

Welcome to Nerd Vegas: A Guide to Visiting and Enjoying Comic-Con International in San Diego, 2006!

Comic-Con International, also known as CCI, Comic-Con and San Diego Con, is the largest gathering of comics industry professionals and fans in North America. It is a show of growing importance to hundreds of pros in related publishing, merchandising and film businesses. It is traditionally held over four days, Thursday-Sunday, with a Wednesday preview night added on for good measure, at some point between mid-July and mid-August.

In 2006, the show is scheduled for July 20-23, with preview night on the 19th.

I hope you will take the following exercise in fevered list-making with something equal to the good humor I hope is apparent throughout. But first:

If I Don't Want To Waste Important Minutes of My Life Reading This Whole Stupid Thing, What Do You Think Are The Ten Most Important Pieces of Advice?

1. Consider going to part of the show (Wednesday-Friday or Friday-Sunday) instead of the whole thing to save on costs.
2. Wear a watch or carry another time-telling device.
3. Don't worry about staying in the perfect place; worry about having as much fun as you can wherever you end up.
4. Join your hotel's courtesy club so that if something goes wrong they can easily compensate you.
5. In order of desirability, how to get your badge: exhibitor gets it for you, press line, pro line, attendee line. Registering or picking up during off hours can also be hugely beneficial, going from a three-hour wait to none at all.
6. Pack your lunches and make dinner dates with 1-3 other people instead of going to dinner "as a group."
7. Attend every party to which you're invited; after-party scenes like the Hyatt (comics' mainstream and indy crowds) the Picadilly (art snobs) and the beach

(deranged younger cartoonists) are supplements, not substitutes.

8. Don't overschedule yourself. There are lines and delays that eat up time no matter how irritated you become. Plus, it's fun to wander around or kick back with pals new or old.

9. Once in your life you should see The Eisner Awards and The Masquerade.

10. Do something fun in San Diego, even if it's just going on a boat ride or taking your significant other to Old Town for dinner.

The Four Basic Things CCI Offers

1. A massive main floor marketplace featuring exhibitors including but not limited to publishers, individual artists, comic book back issues dealers, movie studios, toy companies and individual artists, many of which have many wonderful things for sale.
2. In rooms of varying size at other places in the building, convention programming including but not limited to previews of big-company titles, small-publisher spotlights, themed-issue discussions, film presentations, and sneak peeks at forthcoming TV shows.
3. At night there are entertainment activities both formal and informal, including Friday evening's Eisner Awards ceremony and Saturday's famous costume Masquerade.
4. All around San Diego at all hours of day and night comics industry employees, writers, artists, fans, retailers, Hollywood types, press people are taking morning meetings and sharing late-night drinks, socializing and seeing to informal business matters on a massive scale.

Six Reasons Why CCI Is Important, Not Just Fun

1. The show's size. Between exhibitors and attendees, more people attend Comic-Con International than live in my hometown.

2. Proximity to Los Angeles' film business, a significant concern for many professionals and fans, particularly in the past decade. This successful marriage has led to other pop culture industries increasing their presence -- toy makers, animation studios, television shows and book publishers among them.

3. There is no other sizeable West Coast comics industry show during the summer season, which makes it a huge attraction for sizeable comics professional communities in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, and medium-sized ones in Las Vegas and San Diego itself. It's a national show, for sure, but the percentage of comics folk west of Denver who make it down to San Diego's convention center is extraordinary.

4. Years of experience on staff means that not only does the show run pretty well, but that there is enough institutional memory for staffers to be sensitive to and invested in a lot of different con-going experiences.

5. Some practical business actually gets done there. There is a great deal of looking at talent, talking about future plans, introductory meetings, and so on.

6. It's one of the few recurring, reliable experiences on the calendar by which comics people can mark the passage of time as their lives are duly wasted.

Five Good Reasons To Skip CCI Anyway

1. Some cartoonists, particularly those working in what we might call art comics, become discouraged by the excesses of the show's pop-culture focus.

2. Cost. It costs a lot to exhibit and it can cost a lot to attend.

3. You might feel, and you might be right, that you can get much of what a big convention offers elsewhere in your life for less expense and trouble. It may be just as easy to buy a lot of things on-line than to buy them at a show. Some might prefer Wizard Entertainment's Chicago show or the MoCCA Festival as a place to socialize. And so on.

4. You can't afford the time off, either because of a day job or a creative deadline.

5. What you like about comics may not be the kind of thing you find at a convention.

Five Questions to Ask Before You Commit to Attending

1. "Do I Really Want to Go?"

If it's a chore, or if money's an issue, or if you feel like doing anything else, don't go. It's not a requirement.

2. "Do I Need to Be There the Whole Weekend?"

Unless you're working, you probably don't. I'll be going for only a portion of the show this year. There's no better way to reduce the costs of a funnybook convention than to cut into the time spent there. If cost is any issue, consider going on a limited schedule. Try going Friday-Sunday if your main goal is to socialize and see the big panels. Think about going Wednesday-Saturday if your desire is to shop and network. Think about going one day, even. You may miss one out of five things you wanted to do, but you're less likely to get bored or burnt out (like these poor people pictured above). You may even leave wanting more.

3. "Do I Need a Room or Just a Bed?"

If you only need a bed, you might have a much easier time finding a place to stay. Inform your publisher, your message board buddies and all of your attending friends. You may be able to find a place to stay, or someone to room with you, without the hassle of paying for a whole room by yourself. A lot of people have friends or family back out closer to the date, so there's no time too late to check.

4. "What Do I Want to Do While I'm There?"

I would suggest having one or two goals, if any. Some things many people do (portfolio reviews, say, or obtaining certain autographs) at CCI have a lot of line-time built in that might end up squeezing the other parts of an ambitious itinerary. It's nice to just wander and go with the flow, too. When someone tells you, "You gotta see this comic," it's great to have the time to go see it.

5. "Do I Need to Stay in a Hotel Really Close to the Convention Center?"

It's nice, but not necessary. I've stayed a few miles away and a lot of miles away, and neither weekend stands out in memory as a deficient overall experience. Anyone insisting you have to stay 100 yards away from your

hotel bar of choice is either being lazy or way too precious about their vacation time.

Five Things to Tell People On the Airplane

1. "I'm going to San Diego for comic books. And love."
2. "No, they're not for grown-ups now. They're still incredibly stupid."
3. "Spider-Man was based on my dad."
4. "Sometimes I don't know if I'm an efficiency analyst that dreams he's a Klingon, or a Klingon that dreams he's an efficiency analyst."
5. "Would you like to guess what part of my costume I'm wearing right now?"

