

Jim Kelly has done everything before me—he was born a year before me, got married before I did, and started publishing before I did, after we both (along with Bruce Sterling, William Wu, P. C. Hodgell, and a bunch of others) attended the 1974 Clarion Writers Workshop at Michigan State University.

Which means I've known Jim for twenty-seven years—which is amazing, because we both still look so young.

While I wandered off into the horror field for fifteen years or so, Jim pretty much stayed in the sf field—gained a couple of Hugos (for wonderful stories like "Think Like a Dinosaur") and pretty much staying on the path he had blazed out for himself so long ago.

And as I said, we still both look young.

Unique Visitors **James Patrick Kelly**

It's strange, but when I woke up just now, I had the theme song to *The Beverly Hillbillies* in my head. You don't remember *The Beverly Hillbillies*, do you? But then you probably don't remember television. Television was the great-great-grandmother of media: a scheduled and sequential entertainment stream. You had to sit in front of the set at a certain time, and you had to watch the program straight through. The programs were too narrow-minded to branch off into other plot lines, too stupid to stop and wait if you got up to change your personality or check your portfolio. If you were lucky, you could get your business done during a commercial. No, you don't want to know about commercials. Those were dark years.

Anyway, after all this time—has it been centuries already?—I realized that *The Beverly Hillbillies* was a science fiction show. Maybe it's just that everything looks like science fiction to me, now. The hillbillies were simple folk, Jeffersonian citizen-farmers desperately scratching a nineteenth-century living from an exhausted land. Then—*bing bang boom*—they were thrust into the hurly-burly of the twentieth century. *Swimming pools and movie stars!* The show was really about the clash of world views; the Clampetts were a hardy band of time travelers coming to grips with a bizarre future. And here's the irony: Do you know what the time machine was?

It seems that one day Jed Clampett, the alpha hillbilly, was shooting at a raccoon. Are there still raccoons? Submit query.

Raccoon, a carnivorous North American mammal,
Procyon lotor, extinct in the wild since 2250,
reintroduced to the Woodrow Roosevelt Culturological Habitat in 2518.

So one day he was shooting at a raccoon, which apparently he meant to eat, times being hard and all, but he missed the mark. Instead his bullet struck the ground, where it uncovered an oil seepage. Crude oil, a naturally occurring petrochemical, which we have long since depleted. Old Jed was instantly, fabulously rich. Yes, it was a great fortune that launched him into the future, just as all the money I made writing expert systems brought me to you.

Of course, the Beverly Hillbillies were backcountry bumpkins, so it was hard to take them seriously at the time. One of them, I think it was the son—Jerome was his name—seemed to have fallen out of the stupid tree and hit every damn branch on the way down.

You laugh. That's very polite of you. The last time, no one laughed at my jokes. I was worried that maybe laughter had gone extinct. How many of you are out there, anyway? Submit

query.

There are currently 842 unique visitors monitoring this session.
The average attention quotient is 27 percent.

Twenty-seven percent! Don't you people realize that you've got an eyewitness to history here? Ask not what your country can do for you. The Eagle has landed. Tune in, turn on, drop out! I was there—slept at the White House three times during the Mondale administration. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the Millennium Bubble—hey, who do you think steered all that venture capital toward neural scanning? I started eight companies and every one turned a profit. I'm the primary source. Twenty-seven percent? Well, take your twenty-seven percent and . . .

Oh, never mind. Let's just get on with the news. That's why I'm here, why I spent all the money. Twenty-first century time traveler on a grand tour of the future. Just pix and headlines for now.

Still the glaciers? Well, I never owned one of those foolish SUVs, and our business was writing code. The only CO₂ my companies put into the atmosphere came from heavy breathing when programmers logged on to porn sites. Although how global warming puts Lake Champlain on ice is beyond me. Oh, this is exciting. New calculations of the distribution of supersymmetric neutralinos prove that the universe is closed and will eventually recollapse at the Big Crunch. That should be worth staying up late for. And what's this creepy-crawly thing that looks like a hairbrush with eyes. We've found crustaceans in the Epsilon Eridani system? Where the hell is Epsilon Eridani? Submit query.

