

The WSFA Journal

AUGUST 2004

**The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association -
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Please direct all correspondence to editor@wsfa.org. Please put either "for publication" or "not for publication" on the subject line. (It MUST contain one or the other, or else your email may be deleted unread by spam filters.) I can also be reached by snail mail at 220 Cedar Lane #62, Vienna VA 22180-6623 USA.

IMPORTANT NOTE: AUGUST'S THIRD FRIDAY MEETING WILL BE AT THE MADIGANS'

Many thanks to Nancy Lebovitz for our new masthead. She sells calligraphic buttons and bumper stickers online at <http://www.nancybuttons.com/> and in person at numerous cons including Noreascon, Capclave, and Balticon.

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WSFA fan gallery

What do people want out of the WSFA Journal? In the past it has contained plenty of information such as Hugo and Nebula nominees and winners, lists of recently published books, and even a metric conversion chart, that can now easily be looked up on the web.

I think the WSFA Journal should focus on WSFA. I propose that every member write a short blurb about themselves for inclusion here, something like the Fan Gallery that can be seen online at <http://scifiinc.net/scifiinc/gallery/list/> or in person at Noreascon. Or like Jay Kay Klein's [Biolog](#).

Ideally each entry should say something that is intriguing to other WSFAns, and a good conversation starter. Your day job, how long you've been in WSFA or in fandom, your other interests, your birthday, your website, blog, phone number, anything really cool you've done, etc. But you can put in or leave out anything you want. I will of course print nothing about anyone without their permission.

Ernest Lilley has volunteered to take photos for it.

I'll print a few in each issue of the WSFA Journal. Once we have as many as we're likely to get, perhaps we can print them all in one place, in a *Field Guide to WSFAns*.

This will help prospective new members get to know us. But it won't just benefit new people. I'm sure there's plenty even the long-timers don't know about each other. Or are too embarrassed to admit that they've forgotten after having been told.

First Friday Minutes

Note that there's a brief summary at the end.

The July 2nd regular First Friday meeting of the Washington Science Fiction Association was called to order by president Samuel Lubell at 9:15 pm EDT in the usual location, the basement of the Gillilands' home in Arlington, Virginia.

In attendance were President Sam Lubell, Vice President Cathy Green, Secretary Keith Lynch, Treasurer Bob MacIntosh, Trustees Adrienne Ertman and Steven Smith, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, 2005 Chair Mike Walsh, and Drew Bittner, Alexis and Charles Gilliland, Paul Haggerty, Eric Jablow, Jim Kling, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Wade Lynch, Keith Marshall, Cat Meier, Kathi Overton, Larry Pfeffer, John Pomeranz, Judy and Sam Scheiner, William Squire, Gayle Surrette, Elizabeth Twitchell, James Uba, and Madeleine Yeh. 29 people.

Someone marked Ivy Yap present, but she was not seen by the secretary, so is deemed to have been Not Present.

The weather was clear, warm, and very humid.

Sam Lubell began the meeting by announcing it was the First Friday of July. Bill Lawhorn moved that it be the second Friday, and was ignored.

The secretary was asked if any business had been done at the previous (June 18th) meeting. He said that the club could not agree on a plan for the first night at Noreascon. Lee corrected this to say that we had decided to talk to John Pomeranz about it. The president said that he had talked to John, and that John had said that his liquid nitrogen ice cream won't keep the fans entertained for long enough. John is willing to help, but the activity should not depend on him.

Lee mentioned a device that sprays people sitting in a chair when someone in the audience hits a target. The president said the device is too expensive for a one-time activity.

The president re-introduced the proposals for a kazoo band (with WSFA-labeled kazoos to be distributed to all interested Noreascon members), a giant cat's cradle, a debate, or a living chess set. He moved that we do something rather than nothing, and asked people to raise their hands if they wanted to do something.

Ernest said he thought doing something rather than nothing was a good idea, but added that the way the president had phrased it, anyone raising their hand would be volunteering to run the thing. The president clarified that this was not the case. Eight voted yes, two voted no, four abstained.

Lee Gilliland suggested taking the discussion offline.

Mike said that since we wouldn't necessarily have someone at the booth at all times, we should have a sign saying WSFA was "currently in a secure remote location". This was met with approval, and the suggestion that we could have an empty booth with such a sign, and no other activity.

Bill suggested we also have a sign pointing to "free booze" which would actually just be water. Several people strongly objected to that idea.

Alexis Gilliland pointed out that a human chess game would require 32 people, 16 of whom (the pawns) would have to be small.

The president said his email had gotten no responses. Ernest replied that he had responded. Ernest also pointed out that all 32 fans in a living chess game would have to follow orders.

The president ruled that the consensus was that the human chess set was no longer an option. He then called for an "Australian" (elimination) ballot among the remaining choices: A debate, a kazoo band, a cat's cradle, or an empty booth with a "secure remote location" sign.

At that point John Pomeranz walked in, and the general discussion started over, with several people talking at once, making life very difficult for the secretary.

John was asked what other clubs would be doing. He said the idea is to have a "carnival booth atmosphere" with "carnie type games," "traditional fan table displays," and "small performances on several scattered performance stages". Judy Scheiner suggested we have darts and dartboards of Bush and Kerry. The president reiterated the same four choices, and asked if anyone has any other ideas before we vote.

Madeleine Yeh suggested we give out L. Ron Hubbard books, and sell chances to *not* win them for a dollar each. Sam Lubell said we're not allowed to charge. Lee said it's not a charge, it's a donation. Adrienne modified Madeleine's suggestion with the idea that we let people choose whether the Hubbard books should be frozen, burned, or otherwise damaged or destroyed. Judy Scheiner reiterated her darts idea. John Pomeranz objected that all these ideas were divisive and not fannish, and would stir up strong emotions and resentments.

Ernest suggested a mock election at which SF pros, rather than politicians, are elected. We would provide a list of about five authors, plus the ever-popular "none of the above". Elizabeth suggested a fake election with fake candidates. Bob MacIntosh said he didn't think we could use authors as candidates without their permission. Someone suggested using dead authors. Bob said that at a Worldcon you don't want to make enemies. Ernest suggested an election, not of people, but of fictional worlds -- which one would each fan prefer to live in? Kathi Overton suggested combining the mock election with the debate among people speaking as SF characters, in character. Cathy reminded us that someone has to man the booth. Eric suggested that Cathy is not allowed to participate. [Presumably this is reference to the Hatch act, which restricts certain political activities of federal employees.] John Pomeranz pointed out that this will necessarily be a short attention span theater, and suggested, instead of a closed set-piece debate, that we set up soap boxes and let everyone have their say. Sam Scheiner added that we should also have shills circulating wearing campaign hats, telling fans to go to the WSFA booth and vote for a particular candidate.

Eric Jablow suggested we do the retro-Hugos one better by having an election open to all SF and fantasy works that are over a hundred years old. John added that whatever election we hold, that we use a whiteboard with a running tally, open to write-in votes.

The president called for a vote on the open soap-box debate and election of dead authors idea. Larry asked if we need to vote now. Sam pointed out that there aren't that many more meetings before the Worldcon.

Twelve in favor, one opposed, five abstentions. John then moved that we dispense with the other options. Motion passed. Sam Scheiner, John Pomeranz, and Ernest Lilley are in charge. They will meet after the meeting.

Treasurer's report: We have \$1,067.60.

Capclave '04: Chair Lee Gilliland said that Bill Lawhorn had been appointed bouncer, to make sure nobody removes any alcoholic drinks from the con suite, and that nobody under 21 drinks any. There is a schedule. Nick Pollotta, the writer guest of honor, will donate books and t-shirts to the young writers' contest. Lee also reported that she broke both her feet at a recent Titanic auction. Sam Lubell asked about a mailing. Lee responded that if she announced a mailing, nobody would show up. There is no mailing tonight.

Capclave '05: Chair Mike Walsh reported that he is looking for a hotel.

Capclave '06: Mike Walsh reported that chair Elspeth Kovar is ill, and is thinking about guests of honor.