Twelve Random Observations About Various San Diego Hotels

1. The venerable US Grant -- home of a fine lobster bisque, quiet and well-appointed rooms, decent brunches and a lovely bar no one in the comics industry visits -- remains closed for Summer 2006. It's been closed a while now.
2. In eight years of staying there, four days per visit, the only comics-related person I have ever seen in the Westin Horton Plaza's exercise room is Kevin Eastman. In general, use of hotel facilities like pools, hot tubs and exercise rooms seems to be really light during the convention weekend.
3. For those that place a premium on proximity to one's drunkening, there are a few hotel bar scenes where you can find significant populations of industry people, press, writers and artists. The main one by far is spread across the various bars of the Hyatt, where the relative lack of industry parties and the unfortunate aversion of many comics folk *to* parties has transformed a regal wind-down spot into a fair-to-middling all-night grind. The alternative comics crowd bar of choice is the Pickwick's dive-ish "Picadilly" on Broadway. In 2005, I'm told webcartoonists lurked in the lobby of the Westgate, and the murky micro-lounges of the Marriott have long been the host to small-scene meet-ups -- say, all the folks that hang out at a certain messageboard.
4. The security people at the Hyatt will follow you into a

bar in order to yell at you for not obeying their orders, but you pretty much have to take a swing at one to get thrown out.

5. My favorite hotel out on the Hotel Circle is the Red Lion Hanalei. The Red Lion features easy parking, a hot tub, an exercise room, a pool and a cheap breakfast buffet -- the "four horsemen of the ease-pocalypse" necessary to spend a quality quiet morning before heading out to the convention hall. If you don't want to drive but are staying out on Hotel Circle, explicitly check each hotel's proximity to a train; some are close enough to walk to a station while others are not. There are also a few hotels across the bay south and northeast that can get you near the convention hall via water taxi, which I think is really cool but is probably hugely impractical.

6. There's nothing that says you can't spend an extra night in the city in a different, perhaps less expensive hotel than where you spent the bulk of the show. Two times I've stayed for an early Monday flight, I've switched to a cheaper hotel out by the airport.

7. The Holiday Inn on Harborview is the place where I've seen the most comics people I would have sworn could afford a better hotel. All kidding aside, with water based tourism nearby, a big tourist-friendly fish restaurant across the street and beer-focused bar on its premises, the Harborview is kind of a world unto its own.

8. The hotel I've heard people complain about the most is -- by far -- the Wyndham Emerald Plaza. Sorry, Wyndham Emerald Plaza.

9. A nice place to meet and chat that's close to the show and very quiet is the bar in the Horton Grand. The Horton in general has some nice things going for it. It's *really* close, its own prices aren't much more than the CCI discount so it's a good place to get a room if you think you might come out a day early as you can cancel the day before, and as long as you're not facing the street, the rooms are quiet and nice enough. Its most bizarre quirk is a guestbook in every room into which about 50 percent of the people scrawl obscenities.

10. This isn't exactly an observation, but I would like to recommend some rich publisher throw a swanky private party at Hotel Solamar's pool bar and invite me. Thank you.

11. I find it odd that the W has made almost no impression on the Comic-Con's hotel culture. Location really is everything.

12. It's the experience that counts in the end, not where you stay. There's fun to be had staying in any of the options available.

Six Things To Remember About Getting a Room Through the Con

1. It's great to get the discount offered by CCI, but it's not the only way to get a discount and there are desirable hotels not on that list. Also, in a few cases it's good to get the ability to cancel up until the last minute even if you have to pay \$6 a night more. See the con's room service as one option, not the only option.

2. The most desirable hotels for the most people, meaning those close to the convention center, and particularly the Hyatt (after-hours social central) and the Omni (really close and very new) are snapped up within ten minutes on the first day they are offered. That's just the way it is. In fact, with more companies being pushed by their companies to buy hotel rooms in advance, many of these hotels are booked the old-fashioned way before their discounted rooms come up.

3. It's worth noting that with almost every room guaranteed to sell out, there's very little incentive for hotels to make a lot of rooms available at discount. It's really not going to get any better in the near future, and with so many on-line media sources now, more than enough people are going to be aware of the exact moment the rooms become available in January to make getting a room a pain in the butt.

4. That being said, the Con site is still a great way to find a room at a lot of the hotels, particularly if you stay at hotels that tend to be the next rung down in terms of general desirability, like the US Grant or the Westgate. The con site's done a great job in 2006 in always having a bunch of rooms open, even if they are those a bit of a jump away from the con.

5. Double-check your hotel's dedicated web site for potential hassles at the hotel you choose.

6. If you get your room from the con when they go "live," remember to confirm your reservation before you go to San Diego. Seven months is a very long period between reservation and stay, in which a lot of stuff can happen.

Four Quick Notes About San Diego's Transit Options

1. No one ever smiles on the trains pictured above, and most cartoonists I know don't like them. I've never had a problem on one and found them a convenient way to go from parking garage to convention center. The smiling thing is weird, though. It's almost funny to see all the sad people going to look at comic books.

2. Like Seattle and Indianapolis, San Diego's small downtown is perfect for jumping in and out of taxis, so consider doing so at those moments when a walk seems daunting or problematic. The late nights aren't scary in downtown San Diego, but it's still a city and you can get in trouble stumbling around at 2 AM. I don't think I've ever spent more than \$6 on a cab ride not to the airport. It's probably worth mentioning that in terms of getting home until sort-of late there's always the option of the convention buses to consider, too.

3. Like in Las Vegas -- only without the excuse of being, you know, *Las Vegas* -- there are various places around town where cabs will simply *not* come and get you. I used to go to this skeezy but fantastic Mexican place in a horrible neighborhood and learned the hard way that it would be a bus trip back into downtown proper. I've heard other, similar horror stories.

4. Most of the city garages stay open really late into the night for congoers. Please double-check how late. I remember being locked into a parking garage once, although the security guards in the adjacent building were nice enough to help me get out.

Four Things to Make Sure You Pack

1. Drugs -- Aspirin or similar pain relief can be a blessing. Hand lotion or wipes to keep your germ exposure down are nice to have if that's a concern for you. A few people have told me they use immunity boosters like Airborne for comic conventions.

2. Watch -- If you don't wear a watch, buy a cheap one for the trip. You need to have something that tells the time.

3. Postage Supplies -- Don't want to carry a suitcase loaded down with books? Mail stuff back. Buy a tube and stuff it with tape, a sharpie and a couple of big envelopes. There is a post office convenient to the Broadway-area hotels right next to the Westin Horton Plaza lobby; it's open on Saturday.

