

Remembering Deb Geisler

an excerpt from

idea
Number 14

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Inside front cover
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Remembering Deb

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Idea Volume 2, Number 14
Remembering Deb section

June 2024

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A SMOTHTRA publication. Member & Past President: fwa.
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Idea and this special section are available for the usual from:

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Or *Remembering Deb* can be purchased at:
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This special section of *Idea 14* is published with thanks to Janice Gelb for copyediting expertise on "Our words..." and to Janice Gelb, Karen Johnson, and Jon Singer for proofreading. Any errors that remain belong to the editor.

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Mischa misses Deb, as do we all. Photo by Gerri Sullivan, 29 March 2024





Deb, her mom, and siblings. Libby, Pat, and Su in front; Deb and Doug in back.

ABOUT REMEMBERING DEB

BY GERI SULLIVAN

Remembering Deb is a special section in the June 2024 issue of my science fiction fanzine, *Idea*, which I resumed publishing at the end of 2023.

This stand-alone edition is being published for distribution at the June 22 Celebration of Life for Deb at Suffolk University in Boston, MA. It is also available as a PDF on the *Idea* page on efanzines.com and with other issues of *Idea* on fanac.org. The printed version is available from Geri Sullivan and on Amazon. The same is true for the full issue of *Idea* 14.

Idea thanks Michael Benveniste for his support of this project, Jon Singer for his calligraphy, and all of the contributors. As I worked on the layout, it was as if Deb kept me company. My memories of her certainly did. I imagined hearing her suggest noodging certain elements “one more pixel to the left.” There was laughter as well as grief.

Readers are encouraged to send comments and additional Deb memories to idea@toad-hall.com. Letters will be acknowledged and may be published in *Idea* 15 this coming winter.

Remembering Deb



Deb Geisler holding Berger des Chats (Cat Herder), a pattern-welded sword with a blade of meteoric iron, which Mike commissioned for her. Photo by Michael Benveniste.

Michael Benveniste, Deb's husband, announced on her Facebook page:

Dr. Deborah M. Geisler (Deb) passed away on March 23, 2024, at the age of 66 after a long battle with lung and heart disease. She was resting comfortably under hospice care at home before passing.

Deb was, at her core, a teacher. As a professor of Communication and Journalism at Suffolk University, she touched the lives of students for over 30 years. Deb never stopped caring profoundly about her students and the material she taught. She was also a science fiction fan and con-runner and made many friendships in that community. She was chair of Noreascon 4, the 2004 Worldcon [World Science Fiction Convention], and volunteered her time, experience, and snark to many other conventions. She was also the love of my life – we would have been married 33 years this October.

Deb is survived by her sister Libby and brother Doug as well as her extended family.

Deb Geisler
September 20, 1957 -
March 23, 2024

Her words...

Deb Geisler

Facebook, 1 April 2020

Plague cookies: spiced oatmeal cookies with raisins and craisins. Spicing = cinnamon, allspice, mace, freshly grated nutmeg.

Dessert...or breakfast!

Only in quarantine could I have three student appointments, chat with my department chair, deal with writing reports for work, make a batch of cookies, eat lunch, then have my next student appointments...without leaving my house.

Could be a hell of a lot worse. No whining today.



The Olive Bill

by Deb Geisler

Any time I say or type the words, “the olive bill,” my grandfather Shannon and my dad are alive again. It started sometime in about 1956. My parents were still newlyweds, but strapped for cash (as many of us were, at 22). They lived in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where dad worked at Montgomery Ward and mom wrote for the local newspaper (until a rocky pregnancy – me, as it turned out – forced her to quit).

On a visit to Bellevue, Ohio (where Dad was from and where Mom had finished her Omaha-initiated high school education and, incidentally, fallen for the bad boy of the class) (guess who) to see their respective folks, my grandfather had picked up a pack of cigarettes for my dad. When Grandpa got home, Dad said, “How much do I owe you?” And Grandpa said, “I’ll put it on your olive bill.”

The olive bill, of course, was to pay for the martini drop-ins the next time cocktails were served. Only the olive bill never came due. It was understood in our family that you never paid the “creditor” off in olives – you just made sure the next person you met who needed something got it. On the olive bill.

So. I rarely write this sort of folksy tale, but growing up in my family taught me about paying

forward. And as I read the wrangling over potentially exact wording for a PAF agreement that should never have to be written down, shades of the olive bill (with or without pimento) wander past my monitor. Olive bills aren’t formal contracts. They’re not precisely measured (as if, somehow, the size of the olive or its juiciness or the color of its pimento matters more than the olive).

Olive bills are an inherent belief that you don’t need to be specifically accountable to the people who put something on your pay-it-forward tab. Instead, they’re an acknowledgment that when you do something good for someone, they’ll turn around and do something good for someone else. You never pay off your olive bill. You pass the richness of your own olives off to someone who needs and can appreciate it.

