

READERCON 9

Conference on Imaginative Literature, Ninth Edition
Progress Report 1

Guests of Honor:

Kim Stanley Robinson

Algis Budrys

Memorial Guest of Honor:

C. M. Kornbluth

July 11-13, 1997

Marriott Westborough

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Notes from the Sofa

It's hard to believe that the first Readercon was held 10 years ago. I remember attending that first Readercon; having come into science fiction fandom at a time of large regional conventions. It was wonderful to attend an event where the whole conference could fit into one room and my favorite writers were eager to meet their readers. I like to say that I liked the con so much, I joined the committee! It is our dearest hope to continue to produce Readercons where the attendees feel at home. (And if you have the same reaction I did -- please let us know! We could certainly use more committee members!)

If this is your first Readercon, welcome! If you are a regular attendee, please accept our profuse thanks! Our guests this year, Kim Stanley Robinson and Algis Budrys, are great guys, and we'll be giving you many chances to meet them and hear them speak. We are planning again to provide a place where readers and writers come together.

I hate to bore you with internal committee matters, but I will. Adina Adler, Ellen Brody, and I, Merry! Gross, have replaced B. Diane Martin and David Shaw as both Conference and Program Chairs. They have left us with some awfully big shoes to fill, and I hope the three of us will be enough! So this is why these notes come to you from a sofa, rather than a chair.

Well, I'll stop blathering and let you get on to the important facts contained in this first Progress Report. We'll see you in July!

GOH: Writer

"A writer who could combine the techniques of modern fiction with a genuine command of science could be at the top of this field in no more than a few years. He would also stand alone.

"There are a few among us who know science and a few more who understand fiction, but there is not a single science fiction writer who can do both."

Even as Barry Malzberg published that grim assessment of the field (which is actually quite hilarious, if you keep on reading), in his novel *Galaxies*, it was ceasing to be true. For 1975 was also the year

that Damon Knight bought two stories by a new writer named Kim Stanley Robinson.

As you might expect, Readercon Guests of Honor are something we give a lot of advance thought to. At certain points in the past, we have had potential GoHs penciled in for the next several years. As far back as 1992, we knew we'd be asking Stan Robinson to be our GoH at about this time.

And then he published his *Mars Trilogy*.

They actually vote for the World Series M.V.P. a few innings before the Series looks to be over, so that they can get the trophy ready. I ask you to imagine that Stan won that vote quite easily, and then, in the bottom of the ninth, made a miraculous leaping catch in center field to rob Wade Boggs of a two-out Series-winning grand slam. Just in case you had any question.

One of the events in the sf field indirectly responsible for Readercon's existence (by its re-energizing affect on our founder, Bob Colby) was the spectacular return of Terry Carr's Ace Specials in 1984. How appropriate, then, that the first two Readercon GoHs to be drawn from the 70's / 80's generation of writers be the authors of the two most acclaimed books of that series. While William Gibson was, in one stroke, inventing a bold new subgenre with *Neuromancer*, Stan Robinson was, with *The Wild Shore*, embarking on a more subtle and no less difficult endeavor: making Malzberg's assertion in *Galaxies* into prophecy.

Stan may well be the most versatile great writer the field has ever known, a world traveller with a command of science and history and a passionate interest in society and its structures to go with his Ph.D. in English. Or put it this way: the set of human beings genuinely qualified to talk on both "My Trip to Antarctica" and "Postmodernism: An Introduction" is probably quite small.

After they found evidence for life on Mars last year, Newsweek did a cover story on the planet. "I hope they had the good sense," I told myself as I came inside with the mail, "to mention Stan." In fact, they had commissioned a full-page essay by him, on terraforming. *The Mars Trilogy* has made Stan into an Authority, a delicious and

GOH:
Writer

unexpected bonus we never imagined when we first penciled him into our GoH lineup. But his stature within the sf world was already immense.

It is perilous to attempt to total Stan's award history without a degree in higher mathematics. I come up with eighteen Hugo and Nebula nominations (a figure that I think will stagger even our con committee members), nine of each, for thirteen different works. "The Blind Geometer" (novella, '86) and Red Mars ('93) won Nebulas, while Green Mars won the '93 Hugo and Locus Awards (and was a Nebula nominee). Pacific Edge, the last volume of his Three Californias trilogy, won the '91 John W. Campbell Memorial Award; the earlier volumes, The Wild Shore and The Gold Coast ('88), were runners-up for the Philip K. Dick and Campbell awards respectively. "Black Air" won the World Fantasy Award in '83 and A Short Sharp Shock won the Locus Award for novella in '91. The Memory of Whiteness was an Arthur C. Clarke Award finalist for '85 (as was Red Mars later). I'm sure I've missed a couple.

This year marks a first for us, in that both our Guests of Honor have attended past Readercons (Algis Budrys, in fact, has only missed only one or two). Stan originally turned down our invitation for Readercon 3 in 1990.