World Fantasy '03: Mike Walsh said that Nightshade Press has paid for their sponsoring the con suite for a few hours. The money was late in coming due to Nightshade having a cash crunch - they were/are owed a lot of money by Baker & Taylor (*the library book wholesaler in the US*) and have been distracted by those adventures. Advertising money is still outstanding due to a series of problems, but the billing will soon go out. Should add up to about \$10,000. The WFC money is in WSFA's hands, just in a separate bookkeeping column.

Smoscon: Chairfan Peggy Rae Sapienza was not present, and nobody had anything to report.

Entertainment: Alexis got a new computer, thin-screen monitor, and printer. He also got some houseguests, who were hiding somewhere. Alexis's brother Walter, Walter's wife Marilee, Alexis's sister Ruthie and her daughter Katie. They arrived from Australia via England. Ernest asked the entertainment committee how Lee's foot got broken. Lee explained once again how she fell off her shoes.

Ernest also asked about the Japan in '07 party, and was told that it had happened on Tuesday at the Sapienzas' home, and that many WSFA members were there, as were several Japanese fans. The president clarified that WSFA as an organization does not support either '07 Worldcon bid, Japan or Columbus, though various WSFA members do. And that the voting will be done this year at Noreascon by Noreascon members.

Activities: Lee Gilliland is leaving for Ireland on Monday.

Austerity: Eric had nothing to say. Alexis pointed out that there's a hat that wants money. The club pays \$25 per meeting at the Gillilands'. The Gillilands make up the difference using money from the hat. Eric suggested placing a cat in the hat.

Publicity: Nobody spoke up. Do we have a publicity committee? Who is on it?

Publications: Keith Lynch said the July WSFA Journal, his first issue, was available on the table. And that it was also available online on the WSFA web site, along with the past 23 ⅓ years of WSFA Journals. He also announced that there's a sign-in sheet circulating.

He also announced that he spent more than he intended to on his first issue of the WSFA Journal, as he didn't know there was a cheaper place than Kinkos for making copies. He printed 42 copies rather than Sam Lubell's usual 35 since in addition to the regular meetings he'd be taking it to the Sapienza event on Tuesday the 29th, the 4th of July picnic, and possibly fifth Friday. He also "misunderestimated" the length of the thing. He was aiming for 12 pages and got 22, since he was judging by the length of the HTML, and his HTML is much more compact than Sam's.

He also needed to buy staples. So he went to Staples to buy staples. Unfortunately Staples was out of staples, except for the very largest size of staples, which was surprising since he thought that staples would be a staple at Staples. Anyhow, WSFA now owns 25,000 staples, so if anyone needs any for a WSFA project, please contact Keith Lynch. Otherwise he'll keep using them for the WSFA Journal until they run out in about sixty years, which is close to how long ago WSFA bought the paper that he's taking the official minutes on. [We take the long view.] The staples were only about \$4, unlike the copying.

Old Business:

Lee pointed out that the Third Friday meeting will be here at the Gillilands', and will be hosted by Alexis, as Lee will be out of the country.

New business:

The president asked if there was interest in having more WSFA t-shirts produced with Joe Mayhew's design. There was. Someone asked if they had women's sizes, or any size except extra large. Bob MacIntosh volunteered to be in charge. Bob

tried to say he needed to get the artwork from Evan, but had a hard time remembering Evan's name. Sam Lubell said he has a copy on his computer, as it's on the cover of a WSFA Journal. [The August 1999 issue.] At the next meeting there will be a sign-up sheet, on which people should specify what size they want. Alexis suggested that at our Worldcon booth we sell these t-shirts. John said that he and Bob would "trade pictures over the Internet and talk about underwear".

Ernest Lilley suggested that WSFA front him \$10,000 to produce an anthology of stories based in future Washington DC. He says Jerry Pournelle, David Brin, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Joe Haldeman are interested. He has never produced an anthology before. He has already obtained ISBN numbers. It would be a trade paperback of about 300 pages, selling for between \$16 and \$18, with a print run of about 1000 copies, of which 70% would be sold at wholesale prices, 25% at direct sales, and 5% would be review copies and promotional copies. He would sell them at Capclave and online. There's a warehouse in New Hampshire that takes 10%. At \$10,000 he estimates he could break even. He says it's good not to make a profit since some people are concerned about our non-profit status.

Cathy said we're allowed to make a profit, we'd just have to file a tax return.

Steve asked what our tax status is. John answered that we're tax exempt under section 501(C)4 of the internal revenue code. Steve Smith said the laws about what you can and cannot do commercially "are not what you think they are". John said "yes, but they *are* what I think they are". (He's a former law professor, and currently works in the field of non-profit law, as do WSFAns John Sapienza and Judy Kindell.)

Steve said we got burned by this before with WSFA Press, and as a result had some "really weird membership rules for a few years".

The president pointed out that last time we tried publishing books, we ended up with a lot of unsold books in someone's basement. Mike objected that the unsold books weren't in a basement. Larry said they were in a "secure undisclosed location". Mike said he could honestly say they were at Fort Knox. Ernest touted the New Hampshire warehouse which handles shipping for 10%. When Sam Lubell asked how we know they won't sit somewhere unsold, Mike responded that a lot has changed since the last WSFA Press book [1992], with the Internet and Amazon. Also, it would get a lot of attention because of the big name authors.

Ernest said that as someone new to the area, he may be more aware than most of us as to just how *cool* DC is. Cathy said Ernest obviously isn't from New York City. Ernest retorted that that *is* where he's from. People go to New York City to make money or a name for oneself, but they go to Washington DC to change the world. Washington's also nearly a third world city.

Mike said a selling point is that neither Greenberg's nor Resnick's name would be on the cover, which is unusual for an anthology. Bob said it also wouldn't have Gardner Dozois' name on it. Ernest said it *would*, since Gardner promised him a quote.

John made a carefully worded motion, that "WSFA approve a study committee to present numbers to WSFA on the upfront cost and the likely return for producing an original anthology of science fiction and fantasy about Washington, and that the report of this committee is due to us no later than the meeting before Worldcon, and that WSFA will not make any expenditure until the motion presented as part of that report be approved by two successive WSFA meetings, one in Virginia and one in Maryland". Charles amended the motion that it's contingent on the \$10,000 becoming available to WSFA. John accepted this as a friendly amendment. The motion passed. The committee consists of Ernest Lilley, John Pomeranz, Mike Walsh, Sam Lubell, and possibly more to be appointed by Ernest.

Announcements:

Secretary Keith Lynch backtracked to new business, and asked about Fifth Friday. Elizabeth Twitchell volunteered. Fifth Friday, July 30th, will be at her apartment in Alexandria, Virginia, starting at 8:30 pm. He then made the usual announcement that announcements should be submitted in writing, or via the email address on cover of the July WSFA Journal and on our website. He will endeavor to accurately report all announcements, but makes no promises, especially if several people are talking at once (hint, hint). He also reiterated that a sign-in sheet was circulating. (Nevertheless, at least three people present neglected to sign in, and one signed in despite being thousands of miles away at the time.)

Lee announced that there are two cats, they're indoor cats, and we should please be nice to them. (Bill interjected that

Ernest had discovered that there was no cat food.) Also, we should not flush paper towels down the toilet. She also announced that there were house guests, Alexis's sister and niece.

The president asked if it was anyone's first meeting. Gayle Surrette and Paul Haggerty introduced themselves. They said they have known about WSFA for some time, but took a while to get around to coming. Nobody admitted to being here for the second or third time. Sam informed the newcomers that they could join after they attend two more meetings. John interjected that they could also come for free forever.

Lee announced that at the Titanic auction in New York City she bought a print of the *Olympic*, and two pieces of the steel ballast from the *Bounty* that were raised from Bounty harbor and sold to raise money for a hospital on Pitcairn Island. The ballast was available for touching after the meeting. [But how did the print and the ballast end up on the *Titanic*?]

Steve Smith announced that his wife Kit Mason has art on exhibit at the Kensington Row Bookshop in Kensington, Maryland.

Charles liked Spiderman 2. Doctor Octopus was a fascinating character. Adrienne didn't. Nothing but Doc Ock was any good in it.