Mark Olson said it in his original posting about the Pass-Along Funds: fandom loses if we need to codify our gifts to the future. We make an agreement – a gentlemen’s agreement – that we will do the right thing. When we’re not sure what that right thing is (or which of a myriad of right things we should do), why, we ask each other and work it out. It would be a very sad thing if our gifts to each other came to have paragraph and section numbers.

Originally posted to the smofs email list during a discussion about Worldcon Pass-Along Funds (PAF) and the possible need to further formalize the rules that govern the program. Reprinted in Recipes for Disaster, published by Rune Press when Deb was Fan Guest of Honor at Minicon 39, April 2004.

This press release from Noreascon Four was written by Deb and sent to the convention's professional and fan media contacts on 31 July 2003. It was reprinted in a slightly different form in Recipes for Disaster, published by Rune Press when Deb was Fan Guest of Honor at Minicon 39, April 2004.

Thousands to invade Boston by sea

Aquatic invasion has Boston on high alert; supertanker, sailors make way for ducklings

A “floating flock of bathtub toys,” including the battered, salt- and sun-bleached remains of a flotilla of 29,000 rubber duckies, is expected to wash in to the shoreline of New England over the next few weeks, note oceanographers.

The duckies, which escaped from a container ship on a China to Seattle run in 1992, have made an 11-year trans-Arctic journey to reach Boston — only to discover they are more than a year *early* for Noreascon Four.

Floating along the Alaska coast, through the Bering Strait, wafting past Iceland, and drifting over the sink point of the Titanic, the yellow avian tub-buddies have continued their arduous journey, only to be disappointed at the end.

“We left in 1992, when we heard from our buddies at the Peabody Hotel in Orlando that Boston had started a new bid for a Worldcon,” quacked one anonymous fannish floater. “I don’t think you understand how long a trip that is for a rubber duckie with no bubble bath.”*

Curtis Ebbesmeyer of Seattle, a retired oceanographer who has been tracking the toys’ progress, told CNN that “Some kept going, some turned and headed to Europe.” Ebbesmeyer did not speculate on whether the small contingent of European-bound duckies was hoping to reach Glasgow in time for Interaction in 2005.

Although the duckies might be early, they will be able to get Noreascon Four memberships before the next rate increase, due October 1, 2003.

* Okay, so rubber duckies can’t talk. But if they could, they might have said that.

For Immediate Release

Noreascon Four
The 62nd World Science Fiction
Convention
Boston, Massachusetts
September 2-6, 2004
Guests: Terry Pratchett
William Tenn
Jack Speer
Peter Weston

P.O. Box 1010
Framingham, MA 01701
<http://www.noreascon.org>
info@noreascon.org

Any wayward rubber duckies arriving at Torcon3, the 2003 Worldcon in Toronto next month, will be able to buy their memberships at the Noreascon Four table in the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Boston-bound ducks, fans, alien life forms, and others with a credit card may purchase memberships online at the Noreascon Four web site, <http://www.noreascon.org>

And, of course, everyone can feel free to write us at our postal address, above.

Any rumor that Noreascon Four plans to deliberately re-release the stalwart duckies into the Gulf Stream in 2005, aimed at the United Kingdom, is a base, um, canard.

###

Deb Geisler **Facebook, 11 February 2016**

Throw-back Thursday, via FANAC.org: me, at Smofcon in Cocoa Beach, 2000. Ten minutes after this photo was taken, we filed our bid for the 2004 World Science Fiction Convention, which we won the right to host. This was the least tired I would look for 4 years.



The ConRunner: or There and Back Again

by Deb Geisler

"I feel thin, sort of stretched, like butter, scraped over too much bread."
Bilbo Baggins on the occasion of his 111th Birthday

– J.R.R. Tolkien

Steven asked me to write about how to avoid the attenuated feelings that come of being spread out over too vast an acreage in working on things fannish – of having, as Bilbo did, a burden that he wasn't even really aware of, but that was slowly turning him into a wraith of his former self. Steven noted, "I figure you'd be good since you've been in that place and have, from what I can tell, managed to extricate yourself."

And the answer is yes, well. I have a great deal of sympathy for Tolkien's hapless protagonist, who stumbled into a deal of work because he was flattered to be asked and didn't take time to consider what this would mean. Like Bilbo, I had my own Gandalf, convinced that there was more to this hobbit than met the eye, and that I would have the skills needed to best the trolls and wargs and dragons. Fortunately for my various nieces and nephews, however, mine is a tale

that ends with me, rather than one that embroils them in a multi-generational search for the antidote to ultimate evil.

This is *fandom*, after all, and not the stuff of legends.

