

# PSFS News

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The Newsletter of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society

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May 1997

*Our May Guest:*

## Linda Nagata

*The following was originally published in TANGENT (issue #12, fall 1995), and in modified form on Linda Nagata's web site (<http://www.maui.net/~nagata/>), reproduced here with her permission.*

I know it isn't fair, and I always feel slightly guilty confessing it, but I live in Hawaii. I grew up here. Specifically, I spent the second half of my childhood in a run-down beachfront rental house on the rural north shore of Oahu. Storm waves would run through the yard. Whales would breach off the reef. Shells and glass floats and other flotsam would wash up on the beach. Gorgeous young men with surfboards under their arms would wander by. Sounds like a dream, doesn't it? I couldn't wait to get away. (Ah, youth!)

I got only as far as Honolulu, where I picked up a degree in zoology from the University of Hawaii. Instead of pushing on to graduate school, I moved to Maui and married my sweetheart, Ron Nagata. Thanks to Ron's career with the National Park Service, we live on Maui still, though now we share the house with our nine year old daughter and seven year old son.

So how did I get into writing? Sort of by default. Call me an "ambivalent late bloomer." I didn't grow up wanting to be a writer. I didn't write fiction in high school. I didn't study literature in college. But since I'd decided to cop out on a career as a biologist, I had to find something challenging to do with my time, so I took up writing.

There was never any question about what I was going to write. Science fiction had formed the bulk of my reading since I was ten years old. So I got a day job and wrote a science fiction novel. Then I wrote some short stories and re-wrote the novel. That first novel never sold, but somewhere in those years I learned enough about writing to make my first short story sale to the magazine ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION.

Through my life I've encountered certain ideas which



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Linda Nagata will speak on "Acts of Preservation" — a critical look at our attempts to save pieces of a changing world, from the struggling natural landscape to traditional cultures, with a special emphasis on the evolution of life and society in the Hawaiian Islands.

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immediately struck a sympathetic resonance in my mind; concepts which, at the moment of discovery, seem profound and obvious at once. Biology and its subthemes of evolution and ecology was the first of these. Biochemistry was the second; nanotechnology the third, while somewhere in there Vernor Vinge's speculations regarding a technological singularity found a permanent place in my worldview. In my novel *The Bohr Maker* I've tried to grab some of these themes and run hard with them. How far can nanotechnology be pushed? What cultural limits might be imposed on it? Could cultural limits ever withstand evolutionary processes?

But science fiction is more than a forum for speculation. It's story. Yes, and I'll confess it: To my mind a story needs action, and adventure and deep feeling and a des-

perately necessary goal... and if the world changes in the process, well, that's okay too.

I've tried to incorporate these elements into *The Bohr Maker*. I've tried to bring in other things too. In years and decades past there has been a strain of science fiction devoted to telling us how dangerous technology is, how hubris will get us into trouble every time, how we're better off being considerate, well-behaved, happy-with-the-status-quo kind of people. And maybe that's a philosophy that will prove itself right in the end. Still, there's something viscerally exciting about the state of culture and technology today. There is so much change in the air, with so much more just over the horizon. Realistically, there is no status quo. Maybe there never can be. Instead of denying what's happening all around us, I prefer to play with it. Sure, technology is dangerous. The possibility for self-destruction is very, very real. But change isn't something we can stop because we're scared, and that's what *The Bohr Maker's* about, at heart.

*Tech-Heaven* has similar concerns, though in style and content it's a very different novel. Where *The Bohr Maker* is futuristic — I see it as taking place a hundred to a hundred and fifty years from now — *Tech-Heaven* starts tomorrow. It's about politics and culture as much as technology, with all of these speculations clustering around a central plot that explores the potential — no, the gamble — of cryonics.

Cryonics: there's an example of hubris. There's an example of what we're not supposed to do because it'll mess up the system (natural/philosophical/religious/cultural... you name it). Of course, the protagonists of *Tech-Heaven* don't allow themselves to be swayed by such objections. They are profoundly devoted to protecting the practice of cryonics, and to protecting the privilege of free choice in a changing world.

To the three influential concepts mentioned above, I'd like to add a fourth, and most recent and perhaps unifying idea, and that is complexity theory: how complex systems — from ecologies to economies to artificial life — are created and how they evolve. Complexity theory distinguishes between order and disorder (chaos) and places vital life precisely on the boundary. We thrive on the edge of chaos. That's a remarkable philosophy. It's a dynamic tension that serves as the core of my upcoming novel *Deception Well*, a "far-future cult thriller" ;-)) set in a story world in which Earth has been left behind, three thousand years in the past, and war has become as subtle as ecological succession.

— Linda Nagata

## Membership Status

*Note: Status Changes from inactive to general or general to active become effective after the meeting has adjourned.*

**First Timers:** Cher Schleigh

**Nominees:** Eliot Kenin

**New Members:** C. J. Cherryh

**Members at the April Meeting:** 53  
(46 active, 7 general, 0 inactive)

**Non-members at the April Meeting:** 3

## Announcements

*Copies of any official PSFS correspondence should be sent to both the Secretary and the One Year Director for filing in the Society's official records.*

The Philcon web site is: <[www.netaxs.com/~philcon](http://www.netaxs.com/~philcon)>.

Newsletter Submissions can be e-mailed to [rak@netaxs.com](mailto:rak@netaxs.com)

**Art Group** - meets the fourth Saturday of every month at 10 a.m. for 4 hours. The location of May's meeting has not been announced. Please help P.S.F.S. by supplying your own materials such as pencils, paper, and other art supplies. You can contact Bridget or Barb for the specific supplies you'll need. Call (215) 423-2076 for more information or directions. Your hosts will be Bridget Boyle and Barb Higgins.

**Highlander** - has been picked up for a 6th season.

**Gamers** - on April 10, 1997, in Washington (state), it was announced Wizards of the Coast intends to buy TSR, Inc.

**Sam Moskowitz** - suffered a massive heart attack on Monday, April 7th and entered a coma. He died on April 15th at University Hospital in Newark.