Madeleine Yeh had more "culinary voodoo": A gingerbread Donald Rumsfeld, ready to be decapitated and dismembered. Eric objected to decapitation, even as a joke.

John Pomeranz announced that he and his wife Kathi Overton are hosting a 4th of July picnic at their Arlington home starting at noon on that day, and that everyone is invited. Don't bring food, as there will be plenty already. There will be waterguns and "water weapons of mass destruction" and you will be able to find them. After dark there will be fireworks. Bring friends, family, and people you pick up off the street. There were written directions.

Elizabeth reiterated that she will be hosting Fifth Friday at her home in Alexandria. She promised to provide directions to the webmaster. Keith Lynch responded that he still has directions from the last two times she hosted us.

Alexis introduced his niece Katie, one of his houseguests.

Adrienne made an announcement that she requested the secretary to leave out of the minutes. [Good, less work to get it right.]

Ernest announced he had attended the launch of Spaceship 1. He was surprised that before the spaceship was released they asked for, and received, not clearance for launch, but clearance to land. He was in the press area, as he is a professional photojournalist. His website is www.e357.net, and pictures he took can be found there. He will have a report in the August WSFA Journal.

Ernest asked about having seen an announcement of someone's wedding on the WSFA email list. Mike replied that that was Walter Miles (who wasn't present at the meeting). Ernest said he's also a cheap wedding photographer. Lee suggested he contact Jim.

Keith Lynch asked Lee if she had a correction for the minutes of the June 4th meeting, as she had mentioned before this meeting. She said that it wasn't important, but that it wasn't Bob MacIntosh who provided the laptop computer at the Capclave table at Balticon as was reported in the minutes; Bob merely suggested that she bring her own laptop, and she did.

Mike announced that he had books and postcards for sale. He will be publishing *The Separation* by Christopher Priest, and showed a cover image for *Way Station* by Clifford Simak. The art was found at Boskone. It was by an author who had never read the book, but it fit perfectly.

Bill moved that we adjourn. When Lee attempted to interrupt, Bill quickly announced that Lee wanted to announce that after adjournment we should move the chairs to the edges of the room. The meeting was then adjourned (at 10:26 pm) before Lee could get a word in edgewise.

Houston Westfall and Ted White arrived after the meeting ended.

The last people left at about 12:15 am.

Summary of 7/2/04 meeting:

- We will have an open election of dead authors at the first night of Noreascon. Ernest, Sam Scheiner, and John are in charge.
- Third Friday (July 16th) will be at the Gillilands, Fifth Friday (July 30th) at Elizabeth and Cat's.
- New WSFA t-shirts will be printed. Bob is in charge.
- A committee will report, before Noreascon, on the feasibility of our spending about \$10,000 to publish a trade paperback anthology of stories about DC. Ernest, John, Mike and Sam Lubell are on the committee.

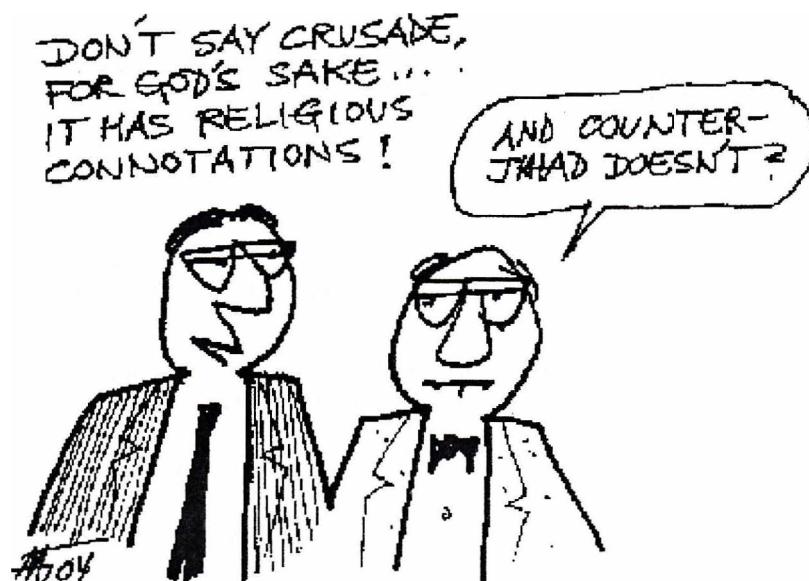
President's Prattles:

Reading is in Decline

By Samuel Lubell

A recent study by the National Endowment for the Arts found that just over half (57 percent) of Americans have read even one book (of any type) in the last year and under half (47 percent) read literature. Worse yet, this is declining (from 54 percent in 1992 and 57 percent in 1982). And the pool of literary readers (those reading fiction of any type, poetry, or plays) remains at the same

number as in 1982 -- about 96 million people -- even while the population grew by almost 40 million. This means that about 90 million Americans did not voluntarily read a single book in 2002.



The average reader read 18.5 books in 2002. However, this mean is slanted by a small number of avid readers. The median is six (meaning an equal percent of the population read 1-5 books as 7 or more). A fifth (21 percent) read 1 to five books, a tenth (9 percent) read 6 to 11 books, 12 percent read 12 to 49 books a year, and just 4 percent read a book a week (50 or more.)

So, just a quarter of Americans read more than six books a year.

The percent of young adults (18 - 24) who read literature dropped from 60 percent in 1982 to 43 percent. Among adults 25 - 34 the percentage dropped from 62 percent to 48 percent. Fewer men read fiction (38 percent) than women (55 percent) and more whites read (51 percent) than African Americans (37 percent) and Hispanics (27 percent). Readers of literature among college graduates shrunk from 82 percent to 67 percent.

The number of books sold per year has been essentially flat for the last two years (meaning they've declined considering the popularity growth).

This decline should not be surprising. People today have many more entertainment choices than back in 1983 before the widespread popularity of satellite television and digital cable, cheap computers and the Internet, high resolution videogames, DVD rentals etc. And many choices - movies, sports, games -- are backed by multi-million dollar advertising campaigns which is all but unheard of for most books (marketing efforts are generally aimed at those who already read, compare the number of TV commercials, toy tie-ins, and Metro/bus posters for books as opposed to movies and TV

shows.) Videogame sales in 2003 were over \$10 billion, a fifty percent gain since 2000 and four times that of hardcover book sales.

So, should this be alarming? After all, if the amount of television watched or videogames played dropped by a similar fashion, few would complain and many would rejoice. Reading fiction is an entertainment choice, not an educational one. Which is more likely to make someone a well-informed citizen - watching the Newshour on PBS or reading Danielle Steele? Which is more likely to expand a person's knowledge of the world around them - reading Robert Jordan or watching the Discovery channel?

I would argue yes. Reading, any type of reading, forces readers to use their minds, to turn words into images and interpret the ideas in the sentences. Television and videogames provide the visuals so are more passive. Studies have found that most television programs use literal and unsophisticated language, with few similes or metaphors and vocabulary on the sixth grade level. Adult books use twice as many rare words per thousand as do television shows (newspapers and magazines have three times as many). Readers score higher on SAT/GRE verbal tests and many experts say the best preparation is years of reading. So people who read frequently develop better vocabularies, are better equipped to understand abstract ideas, and tend to be better writers.

So what can be done to confront this aliteracy? First, groups promoting reading need to expand beyond just serving children who can't read to deal with those who can but don't. Second, publishing companies need to expand their marketing beyond those who already read. Advertising science fiction books during Star Trek reruns or a mystery series during CSI may not be cost effective in the short term, but may expand the market for books in the long term. Finally, we can promote reading by giving books as presents, by talking up books among friends, and encouraging people to turn off the TV and read.

Upcoming Events

This is excerpted from our online calendar of upcoming events, at <http://www.wsfa.org/calendar.htm>. I recommend you check it frequently, in case of last minute additions or corrections. This will be a regular feature of *The WSFA Journal*.

If you plan to take Metro's Red Line to any of these events, please allow extra time due to chronic delays on that line.

Wednesday, August 4th: China Mieville at Politics & Prose

China Mieville signs his new book *The Iron Council* at the Politics & Prose Bookstore, 5015 Connecticut Avenue NW, one mile north of the Van Ness Metro station, at 7:00 pm.