4. Light Jacket -- It can get a little chilly at night, and some of the most commonly utilized nighttime social spaces at CCI are beaches, courtyards and decks. A sturdy long-sleeve shirt will do the trick for most guys.



Twelve Places You Should Know In San Diego (Click on Map for Bigger Map And Details)

1. The Convention Center
2. The Marriott
3. The Hyatt
4. Seaport Village
5. Rail stop for Little Italy
6. Horton Plaza
7. Ralph's Supermarket
8. Gaslamp Quarter
9. Towards Petco Park
10. The Picadilly
11. Post Offices
12. Fed Ex/Kinko's

Five Things Expected To Be Special About The 2006 Show

1. Viz Turns 20 -- Bookscan to announce change of Graphic Novel chart name to "Vizscan."
2. Fantagraphics Turns 30 -- Brought to you by *Focus on John Byrne, Amazing Heroes, porn and the Schulz Estate.*
3. Last remaining group of attending Klingons to be hunted down and slaughtered by a combined force of *Battlestar Galactica* fighter pilots, Johnny Depp-style pirates, and children dressed as the young ninjas from *Naruto.*
4. Jerry Robinson's annual Saturday all-night naked beach rave.
5. Marvel to announce Stephen King's involvement on forthcoming *Dark Tower* project to be waving at trucks full of completed issues as they drive by his house.

Five Tried and True Pieces of Con Advice That Bear Repeating

1. "Wear Comfortable Shoes" -- The con is the size of Oprah's house. Really. It's big. It's sit down and make you cry big. It's make strange excuses not to walk the whole thing more than once big. Wear nothing that will harm you, weigh you down, or make you sweat more than anyone near you would like.
2. "The Convention Center Food is Expensive and Bad" -- This has been true of every convention at every convention center everywhere in the world since 1952, and remains true at CCI.
3. "Get in Shape for The Con" -- Yes if it's to drop five pounds in anticipation of late-night skinny dipping. No if you need to get in better shape simply to survive a few days of walking around tracking down Gene Colan's run on *Sub-Mariner*. If you honestly need to get in shape just to pursue fannish loitering for four days and five nights, please consider staying at home and spending your con money on a YMCA membership. We love you; we want

you to stick around.

4. "Please Don't Smell Like Ass" -- Be considerate enough to work hard at being presentable, even when it's difficult to be at your freshest.

5. "It's Not Your Basement" -- Be friendly and courteous and you will probably meet lots of nice people, a few art heroes and even get in a good dose of informal networking. People are there to meet and be met. Like summer camp and jury duty, people make convention insta-buddies all the time, and sometimes they develop into enduring friendships. On the other hand, snort loudly, muscle into conversations and fire off abrasive commentary in the faces of people you don't know, and you will probably be hired by Diamond. Ha ha, I'm just kidding. You will have your choice of jobs. Still, it's better to be nice.

Six Things to Take to the Show Each Day

1. Lunch -- Consider packing a lunch in case you end up wanting to do things in the Convention Center that make it hard to leave for a meal. You can get a lunch at places like Ralph's, Redfield's at the Hyatt, or at the Westgate Hotel.

If you're meeting someone for dinner that's working at the show, or if you're working, dinner will probably be a late because people at the show usually don't get out until 7 PM. So if you pop out for a burger at noon your lunch won't go to waste; it can be called into duty as a 3 PM snack or a 5 PM blood-sugar offering to a friend that has that feral look in her eye. For a place to eat your packed lunch, the convention center has a lot of outdoor balcony space with nice views accessible from its second floor.

2. Cash Money -- Don't get caught cash-short and have to stand in The Line of Shame at the convention center. The nearby hotel ATMs are a better bet speedwise, but unreliable. I generally take two credit cards, approximately \$150 in cash and a couple of checks to the convention center each day, although everyone's needs are different. I also carry about \$200 in \$3 bills with Prez Rickard's face on them, but almost no one takes those. Thank god for Jim Ottaviani.

A convenient way to meet your cash needs is to get cash

back on a purchase at the grocery store on the way over to the show. Or hit your hotel's ATM as you head out the door. Credit Cards are starting to become more widely accepted, but don't count on every exhibitor being able to take them.

Also, please don't mug me.

3. A Backpack or Carry Bag -- Oversized giveaway bags have been popular promotional items the last two years, although you can't always count on that kind of thing being made available and may want to take your own. Bags and backpacks are also fun for knocking over other people's children "by accident."

4. Water -- Refill your bottle at the water fountains.

5. Business Cards and/or Handouts -- If you have things to distribute, don't forget them!

6. Pen and something to write on -- this is a magic spell deal where if you don't have them you will want them, but if you do have them on you you will never use them. So I guess its your choice of which is more frustrating.

Five Exotic Convention Floor Sub-Cultures

1. Star Wars fans
2. Cosplayers
3. Gamers
4. Agents
5. Girlfriends

Seven Con Registration Tips

1. If you can get an exhibitor to register you, you won't have to wait in line and can simply obtain your badge from them rather than at the registration desks.

2. If you qualify as both a professional and a media person, the media line is much, much shorter than the professional line. Plus there's a pressroom that's always empty if you actually want to interview someone.

3. The professional line is much more bearable on off-hours and days. I've registered on late Friday mornings without any line whatsoever.

4. I don't even know what to say about that generally monstrous attendee line. Good luck with that. Maybe... try to come on a half-day or late in the day? It's amazing how quickly they process the crowds, but holy crap.

5. Don't neglect your lanyard skills! If you don't want people to keep staring at your chest or mumble "Yeah, yeah" when you ask them questions because they have no idea who you are, don't give them the excuse of a lanyard that flips around. Display that badge and display it proudly, that's what I say. I'm not sure I'd recognize my cousin Mitch after eight hours in the visual-overload nightmare that is the convention floor, so seeing your badge is vital. Keep it forward!

6. Make sure everyone staying in a hotel room you remember to put on the hotel room, as hotels won't give an unlisted person a key, even if you swear that you're staying with someone and they told you they would leave one at the front desk.

7. Register at your hotel (like the Marriott, above) as close as you can to when check-in times begin. Hotels can and will bump you; I've heard stories about being shoved out to the boonies without compensation. Secure your room! This is another case where being in a rewards program might help slightly, too.

Six Random Tips, Totally Out Of Order

1. If you need cash, and you're really well known to an exhibitor, they may let you write a check for cash at their booth. Some people may even prefer to have less cash to carry around.

