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Secret Confessions of *Battlestar Galactica* Lovers

The 4/4 April First Friday began with Judy banging the gavel. "Hey!" came a voice from the back. Lee Gilliland confessed that her injury was due to slipping in the bathroom. For old business, the secretary reported that at the last meeting, WSFA changed its bylaws so all mentions of Disclave were replaced with "the WSFA convention."

The Treasurer was playing with his new toy. The club joked that it brings new meaning to the term personal digital assistant. He reported \$1,913.77. Sam Pierce said, we can pay our insurance. Elspeth asked how much is the insurance. Bob said that we won't know for sure until we get the bill but was \$630 last year. Sam P was impressed that "we're solvent".

Capclave present (Sam L) has flyers to be distributed. Capclave future (Lee G) has nothing. World Fantasy (Mike W) reported that the PR went out and got a boatload back. Mob said that the mailman hates me. Mike replied. That's his job. Next mailing, third Friday in May. Judy asked if there was anything on SMOFcon. No.

Entertainment committee (Alexis) reported an expletive written in lights on the original *Battlestar Galactica* movie. Mike explained that when the original *Battlestar Galactica* aired, the publisher of the novels had a riser that was altered to read Battlestar Exlactive, John asked who wasn't alive when the show was on. Elizabeth said, "I was two, I could have seen it." John said, "It was on your mental level." Judy confessed, "I had a Richard Hatch poster on my wall at college." Elspeth took charge, "Moving right along..."

Lee said that Ghosts of the Abyss is absolutely fantastic. Local group going Saturday April 19th. Scott is organizing a trip to see Pirates of Penzance at Wolftrap on June 7th. Austerity committee asked us to tip our waitress. The committee to spend money suggested sending sunglasses to Baghdad so people don't get blinded by flashes of light.

Old business: Third Friday is in Virginia because Lydia's vacation Spring Break coincides.

New business: Sam P said that SFSFC (the parent of ConJose) will match contributions to sflovers.org. He proposed that WSFA collect donations and have SFSFC match it. Elspeth explained a bit on why sflovers.org was important, tracing its history back as the original sf discussion list on the Internet. Judy asked "Will you collect it or would it go through the treasurer?" Richard asked, "How long is this offer good for?" The motion to find out more about this offer passed unanimously.

Bob asked, "Madam President, did you inform trustees to make the slate because the election is one month away?"

Announcements: Brian Lewis is looking for people at Media West. People who bought books through Larry Smith using charge cards should know he's months behind, up to December. John asked that anyone going to the Nebs and willing to assist in taping Fast Forward to see him. Elspeth is looking for books by Tim Powers and James Blaylock. Lee Strong had announcements listed below. Sam is looking for a job in education policy analysis, research and/or writing. Old Earth Books is publishing the Avram Davidson Jack Limekiller series at world fantasy con. Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:35.

Attendance: Pres Judy Kindell, VP Sam Pierce. Sec & 2003 Chair Samuel Lubell. Treas. Bob MacIntosh, Trust Scott Hofmann, Trust. Eric Jablow, Trust Nicki Lynch, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, Sheri Bell, Adrienne Ertman, Alexis Gilliland, Erica Ginter, Cathy Green, Jim Kling, Elspeth Kovar, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Keith Lynch, Richard Lynch, Cat Meier, Walter Miles, Mike Nelson, John Pomeranz, Judy and Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Steven Smith, Lee Strong, Michael Taylor, Elizabeth Twitchell, Mike Walsh, Madeleine Yeh, Wade Lynch, Ivy Yap, David Grimm, R. Lionell Fanthorpe, Larry Pfeffer.

Announcements by Lee Strong

Two years ago, Lee Strong was diagnosed with diabetes. He's 83% still here by weight.

Last year, WSFA authorized Lee to donate money to the Mary Riley Stiles Public Library in Falls Church, Virginia to build up their collection of science fiction and fantasy videos and DVDs. The build

up is complete and each video/DVD container has a notice stating that it is a gift of the Washington Science Fiction Association. Visit the Stiles Library and bask in the club's glory.

Lee is selling books at fire sale prices after the meeting for the benefit of the WSFA Austerity Fund. Subsequently, Lee donated \$20 to the hat courtesy of book buyers.

The US Army awarded Lee the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for placing customer surveys on the Web at a \$500,000 savings to the taxpayers. Brian Lewis wondered if we could get a percentage of that. Lee whipped four large chocolate bars out and donated them to the after meeting refreshments. And a good time was had by all.