Friday, August 6th: WSFA First Friday Meeting

Regular WSFA meeting (at the Gillilands' as usual). Newcomers welcome. Email me for directions.

Monday, August 9th: Dr. Who viewing

The Northern Virginia Doctor Who Viewing Society will be meeting at the Fairfax Government Center starting at 7 pm.

Friday, August 13th: Free showing of Star Wars

WSFAns will be attending a free outdoor showing of the original Star Wars movie at Strathmore/ASHA near the Grosvenor-Strathmore station on the Red Line at 8:30 pm.

Friday, August 20th: WSFA Third Friday Meeting

Regular WSFA meeting. At the Madigans, not the Ginters. Please see our website for directions.

September 2 - 6: 62nd World SF Convention: Noreascon 4

Back to Boston.

Friday, September 3rd: WSFA First Friday Meeting

Regular WSFA meeting. At Noreascon 4.

Friday, September 10th: Philosophical Society of Washington talk

The Philosophical Society of Washington presents *Seven Reasons that Neutrinos May be Faster-Than-Light Tachyons* by Robert Ehrlich, a professor of physics at GMU, at 8:15 pm in the John Wesley Powell Auditorium, Cosmos Club, 2170 Florida Avenue NW DC, near the Dupont Circle Metro station on the Red Line.

Friday, September 17th: WSFA Third Friday Meeting

Regular WSFA meeting (at the Ginters' as usual). Newcomers welcome. Email me for directions.

October 15 - 17: Capclave 2004

WSFA is putting on a convention! At Tysons Corner, VA.

December 3 - 5: SMOFcon

WSFA is hosting 2004's SMOFcon, in Washington DC.

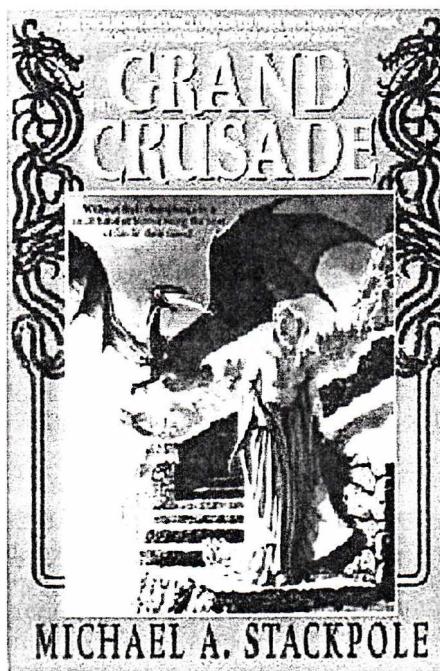
December 10 - 12: Philcon 2004

The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (PSFS) brings you another Philcon. In Philadelphia.

The Grand Crusade

by Michael A. Stackpole

A review by Colleen R. Cahill



High fantasy, when it is good, is more than clichés of quests and swords. It should have a familiarity, but not be predictable and have more than just battles, totally evil villains and powerful wizards. In the conclusion to his series "The DragonCrown War Cycle", Michael A. Stackpole achieves that blend, making *The Grand Crusade* a complex, interesting and original book.

At the end of the last book, *When Dragons Rage*, the not-totally heroic Will Norrington has fallen into a lava lake. His end is not only a tragedy for his friends, but also a disaster for the Norrington prophecy. Many saw Will as the one who would bring down the tyrant Chytrine and end her threat to all living things. Now they fear that nothing will stop Chytrine from gaining all the pieces of the DragonCrown. Once she has the crown, she can control the dragons and obtain complete power. Although the alliance of kingdoms fighting her is now shaky and the armies are in retreat, a group of Will's friends press on against the northern invading forces.

This might seem like old plots, but Stackpole has added elements to make the story his own. One thread follows Chytrine's adopted daughter, Isaura, who loves her mother but is beginning to question the methods and motives of southern conquest. Like many of the characters in this series, Isaura is complex: although trusting, she also is bright enough to see that reality does not support what her mother is telling her and her basically kind nature puts her at odds with the cruelty of Chytrine, who is driven to win at all costs. Some characters are harder to sympathize with: King Scrainwood (what a good bad-guy name) has few redeeming traits, but he also has excuses; he witnessed his mother's head being ripped off while he was young and that would be warping.

with the cruelty of Chytrine, who is driven to win at all costs. Some characters are harder to sympathize with: King Scrainwood (what a good bad-guy name) has few redeeming traits, but he also has excuses; he witnessed his mother's head being ripped off while he was young and that would be warping.

In this final volume, we finally learn what is the force behind Chytrine and the ultimate goal of the war. Many of the puzzle pieces fall in place, while new mysteries are added. Stackpole has a deft hand with magic and adds elements of supernatural with a delicate sense, not just having things bang into the plot. He also uses a modern language flow, so there is no need to struggle with convoluted dialog. And as a true epic fantasy, there are plenty of battles, court intrigue and quests, with touches of romance for good measure.

One has to admire an author who can actually complete a trilogy in three books. You will need to read the earlier two titles, *Fortress Draconis* and *When Dragons Rage* to fully understand the story, but all three are still in print. If you are a

Stackpole fan who has read the earlier works, be sure to pick this up; it delivers a wonderful ending. For those who are new to this author, try this trilogy. If you like Eddings, Jordan or Feist, you will enjoy Stackpole's work.

Third Friday Minutes

Note that there's a brief summary at the end.

The Third Friday regular WSFA meeting was called to order by the president at 9:13 pm on July 16th, 2004 at the Gillilands'. Dramatis Personae: President Samuel Lubell, VP Cathy Green, Secretary Keith Lynch, Treasurer Bob MacIntosh, all three trustees: Adrienne Ertman, Barry Newton, and Steven Smith, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, Drew Bittner, Justin Collins, Mark Fischer, Carolyn Frank, Alexis and Charles Gilliland, Paul Haggerty, Scott Hofmann, Eric Jablow, Judy Kindell, Jim Kling, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Nicki and Richard Lynch, Wade Lynch, Cat Meier, Walter Miles, Judy Newton, Lance Oszko, Kathi Overton, Larry Pfeffer, John Pomeranz, Rebecca Prather, Judy and Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Gayle Surrette, Elizabeth Twitchell, and Madeleine Yeh. 38 people. (Arriving after the meeting ended were Keith Marshall, William Squire, Diana Swiger, and Ted White. Ivy Yap was once again written in, but was once again not seen by the secretary, so is once more deemed to have been officially Not Present.)

The secretary was asked if any business was conducted at the previous, (July 2nd) meeting. He responded that:

- We had voted to hold an open election of SF characters at the first night of Noreascon, and that Ernest Lilley, John Pomeranz and Sam Lubell were on the committee. The election will be open to all Noreascon members, and anyone can nominate a new candidate. He was promptly corrected by the president that the election was not of SF *characters* but of SF *authors* (dead ones only), and by Ernest and several others that the Sam on the committee isn't Sam Lubell but Sam Scheiner. [This has been corrected in the July 2 minutes.]
- Elizabeth and Cat will be hosting Fifth Friday at their home in Alexandria, Virginia. (Elizabeth confirmed, and said cars should be parked across the street at Foxchase Shopping Center or risk being towed.)
- WSFA t-shirts will be reprinted, reusing Joe Mayhew's design, Bob MacIntosh is in charge. [The president and treasurer were wearing previously printed WSFA t-shirts, to show people what the design looked like.]
- A committee consisting of Ernest Lilley, John Pomeranz, Mike Walsh, and Sam Lubell was going to report, before Noreascon, on the feasibility of WSFA Press printing a trade paperback anthology of stories about the future of Washington DC. Ernest responded that the committee consists of himself, Drew Bittner, Sam Lubell, and Mike Walsh. The president said Jim Kling also wants to be on the committee. [Jim Kling arrived late in the meeting, and after the meeting he denied any interest.]

Treasurer's report: Bob Macintosh says we have \$1042.60 in our main account, and "about \$39,000" in the World Fantasy account.