2. The younger arts cartoonist crowd generally has a late-night party Saturday evening on one of San Diego's beaches. It's not the most exciting party -- more people skinny dip than used to, but no one *really* wants to see naked, starving cartoonists twitching in the moonlight; also Joe Chips no longer comes to the show to risk setting himself on fire for our entertainment pleasure -- but it sure is nice to be outside after a half-week of cramped, sweaty, visual overload. Ask around. Getting there and back is part of the adventure.

3. Car rentals are cheap on Saturdays, parking overnight downtown is easier on Saturday and Sunday, and having

a car can open up more parts of San Diego to you. Most full-service hotels can help you rent a car if you get there and suddenly feel the impulse to get one not having reserved one.

Remember, only a few rental car companies still rent to a debit card -- if you're like me, sometimes you don't even travel with a credit card anymore. Alamo is one who does rent to debit-card holders, if you have proof of travel (a ticket that says you're flying out on a certain day).

4. Parking is a bear. Mark Evanier jokes that if you want to find a parking space, then leave right now, which is absolutely true. In fact, it may be too true to be a joke. Many people I know decide that having a car simply means going in earlier than they might have gone were they not with car, in order to find a parking space in close proximity to the convention center. Others park at garages near transit stations, or downtown and then walk over.

When I used to drive a car, the parking garage at the 12th and Imperial station (east on Broadway to 12th, turn right) was my friend, for a few reasons. One, it was the side of the trolley line (and only one station away) directly serving the convention stop the furthest away from a commuter's typical path into downtown San Diego. Two, at the time nobody used it (very much no longer true). Three, despite the parking garages being open really late, when this one was full it was in a neighborhood where at least on the weekend you could find parking nearby on the street. I have *absolutely no idea* if this is still true. I kind of doubt it.

So my advice would be go in early the first day to at least scope things out, and don't be shy about parking far enough away there's a short walk, convention bus trip or trolley hop involved. Build some parking time into your trip; if you're buzzing in mid-day, build a *lot* of time.

If it makes you feel better, your carless friends at the Omni or Marriott aren't able to pop out to Hodad's for a burger.

5. The last few years have seen Friday night art openings in the Gaslamp district in conjunction with the show. This can be a fine Eisner Awards alternative. You can ask around the appropriate art-comics booths. There may also be a movie premiere or two in town although these may require picking up passes and/or standing in a line.

6. Don't be shy about asking people who are dressed up in costumes to pose for pictures; the attention is frequently what they're there for. Plus you may get the honor of addressing a grown man as "Lord Vader."

Three Things About Approaching Famous People

1. Approach with firm handshake and smile. "Hi, [honorific] [last name]. My name is [your actual name, or, if you can't remember it, "Rich Johnston"]. I'm a great fan of your work in [comic, show or movie]. Can I help you [or if the person is with someone, "you folks"] find something?"

2. If someone is approachable, nine times out of ten it's because they're lost or confused by the assault of product. If they're not approachable, leave 'em alone, you creep.

3. Please don't follow famous people around, stopping as they do, blocking everyone else's foot traffic. Because I will hate you.

Five Things to Do at the Show

1. The Eisner Awards (Friday Night) -- It's the North American comic book industry stuffed into ill-fitting golf-shirts! If you work in comic books, you should go at least once just to see it. Be warned that attendance by pros seems to have gone up in recent years, so you can't count on a table up front with the nominees just by showing up the way you could ten years ago. Another reason to go is that there tends to be a decent, smallish cocktail party afterwards that's particularly useful for seeing people you might not run into otherwise.

2. The Masquerade (Saturday Night) -- Showtime at the Geekpollo. This is another amazing thing to watch, if only once, although you may get depressed when you realize the participants are probably having way more fun that one night than you had the entire weekend. This is very well attended, and there is usually a line, so count on investing the evening.

3. Go to a Panel -- A good rule of thumb is that if you can't find something in the programming that

specifically interests you, go to anything featuring Sergio Aragones.

4. Shop the Convention Floor -- What's easily available at Comic-Con seems to ebb and flow. In the last half-decade CCI has become a great place to buy original art, cheaper 1970s comics, and, as of 2004, boutique toys. Consider buying your regular comics at home from your retailer so you can buy more specialty items. If you're a fan of alternative cartoonists, you might keep an eye out for a convention-only mini-comic or similar offering. I believe in shopping early and gawking late -- there are a few people that cut prices on Sunday to lighten the return load home, but not as many as you'd think, not with a Chicago show in a couple of weeks.

5. Walk Artists' Alley -- This is the part of the convention consisting of rows of tables set up with artist after artist behind them. Somewhere in the scores of people is someone you didn't know was still alive and someone whose work you've *just* started enjoying. I promise.

Four Types of Comics Panels to Consider Attending

1. Panels With That Year's Featured Non-North American Cartoonist(s) -- You'll probably get to see a slideshow of pretty art, and the person/people likely won't be back anytime soon. I've seen artists like Lorenzo Mattotti, David B., Dupuy and Berberian (above) and Ryoichi Ikegami speak at the show and loved each and every panel. Jean-Claude Mezieres is attending this year, and I'll be in the audience for as much of that one as my schedule allows. Ditto Yoshihiro Tatsumi. I'm talking with Roger Langridge at another one, and hope you'll attend.

2. Panels With Funny People on Them -- If the cartoonist makes you laugh on the page, they will likely make you laugh on the stage.

3. The National Cartoonists Society panel -- Strip cartoonists don't do lots of shows. Plus you can sit in back, sneak in some booze and do a drinking game based on one sip every time someone in the crowd asks how to get their own work syndicated.

4. One-Time-Only Guests -- I'd include older cartoonists in which you have an interest, because no one knows

how the health of such guests will hold up year to year in terms of travel. There are also cartoonists who for whatever reason don't go to a lot of shows. They're usually good guests because they're not burnt out on the experience and want to be as professional as possible. Art Spiegelman was one such who attended in 1999; Gary Panter was another; he was there in 2005. Dan Clowes is there this year after a long absence, and I can't imagine he'll be back anytime soon.

