

**Boskone XXIV**  
**A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper**  
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### **Thursday**

#### **Holiday on Ice**

Boskone XXIV got off to an inauspicious start for us--we drove up to Massachusetts in a blizzard. It took an hour and a half to go the first 50 miles, but then the roads got better and we made it to South Hadley in about five hours, not much more than it usually takes. The car, of course, was covered with road dirt (the parking lights were totally blacked out), but since we weren't driving into Boston, we just wiped off the lights and left it at that.

### **Friday**

After our traditional pizza and a night's sleep we set off, but not without further difficulties. Dave's car was low on oil, and when he went to fill it, a plastic hose broke off in the cold (about 0 degrees Fahrenheit). Luckily it turned out to be a hose that only kept the oil cap from getting misplaced but we had a couple of bad moments. So we picked up Kate and off we went.

This trip was much smoother--only about an hour and a half into Boston, but then it took us about 20 minutes to find a spot in the parking garage (after moving the sign that said "Full--Hotel Guests Only" which had thoughtfully been placed right in the center of the entrance). The hotel area was full (it was about 2PM) but we finally found a space in the general-purpose area.

### **Registration**

Check-in was relatively quick--the hotel had learned from previous years and gave out the registration forms to be filled in when you got into line, so by the time your turn at the window came, you were done with it. In our case it took a little longer because we wanted two rooms with two double beds each, next to each other, and on a low floor. Well, you can't have everything--we ended up on the 15th

floor. Also, Kate was trying to get Cynthia's name into the computer so that when she showed up she could get another key. And finally, both Mark and Kate had to go to another desk to get second keys for the rooms (you'd think that the hotel would know that a double room should have two keys).

After checking in we popped down to registration, which didn't officially open until 3:30 but opened at 3:15 for pre-registerees. They didn't really have their act together for the hand-outs though (they didn't have packets this year, just stacks of sheets) and we had to go back three times to get everything. We then ate and came back to hit the huckster room. There were more book dealers this year--a good sign--but not all the tables were open yet. I saw Saul Jaffe and we talked about the future of Usenet et al for a while.

### **Panel: Soviet Year in Space**

When everyone finally showed up we went out for dinner at our usual Chinese restaurant and then hit the Star Market for munchies on the way back. At 9PM I went to the "Soviet Year in Space" panel, which was sponsored by the Boston L5 Chapter. It was very slow-moving--most of the hour was spent in detailing the Soviet program from its inception, complete with boring slides. Not much was said about their current ventures.

There wasn't much in the way of parties Friday night--we dropped into the Hobokon in '92 Party briefly but went to bed fairly early.

### **Saturday**

Saturday morning we were going to go to a coffee shop across the street for breakfast, but the wind chill factor was about 10 below so we settled for Brigham's in the Prudential Center itself--still a chilly walk. Kate and I stopped in the liquor store on the way back to pick up a bottle of wine--we decided to move up in the world and get one with a cork, so we had to buy a corkscrew also.

### **Panel: Golem Legend**

At 11:30 we went to the "Cliches in Fantasy Film" panel, but it wasn't going to start until after *Labyrinth* finished, which obviously wasn't going to be until about noon, so we proceeded directly to the "Golem Legend" panel. Unfortunately the panel leader didn't (we discovered later that he was on the "Cliches" panel, an example of poor scheduling if ever there was one), so about a dozen of us sat around for ten minutes waiting. I kept telling Mark he should lead the discussion but he didn't want to. Finally someone said he had come to find out just what a golem was. I convinced Mark to explain it to him and pretty soon, everyone had pulled their chairs into a circle and was discussing the golem and Jewish legends in general. At the end I asked if anyone could recommend any good golem novels and one person said that I really should read the recent article in *Lan's Lantern* about golems--the one that Mark wrote! When I pointed out that Mark had written it, a couple of people told him how good they thought it was. It turned out that one person (Mark Blackman) there was a regular *Lan's Lantern* contributor and another (Mark Keller) had written a really great article on alternate histories in *The Proper Boskonian*. (Gee, 'Mark' sure is a popular name!) We started talking about alternate histories in the hallway and Keller mentioned that the all-time worst was John Jakes's *Black in Time*. He started describing it and a woman who came along just then recognized the description and commented that it was the worst science fiction she had ever read. Keller plans on publishing his alternate history bibliography in a year or two--I can't wait!

### **Panel: Gay Characters and Themes**

Because this discussion ran over, I got to "Gay Characters and Themes" late. The room for this was packed, but the discussion wasn't particularly good. There seemed to be two schools of thought: one group thought that gay characters should be just another kind of character; the other thought that it was important to show how gay characters dealt with societal problems. It boils down to whether the society being described is tolerant or not, and both sides seemed to think that not enough was being done to show their point of view. There was some question as to when the first AIDS-related science fiction would be published, but no real answer (obviously).

### **Art Show**

I then took a quick run through the art show, running into Saul again. He was wearing his SF-Lovers' Digest t-shirt, which reminded me that I should have brought mine. Oh well.... The art show itself was about average--a lot of media-related works, a fair amount of cutesy fantasy, and some really good pieces either not for sale or priced out of most people's range. The art shows are becoming more art displays and less art sales than they used to be, I think.

### **What's Boston Without a Lobster Dinner?**

Kate and I wanted to go to the "USSR/US Manned Space Mission" presentation at 5PM, but I definitely wanted to make the "Electronic Fanac" panel at 7PM and Kate wanted to go to the "Warpods" presentation at 7 also, so we all decided to go to dinner at 5. We went to the Atlantic Seafood Company, where I had an excellent lobster dinner. We weren't quite finished by 7, but I probably didn't miss too much at the panel. SF-Lovers' Digest will be mentioned in an article in the April issue of *Omni*. Jerry Boyajian was there with an article on Sherlock Holmes for me (yet more books on the subject to look for!).