**J. Michael Straczynski** - will be an additional guest at Buc-Coneer.

**Chili cookoff** - we need volunteers for the cookoff at this year's worldcon.

### PSFS News

PSFS News is the Newsletter and Corporate Minutes of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, published monthly as a benefit of membership. It is available free to Active and General Members of the Society, and to any SF club or organization wishing to trade newsletters. Non-members or Inactive Members may subscribe at an annual cost of \$10/year.

PSFS News welcomes submissions, and is seeking to expand. Anyone wishing to contribute articles (book or movie reviews, discussion group or convention reports, announcements, etc.) is encouraged to do so. We prefer that articles be e-mailed (send to [rak@netaxs.com](mailto:rak@netaxs.com)), but they may be mailed if necessary to the P.O. Box. Deadline is two weeks before the next general meeting.

PSFS News is produced on a Macintosh using ClarisWorks 4.0, and is printed on a DeskWriter 320. Emailed articles may be either submitted as plain text, or as attached ClarisWorks files (use macbinary or binhex if available). Other file formats may be possible. Artwork or photos are also welcome in any Mac graphics format, or we can scan originals if mailed to us.

## General Meeting Minutes

These are the minutes of the General PSFS meeting held on April 11th, 1997, at International House. The meeting was called to order at 8:14 pm fst (fannish savings time).

**Proxies:** None.

**Corrections to the Minutes:** Ann Crispin should have been spelled Ann Crispin. S.F.W.A. is know known as Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association or SFaFWA. The minutes were approved as corrected.

### Officers' Reports:

**President:** "Hi, folks!" We're here, our Guest is here, most of us are here, and that's all I have to say.

**Vice President:** Oz said that Carolyn has brought a bound galley of a book that won't be published for another four months and she is donating it to the Society's archives. It is signed.

Darrell Schweitzer has been made the editor guest of the World Horror Convention. Oz was made fan guest of honor of NotJustAnotherCon coming up in September.

**Secretary:** The P.S.F.S. building will contain a 600 room deluxe hotel.

I've got special forms for anyone who has an announcement, meeting, or special event you want listed in the newsletter. If I don't receive a form or an e-mail I won't guarantee that your notice will be listed in the Newsletter or on the Hotline. I also have blank forms for this year's directory. You have until the end of May to get your information to me. You can e-mail me at rak@netaxs.com, give the information to Rich (at the Treasurer's table), or snail mail it to the P.O. Box.

**Treasurer:** This is your first notice that your dues are due. We have new receipt forms for any money transactions. You must have receipts for any purchases you've made. Pay your dues and Philcon membership separately. Tina will be assistant Treasurer this year. If you want flyers check with Gary. Do *not* print any without checking first. See the "The Outgoing Treasurer's Report" for balances.

**2 Year Director (Tina):** No report.

**2 Year Director (Avi):** No report.

**1 Year Director (Shelley):** No report.

**Special Business:** none.

### Committee Reports:

**Philcon '97:** (See last page for meeting details.) The May meeting will be the budget meeting.

**Movie Discussion:** May 31st's movie, will be a British TV night at Bruce & Shelly's, 28 Rosedale Rd., Wynnewood, PA. For more info or directions or if you have any sugges-

tions call (610) 642-6061. There's free on street parking.

**Babylon 5 Dissection Discussion:** There will be no May meeting because the hosts (Tony and Tina) are moving.

**Space Science Committee:** The National Space Society is still celebrating the July week. See Hank Smith for interesting events with a scientific bent.

**No Fund:** John thanked all contributors. He said we have three bags full and a box full of miscellaneous. Help yourselves. Someone asked if we should call John "Black Sheep".

**Programming:** Oz introduced C.J. Cherryh the to the membership.

**Book Discussion:** **May:** *Timescape* by Gregory Benford, Sunday, May 4th, 2 pm, at Lee & Diane Weinstein's, Philadelphia, PA. **June:** *Deception Well* by Linda Nagata, Sunday, June 1st, 2 pm, Ed & Marguerite Rutkowski's, Philadelphia, PA. Call Oz Fontecchio at (215) 342-1672 for more info.

**Art Group:** Bridget was not present. (Check the Announcements section for information about the next meeting. CK)

**Education:** proposed re-starting the writing contest. The contest will be open to all Philadelphia school students in grades 5 through 12. The winners will get a gift certificate to a local bookstore. In the past the winners received a special guest membership to Philcon for themselves, their immediate families, and their teachers. This year we will limit the number of free membership we give to each winner. The deadline for entries will be one month before the convention. This will give us time to judge the contest and get the prizes. Lew handed out copies of his proposal. If you weren't present at the April meeting and would like a copy please contact Lew. After some lively discussion Lew Wolkoff moved, John Desmond second, to give a budget of \$375 (\$300 for prizes; \$75 for printing, mailing, and other expenses) to the contest. Passed many to one.

**Publicity:** The head of Publicity had resigned. We need a volunteer to become the new head.

### Old Business:

**The Historical Marker:** The PA Historical Commission has decided not to put up the historical marker this year. Lew moved, several second, to go back to the Commission and ask about one next year. Gary moved, several second, to refer this subject to the Financial Committee. Passed many to one.

**The Removal of Inactive Members:** Tony said he's not going to read the list (as printed in the April newsletter) as it is rather long. He called for a motion to remove the names from the P.S.F.S. Membership list. Henry Lazarus so moved, several second. Tony called for discussion. There was some concern as to the effect of the vote. These member have not attended a meeting for at least three (3) years. They're coming off the Society's membership list only.

They are not currently getting a newsletter. If any of these people decide to come back any and all rules for new members can be waived. All former officers of the society were retained and are not on this list. If someone can't come to meetings, but wants the newsletter they can pay for a subscription. Will dropping these names bring us below the number needed for a bulk mailing? No, but we don't mail the newsletter bulk anyway. Tony called the question. Passed many to few.

Tony called on the Sheriff of Arms, Pete Radatti, to seat and quiet a disruptive member. The order was carried out gleefully.

**Donuts:** Henry Lazarus was upset that no donuts were set out during the meeting. He was reminded that it was decided at the March meeting (& printed in the April newsletter) not to put the donuts out until break so that everyone could have an equal chance to get some.

