

De Young Disaster

By Joan Bowers
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

San Francisco is still reeling from a VIPER attack that killed eight, injured 83 and destroyed part of the city's treasured cultural spot -- the de Young Museum.

The onslaught took place at a little past 9:30 p.m. while 500 guests were attending a gala opening for the de Young's special arms and armor exhibit - "Knight's Gambit."

The festivities were broken when a two-ton, armored VIPER agent crashed through the museum's 19th century stained glass cupola and caught local paranormal Knightblade in his grasp.

PRIMUS Silver Avenger Maria Chow attempted to stop the monstrosity by drawing it away from guests, however the figure opened fire with what witnesses described as a "canon" knocking the Avenger back into the bowels of the museum.

After that, witness accounts diverge dramatically. Some blame a group of local paranormals, dubbed by one guest as the Golden Gate Guardians -- another as the Golden Gate Goofs -- for most of the damage.

"They just attacked the thing and kept antagonizing it," said Joseph Swift, president and CEO of Northwest

Industries. "If they had just left it alone, VIPER would have robbed the museum and only hurt that paranormal Knightblade."

Witnesses described three separate attacks on the creature by paranormals. They include:

- A dragon that appeared from the recesses of the museum and then attempted to tackle the VIPER agent. The agent bathed the dragon in fire and then fired canon rounds into it.

"No, I don't know where it came from," said Thomas O'Malley, retired San Francisco Police Commissioner, in a rather sardonic tone. "Maybe the Asian Art Museum?"

- A freezing mist and wind that was launched by Morgana Windrifter. Ms. Windrifter has been a longtime activists for paranormal rights. Later Windrifter apparently attempted to deflect some of the debris that crashed down on party



The VIPER Mech

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Priceless art stolen during VIPER attack

By Joan Bowers
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

\$37 million.

If human life has a price tag, it was set Friday night at the de Young Museum.

In an attack that took eight lives, VIPER also got away with \$37 million in valuable artwork.

Using subterfuge and brute force, VIPER kept the museum guests occupied by attacking Knightblade, a paranormal guest of honor at a reception for the new exhibit "Knight's Gambit."

While paranormal guests fought a VIPER agent encased in powdered armor, other VIPER agents made off with the artwork.

More might have been stolen except for the intervention of a mysterious group of heroes whose identities are still shrouded in mystery.

"All PRIMUS knows at this time is that some group attacked the VIPER

agents while they were stealing the artwork," said PRIMUS West Coast spokeswoman Denise Cheung.

Cheung refused to provide more information, but a witness to the crime described these unknown heroes as "invisible knights."

Marcia Thompson, member of the de Young Museum's Board of Directors, was attempting to escape the museum and warn PRIMUS about the VIPER attack when she stumbled across the theft in progress.

"I thought I was going to die," Thompson said. "This VIPER agent leveled a gun at me and I was praying to God when the air just moved."

"It was like the shadows in the museum came alive. There was a shimmer in the air and then VIPER agents were flying across the room. I could hear the sound of blows and I could certainly see the effects, but I couldn't see the actual

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Priceless museum treasures taken while guests and paranormals distracted

Denise Forbes: 16, honor student and student body president at Palo Alto High School. Daughter of Millicent and Geoffery Forbes, owners of the Consortium Mines Corporation.

Thomas Le Roi: 42, owner of Le Roi Furniture company. Member of Rotary and veteran of the U.S. Navy. Survived by two children Jane, 12, and Robert, 16.

Stella Le Roi: 38, homemaker. Member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Also a member of the Mount Zion Hospital Board of Directors. Survived by two children Jane, 12, and Robert, 16.

Bob Butler: 77, president and CEO of First National Bank. Former member of the San Francisco City Council. Member of the Kiwanis Club. WWII veteran and member of the 101st

Airborne - the Screaming Eagles.

Marcus Donhaven: 18, student at U.C. Berkeley majoring in environmental science. Member of the Phi Kappa Beta fraternity. Survived by parents Bob and Betty Donhaven and sister Shelia Donhaven.

The Victims: Shelia Cascade: 24, reporter at KNBC news, San

Francisco. Member of the Broadcast Journalist Association and winner of the Emmy for best political reporting. Survived by Brother Thomas Cascade.