Committees:

Capclave '04, '05, and '06: Lee read an email from Elspeth Kovar, the Capclave '06 chair, who wasn't present, then handed it to the secretary:

Date: Fri, 16 Jul 2004 17:12:50 -0400
From: Elspeth Kovar
Subject: Capclave 2005 and 2006 update for tonight's WSFA meeting

Sending this to various sources since I'm getting it out late -

The Capclave '05 chair is somewhere in New England. I think.

The Capclave '06 chair is in New York, having celebrated her 40th birthday last night by watching the Mets beat the Phillies in the 11th inning and being about to head back to Shea Stadium for Fireworks night.

As Facilities for the one and Chair of the other I can report there is actually stuff being done on both conventions -- just not at this exact moment.

Lee reported that in response to this she emailed the birthday dirge to Elspeth, or at least the seven verses she could remember. Lee also reported that Butch Honeck, the '04 Artist Guest of Honor, had no line drawings for us, and that we would be folding, stamping, and taping Capclave fliers after the meeting.

World Fantasy '03: No report.

Smofcon '04: No report. Its location and the nature of Smofcon were described by Bob Macintosh and Sam Lubell.

Entertainment: Alexis reported that he has a new PC. It's not as fast or as accurate as his old one. But there are also new things which it can't do at all. Lee reported that Alexis is finally "on the web". His email address is wwwizenbeak@hotmail.com or wwwizenbeak@comcast.net. Eric asked "Blogspot, Livejournal, or Movable Type?" [Whatever happened to good old fashioned home pages?]

Activities: Lee reported that she had received 16 movie tickets to a showing of *I, Robot* at the Cineplex Odeon Cinema at 5100 Wisconsin Ave NW on the previous night (Thursday the 15th), and had announced them on the WSFA, USUALDC, and BWSMOS email lists (on Friday the 9th). 8 people went. She gets tickets since her street address is the one listed for WSFA. She typically gets tickets not more than a week in advance, so there's often no meeting between when she gets them and when the movie is shown. She circulated a signup list for the email addresses of people who want to receive future announcements of movie tickets but who don't want to subscribe to the WSFA email list. She also asked the secretary to announce this new list in the WSFA Journal. Ernest suggested it be called the "activities list" rather than the "movie list".

Rebecca suggested that such announcements be sent to the existing urgent announcement list, but Madeleine objected that they weren't urgent enough. All such announcements will be sent both to Lee's new list and to the regular WSFA email list. (Anyone on both lists will get two copies, since there's no central coordination.)

Lee said everyone enjoyed the movie, and it was followed by a party. The president said it was a "good action popcorn movie," but it had little to do with Isaac Asimov, other than using the three laws, and the names US Robotics and Susan Calvin. [Actually, the corporation in the book was US *Robots*. (And Mechanical Men, Inc.)]

Ernest said he will be seeing *I, Robot* at Potomac Yards tomorrow at 1:30 and having coffee at Pentagon City afterwards, and we're all invited to tag along. Elizabeth said there will be a free showing of the first Harry Potter movie outdoors near her home in Alexandria, details are up at the city of Alexandria's website. [It's the second Harry Potter movie, at 8 pm on Saturday, July 31st in Ben Brenman Park, 5000 Duke Street. Also *Shrek* the next evening.] Cat said that something will be playing at NIH at 12:15 on August 14th, and that Emily has the information. Lee asked Cat to send her (Lee) the information, and she would forward it to Keith.

Publicity: Our president needs to get in touch with Emily Richter about the brochure. Bob said WSFA t-shirts will cost just under \$13 each. Sam Lubell asked what color WSFA shirts people want. Bob discouraged the idea of multiple colors, not because that would cost more, but because it would take longer -- two or three months. Sam Lubell said we don't want to duplicate the color we already have [blue, with black printing]. Cathy objected that this is a way of distinguishing the new from the old members. Sam Lubell said no, it's because the people who already have shirts might want different looking ones, too. Ernest asked what colors are available. Bob read the list of available colors: navy, forest, ash, sports gray, kelly, royal purple, maroon, jade, black, sapphire, light blue, sand red, orange, white, gold, safety green, natural daisy, indigo blue. If we choose a dark color, they will use light print on it. Madeleine proposed an "Australian" ballot on which everyone would list their top three choices, after the meeting, after everyone's had a chance to look at the colors in the catalog. A signup sheet on which each of us listed our top three choices in order circulated during and after the meeting. The result will presumably be announced at the next meeting.

The president asked Bob about WSFA membership cards. Bob said we had agreed to postpone that until a future meeting. Sam Lubell responded that this was a future meeting. Bob said enough cards for everyone would cost \$50. Elizabeth moved that we approve the expense. Motion carried. Barry moved that Bob have full discretion on the design. Motion carried. Bob plans to reuse Joe Mayhew's design.

Lee pointed out that we have WSFA business cards. Everyone should take some, to give to friends. Sam Lubell suggested handing them to people seen reading SF on the Metro.

Publications: Keith said the July WSFA Journal went to a second printing of 20, since the first printing of 42 was nearly all used up. (Specifics: One to Keith, one to archives, 12 taken at the Peggy Rae event on the 29th, 17 at First Friday, 8 at July 4th, 4 at PRSFS, 12 at this meeting, leaving 11 from the second printing for Fifth Friday and for any Maryland meetings.) [As of press time three of the remaining eleven were given out at Fifth Friday, and one to former WSFAn F.L. Ahsh whom Keith happened to run into at the Rosslyn Metro station, leaving seven for the August meetings.]

Keith also pointed out that a sign-in sheet was circulating. This is a new design on which the 100 people most likely to attend were listed, based on the past ten years of attendance data and a Laplace transform algorithm developed and programmed by Keith. Wade helped him print it. (And indeed the only people who weren't on it were people who had never been to WSFA before. The other forty people present were all in fact among the *sixty* people thought most likely to show up, so no more than sixty names really needed to be printed.) He also said that he had intended to remove Lee Gilliland from the list before printing it, since he knew she wouldn't be there, but he forgot. And, indeed, the computer was smarter than he was, since Lee was indeed present. Eric asked if he had separate sign-in sheets for Virginia and Maryland. Keith said he's considering that. Lee objected that human nature cannot be predicted, and neither can human ankles. John compared Keith to Hari Seldon [an Asimov character who was able to predict the behavior of sufficiently large aggregates of people].

Austerity: Eric said that since it seems like we're never going to get the World Fantasy money, please donate.

Book committee: Ernest got an estimate of less than \$5000 from the (unnamed) printer that Mike suggests, for printing the proposed trade paperback anthology of original stories about future Washington DC. Joe Haldeman, David Brin, Alan Steele, Jerry Pournelle, and Robert Sawyer are interested. He said that Mike suggested also printing some hardbacks, as those can be sold for a lot more. Robert Sawyer already sent him two (previously printed) stories. Wade asked if they weren't stories about Toronto with the street names changed. Rich suggested Kim Stanley Robinson, since his latest novel is set in DC. Ernest replied that he talked to him at NSF, and he was amenable. He might give us a chapter from his next novel, reworked into a short story. Judy Newton started to speak, but Ernest interrupted and suggested people identify themselves, since he's new enough not to know everyone yet. Ernest said he's asked people who other people are, only to learn that many of us don't know who each other are. He suggested we all wear nametags.

Judy Newton suggested that WSFAns should get some perk, such as copies autographed by all the authors. Lee suggested WSFAns should get a discount instead. Eric suggested the characters in the stories should be given WSFA members' names. Bill said we should invite them all to a Capclave. Keith asked if Bill meant that we should comp all of them for transportation and room nights, as that could get expensive. John said that's for the Capclave chair to decide.

The president asked John about our tax status. John said that since we're a 501(C)(4) social welfare organization, this project does not imperil our tax status. Lee asked if we're really a welfare organization. John responded yes, and Lee is our welfare queen.

Ernest, heavily coached by Samuel Lubell, moved that "the club should earmark funds in the amount of up to \$10,000 for the purpose of publishing this anthology on future Washington and the use of two of WSFA press's ISBNs". Keith objected that at the previous meeting we had voted that this would only be approved after we had \$10,000 in our main account, and after it was approved by votes at two consecutive WSFA meetings, one in Virginia, one in Maryland. Bob said this can be the Virginia meeting, even though the next meeting is also in Virginia, and that it can be approved at the Third Friday in August meeting in Maryland. The main motion passed, contingent on approval at the next Maryland meeting.