Epsilon Eridani is an orange star,
Hertzsprung-Russell type K2, 10.7 light-years away.
It has a system of six planets, four of which are
gas giants, Ruth, Mantle, Maris, and Einstein,
and two of which are terrestrial, Drysdale and Koufax.
The atmosphere of Koufax has a density .78 that of earth.

Life on planet Koufax. I saw him when he was pitching for the Red Sox I think it was 1994. He was just about at the end of his career and still Nolan Ryan wasn't worthy enough to catch his jockstrap. I was a big baseball fan, I even owned a piece of the Screaming Loons; they played Double A ball out of Poughkeepsie in the nineties. But I'm probably boring you. What's my attention quotient now? Submit query.

There are currently 14,263,112 unique visitors monitoring this session.
The average attention quotient is 72 percent.

That's better. Where were you people brought up? In a cubicle? You should respect your elders, and God knows there's no one older than I am. Sure, I could have given the money to some damn foundation like Gates did. What for? So people would remember me in a couple hundred years? *I'm* still here to remember me. Maybe it bothers people these days that I'm really alive, is that it? Just because I left the meat part of myself behind? Well, here's some

news for *you*. I don't miss my body one damn bit, not the root canals or going bald or arthri. You think that I'm not really me, because I exist only on a neural net? Look, the memory capacity of the human brain is one hundred trillion neurotransmitter concentrations at interneuronal connections. What the brain boys call synapse strengths. That converts to about a million billion bits. My upload was 1.12 million billion. Besides, do I sound like any computer you've ever heard before? I don't think so. What was it that Aristotle said, "I think, therefore I am?" Well, I am, and I am me. I can still taste my first kiss, my first drink, my first million.

Why are you laughing? That wasn't a joke. You think you're fooling me, but you're not. What's the day today? Submit query.

Today is Tuesday, May 23.

Is that so? Who's playing third base for Yankees? Who's in first place in the American League East? What's the capital of New Jersey? Who is the president of the United States? Submit query.

Baseball is extinct.

Baseball.. . extinct. And that's not the worst of it, is it? You don't. .. Listen, Sandy Koufal retired in 1966 and there never was a Mondale administration and *Cogtto ergo sum* was Descartes, not Aristotle. You don't know anything about us, do you? I began to suspect the time I woke up. Oh, God, how long ago was that? Submit query.

You have been in sleep mode for eight hundred years.

Eight hundred .. . and there's no sports in your news, no politics, no art. History, wiped clean. You didn't just decide that we weren't worth remembering, did you? Something terrible must have happened. What was it? Alien invasion? Civil war? Famine? Disease? I don't care how bad it is, just tell me. It's why I did this to myself. It wasn't easy, you know. Margaret divorced me right before the procedure, my kids never once accessed me afterward. The police called me selfish. The Pharaoh of Programming buried in his mainframe mausoleum. Nobody understood. You see, even though I was old, I never lost the fire. I wanted to know everything, to find out what happened next. And there were all the spin-offs from the procedure. We gave the world a map of the brain, the quantum computer. And here I am in the future, and now *you* understand. You're keeping it from me. Why? Who the hell are you? Submit query!

Oh, God, is anyone there? Submit query!

There are currently 157,812,263,609 unique visitors monitoring this session.
The average attention quotient is 98 percent.

I think I understand now. I'm some kind of an exhibit, is that it? I never asked to sleep eight hundred years; that has to be your doing. Is my hardware failing? My code corrupted? No,

never mind, I'm not going to submit. I won't give you the satisfaction. You've raided my cage and got me to bark, but the show is over. Maybe you're gone so far beyond what we were that I could never understand you. What's the sense of reading the *Wall Street Journal* to the sea at the Bronx Zoo? Unique visitors. Maybe I don't want to know who you are. You could be like H. G. Wells's Martians: "Intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic."

You don't remember old Herbert George; time machines were his idea.

Only his could go back. No, no regrets. Too late for regrets. Eight hundred years. I suppose I should thank you for taking care of The money I left in the trust is probably all spent. Maybe there is no such thing as money anymore. No banks, no credit, no stocks, no 'brokers or assistant project managers or CFOs or lawyers or accountants. "Oh brave new world, that has no people in it!"

That's Shakespeare, in case you're wondering. He played goalie for the Mets.