Janice Brown: 32, software developer at Tri-Systems. Graduate of Princeton. Survived by daughter Anne, 6.

Stan Cornish: 30, owner of Tri-Systems. Rotarian. Graduate of Princeton. Named one of Time's 50 computer developers to watch in 1996.

Emperor Willie Decrees Paranormals a Menace

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guests after the attack.

"I'll give the babe credit," said Jon Vincent, president of CC records. "I really don't know whether she helped or hurt things. She was stirring around a lot of glass with those winds, but she helped keeping the roof from hitting at least my head. And damn, she looked hot in that dress."

An unknown super jumped on the VIPER mech's leg as it escaped. Witnesses were unsure who the super was. However, they agreed that no one saw him before that moment.

"I don't know what he was doing," said Carl Ponté, a member of the de Young's Board of Directors. "But, he certainly wasn't helping the public."

"The real heroes were people like Mark Burton. That young man pushed my daughter and me out of the way of that VIPER monstrosity. He saved our lives and broke his leg in the process."

"That is true heroism."

The paranormals attacked the armored VIPER agent unsuccessfully. In the ensuing battle, half of the de Young's ceiling came down, including the museum's well known front tower.

PRIMUS agents arrived at the scene within 10 minutes of the attack, but VIPER had fled the scene. However a few injured VIPER agents were discovered in the museum.

Apparently they had been in the process of robbing the museum, using the attack to cover their actions. Their theft attempt was not completely successfully. While they got away with \$37 million in valuable pieces of artwork, including a set of rare marble friezes from the Bronze Age, they were partially thwarted by an unknown group of heroes.

Apparently an "invisible" group defended the museum and injured five VIPER agents.

"The theft could have been quite worse had it not been for those people," said Harry S. Parker, III, who oversees both the de Young and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor.

"We thank them and urge them to come forward so the museum can properly express its gratitude."

PRIMUS has been characteristically quiet about the attack.

PRIMUS West Coast spokeswoman Denise Cheung said the agency has not determined the exact target of the attack.

"Yes, they did rob the museum, but we cannot rule out the possibility that this attack was also motivated by revenge against the paranormal Knightblade," Cheung said.

"PRIMUS plans to interview Knightblade when he awakens from surgery."

Knightblade is listed in serious condition

in the Intensive Care Unit at Mount Zion Hospital.

Doctors said his condition would have been worse had not a paranormal healer helped him. Cassandra Salvatore, assistant curator at the de Young Museum turns out to also have super powers.

At this time it is unknown if Salvatore is the superheroine known only as Psynergie who has thwarted VIPER before or another new Bay Area paranormal, Odyssey.

Witnesses say Salvatore healed several people injured in the attack including Knightblade, the dragon and citizens caught by flying debris when the ceiling crashed down.

"It was too little, too late," said Millicent Forbes. "If she's a superhero, why couldn't she heal my baby? She certainly rushed to save that other paranormal Knightblade and that dragon. Where was she when a normal needed her? Where was she when my baby needed her?"

Forbes' 16-year-old daughter Denise was killed in the attack, along with seven others. Those dead include: Thomas Le Roi, 42; Stella Le Roi, 38; Bob Butler, 77; Marcus Donhaven, 18; Sheila Cascade, 24; Janice Brown, 32; and Stan Cornish, 30.

PRIMUS has been reticent to comment on the involvement of paranormals at the attack.

"We are reviewing the museum's security tapes as well as footage taken by the media," Cheung said. "We have also subpoenaed all unaired footage shot by the television stations that were at the party."

Officially, PRIMUS has openly discouraged the actions of unsanctioned paranormals fighting crime, citing the danger of untrained people engaging in police actions.

"Our main concern is for the public's safety," Cheung said. "While we know that many of these paranormals have good intentions, without proper training they could be a danger to themselves and the public. Good intentions are not enough."

"We will be speaking with the known paranormals that were at the event and encouraging them to let PRIMUS handle things like this."

The incident has already sparked an outcry by the public. No sooner had the first news reports come out about the disaster then talk began of possibly reviving the Paranormal Registration Bill.

