

# **THE WSFA**

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# **JOURNAL**

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The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association

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**Drew Bittner, Editor / Gayle Surrette, Assistant Editor**

**Email Address:** [editor@wsfa.org](mailto:editor@wsfa.org) Please put "Submission:" at the beginning of the subject line if it is to be considered for publication. Entries not marked this way may not get routed by our automatic filters.

**Mailing Address:** WSFA Journal, 5911 Edsall Rd. #611, Alexandria, VA 22304

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**If You Were Telepathic, You Wouldn't Need to Read This.**

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## **FROM THE EDITOR...**

Hello, all!

Well, another year over and a new one just begun, as they say. Time to take stock of the money we (over)spent on the holidays, the pounds we packed on with all those tasty feasts and the friends and family we did and didn't see between the end of December and now.

Thankfully, that's all past. It's a clean slate time of year, when resolutions are made and broken with gleeful abandon. For me, it's all about changing my diet and exercise regimens, as well as getting some prose work finished (instead of dreamed about, meticulously planned and everything *except* written).

What are your resolutions? What do you want to do? Give it some thought and maybe send an email. Write RESOLUTIONS 2007 in the subject line; we can print the most entertaining submissions.

See you all soon!

Drew



## **ESSAYS, MUSINGS AND DIVERSE STUFF**

### **Showing Them All, Electronically**

Hi, everyone. Will Frank, also known as "scifantasy," and newly-minted head of the Entertivities Committee, formerly known as the Entertainment Committee and the Activities Committee. (I tried, but no one liked my other idea: "The Distractions Committee." Oh well.)

I originally wrote this piece for the December WSFA Journal, but it apparently got misplaced and filed in the kitty litter instead. Turns out that's not a problem, though.

Originally, I'd welcomed the chance to rewrite this article, a review of various mad-science-themed web-based comics, with new information, on the grounds that I'd inadvertently left off one of the most mad-science-associated webcomics, and added one which was really more of a "wacky inventor" comic. But last week, I got an amazing letter.

It seems a small publishing house, called "Fools At The Institute Press," are putting together a book tentatively called *The Field Guide To Mad Scientists*. I'm sure they'll come up with something better. Anyway, the point is to create an index to mad scientists and types. I've been asked to submit a section for them, coincidentally enough on mad scientists and the Internet. So, herewith I present my article, "Showing Them All, Electronically," to be published hopefully before those fools at the institute get vaporized again...

The first point of mad science I would like to raise is that despite the prevalence of mad science on the Internet and other modern communication media, the mad scientist is not a new concept. Indeed, the greatest mad scientists of them all (such as Dr. Victor Frankenstein, Dr. Henry Jekyll, and Dr. Cavor) are creations of the Victorian Era, a time where the Industrial Revolution and the various scientific revolutions really gave the people hope--and fear.

Appropriately, one of the mad scientists most visible is still the Victorian hero (or heroine, as in this case), making clockwork contraptions, brewing dangerous chemicals, reanimating corpses and generally having a good old-fashioned time of it. One fine example of this is Agatha Heterodyne, the celebrated Girl Genius (<http://www.girlgenius.com/>). The stellar work of Professors Phil and Kaja Foglio, of Transylvanian Polygnostic University, in illuminating the life and times of this remarkable young woman, her incredible heritage, and the politics she falls into, should not go unrecognized. Beautifully illustrated, witty, entertaining, and most of all, quite, quite mad, with the occasional marvelous two-page image.

Unfortunately, the work may not be best suited for electronic distribution; fortunately, print collections are released, well, like clockwork. In fact, the work was originally printed, and has moved to the Internet. The backlog of previously-printed comics may be found as the "101 class."

(Girl Genius updates M-W-F.)

However, I cannot dispute that the mad scientist has left his mark on the present as well. Nowadays, mad science can be had for rather more cheaply than the traditional obsessed gentry who sinks his fortune into his work. Though no less obsessed, these mad scientists are often more aware of the world, seeking to control--or at least influence--it as much as seeking Science For Science's Sake.

Two memorable examples of this are Casey Grimm and Andy Weir (<http://www.caseyandandy.com/>). Weir's stories of his and Grimm's adventures in mad science are rather more humorous and less grand--not to mention, more primitively drawn--than the Foglio's records, but what they lack in drama they make up in causing even the most well-composed reader to howl in laughter. Their secret of reincarnation, though, remains a mystery.

Weir's memoirs have been interrupted, however, as he has continued with other projects. Still, with the final story in its climax, we can only hope he will complete his task in time.

(Casey and Andy is on indefinite hiatus.)