At the Third Friday meeting, Keith Lynch thanked Lee Strong for locating copies of the July 1993 *WSFA Journal* and providing them to the club. Lee explained that he was cleaning his apartment. (Insert your own archeological joke here.) He has donated 1,374 books, magazines and games to the George Mason Regional Library or sold to WSFAns and the Hole in the Wall Bookstore. One of the articles in the July 1993 *Journal* stated that Lee was cleaning his apartment so this is either a very long process or cyclical.

The George Mason Regional Library will be holding a book sale 5:00 p.m. 1 May thru 5:00 p.m. 4 May 2003.

Lee is planning to further reduce his collection starting with Analog, Asimov's, Fantastic, Fantasy & Science Fiction, Galaxy, and If magazines.

Brian Lewis wrote, "If anyone is going to Media West this Memorial Day Weekend and would like to get together for dinner one night please contact me" brilew@earthlink.net

Fanzine Review

By Ted White

TAFF REPORT
BLUES



UNCLE SMILEY'S BOOKCASE v.2 n.1, 01/20/2003 (Ray Nelson, 333 Ramona Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530; e-mail to RayFaradayNelson@AOL.com; available "in exchange for 'the usual,' in other words for letters of comment, articles, poems or artwork, or in exchange for other fanzines." No money will be accepted.)

Ray Nelson has become a legend in fandom. He has been a fan for more than half a century, and, as a cartoonist, it was he (circa 1949) who created the self-mocking image of fans wearing propeller beanies. A dedicated bohemian for most of his life, Ray moved to Paris in the '50s, where he met his wife, Kirsten and their son Walter was born. At the end of that decade Ray (and family) returned to the United States and he's been at the same address in El Cerrito ever since.

In the 1960s Ray began writing and selling science fiction professionally (his "Turn Off The Sky" in F&SF was bumped from the 1964 Hugo ballot by unfortunate politics) and in the '70s he was publishing SF novels. Over the years Ray has pursued many interests - and in the new millennium he has returned to doing fanzines.

Uncle Smiley's Bookcase is an 8-page fanzine which is mailed out in a letter-sized envelope for one-ounce first-class postage. It's moderately frequent and

basically unpretentious, informal and newsletter-like – but that doesn't mean Ray doesn't use it as a vehicle for some serious thinking.

Six pages of the current issue (all but the front and back covers) are devoted to Ray's "Being God in Your Own Little Universe," in which he takes us through a relatively brief sketch of his evolving life as an existentialist. This "sketch" is "illustrated" with a series of poems, many of them quite short, which were written in the course of his philosophical travels. They tend to be paradoxically simple, but usually express complex emotions and insights.

The rest of the issue? In an opening-page "Editorial," Ray tells us that "the beanie has ventured forth into new realms, most notably the 'geek culture.' I have totally lost control of it & can no longer use it as a signature. With a sigh I release it to the universe." His replacement is the beret.

As usual, the issue closes with a brief, one-page letter column. The contributors to this one are Robert Lichtman (editor/publisher of *Trap Door*), Trina Robbins (long-time fan, well-known feminist and underground/overground cartoonist and artist) and Harry Warner, Jr. (fan historian and author of *All Our Yesterdays* and *A Wealth of Fable*) – which tells you something about Ray's current mailing list.

Write Ray and ask for a copy. This kind of personalized communication is what fanzines are all about.

The Golden Sands of Arrakis **A review of *Children of Dune*** **by Kit Mason**

I'm not going to comment on the irony of the timing of showing *Children of Dune*. That's just too obvious. But I am going to go out on any number of theoretical limbs to say that I liked the presentation and the characterization.

(From what I've been told, *Dune* (the book) was inspired by the life of Mohammed, though it takes a number of sharp left turns and by the time of the sequel has little in common. How many of the readers -- or viewers -- realize that?)