"In memory of Senator Relm and all the others who have died in the wake of paranormal violence, we must act now," Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said in a press release issued shortly after the attack.

"We cannot allow this tide of paranormal violence to continue unchecked or it will wash away all normals caught in its path."

Feinstein did not say what would be

included in the bill she proposes but vowed that she would campaign to stop the deaths.

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown also climbed onto the paranormal pulpit Friday. Brown was one of the 500 guests caught in the attack.

After witnessing first hand the destructive power of paranormals and VIPER, Brown said he had no choice but to reverse his normally liberal position.

"After seeing the death and destruction at the de Young, I can only come to one conclusion," Brown said. "We must take stronger action to bring these super-powered villains under control."

"I will push for legislation both in the state legislature and in Washington D.C. to increase funding of PRIMUS. Only a properly armored force can withstand attacks like these."

Brown also offered praise for Silver Avenger Chow whom he said acted with "great spirit in the face of overwhelming odds."

The only thing certain about the outcome of Friday night's debacle is that it has served to reignite the debate about paranormals.

"Look, I don't know who to blame for all of this," said Charlie Denton, a long-time supporter of the de Young museum who was caught in the fight. "I mean VIPER, paranormals -- who's to say what's worse? All I can say is that when push comes to shove, it's always the normals that get hurt. It's always the normals that die."

Industrialist Albert Hudson left only minutes before mech attacked

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Opinion

Where have all our heroes gone?

They certainly were not present Friday night at the de Young Museum.

That evening, San Francisco was in desperate need of a paranormal savior. A mechanical beast was unleashed by VIPER on 500 unarmed party guests at the museum.

The VIPER monstrosity immediately grabbed and attacked Knightblade -- a San Francisco paranormal who was attending the event as a guest of honor. When the attack ended eight people were dead and 83 injured -- 18 of those critical.

Sad but not surprising, you say? That's what happens when terrorists attack? A week ago the Examiner would have agreed with you. We would have deplored the actions of VIPER and called for an increased effort to stop these terrorists.

But not now.

Friday night and the actions of a few paranormals -- we will not call them heroes -- has changed that.

We'll never know if all VIPER wanted was to take its revenge on just one super and rob the de Young.

We'll never know if eight deaths and countless injuries could have been avoided.

Thanks to the irresponsible actions of a handful of paranormals we can only bury our dead and nurse our injured.

The missteps were countless: Attacking the creature in the midst of an unprotected crowd and drawing its gunfire into this crowd; The use of powers that did more damage to the public than the VIPER agent; Failing to shield many of the guest when their own actions helped bring the museum's roof down.

This paper knows that had Silver Avenger Chow -- backed up by PRIMUS agents -- been left to handle the situation the result would have been much different. Chow, before she was knocked

out in a serious blast, was drawing the creature away from innocent bystanders.

Had she not been so ruthlessly injured -- we are confident that she would have been able to coordinate a far more successful attack on this monstrosity. One that would have protected -- not injured -- the public.

Why are we so certain. Because Chow -- unlike these self-appointed defenders -- is a trained member of law enforcement. As a PRIMUS Silver Avenger she has been tested, taught and is used to dealing with threats like this. These untried supers have not.

All of this leads us to one conclusion.

The combination of untrained paranormals and an unknowing public is too dangerous.

Therefore this newspaper's editorial board is urging the revival of a modified Paranormal Registration Bill.

While we still contest the constitutionality of requiring a paranormal to register their existence, there needs to be some sort of accountability in cases where paranormals injure unknowing members of the public.

We recommend that a revised bill do the following:

- Recognize that PRIMUS and established law enforcement agencies are the only authority to deal with paranormal criminals.
- Set up the groundwork for prosecuting paranormals for gross negligence in the use of their powers.
- Allow victims to sue for damages.

These steps will provide for some accountability to those supers who recklessly use their powers with no consideration for the public.

It is the least we can do the answer the cries of those eight souls who lost their lives Friday night.

Counterpoint

A new sign should be posted outside the San Francisco city limits. "Heroes, saviors and Good Samaritans not welcome."

It seems only fair to warn them that the citizens of this city are too paranoid to accept their help.

