and the most recent one is done by an intriguing use of dry ice. Dry ice as a murder weapon!

100 (or so) Books

Begun December 25th 2010.

1... *The Death Of WCW* by R. R. Reynolds and Bryan Alvarez; 335 pages glossy paperback, 2004. David Meltzer in his intro described it as a book that should be read for everyone in the wrestling business; reading it at one point I said: 'Dave, if I had kept my copies of WON and got permission from you

A LEIGHTON YEAR

to use them as sources, I could have written this fucking thing.’ Very disappointing book.

2... *Run For Your Life* by James Patterson & Michael Ledwidge; 353 page paperback, boring in the beginning, strange hero, many kids, dead wife. Book got better about 60 pages in and really ramped up towards the end; lost of interesting characters and wild actions. Fairly typical novel from the Patterson factory.

3... *Tiger Daze* by Lyn McConchie; 138 pages large size paperback. Lyn adores cats and spoils hers rotten; she writes anecdotes about them and passes these on to friends and periodically she compiles these bitty stories into a book; this one, published in 2007, is mostly about her beloved Tiger, now deceased. I suspect I read all the stories in this book previously but I enjoyed doing so again and will do so again.

4... *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination With The Afterlife* by Lisa Miller; 250 pages of text, plus many notes, and a 20 or so page bibliography – hardcover. Good book; woman admits to not believing in Heaven although she really wants to. A practicing Jewess, she covers the aspects of Heaven as believed by her religion as well as Christianity and Islam and various branches of each plus Mormons and others from antiquity to the present. I liked the book sufficiently to keep it in case I want to read it again someday. It did not answer the questions I have about that particular thing but I suspect only God, if she exists, could do that.

5... *Myth Conceptions* by Robert Asprin; 217 page paperback. Very amusing fantasy, probably what they call Young Adult Fantasy. Fun book.

6... *Rope Opera: How WCW Killed Vince Russo* by, of course, Vince Russo; 255 page large paperback. Russo had a lot to do with ruining the pro wrestling I loved; it was intriguing reading his take on things. A self-described Born Again Christian, there is some preaching but not too much. Not as much dirt as expected although he goes off on ‘dirt sheet writers’ and ‘Internet smarts’ some. The business he alleges to love is fake and no good at all unless he is writing the scripts. Just like the sports entertainment garbage he writes there is a lot of crap in here. A good read, though.

7... *That Angel Look* by Mike Ripley; 207 page paperback. Rather boring mystery of sorts set in the underbelly of England, it has some amusing parts. Read almost all of it one chapter at a time with other things between.

8... *Enter Spencer* by Robert B. Parker; 468 page hardcover 3 novel omnibus. I got mixed up in some sort of conflict with Doubleday and ended up with this one. The first story, *The Godwulf Manuscript*, is the first ever Spencer novel. I read it last summer and again shortly before I started this list. If it had been the first Spencer I read I would never have read another. #2, *God Save The Child*, I also read earlier; reread it recently. Spencer is somewhat of an asshole here but this is also the first appearance of Susan Silverman. #3, *Mortal Stakes* was new to me; Spencer is still screwing other women but Susan plays a part in this one; Spencer murders a couple of guys and makes a mess of things; this is the start of the author trying to persuade the readers that Spencer is a really great human being via Susan; something which appears in almost every one of these novels I have read.

In the second book Spencer estimates Susan’s age as being somewhere between 30 and 35; he is a bit older. Published in 1974. Thus, in *The*

A LEIGHTON YEAR

Professional, published in 2009, Susan would be, oh, somewhere between 65 and 70. Amazing broad for that age!

9... *Slam Wrestling*; a compendium of stories from the website which editors Gerg Oliver and Jon Waldeman felt would make a good book. 350+ pages, paperback. Some were good; some not. Read the first part some time ago, but only just finished it recently.

10... *Daze In The Country* by Lyn McConchie; 140 pages paperback. Tales of life on her small mixed farm which also includes things like trips to SF cons. And some photos. I liked this one; couldn't remember too much of it and learned some things.

11... *Death Set To Music* by Mark Hebden; 189 page paperback mystery set in rural France with lots of humor and some silliness. Pretty good story. One of the Inspector Pel series.

12... *Caught by Harlen Coban*; 388 page hardcover. Super thriller with lots of twists, social commentary and very little filler. The Internet is a terribly dangerous thing in certain ways; whatever happened to the 'innocent until proven guilty' concept?