Keith asked if we know for sure that that meeting will be at the Ginters'. Lee said it certainly wouldn't be here at her house. Nobody has heard from Erica Ginter.

[The motion at the previous meeting was that it had to be "... approved by two *successive* WSFA meetings, one in Virginia and one in Maryland", so the secretary thinks this vote was void since the next meeting will not be in Maryland.]

Old Business:

Sam Scheiner circulated a sheet for nominating dead authors, and for volunteering to champion their cause, for the Noreascon First night. People are needed to staff the booth all evening.

New Business: None.

Announcements:

The secretary announced that announcements should be submitted in writing, or via the email address on the cover of the July *WSFA Journal*. He pointed out that next to that address it says that email should contain either "for publication" or "not for publication" on the subject line, and said that so far all the email he's gotten via that address had neither, which is dismaying since email from people not on his whitelist [which does include all WSFA members, everyone who has attended two or more meetings in the past decade, and several thousand other people] without that on the subject line will be silently discarded unread, mistaken for one of the several million spams or viruses that have been blocked via this whitelisting so far this year. Lee suggested that this be made clearer in future issues. Keith agreed.

Lee announced that nothing but toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet. This got some titters when people considered that taking this literally would make toilets useless for their usual function. She also announced that the Chromatics will be performing at Jamming Java on Saturday July 17th. They performed at Shore Leave and will be performing at Balticon 2005.

Sam asked if anyone was here for their first time. Mark Fischer and Justin Collins introduced themselves. He then asked if anyone was here for their second time. Paul Haggerty and Gayle Surrette spoke up. Nobody admitted to it being their third meeting.

Bill thanked John Pomeranz and Kathi Overton for their Fourth of July picnic. John listed the vast amounts of food that had been consumed: "30 pounds of pork barbecue, 20-some pounds of beef barbecue, about 22 pounds of hamburger, 50-some hotdogs, 40 bratwursts, 40 breasts of chicken, six racks of ribs, and gallons of ice cream." Ernest asked how many people attended. John said he had no idea. Over a hundred. He's been meaning to put out a guestbook, but never gets around to it.

Alexis announced that Chris Callahan had told him that Bill Jensen's mother died yesterday. Bill is in Pennsylvania. For information email Tracy Henry at tihank@comcast.net.

Judy Kindell announced that there would be a Buccaneer meeting tomorrow at 2 pm at Peggy Rae's house. In addition to judging student essays, there will be discussion with Michael Nelson about a possible DC3 Worldcon bid.

Lance has DVDs of SF movie musicals from India, and has a large block of amber.

Rebecca still needs a ride to Noreascon. She also announced that James Doohan, who played Scotty on Star Trek, has Alzheimer's disease.

Kathi said that Kim Stanley Robinson is on the latest episode of the Fast Forward cable TV show.

Nicki has *Dead to the World*, a vampire novel by Charlaine Harris. She had promised it to someone but couldn't remember who.

Rich said that Kim Stanley Robinson was at Borders at White Flint on June 16th, and that six to eight WSFAns spent hours having ice cream with him after his book signing, until the mall closed. He mentioned that that was also Bloomsday.

John said that former WSFA secretary Beverly Brandt [1983-1985] will be at the next meeting. Sam suggested we bring our old WSFA Journals for autographing.

Barry recommended [readerware.com](http://www.readerware.com) book cataloging software, which can look up ISBNs. He also had buttons and bumper stickers saying "Redefeat Bush" and blank cardstock for sale.

Steve is unemployed. Anyone who needs a programmer should see him.

Eric showed a poster. He also announced an outdoor film series at GMU. Tomorrow they'll be showing *Casablanca*.

Madeleine has a new job. She's working for the forest service in Rosslyn. Someone objected that there are no forests in Rosslyn. [But it's adjacent to Roosevelt Island, which is heavily wooded.]

Jim says that his fiance, Ivy Yap, was approved for immigration by the INS. Now he's waiting on Manila. Also, he needs a car. Scott said he should have told him that two weeks ago.

Judy Newton is retired from the federal government. If anyone needs a part-time meta-data standards consultant, talk to her.

Scott pointed out that 35 years ago today Apollo 11, the first manned mission to the moon, launched. Someone asked if they made it. He said to check back in four days.

Rebecca suggested we wear the WSFA member ribbons we got at Capclave on our Noreascon 4 badges. Lee asked if we have any extras. Ernest asked if the club could print more. The president ruled that this discussion should wait until the next meeting.

Madeleine has a gingerbread Dick Cheney, using a heart-healthy recipe she got from the American Heart Association.

Lee said when the meeting adjourns, we should move our chairs, not to the *back* of the room as the secretary had misquoted, but to the *edges*. [The July 2nd minutes have been corrected.] And that we're all invited to "an origami party".

The meeting was noisily adjourned at 10:10 pm.

The last people, other than a few watching TV, left at 12:30 am.

The weather was partly cloudy, warm, and dry.

Summary of 7/16/04 meeting:

- Spending up to \$10,000 on an anthology has been approved, pending ratification at a Maryland meeting. Ernest, Drew, Sam Lubell, and Mike Walsh are in charge.
- We will have an open election of dead authors at the first night of Noreascon. Ernest, Sam Scheiner, and John are in charge.
- Fifth Friday (July 30th) will be at Elizabeth and Cat's in Alexandria.
- New WSFA t-shirts will be printed. Bob is in charge. The result of our color choice vote should be announced at the next meeting, and orders taken.
- Membership cards will be printed, for about \$50. Bob is in charge.
- There's a new email list for people who want activities announcements, but don't want to be on the regular chat list. Lee Gilliland is in charge.
- There is interest in printing more WSFA member ribbons, for wearing on Noreascon badges.

Letter of Comment

From: dicconf

The situation with firing of the (unnamed) dealer room person [...] is more complicated than the report makes it sound. The dealer room person challenged an individual who entered the dealer's room after hours, and instead of explaining that he was there to guard the place while it was closed he went off and complained to Lee. But this probably doesn't need to be followed up.

Sam Lubell is not quite right in bemoaning the two-fifths of Americans who think that astrology is "sort of scientific". Astrology does use tools such as mathematics and astronomy that are scientific, with no "sort of" about it. It is the basic assumptions that are not scientific; the massaging the astrologers give their information is scientific enough to fool people who don't stop to think that the fundamental postulates are nonsense. Stop me before I mutter something about Creation

Science...

Keith Lynch is right, but possibly misleading, in saying that the filk convention Counterpoint doesn't happen every year. The reason it doesn't is that the Floating East Coast Filk Convention, which does occur every year, is given other names when the rotation system takes it to other locations -- Concertino up towards New England and, IIRC, Contata in the NJ-Pennsylvania area. ++ Oh, and a Shabbos goy's tasks are not just those a highly observant Jew is forbidden from doing or asking other Jews to do; a really observant Jew can't ask anybody to do them -- on the principle that such work on the Sabbath is "wrong", so asking even a gentile ("goy") to do them is leading him into sin.

-- Dick Eney
Geneva in '07! Moscow in '10!

This Month in History

From the Secretary's Archives

August 1954: There were meetings on the first, third, and fifth Sunday, at which 13, 6, and 7 people were present, none of whom are 2004 members. The need for a new meeting place was discussed, as Frank Kerkhof was giving up his rooming house and leaving town. Dot Cole offered her apartment in North Arlington as a temporary meeting place.

August 1964: First and Third Friday meetings were both at Elizabeth Cullen's home in DC near Rock Creek. 14 and 20 people present, including 2004 email list members Jack Chalker and Dick Eney, but nobody who has attended meetings in recent years. Treasury: \$89.15.

August 1974: 40 people attended third Friday (location unspecified), including current members Alexis, the Newtons, and Mike Walsh, and current email list members Jack Chalker and Dick Eney. Nixon resigned. Fifth Friday was held at WSFA-run DISCON II, the last the most recent Worldcon in DC.