So this bit of bitness is going to be an explanation of how one gets involved in a fannish treasure hunt (without pocket kerchiefs or thinking through supply lines), what can happen along the way, and when it is right to cry, "Hold! Enough!" (And, for the record, I didn't extricate myself until it was really far too late.)

If you want people to give you more and more responsibility and authority, prove that you can handle what you are given over a series of projects and slow stages. (Or, perhaps more honestly, if you want to suck someone into your con-running venture, ease them in with a series of tasks and great rewards of egoboo when they

Written for Argentus 11, edited and published by Steven H Silver, November 2011. Text is from the manuscript Deb shared with me 15 July 2011.

accomplish what you want them to do.) That was my path, starting in 1989, with an unexpected invitation to work on the Worldcon (my first con-running experience) at a fairly high level (woof!)...then continuing through the 1990s as our local group got me involved with Boskone and other Worldcons and a bid to host another Boston (or somewhere) Worldcon.

Along came 1998, and one of our people did an officer poll of the members: if we win the Worldcon, who do you want to run it? I still have the emailed results from that poll, and another one three years later when we *did* win the right to host the Worldcon in Boston. Of 35 responses, 34 people said they wanted me as the chairman.

That was...unprecedented in my life. Like many of us in fandom and con-running, I was the kid *not* picked when, as Janis Ian sang, "choosing sides for basketball." Suddenly there were people who not only liked me, but wanted to trust me with leading them and managing a million dollar project. So, like Bilbo, I said yes. Unlike Bilbo, I had some time for reflection...and thought I knew what chairing a Worldcon meant: what it would do to me, my friendships, my husband. Even so, I said yes.

So. So, so, so. We lost that bid. We *did* go out in a blaze of excruciatingly pink glory, but we lost none the less. Later, I would think, "Why didn't I slip away then?" And the answer was that no one blamed me

(well, except me); they treated me as a friend, still. They still wanted me as the president of the organization (although I refused to stand for re-election, it was nice to be wanted); they came to me with concerns and troubles (believing, naïvely, that I could make them right).

Our group was working on another project in the interim, and it proved to be more divisive than it would have been if we'd had a Worldcon in the works. The "treasure" here was not so vast (in terms of egoboo), but there was no longer the greater treasure of the Worldcon plunder to look for. And so people battled over petty things, did harm to themselves and the organization, and I grew lethargic.

And then, suddenly there was the possibility of another bid – shorter, more intense, for our own city. It re-energized people. They cast off the useless, petty squabbling, came together to get the job done, and there we were...another officer poll, and 34 of my friends said, again, they wanted me. So, I did it again. This time, I was that much less naïve, that much more aware of what bidding meant. This time, I knew that if we lost again, that would be the end of my time in fandom. Only this time we won.

Which is harder: facing the failed bid, or facing the job of actually *running* the Worldcon? My friends would tell you it is the former. The latter, they would say, is hard, but it is all about creating, not watching one's hopes go up in smoke.



Deb on the Iron Throne. When she posted this to Facebook 25 May 2015, she wrote, "Yeah, I know it looks like I belong there." Photo by Michael Benveniste.

What I learned from being the chairman of a Worldcon:

- (1) No matter how much you think you know about the job, you're wrong. It is taxing and difficult and exhausting in ways you never thought about.
- (2) You'd better really like your friends at the beginning. Some of them will disappoint you, because you thought you knew who they were. Every one of them will be who they are, but unless you can learn to help motivate and encourage and supervise them, that won't necessarily be a good thing. Personnel issues are down to you to take care of.
- (3) No one tells you the ugly little secret about major projects like this: winning can be just as devastating as losing; being successful can shred you just as quickly as failing. And even if they *did* tell you (and nobody did tell me), you probably wouldn't believe them anyway.
- (4) Former Worldcon chairman Martin Easterbook told me something really profound, about halfway through the actual five days of our Worldcon. (He said it wasn't original to him, and I think he credited another former Worldcon chairman.) "Deb," he said with a sad sort of smile, "If you chair a bad Worldcon, thousands of people will be mad at you. And if you chair a perfect Worldcon, hundreds of people will be mad at you." So you can't worry about every single unhappy person in the job – there are times you have to just let go, do your best for the largest number of people, and hope that's going to be enough.
- (5) Eventually, this will end. You have to keep your people moving in the right direction *after* the convention, too. Get the last bits taken care of, finish all of your obligations to everyone. But even so, when the actual convention is over, you'll just want to hide in a hole. This is normal. Listen to me: take the time for yourself afterward.

Be warned that, even if you do #5 correctly, I'm convinced, there is a

sense that you may have used up all of a vital resource, with nothing left to give. You feel...stretched thin. (I hadn't thought about the butter-on-bread line of Tolkien's until Steven wrote me about this article, but it is completely on point.) So, what is the single dumbest thing you can then do? That's right: get involved with more projects. That's what I did.