13... *Outlaw Of Gor* by John Norman; 254 page paperback. Fantasy complete with lots of social commentary and philosophy. Also some weird critters and action. #2 in a long series; Chuck sent a bunch of them. Good read; not enough to make me want to read the next one right away or read this one again, but enough that I expect to enjoy the others.

14... *Angel In The House* by Mike Ripley; 366 page paperback. Funnier than the other one; Angel is a klutz and a fool and totally pussy-whipped in this one. Not a bad book.

15... *Another Fine Myth* by Robert Asprin; 200 page paperback. Another fun fantasy read; back cover says this is the first in a series and it is obviously earlier than the previous one in spite of the other being published first.

16... *Ghost Pine* by Jeff Miller; 230+ page paperback. A compilation of stories from various zines which Jeff has published which ranged from really good to really bad. Intro mentions that his mother won't read it due to the 'salty language'. I wonder what son would really want his mother to read about his drunken adventures, drug taking, teenage sexual exploits and homeless tales; stories of sleep and food deprivation and other things which no parent would want to know about.

17... *Eight Days To Live* by Iris Johansen; 295 page hardcover. Excellent suspense thriller with a murderous religious cult with Judas as the deity, a lead character who's a strong female who is also rather demanding, a guy with vampire-like abilities; communication via dreaming, murders galore and people running around all over Europe and the Mid East. Kind of like a faster paced DaVinci Code. Book came via Doubleday, I can't remember ordering it but am glad it came.

A LEIGHTON YEAR

- 18... *The Cutting Edge Of Barney Thomson* by Douglas Lindsay; 376 pages oversized paperback. Set in Scotland this involves the most inept cop imaginable who spends much of his time lusting after his sergeant, female; a really fucked up killer of sorts; a psychopath; a monastery full of monks who all get murdered, many of them while the cops sleep in the monastery. Dialogue ranged from lowland Scot colloquial banter to long soliloquies full of 14 letter words that this old machine would beep at even more. Fairly fun book.
- 19... *Blood Eagle* by Craig Russell; 468 pages paperback. Sprawling suspense thriller set in Hamburg, Germany, which deals in ritual killing, history, geography, sociology and various other aspects of life. It was kind of amusing in that most of the book is written as though everyone is German but every so often a very British form of speaking or acting appears; such as "Can I have a word?" Something which shows up in every Brit novel and nowhere else. Fairly good book; one read is enough.
- 20... *Alarm Call* by Quintin Jardine; 370 page paperback. Another one set in Scotland more or less. Super rich guy with tons of high tech toys and lots of friends is set up by an ex wife, travels about the US doing some sightseeing with the reader, has a bit of action of various types, ends up with a 3 year old son he didn't know he had. Something of a weird book involving weird folks but not a bad read.
- 21... *Down River* by John Hart; 343 pages large size paperback. Excellent mystery set in the US South with murder, injustice, bent cops and politicians and a supremely dysfunctional family. Lead character is a bit of a bull-headed bastard. Fast flowing story with good characterisations and life dramas. A keeper.
- 22... *Walking Shadow* by Robert B. Parker; 281 page paperback. Another Spencer novel, about the third time for this one.
- 23... *Crimson Joy* by Robert B. Parker; 292 page paperback. Another one. I found a bunch of Spencer books in a corner, so started reading some of them.
- 24... *Paper Doll* by Robert B. Parker; 279 page paperback. About the third time for this one as well.
- 25... *Puck Is A Four-Letter Word* by Frank Orr; 278 page paperback by old time hockey writer Orr; a novel based on NHL expansion; owners screwing with union guys and a lousy coach. Lots of sexual escapades and some hockey. Published 29 years ago, lots of it would be relevant today. Fun novel.
- 26... *Did You Say Chicks?* 300 page paperback anthology of short Fantasy tales edited by Esther Freisner. 17 good tales; 1 dud. Third or fourth time for this one.
- 27... *Looking For Rachel Wallace* by Robert B. Parker; 219 page paperback Spencer novel I had never read before bought by my sister which arrived yesterday and I read it all right then. Spencer hires on as bodyguard for a feminist gay activist female but he's too macho and she fires him and is then kidnapped and he goes looking in between screwing Susan and fighting with cops and reading; eventually figures out where she is and walks 15 miles in

A LEIGHTON YEAR

about 3 hours and breaks down a couple of doors and shoots a couple of people and later cries about it all. Good book.