Five Much-Loved Perennial Costumes (That Are Not This Guy)

1. Dirty Wolverine
2. Superman and His Unfortunately Visible Super-Boner
3. Plus-Sized Klingon Warrior Astride His War-Rascal
4. Underpaid, Simmering-With-Rage Security Person
5. Prostitute

Six Shopping Tips

1. If you really like a certain booth, remember to get contact information or pick up a business card from them so you can buy at other times of the year, particularly if they sell out of an item before you get back to buy it. Most vendors attending the show do mail order of some sort.
2. Don't wait too long to buy something you'll really regret not having. There are 100,000 other people here.
3. Hit early those dealers that seem to have a con exclusive on their portion of the market. Stuart Ng Books is a dealer that frequently exhibits that I like to hit early for their older cartooning books. In contrast, I can probably find some *Master of Kung Fus* with Brynocki just as easily on Sunday than I can on Wednesday night.
4. Rory Root's Comic Relief, a convention mainstay, always does a great job of bringing a ton of material, including out-of-print or hard-to-find oddities. Root has a real knack for anticipating demand on some mid-list books that might become popular at the show, like something that's up for multiple Eisners.
5. Between Comic Relief, the similarly loaded Bud Plant area, and, although people might not admit it right away,

the mainstream-heavy, blanket-discounted, trade-focused Mile High Comics booth, you can find most every major comic-related book and comics trade that's in print. Use these shopping areas as the backbone of your new comics buying, and return to them often.

6. My one friend who buys a lot of comics at CCI makes a list before she goes. This includes the price at which she's willing to buy a book, so that she won't buy something she could have bought for cheaper at home or on-line. Makes sense to me. Also, buying when something hits your price point sounds easier than comparison shopping between tables with 100,000 other people in the room.

Six Things I'll Consider Buying

1. Roger Langridge's original art pages (above). They're beautiful and affordable.
2. 1970s Comics from the spinner rack in front of the Lee's Comics booth.
3. Any Jaime Hernandez prepared-for-the-con pen and ink drawings. My friend Gil has three of these framed in his living room and they're stunning. He has two of them up on his web site right now if you want to take a peek.
4. Johnny Ryan's color cartoon portraits. Last year I bought a Snake Plissken.
5. Anything sketchbooky Steve Rude might have at the show.
6. Something from the Twomorrows table, where all the magazines are piled on top of each other, like a four-color pile of to-be-rolled hard candy.

Five Friendly Pros I Enjoy Seeking Out When They're There

1. Batton Lash
2. Jeff Smith
3. Jim Ottaviani
4. Scott McCloud
5. Roger Langridge

Send Me Your Favorite For a Second List

Five Notes About Networking

1. Before the show tell all your friends and acquaintances what your goals are and ask them if they can help. Make this a common request and you'll be surprised how many times a friend knows the one person you're dying to meet, or how frequently friends will look out for you.

2. Access your peers. For instance, if you're a reporter that wants to meet cartoonists, ask the other reporters you meet if they can introduce you to anyone they know.

3. Get to know as many people as you can. In just a few short years, that person in line with you may be more important than the person *with* the line.

4. Be reasonable about what you can accomplish in a weekend. You're probably not going to spark a bidding war for your services between Random House and WW Norton, but you might meet people to whom you can send stuff to when you get home. Someone once described networking to me as "Setting Up For The Follow Up" and that makes a lot of sense to me.

5. Everybody is really, really busy, so please err on the side of forgiving them if they don't provide you exactly with what it is you feel you need. Comics is stuffed with publishers, all of whom want new talent. Taken as a group, comics publisher have a thorough system for finding and exploiting talent. If you have a talent that's suitable to someone, they will eventually find you. Hang in there.

Six Things People Have Told Me About Having Kids Around at the Con

1. For younger kids, one day at the show may be enough. Families that do a lot of cons and are there for a longer time tell me they try to mix up days at the con with other activities like the beach or the zoo. There is a kids' day with more programming aimed at kids; it's on Sundays.

2. Let their desires, energy and moods help dictate your schedule -- Comic-Con can be really tiring, but it's less so for kids when you're seeing things the kids like and letting them decide when to leave panels or go to the next booth.

3. Make sure you eat -- You can't tell a kid to suck it up

the way you can an adult, so it's important to take a snack or two and to maybe even get to the Seaport Village or up into the Gaslamp District for a meal at a regular hour.

4. Drawing is magic -- I've had a couple of parents mention that a great thing about being at the con is being around so many artists whose basic technical skills can be mind-boggling for a kid to experience. Think about maybe getting a few sketches for a kid of their favorite character; many artists in Artist's Alley are there to do modestly priced sketches. Other artists may do something for a kid for free, but don't count on it.

5. If You Have To Dump 'Em -- The Con does offer childcare, but the only person who told me they've used it is one single parent who had a meeting sprung on him last-minute. I'm not even sure the Con will accept kids last-minute, although he can be very convincing.

6. Enjoy the con through their eyes.

Five More Random Tips

1. For some reason, every year 2000-2003 I stumbled across a men's shoe sale somewhere in the Horton Plaza. There's not a lot of shopping to be had in downtown San Diego that isn't such a random, stumbled-upon sale.

2. If you need some alone time, and you might, it may sound crazy but you can always go to a movie. The Pacific Theaters Gaslamp (pictured) and the UA 14 Movies are the nearby movie theaters. Comic-Con is one of the few places you can go where a giant special effects movie is actually relaxing to the eye in comparison to the visual excess of the exhibition hall.

3. If you're friends with an exhibitor, they may let you stash your backpack or stuff you bought at their booth. If this happens, do something for them in return like manning the booth while they take a potty break or bringing them a coffee.

4. Consider using your hotel's spa if it has one. Comics fans are focused on the con to the point there aren't as many reservations during the Con weekend as there are during other industries' trade shows at the convention center. It's a good way to break up time and squeeze some actual vacation mileage out of the event. Plus, by

Saturday, you could probably *use* a massage.

5. If you get bored, do a good deed. Give blood, register to vote, or go buy something from the CBLDF or ACTOR booths. Heck, buy a sketch or comic from someone in Artist's Alley that looks lonely.

Six Things to Do *Outside* the Show

1. Eat Out -- Despite the barely-controlled rage of comics fans at being asked to spend more than \$7 on a meal, San Diego offers up a number of decent-to-fine restaurants of which to avail yourself in the nearby Gaslamp, downtown, and Little Italy neighborhoods. And because comics fans are that ruthlessly cheap, it's easy to find a table. Call ahead anyway if you can, particularly for Friday and Saturday.

2. Visit the Zoo -- San Diego offers one of the great North American zoos. It's a fun way to decompress on a Sunday or a Monday, or to give you and/or your friends the day away from the convention hall on a Thursday or Friday. My motto: There's no vacation that can't be made better by spending quality time with the pygmy marmoset.

3. Visit Tijuana -- This is a great thing to do with a bunch of people, friends new and/or old, and easy to build around a dinner in a way an impromptu meal *doesn't* work in San Diego. Please note this and other slightly grander plans might be easier to with people *not* exhibiting at the show, who won't be able to leave until 7 pm. This is also a fun Sunday night activity.