**Motion:** David Brill moved, many second, to extend business for 10 minutes. Passed.

## New Business:

**Oversight:** is short one member because Gary is now on the Board. Tony nominated Laura Paskman Syms. Her appointment will be voted on at the May meeting.

**The as yet to be named horror convention:** Tony said we proposing to sponsor a convention to promote and enhance the furtherance of science fiction and fantasy in art, film, radio, TV, and other media. This will be in conjunction with the programming that Philcon already offers. It is not meant to change anything Philcon is doing, but rather supplement it and hopefully reach new and greater audiences. Tony tabled the discussion until next month.

**Meeting start time:** Avi Freedman expressed concern that we're always extending the meeting time and asked if we should start the meetings 15 to 30 minutes earlier. Tony said we'll try to start them on time.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 pm.

## Board of Directors

<b>President</b>	Tony Finan.....(215) 739-4918
<b>Vice President</b>	Oz Fontecchio.....(215) 342-1672
<b>Secretary</b>	Carol Kabakjian.....(610) 623-1139
<b>Treasurer</b>	Gary Feldbaum.....(215) 673-4044
<b>2 Year Director</b>	Tina Blanco.....(215) 364-8411
<b>2 Year Director</b>	Avi Freedman.....(215) 576-8669
<b>1 Year Director</b>	Shelley Handen.....(610) 642-6061

Questions? Comments? Contact any Board Member at the above numbers or use the Hotline.

To send e-mail to the board, write to [bored@cyber.com](mailto:bored@cyber.com)

## Board Meeting Minutes

These are the minutes of the PSFS Board meeting held on April 15th, 1997, at Shelley's home. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 pm fst.

**Board members present:** Tony, Oz, Carol, Tina, and Shelley.

**Others present:** Bruce Bloom, Rich K.

## Officers' Reports

**President:** No report.

**Vice President:** Oz thanked Carol for the excellent meal and Shelley for the hospitality of her home. Tony seconded it then called the vote. Passed unanimously with one abstention.

**Secretary:** No report.

**Treasurer:** No report.

**Two Year Director (Tina):** has the cash box and the check-book back.

**Two Year Director (Avi):** Not here.

**One Year Director (Shelley):** No report.

**Committee Reports:** none.

**Old Business:** none.

**New Business:** *Con Noir (the con in black):* will be a convention mainly for horror literary & media fans. The purpose of this convention is to investigate the other aspects of speculative fiction and do it in such a way that it doesn't affect Philcon. Proposed venue: Adam's Mark. Proposed date: Early May 1998. Tentative schedule: parties & mild programming on Friday, full swing on Saturday, and programming into Sunday. Estimated attendance: 1,000 to 3,000. We will cap the budget at \$30,000 no matter what. We believe that this new convention will help increase our surplus. The next meeting will be in June. Tony asked the Board members for a straw poll on their opinion about the new con. The members present agreed we should have one.

The next Board meeting will be held on June 3rd at 8:00 pm at Rich & Carol Kabakjian's. (see **Meeting Notices** for details.)

Adjourned at 9:16 pm.

## Philcon Meeting Minutes

These are the minutes of the Philcon committee meeting held on April 12th, 1997, at International House. The meeting was called to order at 2:11 pm fst.

**Reminder:** anyone who takes memberships for Philcon must give the information directly to Registration. We had many missing memberships last year because the information was given to the Treasurer instead of Registration.

**Officers' Reports:** None.

**Department Reports:** none.**Old Business:** none.**New Business:**

**Hotel Liaison:** Laura's work phone number is (908) 532-5455. Call her if you have any problems, questions, etc. regarding Philcon.

**Tentative Budget:** will be voted on at the May Philcon meeting. See elsewhere in newsletter for numbers.

**LARP Liaison:** asked for a budget of \$400 to cover the cost of a small corner suite (main room only) for function space, five memberships for the game masters, and money for Liaison's phone calls and mailings. Even if only 75 people show up to play we'd receive \$2400 (at \$32 each) for their Philcon memberships. There was concern that people would sleep there since there is a bed in the room. We will have the bed taken out. Decision: we'll give them one free membership per each 20 player memberships. We'll give them the free room if they have 75 or more players. Where in the budget should we put it? We'll let Gary decide.

**T-shirts:** we're taking bids from different dealers.

**Art Show Mailing:** is scheduled for the first week of July.

**Art Show:** we got \$500 for art equipment rental.

**Art Show Reception:** is good PR. Laura will get a copy of the banquet food price list to Joni. Tony will try to co-ordinate times between the different con run parties so they don't overlap. Joni will give drink chits to all the Artists this year. The reception will be restricted to programming guests, artists & their guests, gallery owners, dealers, publishers, and committee (assistants or higher).

**Dealers Room:** Print dealers will not be turned away from the Dealers Room just because they have art in the Art Show. The Dealers Room will be open to dealers one hour before and one hour after the public hours.

**Den Memberships:** will cost \$10 each this year.

**Beepers:** we're looking into the costs of radio headsets for this year. We should get ear plugs for discretion. We'll clear the use of radios with the hotel and see if we can use them in the hotel.

**Flyers:** Tim will make a mockup of main mailing flyer in both 4 and 6 page styles and get pricing for both.

**Program Book:** we need to increase the size of the book so we don't have more artwork and ads. Deadline for increasing the size of the book is September 15.

**Registration:** current flyer is not acceptable; there is no hotel card and the reg form is incorrect. Tony raised the rates incorrectly. The rates will be \$32 till Sept.15 then \$35 till Oct 20. Tony will take care of any rebates needed.

Adjourned at 5:00 pm.

**Philcon '97 Committee**

(Known as of April 23, 1997)

Chairman..... Tony Finan  
Vice-Chair..... Oz Fontecchio  
Secretary..... Carol Kabakjian  
Treasurer..... Gary Feldbaum

**Administration Division** ..... **Laura Paskman Syms**  
Operations/Security ..... Todd Dashoff  
Gopher Recruitment/Personnel ..... Ed Rutkowski  
Hotel Liaison ..... Laura Paskman Syms  
Registration ..... Rich & Carol Kabakjian  
Publicity/Media/Press Relations ..... Lynn Cohen Koehler  
Information ..... Sara Paul  
Logistics ..... ?  
Quartermaster ..... ?