Children of Dune comprises scenes from *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune*. This simplifies the story line while keeping the list of characters down to a manageable horde. If every character Herbert ever wrote and named were to show up on a soundstage at once, there wouldn't be room for the crew, let alone for the sandworms. The storyline here follows Alia, sister of Paul Atreides, who is regent for her brother's children, Leto and Ghanima; all three of them were born with the memories of all their ancestors' experiences in their minds. In Alia's case, the memories are driving her insane, through possession by the personality of a dead ancestor. In the children's case, it has given them telepathy, an understanding of strategy, and the willingness to use this understanding to expand their positions and abilities. Leto seeks out the path his father turned away from, the Golden Path of unity with the desert planet Arrakis; Ghanima seeks to survive amid the upheavals of her aunt's insane crusade against the desert and its people, who are also her people. Ghanima is aided by Paul's treaty wife, the Princess Irulan, who raised the twins and loves them but has little political power, and by Alia and Paul's mother, the Lady Jessica, played by Alice Krige. Around them and with them move the court and the players who have been there since the leaders of House Atreides first came to the planet: Gurney Halleck, the fremen leader Stilgar, and the much-reincarnated Duncan Idaho.

It was inevitable, given the demands of filmwriting, that some opposition characters would be enlarged to balance the strength of the leading roles. One such is Wensicia, matriarch of a rival House who schemed to gain power over the Atreides by assassination and by marrying her son to Ghanima. Wensicia, played by Susan Sarandon, makes plans in her court in much the same way that Alia makes her own plans, surrounded by the leaders of the religion

that has grown around her brother's legend; the parallelism is apparent and interesting. Wensicia's attempt to influence her son by making the captive Jessica his teacher backfires spectacularly.

Actually, the film could be viewed as a critique of religion used as a control device, with several religions to choose from: the Bene Gesserit sisterhood that wields power behind the scenes in much the same way as the Jesuits after which they were named (or so I've been told); the "official religion" of the followers of Muad'dib, and the native religion of the ordinary people of Arrakis. Each has its own manner of mysticism, its own esoteric practices, and its own orthodoxies and heresies.

It's not faint praise to point out that this production (and the production of *Dune* that preceded it) managed to remedy many of the over-the-Everest traits of the 1980s Kyle McLachlan movie, notably the tendency of actors to take iconic stances while saying lines that didn't make much sense, and of the art direction to err on the side of unfortunate anatomical similarities while creating aliens and effects. This time, however, the production staff borrowed good design from a number of cultural eras and artistic movements -- including but not limited to Tudor, Gothic, Pre-Raphaelite and Moorish Spain to create something that ultimately applied to none of them. The planet was beautiful. The palaces were beautiful and realistic; they looked livable, and the furniture looked usable, not just decorative. For the most part the clothes looked like clothes, not costume. (Hmm. Would dressing as one of the fremen be practical in a DC summer? probably not.) Ceremonial clothes, practical clothes, working clothes.

I think one of the reasons all of the above was so is the advances in technology in computers and special effects in the last two decades. It would have been possible in the past to show Baron Harkonnen taking over Alia's mind, but not nearly as effectively. It would have been possible to show sandtrout crawling up Leto's arm, but they wouldn't have been nearly as pretty. I loved the way they turned into Art Nouveau swirls, more decorative than the plate mail of the book. (Yes, the actor reminded me of a very young Peter Wingfield, (Methos, from *Highlander*) with less nose.)

The attack by the sand tigers was the most 'computer-driven' scene I noticed, far more so than the worms or the storms or the butterfly. It was a bit clumsy -- they really need to get the shadows down for animated creatures better than that, and reduce the heads so they don't look oversized with relation to the bodies. The visual texture of fur needed work. Has anyone looked at a real tiger's fur lately, and the way it ripples over the muscles and bristles in some places while staying sleek in others? And when Ghanima stabs the already dead beast -- so obviously stuffed -- we really didn't need to see dust flying off it, even if that was supposed to be sand. Too obvious.

But I loved, loved, loved Leto's fight with the palace guards and priests, swirling so quickly that he blurred while they moved at a normal pace -- like the legendary battle of Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido, with the six thugs, where he moved a little here and there and they all went flying in various directions. Leto's sweet smile at Alia as she holds the crysknife at his chest to kill him stole my heart. With scenes like this, I don't even try to deconstruct how they're filmed; I just enjoy them.



At the end, when Ghanima tells the man who won't be her husband that Leto comes and asks her to kill him, it's never said that one of the results of the sandtrout merging with him is that they're taking away his genitals and making him into something entirely different, not just a man with armor who can live in the desert without a breathing mask. It's inferred, in Ghanima's words about having children, but never said except in her face. It would have strengthened the movie if this could have been presented more strongly, with a brief scene between Leto and Ghanima where he tells her what he has lost and she realizes it; perhaps such a scene was filmed and left on the cutting room floor for length.