4. Go to a Party -- There were more large parties ten-twelve years ago. While there's still plenty of hotel bar gathering and the like, actual parties are back, particularly with the addition of non-comics sponsors of all shapes and sizes. I suggest going to every party to which you're invited, and one or two to which you're not.

5. They're not there *during* the show this year, but put it into your head to go to a Padres game if you happen to be in town long enough to hit one on either side of the show. At least remember it for a future year. That's a nice little ballpark -- a solid double in terms of design with a nice view of downtown in the upper level seats that go for about \$18. It's nice place to relax, and the vendor food is decent enough for a junk-food dinner.

6. Use the Water -- San Diego's beaches are nice; all of them said to be worth visiting are worth visiting. One thing I've enjoyed in years past is throwing in with some friends to rent a powerboat. The sailing is pretty good, too, although that's not a skill set you pick up in an afternoon.

Five Places I've Eaten in San Diego (Cheaply)

1. In-N-Out Burger

The only burger joint in the area worth a pilgrimage.

2. Saffron

Really cheap Thai within walking distance.

3. Sun Cafe

Scary and only okay diner that gets points for serving grease and starch which may be what you require to throw on top of all the booze still in your stomach. It's overcrowded on weekend for breakfasts, but fine crowdwise on Thursday and Friday.

4. Pokez Mexican Restaurant

Solid resaturant in the area. An old favorite.

5. Dick's Last Resort

I like it okay for a late lunch, or a liquid lunch, not so much for dinner.

Five Places I've Eaten in San Diego (Somewhat Less Cheaply)

1. Mister Tiki Mai Tai Lounge

I've never been impressed by my entrees, but this kind of food and liquor is really perfect for a group of friends. Slightly more expensive than you'd think.

2. Sadaf Persian Cuisine

I think Bandar, which is a street over, may be better overall; but Sadaf's Chicken Fesenjan competes and it's less busy early in the evening. Persian is the only food that is done better in Southern California than anyplace else in the U.S., so I always try to have some.

3. Turf Supper Club

San Diego hipster mainstay still cool enough in 2005 to baffle my older concierge and garner a "very cool" from my younger one. A very short cab ride. It's cook your own meat in a old-time racing bar, which is a good way to mix meals and socializing. A great place to escape the show.

4. Kono's Cafe

The best breakfast I've had in San Diego. A good bonus to give yourself if you're in a hotel far enough away to be using a car.

5. Mimmo's Italian Village

San Diego does pretty good storefront Italian in general.

Five Places I've Eaten Breakfast In San Diego

1. Kono's Cafe

Don't worry about the line.

2. Cafe 222

In the neighborhood. And really good.

3. St. Tropez Bistro

Very convenient to those in the Westin, the Westgate and the Bristol.

4. The Westgate Gourmet Wine and Delicatessen

More coffee and a food item than orange juice and a plate of meat and eggs, but that may be all you need.

5. Hob Nob Hill

Eat breakfast the way Jack Kennedy used to: unhealthily. Worth the short drive if you have access to a car. If I remember right, they have a carry-out bakery.

Six Additional Tips About Eating in San Diego

1. Many of the hotel bars either have food service or allow food to be ordered into the bar from the hotel's restaurant. This makes them good compromise locations at odd hours when, say, one person wants to get a drink but another person hasn't had anything to eat yet.

2. Work with your concierge, if your hotel has one, particularly if your eating group has special requests. In fact, make sure you ask your concierge at least one goofy, slightly unreasonable question during your stay, even if you don't care to know the answer. It's fun!

3. Starting in 2004 there has been made available a restaurant reservations booth at the convention center complete with menus that was very handy. In '04, it was down towards the humongous movie preview rooms; in '05 it was more centrally located. It's good to head someplace with reservations rather than without, particularly on Friday and Saturday.

4. Never, ever go out to "just find something" to eat with a group of more than three other people. Really. Don't do

it. I'm not kidding. Don't. You'll be sorry. More comics industry friendships and business relationships have ended with the words, "Screw you people! I'm going back to the room and ordering a pizza!" than in any company's boardroom.

5. Here's a list of late-night diners in San Diego.

6. If you're super-obsessive about this, San Diego offers about a half-dozen frequently updated Foodie Blogs.

Eleven Things to Remember About Booze at the Con

1. If you're worried about the cost of booze, you can always throw a "pre-party" in your hotel room and consume cheap, store-bought hooch with your closest friends before moving to a bar or party. If you can still make it to the bar.

2. Mental exhaustion from exhibiting is like three beers right there.

3. Lots of people in comics and at the show don't drink; there's no stigma for or against consumption. (Except for the book publishing people, who are drunk 24 hours a day.) The only odd thing about comics culture and alcohol is that many people in comics drink as if they discovered the world of alcohol three weeks ago, so sometimes late nights at conventions can feel like tear night during fraternity rush. Adjust your expectations accordingly.

4. Since it's summer, men can order drinks that have colors in them or that are fizzy and have limes in them without fear of scorn and/or reprisal, except maybe from Beau Smith. Bonus tip: the Cape Codder, Mojito, and Sea Breeze all have the advantage of customarily being served in glasses that do *not* look dumbassed being lugged around on a deck, lawn or porch.

5. If you desire a gin and tonic -- and it's the class of the all-male Memorial Day to Labor Day drink options so it's a perfectly rational desire -- here's a secret: the regular Bombay gin is better than the more expensive Bombay Sapphire. This is important because Bombay is the best sounding cheap liquor to order by name. "Bombay and tonic" sounds like something that will arrive at your table in triumphant fashion on top of an elephant wearing a pith hat and a bemused expression,

while "Tanqueray and tonic" sounds like something that you slough off the deck of a ship.

6. Remember this bit of drinking-on-a-budget doggerel: "all drinks after the second drink might as well be well drinks."

7. Beer for beer, dive bars are far less expensive than hotel bars.

8. You are, however, much less likely to get your ass kicked in a hotel bar.

9. If you walk into a party to which you weren't invited, getting drinks at the bar may bring with it one more round of scrutiny. Look confident, be prepared.

10. You can offer to buy your favorite creator a drink if you want to, but it's not necessary and it's not a guaranteed in. In fact, it's kind of hard to do this without looking like a dork.

11. There used to be things to consume *other* than booze for those people who enjoy breaking the law and making the Statue of Liberty cry. But thanks to increased airport security, that entertainment option is pretty much locals-only. The moral? BEFRIEND THE LOCALS.