August 1984: First Friday at the Gillilands', Third Friday at the Olivers'. Doll Gilliland showed a new board game: "Trivial Pursuit". Mike Walsh said Disclave will probably be back in the New Carrollton hotel in 1985. (It was, and it remained there every year through 1991, then returned once more in 1997.) Rosa Oliver announced that Judy Newton gave birth on August 12th to Meridel. (Happy 20th birthday, Meridel!) Alexis and Doll celebrated their Silver Anniversary on the 29th. Treasury: \$8,246.77

August 1994: First and Third Friday meetings were at the Ginters' and Gillilands', respectively. (The Ginters are often out of town in mid-August, requiring a meeting swap or other provisions.) Treasury: \$2617.83. John Ellis had finished the rough cut of his movie, *Twilight of the Dogs*, which had several WSFAns as extras. Candy Gresham [Madigan] announced that it was her last meeting for at least a year, as she was being stationed in Korea. (She did return one year later.) There was a flier for "Boston (Mountains) in 2000" Worldcon bid. Joe Mayhew said that "leather people" "freaking the mundanes" is a problem, and is making it difficult for us to find hotels for conventions, but "We need to talk to the leather people and not shun them." There was concern about the demographics of WSFA, and suggestions were made as to how to attract more young people. Lance Oszko suggested inviting Chelsea Clinton to join. Third Friday was Colleen Stumbaugh [Cahill]'s first meeting. Perrianne Lurie announced she will be moving to Pennsylvania in October.



SpaceShipOne - A New Hope

by Ernest Lilley

Forty-three years ago I strained to hear the commentary from mission control over a transistor radio as Alan Shepard climbed into Freedom Seven for the first American suborbital flight in May, 1961. Now on June 21st, 2004, I'm squinting up into the bright Mojave sun waiting for Mike Melvill to push SpaceShipOne, humanity's first civilian spacecraft, to the edge of space.



[SpaceShipOne touches down on the Mojave Airport runway after a successful, if not perfect, flight to the edge of space. (image: space.com)]

Listening to the details of Shepard's flight there was much I didn't know. The odds against catastrophe. Why "Spam in a can" isn't a good thing. That modern rocketry was the child of Nazi scientists that we'd captured after they had built weapons to rain terror down on London. How Cold War politics would let us leap to the moon in less than a decade, then leave us earthbound by the weight of a massive bureaucracy, unable to leave, or often even attain, low Earth orbit.

How dreams die.

Standing by the runway of the Mojave Airport watching the sun rise over the mountains I know all those things, but I dare to hope anyway. This time, I say to myself, this time maybe we get to go too.

And if not us, then maybe my nephew, dragged out of bed at 4 am to drive here and stand among a crowd of 10,000 people from all over the world. And maybe, in his lifetime, if not mine, anyone who wants to can go. Maybe the odds are against it, but I know more than what a long shot it is. I know how brightly a dream can burn.

Driving into Mojave the day before the flight was driving into a town in the middle of nowhere at the crossroads of yesterday and tomorrow, but one that leaves open the question - which tomorrow?

Mojave is an old horse town of the jet age. Rode hard and put away wet, though wet isn't a word that fits well with the more dust than rust you see as you drive through the streets by the airport. Trailers and cinderblock shacks line the roads, and a closed library looms just off the main street. Out at the airport there are rows and rows of mothballed jetliners, the legacy of downsized airlines and the rising cost of fuel. A squadron of jet fighters from the 50s sits corralled inside a chain link fence, their wings stacked nearby and their windshields pitted by windblown sand.

Off in the distance the mountains are lined by tall white windmills feeding into California's thirsty power grid, promising that if we can only control our demand for power, they can crank out the kilowatts to feed us as long as the sun burns. Rockets? You're kidding us, the windmills taunt. We beat that old man of La Mancha once, and we'll do it again.

The town has fewer than 4000 people in it, and tomorrow's launch will clog its roads and block Highway 14 for miles. The organizers are hoping for Woodstock, but they're more likely to get an SF convention, though one with more press, beautiful alternative people, and aerospace talent than any con could ever attract. Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven are here, and a number of SF screenwriters have driven the three hours up from LA, but despite the fairly good turnout, and the sellout of souvenirs at 6 am on launch day, most of the world is still in bed at home, unaware.

I've met the folks running the Ansari X Prize, the \$10 million trophy for the first civilian craft that can reach space with three passengers twice in two weeks. SpaceShipOne was built by Scaled Composites (135 people that came from everywhere to the Mojave Desert just to build weird airplanes) and designed by experimental aircraft legend Burt Rutan. Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft commissioned the space plane with 20 million of his own money, twice the size of the X Prize. But it isn't about the prize: it's about the dream.

The night before the launch the National Space Society threw an all-night rocket rave. Mobile homes were circled to make a windbreak for the mixed tribe of engineers, new wave socialites, and reporters dancing to a techno DJ wearing neon lights that made him look like an extra from "Tron" and behind a bank of mixing gear that unconsciously echoed the mission control panels of an earlier space age. The wind gusted over fifty miles an hour and drove fine grit into everything. Dancing in the face of wind, we readied ourselves to invoke fire and ascend from earth to air and beyond.

At dawn the wind pauses, the windmills slow, and the conditions for a launch are at their best. So at daybreak I find myself in the middle of a forest of telephoto lenses watching the weirdly insect-like White Knight mothership roll down the runway with SpaceShipOne slung beneath it to lift gracefully into the quiet desert air. It soars above mountain ranges and rises to its launch position 47,000 feet above us. A tanned news anchor from LA pumps the air with his fist as it goes by, even though the camera is following the space plane. I hear stories about how people had to fight for the assignment, many of them long time space boosters suddenly in danger of being sidelined by the first string, but not if they could help it. Soon all we can catch are brief glimpses of white dots in the air, but everyone cranes their necks and searches the sky.

An hour later the control tower grants SpaceShipOne permission to land (which he's committed to after release) and White Knight drops the craft to soar on its own. Mike Melvill pushes the dual engine start buttons. We listen to the blow-by-blow between the ground control and the space plane, but what we really care about is the white streak that suddenly appears in the sky, crossing the face of the sun and heading towards the deepest blue.

On board the craft, Mike was correcting for sudden rolls to the left and right, considering an early shutdown if he couldn't get the ship's attitude to stabilize, and switching to the backup trim controls when the primary controls failed in hypersonic flight. Civilian hypersonic flight. Mach 3 plus. 4 Gs. To the edge of space. Totally the right stuff. 100% Spam Free.

After narrowly breaking the 100 km mark, the craft goes into descent configuration. The wings fold up to make it look more shuttlecock than space shuttle, and it glides to a perfect landing. The VIPs cheer. The public cheers. The press section buzzes with the whirring of cameras and the clicking of shutters. We are cheering too, but being press means that you can't just stop and clap.

After the ship rolls to a stop and the pilot gets out to hug Allen and Rutan, everyone with a free hand applauds. As the airport manager walks by I asked him to tell Burt "Thanks" for all of us. On the way back he told me that Rutan nodded, but he wasn't able to talk right then. If anyone tells you that men have no feelings, or that they can only destroy, they weren't there to see the look on his face after the flight. Melvill was ecstatic, Allen was pleased and happy, but Burt Rutan looked as if he knew how it feels to breathe life back into a dream.

Children of my generation were told a story about humanity's future in space. We didn't know about the political agenda of economic revitalization of the south and propaganda victories over the Russians; we believed in the vision. Four decades later we're as grown up as we'll ever be. The old, cold war is over, though new wars have been begun. It's time to stop wondering why the promise of space wasn't fulfilled by the government, and to remake that promise to the generations to come--and this time, to keep it.

Note: Ernest's extensive gallery of SS1 images and a collection of articles about the event can be found online in the June 28 issue of TechRevu (<http://www.techrevu.com/articles/2004/0628/>)

Ernest Lilley is the editor of SFRevu (www.sfrevu.com) and TechRevu (www.techrevu.com) and is a freelance editor and photojournalist who regularly writes for science and technology publications. He likes station wagons, roadtrips, digital photography and currently lives in the Gernsback Continuum and is a member of WSFA.)