If you need to rest, rest. And if you've just come off of a major project, no matter how flattering it is to be asked, you probably need to rest. Get some other activities in your life. Pick and choose your projects, and have them show short-term results. Avoid situations that will be difficult for you emotionally. Don't listen to people when they say, "But nobody else has your credibility, your gravitas. They'll *listen* to you," unless you really *want* to become embroiled in the situation.

And if some tiny ass robot, no matter how cute, starts broadcasting a message from a tart wearing cinnamon buns on the sides of her head saying, "Help me, Obi Wan Kenobi! You're our only hope!" Walk. Away. No, I take that back. Run away. (As an aside, it both troubles and tickles me that Microsoft Word knows who Obi Wan Kenobi is.)

See, here's the important thing about that post-major-project feeling: some time later, usually a few months, you'll start feeling like you have energy again. You'll start missing the frenzy and forgetting the terror. Adrenalin rushes can

be addictive. But what you don't know – can't really know – is that this is a short-term burst. And when you wear yourself out *this* time, it will take longer to recover, and the spiritual and emotional deficit will be greater.

Okay, back to that wench in white wanting you to save the rebel alliance. She'll tell you you're unique and special and without you it will all falter.

If that's all true, then maybe it's meant to fail. I once wrote to someone about a situation where she was troubled and guilt-ridden because she seemed to be the only one who could keep a fan group going, but she just wanted to quit. She wanted advice about what she should do, because it wasn't fun anymore. My advice, "*Save you...*" If the group is meant to survive as a group, it will save itself. As for the club, consider what clubs are for: they are groups of likeminded people who gather together for fun and frolic and education and companionship. If this particular club is meeting the needs of its members, other members, seeing you stepping away, will step in and work to keep it together."

Alas, I didn't take my own advice. My friends needed me! I was convinced. Someone had to do the job, and you're the best hobbit for it! Gandalf said. And so, two and a half years later, I was taken out of our annual convention on a stretcher in the middle of the night, my heart a victim of misplaced feelings of obligation.

Thus began a rather slow process of extricating myself from con-running: finish this obligation, cut the related connection, cauterize the loose ends, move along to the next. By 2009, I had slipped entirely out of the fannish circles that were once my home, missing the people, but realizing that this was perhaps the best thing. Once, in fall of 2009, I showed up at a local work session, and three different people asked me what they should do about various con-running concerns. They weren't just seeking advice; they wanted someone to make the decision about what to do. That made me disengage still more – the knowledge that Princess Leia was lurking, somewhere, and I might be stupid enough to shine up my universe-saving staff again.

The simple matter is that nobody but you can decide how much you should engage. Nobody but you can determine your energy, your strength, your tolerance levels. Nobody but you has to pay the consequences when you push too hard, stress your marriage, or wake up the hotel manager in the middle of the night because something is wrong with your heart and you need an ambulance.

Over the last two years, I've tried twice to re-engage at light levels. Once was a failure – not because of what I did or did not do, but because of the people involved. There is this about going to the end of your rope and hanging on for dear life: afterward, you just aren't

willing to tolerate pettiness in the same way you once were.

The second re-engagement was to do a project, one single project, for the Reno Worldcon, Renovation. I felt some debt there (and for once, my husband even agreed the debt was real), so I agreed to work on the convention. (As I write this, Renovation is a month away.) But this is collaborative work with one other person, there's a clear chain of command, and I don't have minions. As much as I joke about minions, having them is a heavy responsibility if you're honest with yourself.

And *at* the Worldcon, I agreed to run slides for a performance, help at the gopher level, and just be a fan. That's damned important, I think: being a fan. Enjoying what Worldcon has to offer. Remembering why it's fun.

How can you avoid the sort of near-burnout (yes, it's still singed around the edges) I experienced? Here are some don'ts: Don't take on the weight of the fannish universe (that never works). Don't assume that you *have* to solve the problems, just because you *can* solve them. Don't angst over the things you have neither the skills nor knowledge to fix. Don't push yourself when you're long past your reserves, just because "someone has to do it." Who died and made you someone? Don't ever make the mistake of thinking you are irreplaceable.

And one "Do": Do listen to the people who love you. At the end of the day, when the convention's all over, who's going home with you at night?

One little pandemic, and I'm acting like a petulant 7-year-old

by Deb Geisler

Under normal circumstances, when my husband suggests he would get me an expensive present for Christmas and asks which of seven choices do I want...I'd pick the cheapest or the second from the bottom, because greed annoys me, I don't need the fancy one, and there are people who can barely afford food right now.

Not this time.