Yes, paranoid. It is the only word that can describe this irrational fear that has swept through our streets, a fear that has paralyzed us like Shakespeare's Hamlet. Obsessed by calculating all the possible outcomes - the what-ifs and why-fors -- we stand mired in inaction.

Now, the Examiner has the audacity to suggest that we should bind San Francisco's paranormals in these chains of idleness.

I refer, of course, to this paper's support of a bill that would punish the very people who are trying help save the city.

Friday night at the de Young Museum, it was not the paranormals in attendance who attacked the guests. That was the work of VIPER, a terrorist group.

Does the Examiner speak out against VIPER or call for more funding to law enforcement to quash this group? No. Instead it blames the very people who sought to stop the violence.

The paper suggests that the public should be able to sue paranormals if they are unable to save someone from injury.

These paranormals are untrained in the use of their powers and could cause harm, their editorial suggests.

By that same logic, we should prosecute the Good Samaritan who runs into the burning house to save a trapped child? Under the Examiner's line of reasoning, we should sue the Good Samaritan for gross negligence. He's not a fireman. He's not trained to handle situations like this.

But we don't sue the Good Samaritan. Instead, the state of California -- the people of California -- have passed laws protecting the Good Samaritan.

We have recognized that in running into the burning house to rescue the trapped child the Good Samaritan exemplifies the very best in man - his ability to sacrifice himself for the sake of another.

If we respect the normal man for his ability to love his brother better than he loves himself, how can we not respect the paranormal who does the same?

Helena Amory is a physician specializing in paranormal medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

Stolen Treasures: Continued from Page 1

person that was delivering the attack.

"It was like the air came alive to fight VIPER," Thompson added.

Several VIPER agents were found unconscious at the crime scene, having received a severe beating. The VIPER agents' irises were a blood red color, which faded over time.

The agents have not yet regained consciousness and are being held under tight security at Mount Zion Hospital. High levels of an unidentified amphetamine were discovered in their bloodstream. This has puzzled doctors and PRIMUS.

PRIMUS and local law enforcement as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation are investigating.

"Whomever those people were, they have done the world a great service," Thompson said about the unknown heroes. "The artwork that was saved will brighten the lives of all who come to see it."

"These agents-for-good deserve a medal. They epitomized the meaning of the words chivalry and knight."

Items stolen include:

- 12 marble friezes from the Great Altar of Pergamon. These items were on loan from the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. They contain some of the best examples of Hellenistic sculpture. Estimated value of the sculpture pieces is set at \$25 million.
- A silver tankard made by Paul Revere. Soethby's sold a similar tankard for \$2.5 million in 1995.
- Frank Lloyd Wright's "Tree of Life" window. Estimated value of \$5.1 million.
- Georgia O'Keefe's "Petunias." Valued at \$950,000.
- Bingham's 1846 "Boatmen on the Missouri." Estimated value of \$250,000.

· Miscellaneous oil paintings by United States' landscape artists.

In addition to the stolen artwork, four Fabergé eggs were destroyed in the attack. Estimated worth of the eggs was \$21 million.

But the artistic and cultural worth of the eggs is cannot be measured, said Harry S. Parker, III, who oversees both the de Young and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor.

"This is an immeasurable loss," Parker said.

Tom Pennyworth, the FBI's top expert in art crimes, said the theft was probably planned weeks ahead of time.

"VIPER had a shopping list," Pennyworth said. "This wasn't just a smash and grab. They had specific items they wanted. Just look at the eclectic list of items they took."

Pennyworth said this suggests that VIPER already has buyers for the items.

"I doubt we'll see these items again. The evidence suggests that they stole specific items for specific buyers. The items are probably already out of the country and in the hand of unscrupulous art collectors."

The attack could not come at a worse time for the museum. The de Young's board has placed a bond question on the 1996 San Francisco ballot. If passed with a two-thirds majority of the city's voters, the measure would provide \$73.3 million in public funds toward renovating the de Young.

Now more than \$73.3 million maybe needed just to repair the museum.

For additional information on the bond question check out the de Young museum's web page at:

http://www.famsf.org/famsf_letter.html.