However, for a present-day mad scientist, look no further than Helen Narbon (<http://www.narbonic.com/>). Shaenon Garrity's recently-completed tale of the wonder and mystery of Mad Biologist Helen Beta Narbon (specialist in gerbils), her henchman Dave Davenport, the stupendously violent intern Mell Kelly, and the world they lived in is one of the finest examples of mad science put to electrons. After six and a half years, the story has come to its grand conclusion, but it will remain online for as long as the Internet itself lasts.

Drawn as a simple black-and-white four-panel strip, and running continuously since mid-2000, the story is one of the few successful tales on the Internet to both be incredibly humorous day-to-day and tell a long, complex story over the course of years. It is highly recommended for everyone.

(Narbonic has been completed, but is running "Director's Cut" commentary every day, to finish some time in 2013.)

And so we come to the future. Sometimes called the natural home of the mad scientist, the future holds more surprises, shocks, amazements, and mad scientists than any other time. It is not uncommon, in fact, for the future to be considered one of purely mad scientists, or at least one where the mad scientists really have conquered the world.

For one where they keep trying, however, there is the story of Benjamin Prester (<http://www.project-apollo.net/mos/>). As told by Jon Kilgannon and Mark Sachs, it is the story of a near-future mid-22nd Century where mad science has been diagnosed as a memetic disease, which renders individuals mad and dangerous. They usually come up with a half-dozen plans for world domination in their sleep. Prester, as a Vorstellen Policeman, has the unenviable job of tracking down, subduing, and delivering the infected for treatment. This usually involves danger, which is why he packs a hand-held railgun. For the case at the center of the story here, however, Prester has been teamed with a psychologist...from the groupmind planet Mars. This Miracle of Science might be more of a headache than Benjamin anticipates...

Drawn beautifully in a Japanese manga-influenced style, this story includes notes by the creators, who are both science and mad science enthusiasts. One often finds discussions of scientific and technological marvels from the here-and-now alongside discussions of what will be, someday.

(A Miracle Of Science updates M-Th, but is soon to end, being in the epilogue already.)

Finally, for the far future, where aliens and humans roam the universe, travel through the galaxy is equivalent to a trip to another state, and one tinkerer really can set off a series of galactic-wide wars by inventing something, look for Howard Tayler's stories of Schlock and the mercenary company Tagon's Toughs (<http://www.schlockmercenary.com/>). The mad scientist here is Kevyn Andreyasn, probably one of the smartest people in the galaxy... except that he's dumb enough to be a professional mercenary. No matter, because he's still very, very dangerous. And so is his company.

This story is unique not just for its humor and wide range (galaxy-spanning events, as mentioned above) but for Tayler, probably the hardest-working man in the industry. He produces a full-color comic-strip sized bit of story every single day, and has done so for six and a half years and counting, without ever missing a day. It is also extremely true to real science, and steeped in classic science--moving a planet via shoving a giant candle in a gas giant and orbiting planets around it is explained, understandable, and entertaining all at the same time.

(Schlock Mercenary updates daily.)

And that's my section for the book. Now, I think I should hide before the mad scientists find out who exactly has been spilling their secrets...

Until next time!

*Editor's Note: The comics-minded among us may know that DC Comics miniseries "52" features an ongoing storyline involving an island of mad scientists—who reasons for gathering are still unknown and somewhat sinister. Considering how many mad scientists populate the DC Comics universe, that's a serious boatload of evil genius. Oddly—and perhaps disappointingly—Lex Luthor is not on this island.*

## **WSFA MEETING MINUTES**

**WSFA Minutes**

**Third Friday**

**Madigan's home, Maryland**

**December 15, 2006**

CONVENED: The meeting convened at 9:22pm.

ATTENDEES: Mike Bartman, Drew Bittner, Abraham Brody, Diana Buigin, Colleen Cahill, Zeynep Dilli (guest), Carolyn Frank, Will Frank, Erica Ginter, Lydia Ginter, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Sam Lubell, Don Lundry, Nikki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Bob MacIntosh, Candy Madigan, Michael Nelson, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Evan Phillips, Mindy Richards, George Shaner, Bill Squire, Gayle Surette, Greg Swiger, Mike Taylor, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The Secretary summed up the minutes of the first Friday meeting in December.

TREASURER'S REPORT: WSFA has \$9,931.52 in its account, plus approximately \$15,000 in CDs.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Capclave Past: Barry reported on behalf of Elspeth, noting that the convention might expect to turn a profit of approximately \$2000. All business was expected to be wrapped up in the month of December 2006 and he expected that a full report would be made in January 2007.

Capclave Present: A meeting for 12/16 was announced to plan for the next Capclave. Colleen said that she was testing processes (including spreadsheets) for administration, but needed to resolve the hotel issue first. Both GOHs are still on board.

Capclave Future: no report.

Capclave Far Future, DC 2012 and WFC: no report.