I snarled at my inner responsible grownup, picked the second best (because the best one is sized wrong for me), requested the color I like, and slapped myself upside the head (where that "petulant" description comes from) and told my inner adult to STFU.

Want a toy.

Pathetic, isn't it?

It's been a hideous and wonderful and agonizing and soulful and sad and joyful and divisive and unifying year. And I'm feeling like a kid who wants a new toy so I feel better.

Might blubber.

Gonna get the toy...and then be sure to help other people, make them feel good about life, make some cookies, support charities, be nice to my students, enjoy my

It's been a hideous and wonderful and agonizing and soulful and sad and joyful and divisive and unifying year. And I'm feeling like a kid who wants a new toy so I feel better.

friends and loved ones, and try to help some more.

And maybe on Christmas, but definitely by New Year's Day 2021, I'll sit by the fire, play with my new toy (no, it's not a car), and enjoy the great company of my cat and my husband. My husband – who also said that if we couldn't get the toy by Christmas, I should tell him what else I wanted, and I could have that. Too.

There are days when my worst nightmare is that I'll wake up and find out he has been a dream. Then I realize that my imagination is just not that good. :-)

Merry, Happy, Joyous. Play with a toy. Eat paste. Be well and safe.

Posted to Dreamwidth 22 December 2020.

Deb Geisler Facebook 20 October 2021

Thirty years ago today, Michael Benveniste and I exchanged vows and rings in front of a rabbi and a whole bunch of our friends and family.

That's worked out pretty damned well. By which I mean that I've been the luckiest woman in the universe for the last thirty years.

I cannot imagine anyone else to have survived the pandemic with, nor the disasters large and small, nor shared the amazements and victories, nor a hundred thousand other things we have done together with love and joy and unity and giggling.

Happy Anniversary of our hitching, Michael, my favorite husband.



Deb Geisler and her sister Su, 1961.



Michael Benveniste at home. Photo by Deb Geisler.

If life makes it possible for you,
spread some kindness
and love today.
There's too much unreasoning
hatred and brutality in the world.

Light a candle.

Deb Geisler
Facebook 17 February 2024

Deb's last Facebook post 19 March 2024

Before claiming something is impossible, it is useful to remember that, with enough thrust, pigs will fly just fine.

Deb online...

thesuffolkjournal.com/44458/news/in-memory-of-deborah-geisler-a-life-of-impact/ – In memory of Deborah Geisler: a life of impact, April 24, 2024

linkedin.com/in/deborah-geisler-9058865/ – Account has been memorialized as a tribute to Deb's professional legacy

<http://www.clearether.com/Deb/> – Deb's webpage for Minicon 39

mnstf.org/minicon/minicon39/M39_DebGeisler_chapbook.pdf – Recipes for Disaster – Chapbook published by Rune Press for Minicon 39, where Deb was Fan Guest of Honor

legionsofdarkness.com/ – Deb's Legions of Darkness website

Deb edited...

Holt, Tom. (2002). *Expecting Beowulf*. Deb Geisler, ed. NESFA Press
nesfa.org/book/expecting-beowulf/

Brin, David. (2003). *Tomorrow Happens*. Deb Geisler, ed. NESFA Press
Out of print. Currently available used from Abe Books and Amazon.

Coville, Bruce. (2008). *The One Right Thing*. Deb Geisler, ed. NESFA Press
nesfa.org/book/the-one-right-thing-2/

Renovation Souvenir Book (2011), Deb Geisler, ed. Reno Convention Fandom, Incorporated. fanac.org/conpubs/Worldcon/Renovation/Reno%20Program%20Book.pdf

Honors...

Deb became a Fellow of NESFA in 1999.

Fan Guest of Honor

ConCave 25 – February 27–29, 2004, Horse Cave, KY

Minicon 39 – April 9–11, 2004, Minneapolis, MN

ConQuesT 38 – May 25–27, 2007, Kansas City, MO

In memory of Deborah Geisler: a life of impact

Shelagh Shullenbarger, Editor-in-Chief • April 24, 2024

Professor Deborah Geisler first came to Suffolk University in 1984 and left an impact of generosity, humor and resilience for the students and faculty she worked alongside and taught for nearly 40 years.

Geisler died March 23 at the age of 66. She is survived by her husband Michael Beveniste and two siblings.

A graduate of Ohio University and Southern Illinois University, Geisler harbored a passion for journalism and communication. Above all, though, Geisler's heart lay with her students.

"She just was inspiring, compassionate, a true educator and she always made us laugh along the way," said Nick Edwards, a 2020 Suffolk graduate.

Fur Practitioner-in-Residence and Suffolk Journal adviser Charles St. Amant, who had Geisler in her first semester at Suffolk and went on to work alongside her, Geisler's



Geisler, a graduate of Suffolk University, is remembered by Suffolk community members for having a profound impact on everyone who had the honor of getting to know her.