Fourth of July Picnic

Kathi Overton and John Pomeranz once again hosted a Fourth of July picnic to which all WSFAns, and many others, were invited, starting at noon, at their "Fabulous Bungalow". They have been hosting these events for at least eight years.

I arrived at about quarter past noon, and was promptly drafted into helping move the large canopy that covered most of the driveway so that it would be flush with the carport, and into helping to install red, white and blue bunting on it. There was a smaller canopy mounted over the middle of the front yard. Both had tables and chairs under them.

Plenty of food was grilled in the back yard (see the Third Friday minutes for a partial list), and liquid nitrogen ice cream was made at least twice in the driveway, and once more at the church at the top of the hill. I had Kathi add some liquid nitrogen to my cup of water, which I resumed drinking after the LN had boiled away. (Surprisingly, it doesn't cool water noticeably. Which is just as well, since I don't like my water cold.) The liquid nitrogen made very impressive fog since the humidity was so high.

Turnout was the highest I've ever seen, perhaps because of the bad weather, or because of concerns about intrusive security on the mall. The people present included John Pomeranz, his wife Kathi Overton, Covert Beach, Jack Chalker, his wife Eva Whitley and his son Steven, Jim and Terilee Edwards-Hewitt, Alexis and Lee Gilliland, Alexis's Australian sister Ruthie, Eric Jablow, Jim Kling, Yoji Kondo and his wife Ursula, Elspeth Kovar, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Sam Lubell, Perrianne Lurie, Bob MacIntosh, Cat Meier, Walter Miles and his new wife Sholey Argani, Lance Oszko, Larry Pfeffer and his wife, son, and daughter, Anna Reed, Robyn and Sylvia Rissell, Tom Schaad, Judy and Sam Scheiner, Diana Swiger, Elizabeth Twitchell, Hannah Shapero, Steve Smith and his wife Kit Mason, Mike Walsh, Lawrence Watt-Evans and his wife Julie and their son Julian, Houston Westfall, Beth and Mike Zipser, and my brother Wade and myself. Of course not everyone was there the whole time.

It wasn't raining when I arrived (though it had rained earlier), but around 1:30 pm it started pouring. The area under smaller canopy, then the larger, had to be temporarily abandoned. But there was plenty of room indoors, upstairs and down.

After dark, it was decided that the backyard was too wet for people to watch fireworks, even though it wasn't currently raining, so the middle of the street was commandeered for the purpose.

The only sour note was when someone was injured when they attempted to stop two dogs from fighting, and had to be driven to an emergency room in a van with dodgy brakes. But they'll be fine, as will both dogs, who had to go to vets for their injuries.

There was more heavy rain around midnight.

The last people, other than those who were spending the night, left at about 2:30 am. Since it had stopped raining, I walked home, and got home just as the sky was starting to get light.

I look forward to doing it again next year.

City of Wonder

Written by E. Charles Vivian

Original Publication circa 1925; Centaur Press Edition 1973

Reviewed by Lee Strong

The title city of Kir-Asa is a "lost land" from the days when such things were still possible. Intrepid European/American explorers find an exotic city hidden somewhere in the wilderness along with the obligatory beautiful woman and monetary treasure. If it sounds familiar, it should.

Kir-Asa is hidden somewhere in "the lands bordering the Pacific," guarded by semi-sentient ghosts and apes along with

natural perils. Our heroes reach the city and spark a revolution against the insane Atlantean princes waiting to despoil the throne and the nation's women. As usual, modern firearms provide all the magic necessary.

This is an okay little novel strongly reminiscent of H. Rider Haggard's immortal *Allan Quatermain* and *She*, but without those novels' color and romance. There is some incident and invention -- notably the use of theosophical ghosts as a sexual menace -- but basically the work left me yawning. The characters are all cut from good quality cardboard with minimal personal development. This "time-lost" novel is best left to the lost civilization enthusiast.

I rate City of Wonder as ** on the five star scale. -- LS

The Potomac River Science Fiction Society (PRSFS)

Report by Keith Lynch

WSFA is not the only science fiction club in the Washington DC area, though it is the oldest, and, in my humble opinion, the best.

PRSFS (pronounced "prissy fish") was founded about thirty years ago by the late Don Miller, at about the same time he left WSFA. Don Miller is best known as the first, and most prolific, editor of *The WSFA Journal*. He put out at least 85 issues, some over a hundred pages long, from 1965 to 1975. He also put out at least 160 issues of *The Son of the WSFA Journal* from 1969 to 1975, around a dozen pages each.

Considering their origin, it's odd that they don't have any sort of journal or newsletter.

They don't have formal meetings, dues, a treasury, meeting minutes, or a website, nor do they host conventions. They *do* have officers: Every member is a vice president.

They meet once a month, usually on the second Friday, at various members' homes in DC and its Maryland suburbs (never Virginia). They also have two picnics each year. In the booklet of upcoming meetings that's given out at the beginning of each year -- the only club publication -- a start time of 7:30 pm is given for each meeting. But nobody ever actually shows up until around eight.

People bring refreshments similar to those found at WSFA meetings.

At about 8:30 pm someone calls a halt to the informal conversation. First people give brief announcements. Then for the next two hours or so, people take turns giving reports on books they've recently read. Usually fantasy or science fiction, but sometimes non-fiction, mystery, or other. They usually bring a copy of the book with them to wave around while talking about it. Only after everyone who wants to give a book report has done so are reviews of movies or TV shows acceptable. PRSFS, far more than WSFA, is biased in favor of written SF.

Most of the reports are short, but some of them last a half hour or more, which can be tedious if you've decided in the first two minutes that the book doesn't appeal to you. The meeting places are seldom large enough for those not interested to go elsewhere to converse. Sometimes people ask questions, and the report segues into a question and answer session.

There is no smoking indoors at any meeting, just as is true at WSFA.

They have their own traditions. For instance there's a rubber chicken which is to be thrown at anyone who make a bad pun.

After the reviews, and a few minutes of informal conversation similar to that after WSFA meetings, the last people drift away between eleven and midnight.

Nobody makes any note of who was present, or of who gave reports, or on what books.

Attendance is usually around fifteen. There's little overlap with WSFA membership. I'm the only person who regularly

attends both clubs. PRSFS does contain several former WSFAns. And plenty of people who are regularly seen at Capclaves and Balticons. If you go to cons, you'll see familiar faces at PRSFS.

The time and date of the two annual picnics is not listed in the booklet, but is announced at a meeting a month or two before each picnic. There are no reviews or announcements at the picnics. They're similar to WSFA's fifth Fridays, at which there's never a business meeting.

Aly Parsons prepares the annual booklet. In addition to the dates and locations of all the meetings for the year, and directions to those meetings (usually car directions only, not transit), it also lists the names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of all the members, and the dates and locations of other events, including Capclave. Aly also emails all members if there's a last-minute change in meeting locations. She's the one to contact if you're interested in the club. She sometimes attends WSFA meetings, but not very often (seven in the past decade). Contact me to get contact information for her.

They have about a dozen regular meeting locations. All of them are at least marginally transit accessible.

December's meeting this year is on first Friday instead of second Friday, so as not to conflict with Philcon. Unfortunately that means it conflicts with a WSFA meeting.

I recommend PRSFS to you if it sounds like the sort of thing you'd be interested in.

Coming next month...

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue. I bumped my own articles about the Cassini/Huygens Saturn probe and about WSFA's several email lists to the September issue to keep this issue from being too long. (I prefer to have contributions from as many people as possible in each issue.) If you're really eager to hear about our several email lists, please see <http://www.wsfa.org/list.htm>.

Also in the September issue I'll have a review by Colleen of Jules Verne's *A Fantasy of Dr Ox*, at least one more review by Lee Strong, more cartoons by Alexis, and of course the regular features: meeting minutes, September '4 in history, upcoming events, and what to look forward to in the October issue -- which should be coming out just two weeks after the September issue. (The September issue will be coming out shortly before September's Third Friday, not First Friday, because of Noreascon. So you have until 9/10 to get contributions to me for that issue.)