**Programming Division** ..... **Oz Fontecchio**  
Main Programming ..... Oz Fontecchio, Darrell Schweitzer  
Science Programming ..... ?  
Green Room ..... Rosemarie Freeman  
Programming Operations ..... ?  
Writers' Workshop ..... Darrell Schweitzer  
Costumers' Programming ..... Vicki Warren  
A.V. Coordinator ..... Tim Kahler  
Art Programming ..... ?  
Meet the Pros Dance ..... Tim Binder  
Publications ..... Tim Kahler

**Fixed Functions Division** ..... **John Syms**  
Art Show ..... Joni Dashoff, Barb Higgins  
Dealers' Room ..... ?  
Masquerade Co-Ordinator ..... Vicki Warren  
Media Operations (Film, Video, Anime) ..... Greg Ventura  
PBTv 1 ..... ?  
Exhibitions ..... Ira Kaplowitz  
Computer Room ..... Avi Freedman  
Den ..... Cynthia Moreno  
Con Suite ..... Ivy Martin  
Gaming Room ..... Becky Kaplowitz

**Functions/Depts not yet named/assigned to Divisions**

Babysitting  
Dealers' Security  
L.A.R.P. Liaison - Leslie Dannenburger  
Load Master  
P.S.F.S. Sales  
Transportation  
Signs  
ASFA Liaison  
SFWA Liaison  
Chairman's Staff  
Artists' Workshop  
Gaming Programming  
Filking/Filk Programming/Filksong Contest - Crystal Paul



## Outgoing Treasurer's Report

*Here is a Treasurer post em report from Pete Radatti.*

It appears that we have more cash on hand that I considered. This was caused by an error in my bookkeeping which was found while closing the books for the year. The Society has cash on hand of \$78,778.93. I believe that this figure can be increased by at least \$4,000.00 in a short period of time with suggestions that I will provide at the end of this report.

### PSFS Year-End Cash On-Hand Balances (Closing 4/1/97)

<u>ACCOUNT</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>DATE</u>
CoreState Checking #1	\$ 3,768.67	4/01/97
CoreState Checking #2	\$ 20,649.52	3/26/97
CoreState Savings	\$ 6,938.67	3/21/97
Vanguard Account	\$ 47,593.46	4/01/97
Cash Box #1	\$ 394.08	4/01/97
Cash Box #2	\$ 197.51	4/01/97
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$ 79,541.91</u>	<u>4/01/97</u>

### Suggestions for increasing cash on hand are:

1) Philcon Hotel Liaison suggests we were overbilled by \$2,000.00. If we can prove this, then we can have a refund within days of the hotel's acceptance of our explanation.

2) We have a lot of bounced checks from Philcon. It is time consuming to do the follow up and many people are not at home when I called. One dealer called me and told me she bounced our check and asked if she could pay us on the installment plan. I agreed on the theory that anything is better than nothing. At least one of the checks was for artwork. I would guess that this is at least another \$2,000.00. The new Treasurer may be able to collect this especially if he offers a payment plan. Deadbeats should be sold to a collection agency. If the Treasurer can not or does not have the time for follow up then all of the bounced checks and credit card receipts should be sold to a collection agency.

3) We have paid a lot of bounced check and other bank fees. We should charge people who bounce checks a fee. I suggest a \$50 fee for every bounced check. This will have the effect of reducing the number of bounced checks, refund us the banking fees and generate a surplus which is in reality a pain fee. The pain is to the person who bounced our check and even more pain to the Treasurer.

4) Philcon is a large expense. The President has already started a committee to review how to purchase Philcon related material at a better price. I believe that a good savings can be had by centralizing the purchasing of all printed material for Philcon.

5) Stop giving money away to non-profits. We are a non-profit and I don't think we should give money to other groups. If we asked them for money I know they would ignore us. I don't believe that helping SWFA's Medical Fund is an appropriate use of our funds. I know that TV 12, the Zoo and other groups that we gave money to in the past are not appropriate.

### Closing suggestions:

When we consider spending money that is not already on the budget someone should tell the Society just what the cost benefit ratio is. For example, if we want to spend \$900.00 on something that will benefit 10 people then it should be presented that we want to spend the dues from 60 people to benefit 10 people. This may have an effect on slowing our spending habits.

Finally, dues are an insignificant source of income to the Society, yet many members of our society can not afford more. If we doubled the dues they would still be an insignificant source of income. I suggest that dues not be increased for the foreseeable future.

Thank You,

Peter V. Radatti

PSFS Treasurer Post em 4/1/1997

*Event Report: Book Discussion Group - March***Timemaster**

by Lee Weinstein

The book for March was *Timemaster* by Robert L. Forward. Forward is a physicist at the Jet Propulsion laboratory who also writes SF. He has made appearances at some east coast conventions.

The novel, a space opera in the tradition of E.E. "Doc" Smith, follows the adventures of industrialist Randy Hunter as he conquers first space, then time, and finally human aging, while becoming the world's first trillionaire. He does this by means of his serendipitous discovery of the Silverhair, a space organism living among the asteroids. Silverhairs, it seems, are composed partially of negative matter. In short order Randy harnesses them to drive ships at near light speed, to create wormholes connecting different time periods, and by the way, to create best-selling albums of rock music (honest!).

The writing style came under attack first. Some one quoted the line of the character who first saw a Silverhair, "Holy Spaghetti!" Another member berated the overuse of "said-bookisms" (He intoned, she exclaimed, he queried, etc.). All agreed characterization was weak to non-existent. A defender of the book said that the work should be criticized on its own terms, i.e., whether it accomplished what the author set out to do. Since the story appeared to be an excuse for the science, we then examined the scientific concepts.