Our words...

Finding a Superhero by Jim Hudson

Every superhero needs a good origin story. And we all know Deb was a superhero.

I was there at the beginning. But that was 35 years ago, and I know my memory isn't perfect. So let's look at the recorded history, from *The Mad 3 Party* #35, Noreascon 3's Hugo-winning fanzine:

Division Heads Meeting, May 7,
1989 (notes by Leslie Turek)

We received a letter in February from a Suffolk University professor of journalism, Deb Geisler, who expects to have some free time in the summer and is willing to help out. She also has a student, Babette Mortell, who would like to intern for us. Jim Hudson met with them and learned that they are fans who have strong computer and publication skills. Deb also has strong contacts (ex-students) at various local media organizations. They will come to the work session on May 17 to meet us and start taking on tasks...

So Deb & Babette came to the meeting in May. Deb presented herself as a mild-mannered college professor. (I think she was "mild-mannered" for the first five minutes; that went away fast.) But we all could tell that was a secret identity and she had superpowers.

Worldcons, by their nature, are always desperate for volunteers. Especially for volunteers who are intelligent, skilled, organized, and able to work well with others. And able to be silly.

We all quickly recognized that Deb was one of us. It took her a little bit longer to figure out that we were her people, but there were a lot of us. While my memories of the summer of 1989 are pretty jumbled, I know we kept giving her work related to her field. And jobs nobody else wanted to do (see "liaison with the film studios, below"). She kept showing up, doing those tasks, and taking on more responsibilities.

For example, again from *The Mad 3 Party*,

August 19-20: Program Booklet

...Meanwhile, Deb Geisler and [Leslie] ran a sort of control center where we kept track of the latest size estimates for each portion and worked out the layout of the book by moving 64 yellow stickys around on the wall. As pages were completed, Deb pasted them up on the prepared boards and added page numbers...

The tools have all changed immensely since then. But the need

remains for groups to cooperate and work under intense deadlines. Deb was a master at that sort of cat-herding.

She appears in the final committee list several times – for the pocket program, as the convention’s liaison with the film studios, and as Chairman Mark Olson’s Aide. The Aide job basically meant “follow Mark around and do whatever’s needed.” Sometimes

that was smoothing ruffled feathers, sometimes it was being a sounding board, sometimes it was just making sure that people got food. But everything was real-time and required to make the convention work.

I am so incredibly happy to have been part of introducing Deb to convention fandom, and vice versa. Among other things, it gave me a few decades to watch her superpowers in action.



By Elizabeth (McCarty) Upchurch

My first vivid memory of Deb was at Chicon 7 in 2012. It wasn’t the first time we’d met but it was the first time we had a long conversation about con-drama over a couple of smokes. I had actually quit smoking a few years back but the stress and bad feelings occurring at that con drove me outside, away from people and fortuitously into the company of one Deb Geisler. I wish I had listened to her that night. She was dead on with her observations, her ability to see people’s motivations, and she could gently, but with a purpose, guide someone to consider the best option for themselves. I can only imagine what an amazing professor she must have been!

In the years that followed, I became closer to Deb and to many of the Northeastern fans. I tried to get to Boston when I could, Arisia and Boskone conventions, dinner parties, and con comm program meetings. Deb and I would share

some snark, discuss current con-running problems, and she would unfailingly give me good advice. Deb had a way of working with people that allowed them to thrive in the best atmosphere without putting limits on their creativity. She was open to hearing new ideas and could make the leap to new practices that showcased them. There were times I volunteered and felt frustrated, and Deb would either laugh about it with me and get me to see the positive or she’d tell me to straighten up and fix what was *really* bothering me.

I wish I had been around to see her in action at Noreascon 4. While it’s easy to sit back and think “I bet she was a great Worldcon Chair!,” the fact that I’ve watched multiple Worldcon chairs come to her for advice and guidance over the years verifies she was. There was con-running, art appreciation and collecting, jewelry-making, cooking, and sending little gifts and care

continued >

By Elizabeth (McCarty) Upchurch (continued)

packages to friends when they needed her. Along with everything, though, was the deep love and respect between Deb and Mike. A true partnership among people who not only were friends and lovers but showed what marriage goals could be. How you each lift each other up and have each other's back.

Deb really made this world a better place to be in. She was so thoughtful and so genuine that you knew if she praised you, you had done good. If you got the laser

death, well, it was deserved. For me, Deb had a lot of good qualities in common with my late mother, with none of her bad ones. Which is probably why I felt so drawn to her. She was a rare combination of insightfulness, snark, gentleness, humor, caring, and strength. Knowing her and spending time in her company brought me such joy. She provided us with a great blueprint for enjoying life and the people we share it with. We should follow it and honor her.