I'll never forget getting a phone call from him while on vacation in California, ten weeks before the con (I was staying at friends) after attending Sercon 4 in San Francisco, but Stan tracked me down. "Is it too late," he wanted to know, "to change my mind? All my buds are going to be there!" I assured him that I thought I could find room for him on the program. Those who were at Readercon 3 may remember the smile that never left his face for the duration of the weekend. We felt sure that we had won over another convert, another regular.

We were half right. Stan has been a faithful, even zealous proselytizer for us to his friends in the sf community, but he moved from the East Coast back to his native California soon after Readercon 3, and hasn't been able to make it back to the con himself. So his presence among us in July will be something special, a reunion, community. We hope you'll join us. - Eric Van

GOH:
Critic

I first met Algis Budrys at his Kaffeeklatsch at Readercon 6 in 1993, but I can't remember when I first encountered his work because it seems like he has always been here.

He has been a quietly important presence in speculative fiction since the 1950's, and is currently the editor/publisher of tomorrow'sf which is electronically available at www.tomorrow'sf.com. (The magazine was produced on paper for the first 24 issues, and was previously known as Tomorrow Speculative Fiction. I identified his car in the parking lot at Readercon 8, because the license plate read UNIFONT, the name of the publishing company.)

A. J. is the author of eight novels, the best known being Rogue Moon (1960, Fawcett/Avon), a Hugo finalist selected for inclusion in Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels. His short fiction has appeared in numerous collections, anthologies and magazines. I think he has been even more influential as an editor, teacher and book reviewer. He has edited a great deal of speculative fiction and other genres, was a visiting writer at Clarion and taught writing workshops at the Library of Congress and many other places, and reviewed books for Galaxy and Fantasy & Science Fiction magazines. He was also the director of the Writers of the Future program and edited eight annual volumes of L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers of the Future for Bridge (1985-1992).

Gracious and friendly people like A. J. and his wife, Edna, make possible the meeting of readers and writers that is one of the hallmarks of Readercon. His participation in previous Readercons makes me feel like we are honoring one of our own. - Ellen Brody

GOH:
Memorial

C. M. Kornbluth (1923-58) had a short yet remarkable career. A member of the Futurians in the late 1930's, Kornbluth is perhaps best known for The Space Merchants, a biting satiric collaboration with Frederik Pohl in which Earth is controlled by advertising agencies. He also wrote other novels with Pohl, several with Judith Merrill, and a number on his own. His short stories are frequently reprinted, particularly "The Marching Morons" and "The Little Black Bag" (both based on the premise that we are breeding intelligence *out* of the human gene pool). Kornbluth was a writer of dark humor and remarkable versatility, and we will be examining his career in several panels and events this year.

Programming

The Program is not just the heart and soul of Readercon, it's most of the internal organs, several appendages, and perhaps a tattoo. We try to think of panels and events no one has ever done and put fresh new twists on the ones they have. From what folks tell us, we succeed. While most cons leave you (and all too often the panelists) guessing what the panels are about, we provide full descriptions not only in the Program Guide but in PR2.

Our regular programming consists of four or five simultaneous tracks running from 6 to 9 PM on Friday, 10 AM to 5 PM on Saturday, and 10 AM to 5 PM on Sunday. There are panel discussions in two large rooms, each with a stage with easy chairs and coffee tables, and area microphones to pick up all the panelists' dialogue. Two smaller rooms feature author readings and a writer's mini-track of panels and how-I-wrote-my-book presentations. A third small room hosts occasional discussion groups, (if you'd like to lead one, let us know).

Special
Events

Our Special Events start Friday evening with our Meet the Pros(e) Party, where you get to meet the writers and their writing, and commit Art (How? See PR2). On Saturday there will be special events featuring our Guests of Honor. Saturday night we are hoping to have a new edition of our Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition (send us ideas!).

Banquet

We are planning another banquet this year, continuing the idea of discussion topics at each table. Barring another hurricane, we may even be able to have it outside on the patio! Please send ideas for banquet table discussion topics to Adina Adler at aadler@kineticsinc.com.

Writer's
Workshop

Once again we'll be hosting a three-hour closed writers' workshop for a few amateurs or new pros, led by David Alexander Smith and Alexander Jablovkov. It will probably happen on Sunday morning at 8:30 AM. Submit up to 7,500 words of fiction (self-contained short story, chapters from a novel, or an outline) by June 30 directly to David at: 112 Avon Hill Street, Cambridge, MA 02140. For more information, write to David or call him at 617-661-3223.

Bookshop

The Bookshop is our dealers' room. Expect a varied selection of new and used books and magazines from small and large publishers. If you'd like to have a table here, send us the following information by March 31: Your name, address and phone number, your assistant's name(s), the number of tables you want (up to 3), whether you're willing to be put on a waiting list, and any special requests, such as electricity. The majority of what you sell must be literary in nature. You must also send us a payment of \$45 per table, which will be returned if you're not selected.