A Few Last Random Things

1. Above is my favorite photo from a San Diego Con. I have a weakness for the meta-panels, the ones with names like "San Diego Con Memories" or this one, which was a panel set up for people to complain about the Con in progress. As I recall, this guy had his fair share of complaints.

2. The Manx Media party at The Casbah on Thursday night looks like a good time. It's far enough away from the usual con activities to feel like you're getting away from the show, too.

3. I'm one of those old-timers that sees manga as less its own thing and simply as "more comics" from another of the world's great comics traditions, so I'm probably not the first person you go to for special tips on how to enjoy manga and anime at Comic-Con. Still, manga and anime fans are certainly out in force and the publishers and producers have a strong, professional presence. Most of

the young people you see dressed up are wearing some sort of manga-related costume. You can experience the show from a manga-heavy point of view the same way you experience any other area (old superheros, art comics, movies) that interests you -- visiting the related booths on the exhibition floor and going to the panels and previews that feature this kind of material.

4. My favorite memories of San Diego Con are the small, personal moments. Like last year: I was standing at a comics-related booth talking with some friends. Their booth was across the aisle from an exhibitor that had set up consoles where people could play a new Hulk videogame. This little kid was playing, and our conversaton began to drift as we each began to notice that all this kid had the Hulk doing was beat up what looked like cows. Throwing the cows. Slamming them down. I think even kicking the cows. This eventually ended our conversaton cold, and we continued to watch for a silent 30 seconds. Finally, someone put it into words, "Man, that kid *hates* cows."

Six Common Con Activities With Which I'm Largely Unfamiliar

1. "Breaking Into Comics" Panels -- Be talented and professional; be prepared to start small and work your way up. There, now you don't have to go.

2. Portfolio Reviews -- I would suppose the key here is to show work as close to the work you want to be hired to do as possible, follow their rules, enjoy your time in line as best you can and take the advice given. Most people break into comics by doing them, anymore, so *my* advice is to start doing comics. The great Steve Lieber has some tips here.

3. Autograph Seeking -- There are lots of people signing stuff: set up by the con, at their publishers, at their spaces. It's not my thing, but I certainly have friends who seek out signatures for books, especially for gifts. The only advice they give me is to check out charity-related booths like the CBLDF, or any smaller publisher that carries the creator's work. Those places might allow you to get an autograph without having to stand in a hugely long line. If that's impossible, enjoy your line experience with like-minded fans, because it's likely unavoidable. Matt Groening stands in lines; you can, too. That's Dave Cooper doing a sketch in the photo.

4. Gaming and Other Related Nerdy Arts -- There is a lot of general fan activity in San Diego, gaming and whatnot; there even used to be some hardcore *Star Trek* stuff, but I'm not 100 percent sure about that anymore. I bet there still is, though. The con schedule on the site and the paper version that gets sent to people who register should tell you everything you need to know to find what you're looking for.

5. Taking the buses -- the con runs buses in circuits from participating hotels to the convention center and back on pre-determined routes. They're pretty great if you are staying up the other side of Broadway from the convention center; otherwise, I've always walked or used cabs. San Diego has pedicabs, but the only time I took one is when a guy gave me a free, pity ride rather than see me beat up by CBLDF-hired security. Some people really like pedicabs when they're exhausted. Get a price before hand and be sure to tip. Oh, and the con buses run really late, too, although as a Richmond Senior Center Dollywood Trip veteran I can attest that getting on a bus when you're filled with liquor can be a disheartening moment to match no other.

6. Eating Out (Seafood) -- It would make sense that San Diego would have some fine seafood restaurants, but the majority of my time going there I've lived in Seattle and just didn't feel the need to seek any out. Sorry. I've heard good things about Blue Point for high-end seafood, Harbor Fish and Chips for seaside carry-around chow, and Tin Fish as a convenient place to find that San Diego staple, the fish taco. I can't personally vouch for any of them, though!

Five Small Joys to be Had Late in the Weekend

1. A first-time attendee flipping out and becoming acid-tongued and bitter. It's so cute.
2. People sitting outside the convention proper, lined up along the walls of the lobby like kids at a middle-school dance waiting for a ride home.
3. Young couples in related costumes holding hands.
4. Exhausted security people openly making disparaging comments about attendees by Saturday morning. Upstairs is a better show than the main hall.

5. Weird, lightly attended Sunday morning panels where everyone involved is too tired to whitewash the truth. Sunday 10-12 should be re-named the Howard Beale timeslot.

Ten Ways to Say Goodbye to CCI

1. Watch the final few holes of the British Open from bed on Sunday; I swear it's on TV like every third year.
2. Say goodbye Saturday night and skip Sunday altogether, avoiding any potential disillusionment from encountering desiccated, grumpy cartooning idols.
3. If you're feeling guilty or unclean, the Christian Cartoonists Panel is sort of like church. They pray and everything.
4. Go back to beach on your way to the airport and retrieve your a) eyeglasses b) wallet c) underwear.
5. Put your costume on and eat the champagne brunch at the Horton Grand in character.
6. Walk around and hint loudly that you have blackmailable dirt on various DC and Marvel editors based on what you saw over the weekend. If you're convincing, you might get some work out of it.
7. Give your badge to the angriest-looking local kid who asks for it as you leave the show for the last time, so that crimes will be committed in your name.
8. Stay an extra day and hang out with the other people who do the same, soaking in that "last day of summer/we are the c.i.t.'s" vibe. Sometimes there are Sunday night thank-you or "dead dog" parties to crash. Going to a nice dinner and crashing early can be a good idea, too.
9. (Semi-advanced travelers only) Take your car out of the expensive hotel parking on Saturday night and try to park near your hotel on the street, which may be slightly easier to do on Saturday night and Sunday daytime than the other days. You save \$25 on parking, and the next morning you can stuff your bags to your car rather than check them in at the sure-to-be-obscenely-crowded bellhop counter.

10. (Super-advanced travelers only) Save a night's hotel by scheduling your Sunday flight early and going straight from the bar or beach late Saturday night (or restaurant) to the airport. Or to breakfast and then the airport. Must have light luggage load, a friend willing to store stuff, or a car rental.

Six Things To Do When You Get Home

1. Sleep.
2. Get all of your business and networking follow-ups out the door by Friday. There's no reason you should have the same discussions about the same things next year that you had this year, although you'd be surprised how often that happens.
3. Write about the show, whether as magnificently as a classic Steve Lieber/Jeff Parker effort, or as modestly as a message board post. It's genuinely fascinating -- well, at least to me -- to read about other people's experiences, to find out what that group you walked by at the Omni was talking about, for instance, or what happened at the panel you couldn't visit.
4. Get back to work, you bum.
5. Unpack all of your stuff. If something's gone missing, it's better to know sooner than later.
6. Make your reservations for next year.