Jeffrey Green on Facebook

Condolences is such an inadequate word. She was and is clearly held in a web of hearts, and may you find some comfort in that, for you too are held in that same web. Word of another friend now gone has become increasingly common...the actuarial inevitability. The line Robin Williams spoke in Dead Poets Society becomes increasingly poignant: "Carpe Diem!" "Live!" And that she did. I think of a road trip she and a bunch of our Ohio University forensics friends took to

NYC; about nine of us I think piled into my old '74 blue van after NFA nationals in Monmouth, NJ. She fondly reflected on those experiences on several occasions. She seized the day; she lived! That a few days before she would slip these "surly bonds of Earth" she would comment about the sword you had crafted for her from a meteorite was a testament of what you shared. I see her now, soaring through the firmament brandishing that great blade born of love and stardust.



Michael Lee on Facebook

My first Smofcon was the one in San Jose back in 2010, and, given my personal fannish history through the Minicon collapse and time with CONvergence, I went with a fair bit of skepticism. But Deb gave me a not short ride (and we didn't know each other at the time) from SFO and that was a very pleasant ride that I still remember very fondly, and it was a key event in my own fannish path.

By Janice Gelb

It's not often that I'm at a loss for words but it's hard to think of what to say about the passing of one of the wittiest, kindest, most generous, and just all-around wonderful people I've ever known. I know I am just one of a legion of people to whom Deb extended friendship, hospitality, support, and advice over many years.

I have so many memories of time spent with her and Mike: a road trip from Boston to Montréal through Vermont in 2009, attending the Rally to Restore Sanity in DC in 2010, a shared trip to Alaska with friends in 2012, numerous stopover visits to their place – I'm especially glad that we got to spend a couple of days with them in December.

When we did stay over, Deb made sure to have some of my favorite foods from the local kosher deli, and that's just one example of her thoughtfulness. You never knew when you might get sent or given something to show she was thinking of you, like flowers during difficult times or milestones. Just on the day after she died I had already missed her usual sympathy note about the

noise from the Melbourne Grand Prix (Formula 1 racing was just one of her many interests), and a costume for a party that day serendipitously included a themed pin she gave me.

And then there's the snark and the wit: We often exchanged a lot of acerbic comments during red carpet fashion events... and there's nothing like getting a message from a co-worker asking you about your run for the governor of California! During a recall election where a number of signatories was all you needed to get on the ballot, a friend had found a campaign site with a donation thermometer on my behalf, and I immediately knew who the culprits were.

I am not exaggerating when I say that in the month or so since her passing not a day has gone by when I haven't encountered at least one and often more things that I would have shared with her. Despite my always valuing her friendship, her death leaves a larger hole in my life than I would have predicted. She was a truly special person.

.....

Kara Shemin on Facebook

Deb was my professor in grad school. It was the early days of blogs and social media. She brought her unique perspective and taste to her curriculum and made learning so enjoyable. She was honest, real, and unapologetically, Deb. I will miss her snark, her wit, and her warmth. I imagine her without pain, commiserating with family and literary and pop culture icons unraveling the mysteries of the universe.

By Leslie Turek

I'll begin by asserting that Deb and I had a special relationship. "Wait a minute,' you might say, "Who are you to say that? Because Deb and *I* had a special relationship." And I have no doubt that you did, because Deb had a knack for making everyone feel special. (Well, unless you were a fool, in which case you were probably subjected to the sting of her scorn.)

Still, our connection was truly one-of-a-kind. Deb and I were the only two women who had ever chaired a World Science Fiction Convention in Boston. I had run Noreascon II in 1980, and we were lucky enough to convince Deb to take on Noreascon 4 in 2004. Managing a Worldcon presents a unique set of challenges and can truly be a trial by fire. Even though we might have different approaches and styles, and even though our conventions were decades apart, there was an underlying bond of appreciation and respect that was never broken.

The first time I remember interacting with Deb, aptly enough, was while working on Noreascon 3 in 1989, the Worldcon in between our two conventions. At a bustling work session shortly before the con, we had the job of pasting up one of the major convention publications. I say "pasting up" because this was an era before we had computers that could do the layout. After working out what was going to fit where, we'd have to run the paper strips of

typeset text through a hot wax machine, then affix them to a backing sheet with the help of a light table to get the alignment right.

The job was tedious and meticulous, and required concentration and good communication while the chaos of con preparation was going on all around us. It was not the kind of job you'd normally want to try to do with a stranger. But much to my delight, I discovered that this new person was an excellent collaborator – she was reliable, competent, focused, efficient, hard-working, and fun. We knocked out that challenging task, and formed a friendship in the process. So I like to joke that we bonded over a hot waxer.