It was generally agreed that the author was attempting to show what the effects of time travel would actually be like, given our current understanding of the physical nature of the universe. However, it was also agreed that the science, accurate though it may be, was not presented very well. For example, at a climactic point in the book, Randy sets a "time-trap" for his enemy, Oscar, resulting in Oscar's destruction. The workings of this trap, although explained at length (there are even diagrams in an appendix), left people either confused, or unconvinced that it would necessarily work in the manner depicted. As another example, there is a scene in which Oscar attempts to kill Randy, but is thwarted when Randy's future self returns to intervene. Some members noted that there is no origin point for this time loop. In other words, how did Randy survive the attack the first time around so that he could return to save himself?

Some people suggested that the book would have been much more interesting if Forward had explored the tossed-off idea of meddling with the stock market, and demonstrated why it wouldn't work.

There were touches of social commentary that many found appealing. For example, in Randy's society, make-up and jewelry are considered to be masculine, and no self-respecting woman would wear them. There was also an intriguing bit in which Randy had to prove that the Silverhairs were plants rather than animals, in order to stop interference from animal-rights activists. Several members admitted to having enjoyed reading the book, despite its flaws.

The next book to be discussed will be *Door Number Three* by Patrick O'Leary.

**Philcon '97 Budget**

(more or less)

Art Show		Masquerade Video	600
Awards	25	Media Ops (Films/Video)	1,900
Equipment	800	Miscellaneous	
Mailing	750	Operations	70
Phone	75	Beepers	300
Reception	2,500	Insurance	2,200
Triplicate Forms	150	Nursing Supplies	25
Set-up	150	Phones	130
Babysitting	110	Parties	
Book		Meet the Pros	250
Con Suite	2,300	Pre-con parties	450
Contingency	500	PBTB ?	
Dealers Room		Programming	
Mailing	600	Mailings	150
Surcharge	850	A.V. Coordinator	2,300
Electricity	100	Workshops	
Den	800	Artists	25
Donations (Memorials)		Costume	25
Exhibitions	50	Writers	10
Filking		Science	25
Filkers Coffee	395	Filk	
Filk Contest	50	Childrens Prog.	50
Gaming	75	Programming Ops	200
Gopher	200	Easels	
Green Room		Publications	
Food	325	Advertising	100
Coffee Set-up	1,000	Flyers	1,500
Guest Bar (drink chits)	600	Pocket Program	1,100
Guests of Honor		Program Book	5,000
Transportation	5,500	Web Page free	
Food	900	Publicity/Media Rel.	1,200
WAM	800	Registration	
Hotel Liaison		Badges	300
Curtains	300	Postage	1,000
L Room Exp. (non-con)	350	Ribbons	200
Rental (Func. Space)	10,700	Supplies	100
Security	1,000	Secretary	10
Tips	1,000	SFWA/ASFA	
Information		Signs	150
L.A.R.P. Liaison	50	T-Shirts	
Logistics	500	Transportation	
Masquerade		Treasury	300
Masq. Ribbon Awards	300		
		<b>TOTAL (so far)</b>	<b>53,475</b>

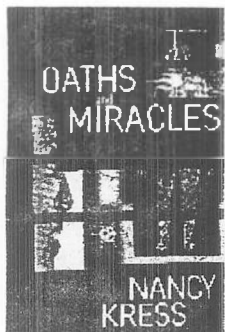
**Call the PSFS Hotline**  
**(215) 957-4004**

PSFS & Philcon Meeting Info  
Leave Messages

Last Minute Meeting Cancellation Info

## Shiny, Juicy, New Stuff

by Tasha Kelly



### Oaths and Miracles

by Nancy Kress  
paperback, Tor Books  
© 1996, 372 pp.

Nowadays, if Tor Books publishes a mass market paperback, you can bet the farm the writer is an alpha-member of the Tor stable. Why? David Hartwell gave us the lowdown a few months ago, when he spoke to our society. He told us that Tor, a publishing company that used to publish lots of mass market paperbacks every year, has cut back to only publishing a few a year. He told us that Tor wanted to move toward trade paperbacks as an alternative to mass market. Most of Tor's writers are now published in hardback first (or only) and then if the book shows enough promise, the trade paperback might follow. Only the few writers who command a rather large, loyal audience might still be published in mass market. As a reader of lots of new writers, I find this disappointing because it virtually guarantees that the books put out by Tor that I want to buy most will not appear in mass market paperback. Most book lovers I know (including myself) do not appreciate the prices of hardbacks when a mass market book would do quite nicely. Hardbacks, by Hartwell's admission, are mostly bought by libraries, with a meager percentage actually being sold in retail book stores (or dealers' rooms) to individual readers. Trade paperbacks, the sf publishing industry's white flag of surrender in the mass market paperback wars, are almost as prohibitively expensive as hardbacks, and I get the feeling the publishers are hoping the reading public won't notice or won't mind. I suppose all we readers can do is be thankful we can still afford Nancy Kress's *Oaths and Miracles*, a biotech thriller set in the present day.

I had been in the middle of a particularly stagnant reading break, when I decided to pick up *Oaths and Miracles* and give it a go. I found myself sucked in immediately by the tension-laden first scene, in which a bunch of Vegas showgirls tumble down like dominoes in the middle of a glitzy act because one of the women is suffering from a fight-or-flight episode. We soon learn that the terrified woman is afraid for her life because of a riddle-like series of words her Mafia boyfriend has recited to her. The boyfriend is dead soon after, and she knows she's next. She doesn't know what the words mean — "Cadoc. Verico. Cadaverico." — but she knows they have lots of deadly meaning to someone who wants her silenced even for just hearing the words at all.

Further along, we meet Judy Kozinski, the insecure

wife of a famed biologist who is killed shortly after interviewing with a nondescript biotech research company called Verico, in Northern New Jersey. In shock over his death, Judy begins her own determined yet amateur investigation of the possible links between Verico and her husband's death.

Also investigating along the same lines of suspicion, is one Robert Cavanaugh, a young FBI agent who has just been handed the first big (yet flimsy) case of his career. Robert yearns for his ex-wife and for some recognition within the bureaucracy of the FBI.