A SAMPLING OF THE LOST WORKS:



THE IMPERIAL CAUCUS EGG:
DESTROYED BY THE VIPER CANNON

Mild-mannered museum curator or paranormal pinup?

By Joan Bowers
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

It was a night of surprises Friday at the de Young Museum.

And while not the most exciting, certainly one of the more interesting, was the revelation that assistant museum curator Cassandra Salvatore was well - a paranormal.

In a revelation that seemed straight from the pages of a comic book, Salvatore dropped her secret identity when she rushed to the aid of several partygoers and teleported them away from the falling ceiling.

Salvatore was also seen healing some guests as well as paranormal Knightblade and -- we're not lying -- a 5 meter tall dragon.

The Examiner has been unable to reach Mrs. Salvatore -- no one is answering her phone at either her Bay Area home or at the museum.

However, the Bay Area has seen the appearance of only two unknown superheroines in the past few months - Psynergie and Odyssey. Scientific deduction suggests that she is one of these

two paranormals. However, it is possible that she is also a paranormal who has not yet carried on a life as a costumed adventurer.

Salvatore joins the ranks of such other Bay Area paranormals as: Silver Avenger Maria Chow. This PRIMUS Avenger has been serving with great distinction in San Francisco since D.J. Johnson was promoted to Golden Avenger in 1994.

Golden Avenger D.J. Johnson. While now serving in Washington D.C., the Golden Avenger does make it back to San Francisco from time-to-time to help out local PRIMUS forces.

Knightblade. While this paranormal's identity is not known, he has been perating only recently in the San Francisco area. It is unknown if the injuries he sustained Friday night will prevent him from returning to crime fighting.

Psynergie. A mysterious woman who has twice thwarted VIPER plans and once captured four VIPER agents herself.

Odyssey. The one who closest matches Salvatore by physical description. Odyssey only recently showed up during the arrest of Jean Thermodier and the rescue of several hostages.

Protector. He was seen only once at the capture of Jean Thermodier. His identity is not known, but could he be the mysterious party guest who followed the

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VIPER mech up, up, and away?

Morgana Windrifter. Windrifter has been active in speaking out for paranormal rights and is known to have weather control powers.

Outside of San Francisco a few dozen other paranormal "heroes" outside of PRIMUS: the Hudson Hawks in Hudson City, the Champions in New York, the mysterious and beautiful healer Selena in New York, Southern California's hyperactive Starlight, the vigilante Corsair in Philadelphia, and Ad Astra, NASA's most famous spokesman.

Salvatore's powers came as a surprise to those she works with.

Carl Ponté, a member of the de Young Museum's Board of Directors, called the news "unsettling" and refused to comment further.

Senior Museum curator Peter Davidson said that Salvatore's powers were simply another skill.

"Mrs. Salvatore is a fine curator, very skilled in her job," he said. "News of her powers does not change this. Nor do I think this will change the excellent job she does for the museum."

Perhaps not, but it will certainly raise questions on the museum board -- a board that now has to deal with rebuilding.

VIPER, New World Order? No. Old Fashioned Tyranny? Yes.

by Morgana Windrifter

SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

VIPER choose the opening of the new display of Chivalric Virtues of Knights and Armor at the De Young Fine Arts Museum to unveil its new suit of armor and its idea of a "New World Order". I know this intimately because I was there.

The suit of armor used by VIPER was nothing more than a parody of the exhibit it literally crashed, standing over 20 feet tall and weighing several tons, it was more a tank than anything else. Armed with cannons, machine guns and flame throwers, it was the epitome of VIPER's might makes right philosophy. A metallic nightmare of misused technology. Its appearance and actions were designed to terrify and terrorize and that it certainly did, killing several innocent people and wounding many more in the process. A variety of irreplaceable artifacts and arts objects (as well as much of the museum) were also destroyed during the VIPER attack by the weaponry used by this VIPER war machine. Fitting symbolism, as the soul-less war machine of VIPER destroys the art and spirit history that makes our culture what it is.

After attempting to kill Knightblade, it also proclaimed VIPER's 'New World Order' in the following words, "Welcome to the New World Order, ladies and gentlemen. This is how VIPER deals with its enemies. Remember that."