Policies

\$\$ No smoking in programming areas or the Bookshop.
\$\$ Only guide animals in convention areas.
\$\$ No weapons in convention areas.

\$\$ Young children who are always with an adult are admitted for free; others need a membership. Readercon does not have children's programming or baby-sitting. However...

Baby-sitting

Every year we seem to acquire more young fans. We don't have the resources to care for them ourselves, but if any parents out there want to organize a babysitting cooperative, we'll help you get in touch with each other. Just let us know who you are!

Publications

We've already mentioned our Program Guide, which runs 30 or 40 pages. In it you'll find the full conference schedule with panel precis and an index of each participant's appearances, plus a wide variety of useful information. In the back there are complete mini-bibliographies of every participant - that's right, all of their book titles with dates and publishers, and then some. For those who prefer to travel light, we provide a simple pocket schedule in table form.

Our souvenir book is comparable in non-ad page count to the Worldcon souvenir guide. It may also improve your sex life, cure baldness, win friends, and influence people. Our book will have original material by and about our Guests, original artwork, and much more. If you want to place an ad in the souvenir book, contact Amy West for info (awest@m-w.com; 81 Orchard St., Rockville, CT 06066) Ads must be submitted in camera-ready form by May 15.

Tiptree Award

Readercon joins other conventions across the country in raising funds for the award the old-fashioned way: with a bake sale. We'll be soliciting baked goodies and volunteers to help sell them in the next Progress Report.

The sixth James Tiptree Jr. Award will be presented at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts. ICFA 18 will be held March 19-23, 1997, at the Dania Airport Hilton in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

You can write to them c/o: Martha Bartter, Div. of Language and Literature, Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. For info send email to: William A. Senior (seniorw@mail.firn.edu) Or, visit their website at <http://www.sf3.org/tiptree/index.html>.

Our hotel is once again the friendly Marriott Westborough. Reserve your rooms early to avoid unpleasant last-minute surprises!

Hotel

Getting There

Westborough is less than an hour west of Boston by car. The Marriott is located at the intersection of Routes 9 and 495, and is served by a limousine service that runs from various points in Boston, including Logan Airport. Call the Marriott for current information about the limousine service. Progress Report 2 will have detailed directions for driving there.

Membership

You're getting this Progress Report either because you've already bought a membership in Readercon 9 or because you're on our mailing list. If your mailing label says "Pre-paid member" on it, you've already bought a membership. Otherwise, you can buy one in advance by filling out the form below and sending us a check. At-the-door memberships will cost \$50.

Con Suite

The Con Suite is Readercon's own party, where you'll find munchies both nutritious and politically incorrect, and people to talk to (there is a causal relationship here). We try to keep it open during all convention hours (with a little help from volunteers).

Volunteers

Readercon is run entirely by volunteers. We can always use more help, in every area. If you're new to conventions, volunteering is a great and time-tested way to meet people. Let us know you're interested on the form below, and we'll contact you about scheduling you in the areas you'd like to work - or you can just volunteer at the con (although the most interesting jobs may be taken by then). Work enough hours and you'll earn some cool thing or other.

PR2

PR2 will have an updated guest list, a more detailed description of the program, and more information on getting to the con. It will be sent to members in mid-May. If you won't know by then whether you can attend but would like to receive a copy, check the box on the reply form.

Enclosed is \$_____ for the following:

- _____ Attending membership(s) (\$35 until March 1st, then \$40 until July 1st)
- _____ Supporting membership(s) (\$10, includes all publications)

- () I'm not ready to join yet, but send me Progress Report 2.
- () I would like to organize a discussion group or workshop.
- () I am interested in joining a baby-sitting cooperative.
- () I like to check off little boxes!
- () Please send Volunteer info Bookshop info Advertising info.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Make your check or money order out to READERCON. Please don't send cash through the mail.

Mail this to: Readercon 9, P.O. Box 381246, Cambridge, MA 02238

Who's coming to Readercon 9?
GOHs Kim Stanley Robinson and Algis Budrys

Additional Confirmed Attendees:	Rebecca Ore	David Hartwell
The Joey Zone	James Morrow	Geary Gravel
Anne Tonsor Zeddies	Edward McFadden	Gordon Van Gelder
Jean-Louis Trudel	Laurie Marks	Craig Shaw Gardner
Susanna Sturgis	Barry Malzberg	Gregory Feeley
Sarah Smith	Warren Lapine	Tom Easton
Cortney Skinner	Lissanne Lake	Don D'Ammassa
Delia Sherman	Ellen Kushner	Hal Clement
eluki bes shahar	Rosemary Kirstein	Suzy McKee Charnas
Darrell Schweitzer	Angela Kessler	Jeffrey Carver
Felicity Savage	Connie Hirsch	Stephen P. Brown
Paul T. Riddell	Jeff Hecht	

...and many more to come!

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