The last disparate link in this complex, character-rich novel is one Wendell Botts, an alcoholic father of two and estranged husband of a woman who lives with their children within a peaceful religious compound in a small town named Cadoc, in upstate NY. Wendell, trying to stay sober and get access to his children and the wife he desperately wants back, resorts to a farcical smear-campaign against the group, called the Soldiers of the Divine Covenant. He believes that the Soldiers have begun sacrificing humans as part of their religious rituals, and tells this to whomever will listen.

As the various players in the novel dance closer and closer to the truth and to the scary climax, Ms. Kress packs the pages with lots of character development. We learn the inner workings of Robert Cavanaugh's wounded heart, the meaning of the tender relationship between Judy Kozinski and her spiritually strong father, and the inevitable failings of Wendell Botts's coping mechanisms.

I recommend this engaging page-turner for anyone with a liking for Ms. Kress's other works and for fans of character-driven novels. You will care about Judy and Robert; you'll suffer along with Wendell. Altogether, a satisfying read.



### Mainline

by Deborah Christian  
hardback, Tor Books  
© 1996, 383 pp.  
Cover by Bruce Jensen

After my grumbling above, in which I complain about the price of hardcovers, I'm almost afraid to admit that I actually shelled out the full hardcover price for *Mainline*. However, I'm glad I did. I suppose the subtitle/description, "A Science Fiction Thriller", on the front cover primed me for the wild ride.

*Mainline* is Ms. Christian's first published novel and she does an excellent job of it. The most noticeable asset of this story is the detailed, imaginative universe in which it takes place. In the far future, after humans have spread out among the stars along with lots of other sentient alien species, a water-covered world called Selmun III is



beset with political struggles between the water-breathing humans who've had their DNA modified to better live and work on the world and the unchanged humans who must use fins and air tanks to keep up with the underwater people.

Reva, a hard, solitary assassin, unwittingly becomes involved in the intrigue when she is hired to kill two key figures in opposition to the land-dwelling cartel which controls most of the commerce between other worlds and the water-breathers of Selmun III. She doesn't know it, but a particularly mean and nasty alien named Yavobo has been hired to protect one of her targets. When she kills his charge, he becomes blood-sworn to protect the family of the slain politician, whose niece happens to be Reva's next target. Of course, Reva manages to get the niece too, and this drives Yavobo a bit mad with frustration. Between his dogged pursuit of her and her own growing attachment to a business contact named Lish, Reva begins to risk her own safety by going against her own code of conduct — she begins protecting lives and loses the taste for killing.

The twist which gives this book its title and gives the action a dash of spice, is Reva's mysterious ability to survey all the possible futures stemming from her present (what she calls her "Now") and to choose one of them to live in. Whichever Now she resides in is called her Mainline, and the offshoots serve as a nearly foolproof way for her to do her deadly job and get away unobserved. The only danger, and it's a big one, is that once she has chosen an alternative line to travel upon, she loses the versions of her surroundings and loved-ones she had in her previous Mainline. Every time she goes to a different Now she risks hopping into an undesirable version of a previously pleasant relationship, or into a reality where someone she cares for does not exist at all. The gift, obviously, is also a curse.

The writing in *Mainline* is snappy and packed with neat-o ideas and world-building terminology. Along with the numerous characters, we get to know fascinating little bits about this universe; some human cultures have proudly reintroduced a caste system, for instance, and monstrous cyborg-enhanced sea animals (rather cutely named "borgbeasts") are outlawed... for the obvious reasons, I suspect.

Christian gives respectful nods to time-honored and relatively recent sf tropes, like cyberpunk (the spunky character Flashman is a joy to follow through his crack-n-hack adventures), nanotech (the borgbeasts running wild on Selmun III need some), psi powers (an undercover agent (a "bug" from the Ministry of Internal Security — "IntSec" for short — named Vask Kastlin has telepathic abilities) and space opera (Devin, a spaceship captain, pulls some heroic Star Trek-esque maneuvers to overcome the damage to his ship caused by a roving "stelloid", a creature made of "fusioning plasma").

This is the kind of book that immerses you so well

and thoroughly, that you can truly forget your worldly troubles for a while and escape. Some people sneer at the idea of escapist fiction, but I welcome a good yarn with so much adventure, suspense, and imaginative background that time spent living in the real world in between reading sessions is a secondary annoyance to be suffered through until the next chance to pick up the book arrives. That's what *Mainline* did for me.

Since at our next meeting we will be enjoying the company of Linda Nagata, an exciting new writer who won the Locus Award for Best First Novel for her excellent debut, *The Bohr Maker*, I would like to encourage my fellow science fiction readers to purchase and read any or all of her three novels: *The Bohr Maker*, *Tech Heaven*, and *Deception Well*. Ms. Nagata's books tell fresh, provocative stories we can all enjoy, and she deserves our support. The best news of all is that all three of her novels are available in mass market paperback from Bantam Spectra, so there's no fiscal reason not to take a chance on this gifted new writer.

Happy reading. By the way, if anyone takes my suggestions and/or has already read the books I review, I'd love to hear your feedback.

## 1997 Hugo Nominees

LoneStarCon2, the 1997 World Science Fiction Convention, announces the 1997 Hugo nominees for outstanding achievement in the science fiction field. The Hugos are nominated by members of the current World Science Fiction Convention. LoneStarCon2 received a total of 429 valid ballots (ballots cast for each category are noted).

### 1997 Hugo Nominations (429 ballots)

#### Best Novel (356 ballots)

*Blue Mars* by Kim Stanley Robinson (HarperCollins Voyager; Bantam Spectra)

*Holy Fire* by Bruce Sterling (Orion; Bantam Spectra)

*Memory* by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)

*Remnant Population* by Elizabeth Moon (Baen)

*Starplex* by Robert J. Sawyer (Ace)

#### Best Novella (209 ballots)

"Abandon in Place" by Jerry Olton (F&SF 12/96)

"Blood of The Dragon" by George R. R. Martin (Asimov's 7/96)

"The Cost to Be Wise" by Maureen F. McHugh (Starlight 1)

"Gas Fish" by Mary Rosenblum (Asimov's 2/96)

"Immersion" by Gregory Benford (SF Age 3/96)

"Time Travelers Never Die" by Jack McDevitt (Asimov's 5/96)

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There are six nominees due to a tie vote.