28... *Contract by Simon Spurrier*; 408 page large paperback. Man, what a weird book! Contract killer gets involved in a crazy scheme; gets involved with a crazy woman; meets with a pair of cops; talks like a speed freak maniac. Mystery turns to Horror to philosophy to sociology to paragraphs of info taken off the web to religion to... I found it a book worth reading once, with a number of breaks. I don't think I could have done a review of it even when I wanted to review books and believed I could do so.

29... *Darwin's Bastards*, 450 page large paperback anthology of alternative fiction. Edited by Zsuzsi Gartner, 24 stories. I read them all except for one which I abandoned near the end; *Gladiator* by Jay Brown; the most sci-fi type story in the book. *Atheists Were Almost Right About Everything* by Neil Smith is very good. Most were fun to read; none were spectacular.

30... *Fete Fatale by Robert Barnard*; 154 page slim hardcover. Murder in an English village with an inane motive, tale told by wife/widow of the victim; much of the book is devoted to the problems of a new pastor who is like a priest and the women who run the village don't want him. Ok story. Final line is that a bit over a year after the death of her hubby the storyteller married the minister. What the hell happened to grieving?!

31... *The Bullet-Proof Martyr by James Howard*; 156 page slim hardcover. Kinsmen, mid 50s mid US. Fast talking rabble rouser; aide who develops a conscience; murder. Ok book.

(project abandoned March 18th 2011)

January 7th 2011. Mail carrier brought *Feline Mewsings #42*. If you don't read it you might want to take a look at it; article by someone named Jonathon Vos Post about authors and copyright. Publisher Laurraine Tutihasi had offered to ship me secondhand fanzines if only she knew what I wanted. Sent her some ideas.

I read part of *On Green Dolphin Street by Sebastian Faulks* some time ago and set it aside as happens sometimes. Started where I left off yesterday and after a couple of pages abandoned it as being too damn boring for me.

January 20th 2011. I talked to the woman at the post office about why a package and one bag of books arrived the same day and each took 6 or 7 weeks, while another bag of books arrived the next day and took only 2 weeks or something. She said that sometimes larger packages are shipped by sea by mistake even though they are supposed to go by air and vice versa. Seems the second bag of books got to fly for some reason.

January 25th 2011. About minus 30 degrees outside. I am in the process of changing some things around; sister has some bookshelves which I have been storing and we agreed it makes sense for me to make use of them. Just small things. I just put all the books I have bookmarks in that I have read to a

A LEIGHTON YEAR

certain point and set aside to try later in one of them. Except for some that came from you and one other. I think I will try those books again this winter but just toss them at whatever point I reach whether it be finished or abandoned. No mention in the 100 books thing.

In order to try and maintain my habit of saying something about most of what you send me:

The Jester by James Patterson & Andrew Gross. Most boring book with James Patterson's name on it I have ever seen; set aside at page 160.

The Big Nowhere by James Elroy was a big nothing to me. I only got to page 58; may start it at the front again; may toss it.

The Red Room by Nicci French. Bookmark is at page 199; this one has been buried under other stuff for God knows how long. I can't recall it at all. May show up again.

One Last Kill by Barry Eisler. Fairly recent one that I found rather boring; set it aside at page 80.

I suppose it goes without saying that I have fallen into a weird frame of mind in which I don't have much interest in reading or watching movies or hockey games or anything; sit and daydream or sometimes just stare into space. Up to 17 on the 100 Books thing; should be about 25. Sigh.

Jan 31st 2011. Friday brought a letter and 4 DVD disks from you. Watched a couple of the Nero Wolfe (*A&E version with Timothy Hutton*) shows and all of the Silent Witness.

I really liked this one. Not all that enthused with the lead character, Sam. You must be well liberated over there; show is rather graphic. But perhaps some here are as well. Think I told you I don't watch much TV but I have noted that the CSI shows have warnings at the front about mature content and such. Mind you, that also shows up on the Dr. Phil show occasionally... not that I watch that shit but it is on just before the news show I sometimes watch and if I turn the TV on early I end up watching that sometimes. I used to watch something from the States called... I forget, Flash Point or something like that; undercover cops, some sex and violence.

Anyway, this contained Series 1, 5 or 6 shows. (*Finally sent RL disks with Series 1 through to 14 on them, plus some Waking The Dead*)

The last 3 things you sent that I had no idea what they were turned out very well. I liked *The Big Bang Theory* (*first three series sent*), *Foyle's War* and now *Silent Witness*.