Even so, *Children of Dune* provides many images that stick in my mind -- St. Alia of the knife practicing her defensive techniques, Alice Krige doing a fine version of Katherine Hepburn in her more formal moments (no Borg Queen here), Susan Sarandon enjoying her scheming, the actor playing Duncan Idaho giving the role the depth it deserves, the Bene Gesserit speaking simultaneously in words and in hand signs that mean different things, and the blinded Muad'dib who still sees more than anyone else ever did, or will. It may not be faithful to the printed page, but it's good enough to please me, and not many book-to-screen translations can claim that.

The Core **Reviewed by Lee Strong**

This fantasy science flick is not a bad adventure yarn... provided you ignore the bad science, weak plot, cliched characters, and uninspiring music. Other than those few weaknesses, it's really terribly adequate.

A conflict of interest warning: I'm planning two novels with some ideas in common with *The Core*, so my evaluation may not be completely disinterested.

The plot here is pretty simple: a series of strange events, linked by a magnetic theme, causes a Brilliant and Heroic Scientist to deduce that Everyone On Earth Is Doomed Within A Year. It seems that the Earth's inner core has suddenly stopped rotating, weakening the magnetic field that protects Earth from solar microwave radiation. A Hard Nosed Military Leader determines to fix the problem by rounding up a crew of clichés, including a Spunky Female Pilot, a Stalwart Male Commander, an Arrogant Genius Scientist, an Eccentric Genius Scientist, a Computer Hacker Super-Nerd and a Lovable Sidekick who doubles as a weapons expert. Together they quickly build a gee whiz nuclear powered subterrene and race thru Earth's crust, mantle and outer core to jump start the inner core with 5 nuclear bombs. Along the way, they encounter the dangers and beauties Inside The Earth, which they struggle to overcome with brains and really weird science.

There is a mediocre story with some logic here and there, and some of the visual effects achieve a towering beauty, but that pretty much exhausts the virtues of this trite effort. Planetary cores just don't suddenly halt in position, even if doubletalk energy beams are revealed to have been directed at them previously. If they did, much of the crust would fly off into space, and the rest would be melted by the released heat. We won't have time to build unobtainium (!) vessels that continue functioning when 5 of its 6 compartments are jettisoned due to heroic jury rigging. The visual splendors of this film cannot disguise the rottenness at its intellectual core.

I rate *The Core* as ★★ on the five star scale. – LS

BULLETPROOF MONK **A movie review by Barry Newton**

The short description: I liked it. For a bit more detail, see below.

I'll admit I was kind of sucked in by the Yahoo! description of the show: Action/Adventure and Science Fiction/Fantasy. There is a good deal of action and adventure--it's a kung fu movie, folks. The SF&F aspects of it. . .well, it does require much suspension of disbelief. There is

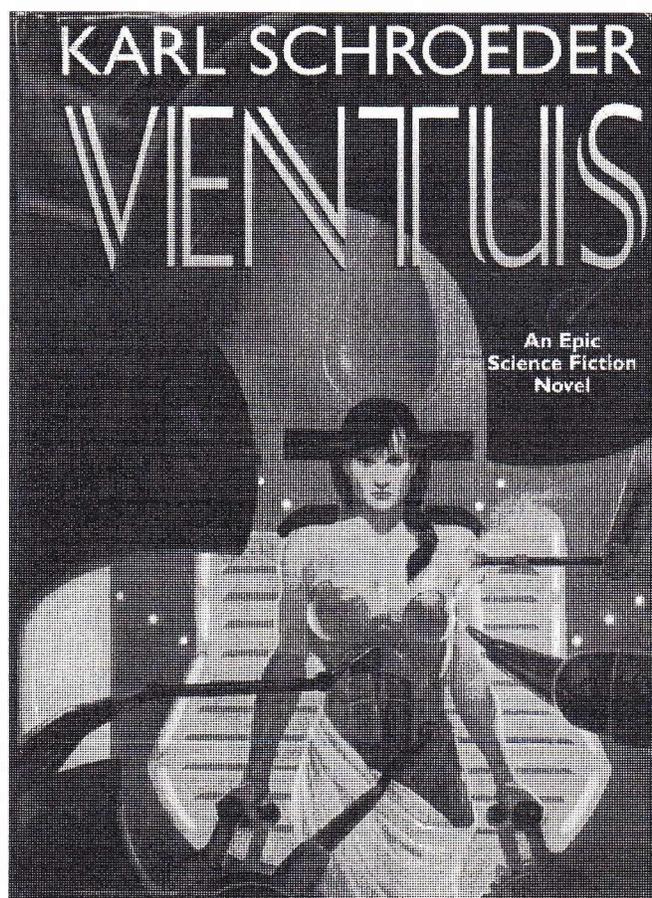
considerable homage to *The Matrix*, not to mention *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. If you advance far enough in the martial arts, you get to meet Tinker Bell, who works her magic upon you.