### **Mod.movies is Reborn**

After the panel started to dissolve, several people convinced me to volunteer to moderate "mod.movies" on Usenet. (Actually, it's going to be rec.arts.movies.reviews.) Shows what a glass of wine and an after-dinner drink will do!

### **Readercon**

There were more parties Saturday night, but the elevator situation was a real mess. We took the elevator up to the 22nd floor where we dropped in on the Readercon party. Readercon is a new convention emphasizing (you guessed it!) reading. The first one will be this June in Brookline and Gene Wolfe will be the Guest of Honor. The hotel situation is a little strange (the hotel won't take credit cards, only checks, and normally won't take cancellations within three weeks of the date, though the Con committee thinks they can get them to make an exception for us--given the non-subsidized nature of this convention as compared to a business convention.) Kate may lead a discussion group on the modern horror novel--I keep telling Dave he should lead one on the "Gor" novels.

### **UMassSFS 25-Year Reunion Planned**

Then we walked down to the 19th floor where we dropped in on the BoF (Bunch of Fans) Party. (BoF is a Western Massachusetts fan group.) Mark, Dave, Joe Ross, and I got to talking about the last UMassSFS reunion that was held at Dave's place about ten years ago. We started saying there should be another soon, one thing led to another, and before we knew what had happened, we realized that

1989 was the 25th anniversary of the founding of UMassSFS and also the year of Noreascon III. So we decided to organize a 25-year re-union to be held at Noreascon III. One of the people still in the Amherst area will get the list of all the past officers, Joe Ross will get their addresses from the Alumni Association, and he and/or I will try to contact all of them. We also plan to advertise in the alumni newsletter and fannish publications. This should be a lot of fun--after all, we have two years to plan it!

### **HASA Party**

Then we walked back down to our rooms on the 15th floor. I called down to the 6th floor to make sure the HASA party was still going on before I walked all the way down. It was so I did. Sure enough, there were Mikki Barry, Charlie Wingate, Jonathan Trudel, and six copies of Rich Rosen, along with an open copy of the Gideon Bible. After hanging out there for a while, I walked back up to the 15th floor and went to sleep.

### **Sunday**

#### **Godzilla Makes an Appearance**

Sunday morning was Brigham's again, then back for the "Godzilla" panel. Billed as "Everything you always wanted to know about Godzilla," this turned out to be a Boxboro gag, with someone showing up in a Godzilla suit and answering silly questions from the audience. A real waste of time if you were hoping for a real film panel--which we were.

#### **Whither Boskone?**

We skipped the "L5 Presents the Mars Underground" to pack and check out, because we all wanted to go to the "Look Ahead to Boskone '88." Some back-tracking is necessary at this point. NESFA has been saying for several years now that Boskone is getting too large--this year's attendance was estimated at 4000. As a perspective, Boskone VI in 1969 (our first) was about 260 people and Noreascon I in 1971 was only 2100. Next year when the Hynes Auditorium re-opens, the Sheraton will close the temporary exhibit space that it "borrowed" from the parking garage area. The bottom line is that the current size is too large for the new Sheraton without the Hynes and too small to make renting the Hynes a fiscal possibility. Also, NESFA does not *want* a larger convention--they want a smaller one. So starting with this year's to some extent, and continuing for the next few years, NESFA will be down-scaling Boskone by emphasizing literature, art, and fannish activities (like filking) and de-emphasizing media. Unfortunately, all this got tangled up in the other problem--rowdies causing problems with the hotel. Friday night there were three false fire alarms (I slept through all of them) and the Con committee was ready to cancel next year's Boskone on the spot. By Saturday night things had gotten better--the people thought to be responsible for the Friday nights alarms were not members, but friends of a con member, and the hotel could see that most con members were being as helpful as possible in preventing this sort of problem in the future.

Anyway, the meeting had two major "bones of contention": should NESFA de-emphasize media and what could NESFA do to keep the rowdies out? One of the people from NESFA made the mistake of saying that in order to get "more of the sort of people we want" at Boskones, they would be de-emphasizing media. After a lot of heated discussion, I think the conclusion we all came to was that the de-emphasizing of media was being done to focus the convention and had nothing to do with the type of people who liked media. A smaller, less advertised convention would, by its very nature, attract fewer hangers-on than a large one. In spite of the (in my opinion) reasonableness of all this, there were those who felt that NESFA had some sort of obligation to offer big media presentations

because, after all, there were people who liked this sort of thing and they wanted to come to Boskone and so Boskone should offer it. (I suspect you can guess my opinion of this from the previous sentence.) The bottom line is that NESFA won't--there will be no video room (though they may go back to closed-circuit video as a means of keeping people in their rooms rather than wandering the halls looking for entertainment), there will be no cinematic blockbusters or major media presentations, and in general people who attend only for media will have to find another convention to go to for that.

The other, somewhat surprising, suggestion to be put forth was the drastic scaling down of parties. It used to be that parties were occasions for people to get together and talk; now they are, in many cases, a giant drinking bash. Many of the hangers-on show up because of all the free booze available. The suggestions in this area ranged from no seeding of parties (to keep the size down), to spot-checking parties to make sure no under-age people were being served alcohol, to banning alcohol altogether from open parties (those advertised by the Con committee). It was agreed that there was no way to ban liquor altogether but that it would certainly make a difference if only private parties were serving it. Stay tuned till next year for the results of all this.

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