Thanks for the definition of words. Not being American I don't know why they call cutlery flatware. I plugged that into a bit of a thing I have going which will be sent to *Alexiad* eventually. I asked if anyone cared to supply the answer; who knows if anyone will. All knowledge is found in fanzines, right?

A LEIGHTON YEAR

I have to go to the bank and pay some VISA bills. Yes, I know, if I would join the New Age and get computerised I could do it by computer or even phone without leaving the house. But I will go in and mail some stuff and go across the street and admire some young(ish) female while she pulls money out of my account and sends it off to VISA.

February 14th 2011. Finally gone through the 22 odd episodes of Nero Wolfe and quite enjoyed them. I had some issues; Wolfe is more jovial and active than the books suggest; I was not impressed with Hutton as Archie but since he had a lot to do with the project I can see him being there. I will keep these to watch again some day. I know there are others around; some that my sister taped are not in this batch. I would enjoy seeing the others if you can find them and care to send them along.

Estimated snow on the ground at the moment: about 4 feet.

February 21st 2011. Wasn't sure if this was a mail day or not; some provinces call it a holiday; not N.S., but I thought it might be a Federal holiday. Looked out the window and saw the mail lady at the boxes. Wandered up; package from Chuck. Looked at it. 11 DVDs! Jesus Christ! Thanks very much.

February 22nd 2011. Another snowstorm. Springsteen at Hyde Park disk 1 works great, just like a commercial DVD. Great concert.

February 23rd 2011. Season 2 of Silent Witness: I enjoyed watching it all, although I wondered at the change in Sam from the assertive, right at all costs detective to the emotionally bothered play it by the book pathologist; the final show was really the only one in this season in which the 'real' Sam appeared. Not sure I liked all this romantic stuff. As I said, I did like it all, but not sure I want to watch it again.

Season 3 was all good. Back to the Sam that I kind of liked, didn't like much character from Season 1. I was intrigued to see a bare boob shot with a live actress as opposed to a mannequin; what time was the show on, I wonder. (*21:00-ish, just over the watershed time.*)

Part 2 of the Springsteen concert worked well. I watched part of the first part of the concert last night. Disk had been out of the machine for days. Said: Resume Play At Last Stop. Great concert!

March 3rd 2011. I do spend a lot of time in my easy chair these days. Some of it is sleeping; some is staring out of the window or into space; some is reading. I watch an hour or so of the Springsteen concert most nights. For some reason, those disks start at the point I shut it off regardless of how long it has been out of the machine.

I got curious by *Waking The Dead* title I decided to try one. Great show! I have watched the first ... pilot plus 3 of the shows on the first disk... I have 4 episodes, 2 shows to watch. Really good plots; really good characters; great acting. Perhaps a tad too much time spent on trivial matters; a bit too reliant

A LEIGHTON YEAR

on forensics bullshit. But, hey, each of the 4 shows I have watched have made me cry! That's actually a good sign; shows I am really caught up in them.

March 4th 2011. Today 11 more DVD disks, all *Silent Witness*.

March 5th 2011. And last night the Boss started acting up. I took out the disk and wiped it off and put it back in and by God it started where it was when I shut it off.

March 9th 2011. *Waking The Dead* disk 2: all good shows. I thought the ending of this bunch was strange and a couple had too much flashback stuff. I would think that if there are major problems within the unit they should follow those up rather than just going into a new show as though everyone is good friends. I really do like this show.

March 14th 2011. Daylight Saving Time now. I watched disks 5 and 6 of *Silent Witness*. I guess these must have been TV movies. I thought a couple of times "That's a hell of a weird place to end it!" But the last one on that disk was well wrapped up.

March 18th 2011. This week I started my latest stop smoking attempt; God knows how long it will last. Haven't read a book in a couple of weeks. I have been reading over some of my old zine things. Jesus what shit!

March 19th 2011. I watched the first show on disk 4 of *Waking The Dead* last night; Mel died; I cried. I was wondering what that said about me that I shed more tears than her friends did and the phone rang and it was a guy I knew years ago who chattered on and on and on...

I don't feel like typing anything much to be honest. Someday soon I am going to unplug this thing to do some cleaning and switch some things around and it may take some time to hook it up again.

Habs lost big last night. Don't care, do you? Hey, you have professional ice hockey in the UK?

Thanks for everything. Don't fret if you don't hear from me for a while.

-oOo-

-oOo-

All Letters of Comment, Fanzines, and general communication to Rodney should be sent via snailmail/The Postal System to the address at the start of this.