And that's it. Have fun. Smile. Say hi if you see me; I'd like to meet you. And please, e-mail me with obvious errors, your favorite cartoonist to visit, and any tips of your own. Especially stuff like places that are closed; I probably missed at least one of those.

Photos by Whit Spurgeon, 2003; yes, my brother photographs his food. Also, it should be noted that Comic-Con International and Mile High Comics are advertisers here; in my defense, consuming gin basically killed my father, and I think I'm quite fair to the gin companies.

Wait! Before You Leave: Special After the Credits Bonus Section of Additional, Random Tips From CR Readers

From Jackie Estrada:

Don't miss out on a program or autograph signing because you didn't know about it ahead of time. You have lots of resources to choose from: (1) www.comic-con.org will have the program schedule and other event information posted starting next week; (2) everyone gets a free Events Guide at registration that lists not only the programs, signings, film showings, anime schedule, and so on but has an "Around the Booths" rundown of what's happening where in the Exhibit Hall; (3) the daily newsletter is available Thursday through Sunday as you walk into the convention center and at the Info booth, with programming changes and additions, that day's happenings, news tidbits, and other stuff.

In addition, some fan websites and message boards will have advance postings about gatherings, specialized programming, and booth happenings, so it's worthwhile to make a few Google visits before the Con looking for items of interest.

From Chris Arrant came this question:

Here's a dumb travel question, but I have to ask. What should I do to ensure my laptop's safe at the hotel while I'm at the con? I just bought a new one, and it would ruin my trip if a hotel person snagged it. As much as I like it, I'm not lugging it around on the con floor. I'm just bringing a camera, audio recorder, notepad and backpack.

Since I thought that was a great question, I asked to answer it here:

I never thought of that before. I have an old laptop run by steam I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy so it's all I can do not to stick it out in the hallway in the hope that some poor soul takes it away from me.

I called [Chris's hotel]. They told me they have one hotel safe big enough for a laptop, a safe that is free for guests as long as you don't lose the key. When that safe is full, most of their business travelers check their laptops in at the front desk, where they're put in a very safe location and returned to the guest when they get back. I would assume those hotels that don't have room safes have variation on these options, and that it's worth checking ahead on this matter with a phone call.

Jim Murdoch of Comic Madness:

One point to add that may help someone: if possible, register and pay on Sunday for next year, whether you're an attendee or an exhibitor. This will get you the best price, and save you from missing the deadline.

Mark Butler:

I have one thing to add that I didn't see mentioned and I wish I knew about earlier. Some celebrities only do small autograph signings that you need to win a raffle to take part in. I didn't see that announced anywhere. I learned about it when a staff member asked if I wanted to buy a raffle for the chance to get Natalie Portman's autograph. I understand that the cast of the movie "Serenity" had a small signing through

raffle also. If interested, people need to look out for those raffles.

Gabriel Neeb:

If you're young enough (17 to early 20s), I advise Volunteering. And if you do it early enough, you get picked for shifts in the days and weeks before the Con starts- and that's fun because you get a look at the behind-the-scenes stuff and you get your requirements for admission out of the way (not to mention other benefits, I played fly-on-the-wall to this one conversation...).

John Galitzen:

Rather than eat the horrible food at the con, last year I took advantage of the 5 minute walk out the back of the con. There is a Joe's crab shack there. While not the greatest seafood ever, it beats the pants off of the food at the con. They have daily \$6.99 lunch specials that are pretty good. Getting a lunch special and a large beer, my daily bill was \$11-15 including tax and tip. Considering a slice of tasteless pizza and a soda cost \$9 or so at the con, it was well worth it to go to Joes. Also, it was very relaxing there and provided a much needed break. Be warned that it does tend to get VERY crowded around 4pm.

Terry Tyson:

Although you mention the SD Zoo, a walk about in nearby Balboa Park is a great way to spend some free time during the con. The park and its museums are a real treasure, providing a nice break from the manic nature of the convention. Two of my favorite haunts are the Mingei International Museum which showcases world folk art and craft and the SD Art Museum which has

a great Warhol exhibit currently up.

The Model Railroad Museum is a gas and appeals to the geek in me on some level or other. The Museum of Photographic Arts generally has a film related exhibit on display. The Park's main restaurant, "The Prado" is very nice, very pricey. For a light snack, check out the Japanese Friendship Garden, serving tea and light snacks. The ever-present hotdog cart is nearby.

4th and B is a very nice club in downtown SD, (surprisingly located at the corner of 4th and B Streets) featuring an eclectic array of musical acts and house music.

Pam Noles:

Yoga. Do yoga before you start the day and it makes a world of difference at the end of the day. If you're not the yoga doing type, even just 1/2 hour of doing a few basic stretches before leaving the room in the morning will help a person get through all the day's running around without limping.

I'd like to offer a counter to one item submitted. I don't know where Gabriel Neeb got the idea that volunteering is for the young, but one does *not* need to be a child to volunteer for CCI. (All you have to do is stand on the floor, open your eyes and Look to realize this.) CCI's volunteer corps ranges from teens to people in their 70s. There is a job for every age, skill level and physical ability. You can put in a couple of hours, or take the Kool-Aid and throw in for a whole day the entire run.

Just mentioning this because it would be a bummer for someone thinking about volunteering to back out due to a belief that you have to be a kid to do it. I was not in my teens or 20s when I started volunteering for show, I'm even further

from being in my teens and 20s now, and I'm still here. So are all of my We Are Not Teenagers friends. Really, his statement was just so idiotic it irritated me enough to say something. (And for as long as you've been coming to show, you should have known better than to let that run unchallenged.)

Rory Root:

After you've spent too much on those out-of-print GN's and cool comics and the weight is getting to you; in the front lobby is a UPS or Fed Ex shipping station.

Send those books off to your home so you don't have to worry about getting them to the airport. Let alone carrying them around for the rest of the day.

Large exhibitors may have a box or two to spare, especially if you bought part of your horde at their booth.

Someone asked me:

Will there be wireless available at the convention center?

David Glanzer wrote back:

We're locking that down now, and we should have Wireless capability at the Press Room which is 33A on the top floor of the San Diego Convention Center.

David Glanzer wrote in on his own:

I wanted to mention something in regard to the comment from Mr. Butler above. The "staff member" he was talking about was probably a staff member of a

particular booth.

Comic-Con doesn't sell raffle tickets for any event or prize. While tickets may be required for some prizes, the distribution of them is always free.