Publications: No news on *Future Washington* front was given to the Secretary, but Ernest reported that sales had slowed; he also noted he had reviews to send to the Journal. He suggested enterprising WSFAns might put reviews of FW on Amazon.com.

Entertainment: Will (the new committee chair) is looking for members for his committee; he promised he will suggest things to do, then plan trips. He noted Jonathan Colton, folk singer and SF fan, would be at Jammin' Java on Sunday. Mindy Richards volunteered for the committee, which may be renamed "Entertivities."

Rules Committee: no report.

Trustees: no report.

Committee to Talk About Science Fiction: Bill reported that the committee would discuss Asimov's January issue at first Friday in January, but that he would be in Chicago and did not plan to phone in.

Awards Committee: Colleen read her draft proposal to the last meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: Martin's motion is still tabled. There is no progress on incorporation or on the club's tax situation.

NEW BUSINESS: none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: send email announcements to Drew. Fifth Friday this December would be a New Years party at the Pomeranz/Overton bungalow.

Hostess announcements included mention that John Madigan's father had passed away and condolences were expressed by those assembled.

Newcomers to the club included Abraham Brody and Zeynep Dilli, for their first meeting, and Mindy Richards, for her third meeting (and she subsequently joined WSFA).

Nikki was raffling quilt tickets; Erica announced that her cat Spike passed away from diabetes and cancer; Ern said he **could** have gone to the first space launch from Maryland's new space center but chose to be at WSFA instead (a hearty "Awww!" was heard); Judy said she would be making latkes upstairs; Mike Walsh announced that Old Earth would be releasing (soon) a Howard Waldrop collection; Elizabeth Twitchell is selling off her comic book collection; Gayle announced she and Paul would no longer truck books to the meetings but would instead encourage prospective reviewers to go online and check out the Available Books listing; Barry announced that his daughter was off to Japan; and Bill called for adjournment.

ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 9:58pm.

POSTSCRIPT: It was announced online with regret that longtime WSFA member Richard Eney passed away on December 22. Our thoughts are with his family.



## EVENTS

Please email upcoming events to [editor@wsfa.org](mailto:editor@wsfa.org) with the word "submission" in the subject line for consideration.

Thought you all might be interested in/amused by the release schedule as set up on IMBd (Internet Movie Database, at [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)), for 2007. I've boldfaced my choices for "blockbuster" but your mileage may vary.

Enjoy!

**JANUARY 5**

Happily N'Ever After

**JANUARY 12**

Miss Potter (not really fantasy but lots of whimsical touches)  
Arthur and the Invisibles

**JANUARY 19**

Epic Movie (parody)

**FEBRUARY 16**

Ghost Rider  
Bridge to Terabithia

**FEBRUARY 23**

The Number 23 (ironic release date? ...no)  
The Astronaut Farmer (not sf but in-the-ballpark)

**MARCH 9**

300

**MARCH 16**

Sunshine

Premonition

MARCH 23

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
The Last Mimzy  
Superhero! (parody)

MARCH 30

Meet the Robinsons (Disney animated)  
The Reaping

APRIL 6

Grindhouse (Tarantino/Rodriguez horror double-feature... yaa-hoo!)

APRIL 27

The Invisible

MAY 4

**Spider-Man 3**

MAY 11

28 Weeks Later

MAY 18

**Shrek the Third**

1408

MAY 25

**Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End**

JUNE 15

**Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer**

JUNE 22

Evan Almighty

JULY 6

Transformers

JULY 13

**Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix**

JULY 27

Stardust

AUGUST 3

Bourne Ultimatum  
Underdog

AUGUST 17

The Invasion

Fanboys (*Star Wars* related)

AUGUST 24  
One Missed Call

AUGUST 31  
Halloween (remake)

SEPTEMBER 7  
The Waterhorse

SEPTEMBER 21  
Resident Evil: Extinction

SEPTEMBER 28  
The Dark is Rising

OCTOBER 12  
The Martian Child (based on David Gerrold's semiautobio)

OCTOBER 19  
30 Days of Night

NOVEMBER 16  
Beowulf

NOVEMBER 23  
Enchanted  
The Mist

DECEMBER 7  
**His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass**

DECEMBER 14  
I Am Legend

DECEMBER 21  
Alien vs Predator 2  
The Eye

## **IN MEMORIAM**

**Richard Eney**

**Science fiction fan and WSFA Member**

Richard Harris Eney died December 22 at the age of 69. Tamar Lindsay, married to Dick since 1993, posted online: "Dick had a stroke, apparently one of a series that had passed unnoticed because the symptoms were atypical until the one last night. The doctors at Prince George's Hospital operated to remove the clot, but the complications that followed were untreatable." She advised his friends to please make a donation to charity in lieu of sending flowers.

*-Obituary from Trufen.net, written by Migly, December 24, 2006*