What was left out of the Yahoo! writeup was the word "comedy." This movie does not take itself entirely seriously. The villains are classic James Bond nasties. The Wise Teacher is witty, the sidekick unwitting, but with a good heart. The plot, well, no need to waste too many electrons there. If you really want spoilers, see <http://movies.yahoo.com>, they know how to do that. I'll give you just this one: the good guys win in the end.

Light entertainment, much amusement, some more-or-less graphic violence. I'm easily amused. If this describes you, see the *Bulletproof Monk*.

Review of Karl Schroeder's *Ventus* (Tor: 2000)

Reviewed by Samuel Lubell



Ventus is a wonderful achievement, made more impressive by being the author's first sf novel (he had collaborated in a fantasy novel). At first glance *Ventus* seems a low-tech world and the events that take place more like fantasy than sf (although the book is carefully packaged as sf) where the Winds are worshipped as gods. Jordan, the son of the hereditary master mason of his estate starts to have mysterious visions of a war being fought and is taken by two mysterious strangers on a quest. But this fantasy shell disguises a rigid sf universe where nanotech and artificial intelligence control the planet of *Ventus* and the two strangers are aliens from Earth sent to stop a cyborg agent of a defeated godlike artificial intelligence from resurrecting his master.

Unlike most novels of this type, there is no real evil villain. The cyborg Armiger becomes more human as the book goes on, even falling in love (and not with the Queen who he helps). While Jordan is the main hero, Armiger is at least an anti-hero (and a much more interesting character.) The author has several plot streams going simultaneously, including a trip back to Earth to decrypt the secrets of the founders of *Ventus*. Most of the book consists of trying to unravel the mysteries of the world, why only some humans have nanotech powers and the goals of the different artificial intelligences.

The book has more than enough action and adventure to satisfy most readers yet has much more to offer. Ultimately, the novel comes down to a duel of rival philosophies and different conceptions of the role of artificial beings. This is a book I'm placing on my re-read shelf. Highly recommended and I'm going to look for more by the author, Karl Schroeder.

The Time Travel Handbook: A Manual of Practical Teleportation & Time Travel

Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1999

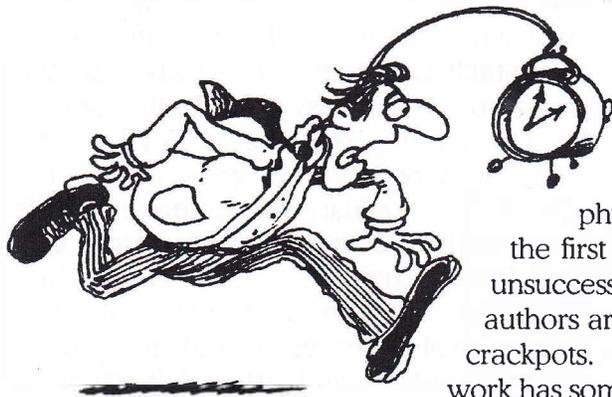
Edited by David Hatcher Childress

Reviewed by Lee Strong

During the First Friday meeting in December 2002, Elspeth Kovar stated that she needed a time machine and Ivy Yap revealed her mastery of teleportation. Purely as a public service, I reviewed this work of breathtakingly banal pseudo-science.

This book is a collection of diverse chapters themed to the title concept, including the Philadelphia Experiment. The first two chapters are written by Mr. Childress himself and are actually fairly good recaps of current quantum mechanical cosmological theory. After that, things get stranger and stranger and stupider and stupider. We have a chapter on 19th Century UFOs and two chapters on the Philadelphia Experiment in which the US Navy supposedly achieved teleportation, invisibility and contact with aliens sometime in 1943. These are followed by New Age babbling about UFO's and grand conspiracy theories. Then there are a couple of chapters on

"practical time travel" including "actual patents and technical diagrams." And, finally, there are some time travel cartoons. Everything the aspiring pseudo-scientist needs to gallop off to the 23rd Century. Especially the cartoons.