(continued)

**Best Novelette (221 ballots)**

- "Age of Aquarius" by William Barton (Asimov's 5/96)  
 "Beauty and the OpÈra or the Phantom Beast" by Suzy McKee Charnas (Asimov's 3/96)  
 "Bicycle Repairman" by Bruce Sterling (Intersections; Asimov's 10/96)  
 "The Land of Nod" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's 6/96)  
 "Mountain Ways" by Ursula K. Le Guin (Asimov's 8/96)

**Best Short Story (254 ballots)**

- "The Dead" by Michael Swanwick (Starlight 1)  
 "Decency" by Robert Reed (Asimov's 6/96)  
 "Gone" by John Crowley (F&SF 9/96)  
 "The Soul Selects Her Own Society . . ." by Connie Willis (Asimov's 4/96; War of the Worlds: Global Dispatches)  
 "Un-Birthday Boy" by James White (Analog 2/96)

**Best Non-Fiction Book (163 ballots)**

- The Faces of Fantasy* by Patti Perret (Tor)  
*Look at the Evidence* by John Clute (Serconia Press)  
*Silence of the Langford* by Dave Langford (NESFA Press)  
*Time & Chance* by L. Sprague de Camp (Grant)  
*The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* by Diana Wynne Jones (Gollancz/Vista)

**Best Dramatic Presentation (283 ballots)**

- Independence Day* (Centropolis Film Productions/20th Century Fox Film) Directed by Roland Emmerich, Written by Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich, Produced by Dean Devlin  
*Mars Attacks!* (Warner Bros.) Directed by Tim Burton, Written by Jonathan Gems, Produced by Tim Burton and Larry Franco  
*Babylon 5 "Severed Dreams"* (Warner Bros.) Directed by David J. Eagle, Written by J. Michael Straczynski, Produced by John Copeland  
*Star Trek: First Contact* (Paramount Pictures) Directed by Jonathan Frakes, Story by Ronald D. Moore, Brannon Braga & Rick Berman, Screenplay by Ronald D. Moore & Brannon Braga, Produced by Rick Berman  
*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine "Trials and Tribble-ations"* (Paramount Pictures) Directed by Jonathan West, Written by Ronald D. Moore & Rene Echevarria, Story by Ira Steven Behr & Hans Beimler & Robert Hewitt Wolfe, Executive Producers Ira Steven Behr & Rick Berman

...

Babylon 5 "War without End" and "Z'Ha'Dum" were nominated but J. Michael Straczynski declined.

**Best Editor (248 ballots)**

- Gardner Dozois (Asimov's)  
 Scott Edelman (SF Age)  
 Patrick Nielsen Hayden (Tor)  
 Kristine Kathryn Rusch (F&SF)  
 Stanley Schmidt (Analog)

**Best Professional Artist (226 ballots)**

- Thomas Canty  
 David Cherry  
 Bob Eggleton  
 Don Maitz  
 Michael Whelan

**Best Semiprozine (223 ballots)**

- Interzone* edited by David Pringle  
*Locus* edited by Charles N. Brown  
*New York Review of Science Fiction* edited by Kathryn Cramer, Tad Dembinski, Ariel HamÈon, David G. Hartwell and Kevin Maroney  
*Science Fiction Chronicle* edited by Andrew I. Porter  
*Speculations* edited by Kent Brewster

**Best Fanzine (224 ballots)**

- Ansible* edited by Dave Langford  
*File 770* edited by Mike Glyer  
*Mimosa* edited by Dick & Nicki Lynch  
*Nova Express* edited by Lawrence Person  
*Tangent* edited by Dave Truesdale

**Best Fan Writer (202 ballots)**

- Sharon Farber  
 Mike Glyer  
 Andy Hooper  
 Dave Langford  
 Evelyn C. Leeper

**Best Fan Artist (177 ballots)**

- Ian Gunn  
 Joe Mayhew  
 Peggy Ranson  
 William Rotsler  
 Sherlock

...

Brad Foster and Teddy Harvia declined their nominations.

**John W. Campbell Award (not a Hugo) (156 ballots)**

(Award for the best new science fiction writer of 1995 or 1996, sponsored by Dell Magazines)

- Michael A. Burstein (second year of eligibility)  
 Raphael Carter (first year of eligibility)  
 Richard Garfinkle (first year of eligibility)  
 Katya Reimann (first year of eligibility)  
 Sharon Shinn (second year of eligibility)

## Science Fiction for May

by Henry Leon Lazarus

For this column, my policy is to only report on novels I've managed to finish, thus eliminating both the unreadable and those novels that I was unable to get a hold of. Since I've been putting this column together since 1991, I do get many of my copies from the publishers. I've learned over the years, that publishers usually have reasons for not including books and when I've spent my own money on these dogs, have found out why. There are, however, exceptions to that rule, and I was very lucky this month with the extra books I bought during a quiet time.

Robin Hobb completes her *Farseer* trilogy by sending Fitz on a grueling *Assassin's Quest* (Hard from Bantam Spectra). My only complaint is that the magic of Skill which previously seemed like telepathy has been expanded to the creations of roads and other things which Fitz learns about as he follows the skill made road in the mountains to find his king and save his country. But who said magic had to make sense. It was a fun read. Michael A. Stackpole's *Talion Revenant* (paper) has been held for eight years because of its length. That's a true shame because this tale of an unstoppable man of justice who rides the land with only his sword, which he can call, and the ability to draw souls out of men is a very enjoyable read and I would hope that some sequels might be along eventually.

Mark Sumner's view of a truly wild west, *Devils Engine* (paper from Del Ray) I also had to buy. After the civil war, magic talents have warped the wild west. This time Buffalo Bill, the rainmaker (who rides in a sail driven wagon), and Jake Bird have to stop Jay Gould and his railroad tracks designed to draw the magic from the west in a tall tale that is impossible to put down. I was glad when they sent me the sequel to *The WaterBorn* (paper). J. Gregory Keyes has improved greatly and strengthens his view of a world where gods and goddesses inhabit the natural world and the *Blackgod* (hard) uses the characters from the previous books to try and kill the river god. Lovers of Anne McCaffrey's *Pern* series will be overwhelmed by a gift of the second edition of *The Dragon Lover's Guide to Pern* (Trade) put together by Jody Lynn Nye.