A New World Order? One run by VIPER? At least the old Soviet Empire, for all of its myriad flaws, claimed a vision of a better tomorrow. Even the Italian Fascists dreamed a new Golden Age of Rome. But what kind of future could be expected under VIPER? Surely only a jack-booted tyranny that would make even Stalin blush.

By their attack on the De Young Museum, VIPER showed the world what their 'New World Order' would be: an era of fear, an age of terrorism, a world in which only the might of VIPER makes their any excess right. It would be a new Dark Age with VIPER nestleaders as feudal lords and you and I as the peasant underclass to serve their every whim.

This is the vision of the future that VIPER offers you, no, demands that you accept. 'Submit or die!' is their 'reasoned' argument for why they should lead the world in the 21st Century.

Eye on S.F. : Silk and super-strength armor

By Gloria Newbon

OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Friday night might just go down in social calendars as the party to end all parties.

It began as a socialite's dream and was tragically ended by the Bay Area's worst party crashers -- VIPER.

The evening began pleasantly enough with champagne and caviar at that most glorious of edifices dedicated to maintaining history -- the de Young Museum of Fine Art.

In attendance was the sparkling glitteratti of both the West and East Coast.

First the local sights.

S.F. billionaire bombshell Jack Harrison was seen accompanying Silver Avenger Maria Chow. Ow, Jackie, give us normal girls a chance. Who can compete with Maria - our favorite PRIMUS avenger next to San Francisco's own D.J. Johnson - especially with skirts as short as that silver one she was wearing? Now we know why she does all those calisthenics.

Schmooser and maneuverer Willie Brown was pressing flesh across the room. Sorry Willie - we already contributed to your last campaign. Maybe you should check with David White for a donation.

White -- a former Hudson City PRIMUS agent -- struck it filthy rich in the lottery. It seems his new-found wealth has also meant he keeps better company. He came in with none other than Albert and Mary Hudson.

Hudson was apparently in S.F. for a family trip -- his daughter Erica is attending Stanford University. But certainly he would never turn down an invitation from his wife's cousin, Peter Davidson.

Peter, my dear, when are you going to get date? Single and related to one of the world's wealthiest men. It just can't be true.

But I digress, Hudson made a sparkling figure dressed in an Armani tux and his wife was stunning in her gown by Dolce and Gabana. Nothing like a little East Coast style to liven up a West Coast party.

Speaking of style or in this case the lack of -- the new Mrs. Ben Berkeley was without any sense of style. Dresses that expose your nipples may be de rigueur in Hollywood, Anna Nicole, but not here.

And then, just as the party got interesting, VIPER butted in.

Now my dears, I'm no Miss Manners, but when the invitation says black tie, it means black tie -- not powered armor.

There is little I can say about VIPER's attack that is printable in most newspapers. Suffice it to say that they were the worst possible party crashers. Boorish, rude, bumbling and above all unwanted.

Our hands washed of that bit of unpleasantness, we can now concentrate on the interesting things that happened after VIPER left.

Did you see the dragon? Well, I did and it was simply fantastic. Now I'm not saying I want to hurt the wee beastie, but those iridescent scales - tres chic. He'd be welcome at any event I was having.

And the biggest bombshell of the night -- mild-mannered assistant curator Cassandra Salvatore a paranormal.

You may remember Mrs. Salvatore -- yes, that's Mrs. Sorry to disappoint all those male fans out there, but she is married to a big brawny guy, wouldn't you know -- from when she was mentioned in this column four months ago. She was one of our picks for best dressed on a budget.

Well, it turns out Mrs. Salvatore's been moonlighting on another job - superheroine.

I for one applaud her. If nothing else, she'll bring a little taste to the long-underwear brigade.

Well, my dears, unfortunately they only give me space for 3,000 words. Until tomorrow remember the only true hero is one who can utter the line - "Justice will prevail" without looking foolish in tights.

Not a 'New World Order' at all, just old fashioned despotic tyranny. By their actions VIPER has declared war on freedom, now we must declare war on VIPER. This century has already seen too many tyrannies and too many dictators. It is a shame that the 20th Century will have to end with one more war against the forces of evil. But it is a war that I, for one, am willing to fight.