Anyone reading this book for real history, physics, and/or engineering will be disappointed after the first two chapters. A lot of implausible technobabble unsuccessfully attempts to disguise the fact that the various authors are crackpots who make money by writing for other crackpots. As a springboard for science fiction stories, this work has some value. As a serious piece of science speculation, it has none.

I rate *The Time Travel Handbook: A Manual of Practical Teleportation & Time Travel* as ★½ on the five star scale as being pseudo-scientific rubbish of interest solely to those with specialized tastes. -- LS

The Fantastic Inventions of Nikola Tesla

Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1993

By Nikola Tesla with additional material by David Hatcher Childress

Reviewed by Lee Strong

This is a curious book composed of 2 parts serious electrical engineering, one part biography of Nikola Tesla, and one part pseudo-science building on the rest.

Tesla may well be the prototype of the stereotypical "mad scientist." Born in 1856, he created many crucial electrical inventions including the practical generator and radio. However, he also speculated freely about death rays, robots, and electronic defenses, which resulted in his name being attached to many pseudo-scientific theories.

The first half of this book is reprints of serious lectures in electrical experimentation that Tesla gave to appreciative scientific audiences. Another quarter of the book is semi-serious biography of the great man interspersed with patent drawings. The final quarter is pseudo-scientific speculation about Tesla and Marconi disappearing into the wilds of South America to found a utopian scientific community dedicated to world peace thru free energy.



The latter is the reason for its publication by Adventures Unlimited Press (a specialized publishing house for the discerning pseudo-scientist).

The first half of the book will reward the intelligent reader interested in Tesla's own words. However, I recommend that such a reader look elsewhere for serious research. The second half of the book is basically pseudo-science useful for speculative fiction and nothing else. Unless you're looking for a couple of cute idea to spark an offbeat novel, this book is pretty much worthless.

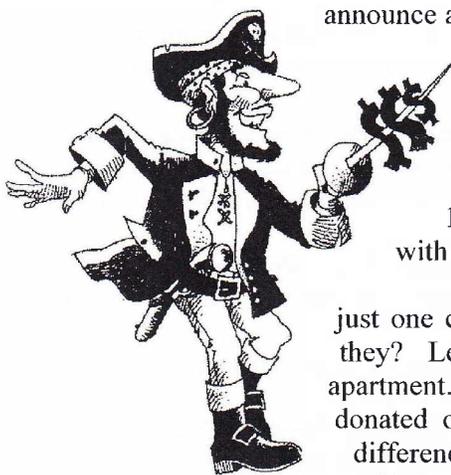
I rate *The Fantastic Inventions of Nikola Tesla* as ★★ on the five star scale as being primarily pseudo-science of interest to those with specialized tastes. -- LS

Trustees Come Through at Last Minute

The 4/18 Third Friday meeting met, unusually, at the Gillilands. For old business, Sam P. talked about his research finding that the parent of ConJose will match donations to the sf lovers website up to \$400. "I suggested we take up a collection and apply for matching funds. Saul said for tax purposes should run it through their SF club. For your tax purposes, write your own check." Judy, who has written a tax regulation or two said, "It only matters if \$250 or up." Sam P. asked that anyone who wishes to donate to see him.

Bob reported \$1,928.77. Calls for parties were heard. Alexis said the entertainment committee went to a Titanic convention. "It's like going to a parallel universe. People interested in strange stuff, the dealer's room has strange stuff, but the people are enthused about three smokestack ships. Compared to regular sf fans they are more socially ept, but we outnumber them 30,000 to 3,000." Lee added, "Well, I had a good time." She also confessed that "My grandmother's stepsister was on the Titanic." The con's traditional weekend is when the ship sailed. Keith said, "Should have taken a ship."

Capclave present said it is time to talk about doing a mailing and invites to program people. WFC had something for Bob. The club speculated that it was Enron options, but it was just mundane money. A call was put out for the trustees, to much laughter. They have only two candidates for vice president—Cathy Green and Keith Lynch. "Does anyone want to run for president?" Scott asked. "Howard Dean!" said a club member. <Not being a WSFan, he can't run for WSFA president.> Lee G suggested that if the trustees can't find candidates that the election be postponed. Sam L. pointed out that the date is in the constitution. Judy said, "If they can meet after the meeting, track down candidates and announce a slate after the meeting." Sam P. had a radical suggestion, "Talk to the incumbents."