Had I not gotten the first of Leonard Nimoy's *Primortals* as a review copy, I never would have looked at Steve Perry's *Target Earth* (hard from Aspect) which is a true hoot about a would be alien emperor running from the true rulers of the galaxy who comes to earth for a new start at empire building. The reaction to his radio messages is handled just right (I really giggled at the call in radio show opinion poll about whether he came in peace.) I hope Steve Perry continues as the author of this series. Buzz Aldrin and John Barnes's excellent and award nominated *Encounter With Tiber* about the discovery of a failed, prehistoric alien expedition is out in paper.

I bought one of the earlier of Daniel Hood's magical mysteries, so I was very glad to see the latest, which takes place during the holiday of *Beggar's Banquet* (paper from ACE) and starts with a dead man washed in from the sea and a stolen jewel. As usual the solution involves both magic and murder. Ellen Datlow's collection of original alien sex stories, *Off Limits*, Sharon Shinn's tale of a love between angel and human on a colonized planet, *Archangel*, and Allen Steele's odd spy

story that concludes on a lunar colony established in the 50's in an alternate present, *Tranquility Alternative*, are all out in paper as is Robert Heinlein's classic *Starship Troopers* which will probably be demolished by the upcoming movie and should be enjoyed first.

Little boys like to pretend they are the robot toys they play with. James P. Hogan invents a technology that lets some teenage boys actually feel that they are in small robots in *Bug Park* (Hard from Baen). When the baddies try to kill their father and steal his company only these tiny robots can save the day. It's a real giggle when they attack the villain's boat. I cannot recommend Charles Sheffield's *Convergence* (paper). The three earlier novels were published by another publisher and will be reprinted by Baen, but the solution to the giant structures that fill the galaxy is too simplistic and silly. Which is a shame, because the awesome constructs promised a solid puzzle.

Sherri S. Tepper puts together the tale of a policewoman who is solving the murder of some scientists while putting up with a forest that is overgrowing our world, with a tale of people on a quest in another time and place where technology is limited and magic works in *The Family Tree* (Hard from Avonova) But when she finally got the stories together, I realized she had borrowed her plot from a famous television/movie series. However her gentle, warm characters still carried the story. I've already read Jane Routley's *Mage Heart* twice. It's about a young female mage caught up in court politics and is finally out in paper. I'm hoping for a sequel.

James White believes in anti-hmo's because his Sector General hospital works to heal patients of all galactic species, not worry about how much their care will cost. *Final Diagnosis* (hard from TOR) is told through the eyes of a human patient with a difficult to diagnose ailment and is the usual fun. In the Orb line of reprints, the first three novels from my favorite Jack Vance series about a man killing the crazy gangsters known as *The Demon Princes* after they wiped out his world are together in one volume, and Maureen F. McHugh's first novel/collection about a future run by Chinese Communism, *China Mountain Zhang* are out, both in trade paperback.

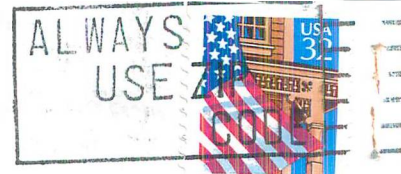
Long after plague has wiped out our technological future, a group of adventurers set off to find a cache of stored knowledge along *Eternity Road* (Hard from Harper Prism). Even though the characters are interesting and pleasant, Jack McDevitt doesn't hesitate to let the dangers be fatal, giving greater realism to this odd future. A collection of Isaac Asimov's fantasy tales and essays, *Magic* is out in paper. Terry Pratchett brings tears to my eyes (of laughter, of course). *Men at Arms*, a police procedural mystery set in Ankh-Morepork on Discworld, is also out in paper. The night watch has to find a killer with a gun, but guns haven't been invented.

Finally, for those Star Trek completists, Herbert F. Solow and Yvonne Fern Solow have put together *The Star Trek Sketch Book, The Original Series* (Trade from Pocket), which has the original sketches for that show along with the histories of the designers. Neat.

Henry L. Lazarus <hlazar@netaxs.com>



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## Meeting Notices

### General Meetings

*Unless otherwise specified, General Meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month in the South America Room at International House, 37th and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Business meeting starts at 8 pm. Program starts at 9 pm.*

#### Date

May 9, 1997  
June 13, 1997  
July 11, 1997  
August 8, 1997  
September 12, 1997  
October 10, 1997  
February 13, 1998  
March 13, 1998

#### Guest/Agenda

Linda Nagata (from Hawaii)  
Bruce Jensen, artist  
Hugo Predictions Panel  
John Kessel  
Maureen McHugh  
James Patrick Kelly  
Jonathan Lethem  
Stuart Moore

#### Date

### Board of Directors

Tues., June 3, 1997, 8 pm

#### Host/Location

Rich & Carol Kabakjian, 17  
Lewis Ave., East Lansdowne;  
(610) 623-1139

### Philcon '97 Committee

Sun, May 18, 1997, 2 pm

International House (see  
above for address)

## About the Society

The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (PSFS) is a non-profit organization that meets monthly to discuss and promote science fiction and fantasy in literature, the arts, and popular culture. Meetings are held the second Friday of each month at International House, 37th and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia. Meetings consist of business proceedings from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., followed by a guest speaker involved in some area of Science Fiction or Fantasy, such as writers, editors, artists, publishers, etc.

In addition, PSFS sponsors an annual science fiction conference, Philcon, and has many special interest subgroups; such as the Book Discussion Group, which meets monthly to discuss a work of science fiction or fantasy; and the Special Events Group, which attends science fiction and fantasy movies and other events.

Membership in the society is open to everyone. Becoming a member is easy. Attend your first meeting; we'll say "Hello." At your second meeting, you can nominate yourself for membership or ask someone else to nominate you. At the next meeting you attend following your nomination, you're eligible to be voted in as a General Member. Our current dues are \$15 for a full year (\$24 for couples), and attendance at 4 meetings each year maintains the status of Active Member.