A quarter to three in the morning is no time for a human to be awake unless he or she is delivering milk, going ice fishing, or preparing the Farm Report for a local community TV station. Yet there I was, rolling out of bed at that ungodly hour in an effort to make the 6 a.m. flight to Seattle. I do love Seattle, so that's cool. And the fact that I'm on the way to ZomBcon—a zombie themed convention in a city I dig—well that's very cool. It's almost cool enough to make this ridiculous time acceptable. Almost.

I'm in the car by 3:30 hoping to be at the airport around 4, two hours early (as recommended by the airline) despite my future travelling companion insisting that "at that time in the morning it'll be quiet!" That's right, for the first time ever I wouldn't be making the journey solo, as my editor, Mr. Chris Alexander would be heading down with me to participate as one of the featured guests.

Despite telling the shuttle driver (of the off site parking lot) which airline I was flying, he dropped me off at the wrong terminal, resulting in a frenzied search for a non-existent airline counter followed by a train ride back to the correct terminal. I now had less than 90 minutes before the flight and I was facing a massive lineup—no sign of Chris "it'll be quiet at that time of the morning" Alexander of course.

Chris finally turned up 10 minutes before boarding and promptly took off again to get a coffee—and that was the last I saw of him until long after myself and the airline had given him up for lost, when he was running down the aisle of the airplane he personally held up. I was too tired to pull off a convincing "I don't know this guy" so I just squirmed in my seat in uncomfortable embarrassment. Now that's how you start a weekend.

After an uneventful flight and a well-timed connection in Chicago we bounced into Seattle around 10:30 (three hour time change) where we were escorted to the hotel by the very congenial ZomBcon volunteer Tamar Bains. The con was taking place at the Hilton Seattle Airport and Conference Centre; the same facility Crypticon was held at last spring. Great hotel, the staff are amazing and the bar/restaurant area is very inviting, albeit a little pricy.

(I think that if they offered a convention rate fare, the less affluent attendees would be more inclined to eat there, but maybe the idea is to maintain a more upper scale experience, which is fine. I personally find the atmosphere and convenience worth the few extra clams)

After stowing our gear we wandered down to the convention hall to register at the press/guest table and ran straight into a cabal of FANGORIA flag wavers; Sean Smithson, Heather Buckley, Thom Carnell, and Mars Homeworld, who would all be moderating the various guest panels spread over the course of the weekend. The first one would be with NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD's Judith O'Dea but that wouldn't be for an hour or so yet, giving us a little time to freshen up. And by freshen up I mean we had time to retire to the bar for a couple of drinks (hey, It was 2:00pm back home).

If you've read my Crypticon column, you may remember that this particular Hilton has the distinction of being the only place in America I know of that makes a Bloody Caesar (think Bloody Mary, only drinkable) and all I needed was one of those to clear out the travel-sludge. I was now ready to take the con by the horns.

Chris and I snuck into the O'Dea panel already in progress. Judith is attractive, energetic and engaged. She gave a fun panel and I snapped a few shots before the unanimous decision was made to head back to the bar for more fortification. There were to be a few more back to back

panels in the immediate future and we needed to build up our strength.

But first I took a detour to check out the layout of the main hall to see if I could find my Seattle friends. I was immediately rewarded when ran into the talented artist Nick Gucker, one of the genuinely friendliest guys I've met on the road. We caught up for a bit and I promised to drop by and see him later in the 'artists alley' where he was squirreled away.

Next I found my pals Charity and Born at the Blysster Press booth - Charity's independent publishing company - where we hugged and helloed and made plans for later. On the way out of the main hall, I saw Elissa Dowling down at the far end engaged in conversation. I had to catch her later to say hello, as well as make plans for an interview as we'd discussed earlier online. But first, the lounge.

I found Chris in the bar at a table with Sean Smithson and his daughter Rayne talking movies. It seemed to me that another Caesar would be a fine idea at this point and as the nice young lady behind the bar was getting pretty damn good at making them, one turned into a couple (maybe three but who's counting) before we wrapped up and scooted back to the convention hall for a Future of Fango panel, followed by a nostalgic discussion on VHS.

After shooting a pile of pictures of the FANGORIA mob, I took a little 'me' time to go and meet/shoot some of the guests before it got too busy. I have to say at this point that I was puzzled by the layout when it came to the guest placement. As a rule, they're always at the end of the vendor area, but here they were in a long row in the outside hallway. If things got busy the lineups would block the hallway, plus there was no way the folks behind the tables could conveniently get out from behind them for pictures with their fans.

The tables were all occupied, but there were still some people missing and I wasn't sure where to find them. In the mean time I was very excited to meet who was there, as several of my all time favorite zombie flicks were richly represented.

This is where ZomBcon shone. The guest list was extraordinary in not only the films the guests were culled from from, but even more so, how incredibly cool and friendly these particular people were.

For the next hour, I felt like a little kid in a candy shop, chatting with Lori Cardille, Jarlath Conroy, Antone Dileo, and John Amplas from DAY OF THE DEAD; Eugene Clark from LAND OF THE DEAD, David Emge from DAWN OF THE DEAD; and of course, Judith from NIGHT. Brother, if you had any idea how many times I've watched these people battle the hordes, struggling to survive the apocalypse—well I'm sure you get it or you wouldn't be reading this. I was in heaven. To any event, organizers who happen upon this report, take note, these people are all gold and more than worth than whatever it takes to bring them on board.

There were a few guests I've met before, like Tom Savini, Sid Haig, and Bill Moseley (I've seen Bill so many times this year I wouldn't be even mildly shocked if he was to walk out of my downstairs bathroom one morning and sit down for breakfast) as well as a few guests I was eager to meet for the first time.

Ian McCulloch (ZOMBIE, ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST) was someone I was anxious to say hello to, and he proved to be one of the most interesting guests at the con. I found it would be Jarlath and Ian that I would continue to return and chat with throughout the course of the weekend.

Another highlight for me was meeting Electra and Elise Avellan, aka The Crazy Babysitter Twins. Holy crap, these girls are gorgeous, not to mention petite, bubbly, funny, and very friendly!

I wandered the floor taking shots of the very cool zombies shambling around the aisles (some of these guys stay in character 24/7), still wondering where the hell Elissa was when I passed a room with a couple of the guests who were signing separately from everyone else. Norman Reedus of THE WALKING DEAD, and Sean Patrick Flanery were definitely on my list of folks to check out, which I briefly did, and left them before I realized that there was a reason they were paired up, namely THE BOONDOCK SAINTS, a movie I was never personally crazy about but turned out to be the biggest draw of the show, if panels count for anything.

At this point I was determined to find out where Elissa was hidden (I had covered every inch of the vendor, guest and panel area and still couldn't find her) so I started asking people if anyone knew her whereabouts until eventually one soul pointed to the 'chill zone' near the exit doors that the smokers took to go light up. That didn't make any sense to me—there were no guests out there—but I wandered out in that direction and still couldn't see her until I turned to go back into the hall. There she was, around the corner just inside the door. She might as well have been on the roof.

She introduced me to her friend Jooley and we chatted for bit until it became apparent that they were about to close house for the evening. It was now dark, I was hungry (I'd forgotten to eat a lunch) and I was suddenly hammered with a wave of travel fatigue. There was a big party after the con, but there was no way in Hell I was going to have the groceries to make it. Just enough juice left for a light dinner with Charity, and then I crashed hard, like an off color joke at a prayer meeting.

Stay tuned for Part Two coming shortly!