Activities committee has organized a trip to see *Ghosts of the Abyss*. Scott is organizing a trip to see *Pirates of Penzance*. "They want to charge \$2.75 to buy tickets, so tickets are \$12.75. June 6th." Lee said that there would be a trip to see *Matrix Reloaded* on May 17th. Time and theater to be announced. She is trying to get in touch with WETA about a pledge drive.

Keith for publications would like to thank Lee Strong for finding not just one copy of the July 1993 issue but a whole stack of them. Where were they? Lee explained, "As announced in the July 93 issue, I am cleaning my apartment." Walter added, "Every ten years whether it needs it or not." Lee has donated over 1,000 books "and I doubt the average people would know the difference. The WSFA chat list mentioned giving away a large collection of 400 books. Amateurs." Someone debated, "My pile is bigger than your pile" which somehow degenerated into comparing people's hair lengths at age 19. There were no other committees.

Lee G. asked if we could kill the trustees? Unfortunately, if you kill them, you have to take their job. <Just like holiday mascots in Sluggo Freelance.>

Announcements. After the meeting Lee will sink the Titanic in the kitchen sink, we will put ice cubes in for the icebergs. Nicki Lynch's quilting group will display 300 quilts at the Montgomery

Fairgrounds. Madeleine asked if their were Quilters Anonymous for those quitting quilting. Lee is reducing his collection and asked if anyone was looking for something specific, to email him. Mike Walsh announced that a magazine will feature Edward Whittemore in its June issue. Keith said that Rich and Nicki were nominated for Hugos. Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:45.

Meeting re-convened at 9:50. Scott for the trustees said, "we have a slate." Walter asked, "What's on it." Scott said the officers:

For President	Judy Kindell
For Vice President	Cathy Green or Keith Lynch
For Treasurer	Bob MacIntosh
For Secretary	(Someone who is writing madly) Sam Lubell
For Trustees	Adrienne Ertman, Steve Smith, George Shaner
For Capclave 05	Mike Walsh.

Attendance: VP Sam Pierce, Sec & 2003 Chair Samuel Lubell, Treas Bob MacIntosh, Trust. Scott Hofmann, Trust Nicki Lynch, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, Bernard Bell, Adrienne Ertman, Carolyn Frank, Alexis Gilliland, Cathy Green, Bill Lawhorn, Keith Lynch, Richard Lynch, Keith Marshall, Cat Meier, Walter Miles, Rebecca Prather, Judy and Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Steven Smith, Lee Strong, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Diana Swiger, Duck Dodgers!, Emily Richter, Kelley Singer

Phase Transition by Lee Strong

April 2074

The humans experienced the subliminal feeling that a ring of fire rushed past the returning starship. The computers reported a massive quantum fluctuation spike. Objectively, the reddish Cetan sunlight winked out of existence and the yellow light of Sol winked in. They were home.

"Very good, people," stated Captain Tomonaga. "Pilot, log the quantum tunnel transition as successful and shape our vector for L-5 base. Communications, contact Alliance Center, download our data on the Cetan planets to the Technical Department, and upload any traffic advisories for the Pilot. Everyone else, perform system checks and advise the Executive Officer."

There was a chorus of Ayes as the crew went about its business. Communications announced that contact had been made. The forward screen changed from the welcome view of the Earth-Luna system to a generic office somewhere in Alliance Center.

"Admiral Ghiradelli, the Coalition of Nations Space Alliance starship *Paul Dirac* reporting," stated Tomonaga formally. "We have completed our assigned exploration of the Cetan planets and are returning to base pursuant to orders." The captain's stoic tone did not completely conceal his pride in his ship's accomplishment.

Rank having its privileges, the admiral was more effusive. "Acknowledged, *Dirac*. Welcome home." His face broke into a Latin smile. "Makoto. It's good to see you! Congratulations! The first long tour interstellar exploration completed! When you have a chance, the bheer's on me!"

"Thank you, sir. The crew performed splendidly. We will dock at L-5 in approximately five hours. Would you have Traffic Control beam us the latest advisories?"

"Of course, Makoto. We don't want our heroes bumping into an ore shipment after multiple star jumps. We'll see you in Five in five." The admiral directed his computer to transmit the latest traffic advisories to the starship before he signed off.

Communications reported the successful downloading of the *Dirac's* planetary system data and the beginning of the uploading process. The first 2.95 billion emails flooded the ship's computer and crashed the life support system.