Over the years that followed, I learned of her many other virtues. I had a great deal of respect for her judgment and valued her insights. A Facebook post just didn't feel complete until Deb had commented on it. She was a great cook and a warm and welcoming host. She had a snarky sense of humor and would set up silly web sites just for the fun of it. She enjoyed fast cars and appreciated beautiful arts and crafts. She created jewelry and generously gave her work away. We shared tickets to concerts and shows; Simon and Garfunkel was the best, but I enjoyed introducing her to Once. She was very sweet to me and only hit me up once for help on a convention; that brought me out of retirement to run First Night

at her Worldcon. I wouldn't have done it for anyone else.

Many have experienced her gifts as an educator, but the side I saw was how much she loved her work and her students, and how sad she was when health problems forced her to give up teaching. But she kept up her positive attitude in spite of the troubles she was dealing with. She was blessed with a loving husband whom she did not take for granted, expressing her gratitude for him each day. Finally, she was a good friend. Even though she was younger than me, she felt almost like a big sister.

She was the friend who would drive miles out of her way to give



Past Noreascon Chairs Leslie Turek & Deb Geisler at the Worldcon Chairs' photo session at Loncon 3 in London in 2014. Excerpted from the full group photo taken by Lisa Hayes.

you a ride home from a medical procedure.

She was the friend who would lure you to her home for a photo session that you would later learn was a secret ploy to create a batch of bobble-head dolls based on your likeness for your guest of honor stint at the Sasquan Worldcon.

She was the friend who would listen to your amateur piano playing and make you feel like she was really enjoying it.

She was the friend who would be there for you in any type of difficulty.

She was the friend who you really didn't want to lose.



Charles St. Amand on Facebook

I had the great privilege of not only having Deb as a teacher but also a colleague. She had a huge impact on my career by being a wonderful, caring teacher and also by helping me get an internship at The Patriot Ledger that would set the foundation for my 31-year career in daily journalism. When I returned to Suffolk full time as Practitioner in

Residence in Journalism in 2018, Deb once again was instrumental in helping me settle into a new career. I will always be grateful for her support and encouragement 40 years ago and in recent years. I have lost a hero, but she will continue to influence how I face my students in the classroom and halls for as long as I am a teacher.

Helen Montgomery on Facebook

I'm currently reeling from the news that Deb Geisler has died. Deb was a fannish mentor, someone I could always go to when I needed some guidance. She was wicked smart, wicked snarky, and I can't quite fathom that I won't get to talk to her again. My heart goes out to Michael Benveniste and Deb's family, because I know if I'm hurting this bad, they are devastated.

Deb wasn't able to come to Chicon 8 [the 2022 Worldcon that I chaired], but she sent me a really lovely and supportive email shortly before it, including "I hope things on the day run smoothly, goofily, charmingly, and joyously" and the reminder that we weren't going to please everyone and that was okay.

In January 2014, she knew I had the lumpectomy for the breast cancer, and sent me a gorgeous flower arrangement. You'll notice that there's a purple butterfly in the arrangement. While the flowers are long gone, the butterfly remains at my desk, held in place by a magnet.

In August of 2015 we got to spend time together in Glacier National Park en route to the Spokane Worldcon. We had a wonderful dinner, and huddled



The purple butterfly from Deb's flowers remains on my desk to this day.

Photos on this page were taken by Helen Montgomery.



Flowers from Deb Geisler following my lumpectomy.

together for warmth during our open top red bus tour through the park.

The fact that Deb Geisler and Peggy Rae Sapienza died nine years and one day apart leads me to imagine the two of them are now hanging out somewhere in the universe. Peggy Rae's lawn is freshly mowed and decorated with Deb's flamingos. The two of them sit together, smoffing and snarking, while watching their minions working hard to bring their plans to fruition. As it should be.



Dinner in Whitefish, MT near Glacier National Park in August 2015. Photo provided by Helen Montgomery.



Photos by Gay Ellen Dennett



Deb not only made jewelry (see pages 42–63), she taught friends how to make jewelry, too. These are the first pieces Gay Ellen Dennett made with Deb's instruction, guidance, and help.



By Randall Shepherd

Remembrances of Deb include when I first got to know her working on the LoneStarCon 2 Worldcon back in 1997 where she was the liaison to Jeff Walker, who in those years before movie studios running trailers on the internet hosted the very popular “It Came From Hollywood” program item with lots of trailers, scoops on upcoming films, and tons of swag.

I first heard the quote “not my circus, not my monkeys” from Deb. (I feel certain it was at a Smofcon.) I enjoyed Deb’s sense of humor and her snark. I found it hilarious and repeated to friends when I got home. They proceeded to get me a t-shirt printed with a carousel on it and the quote. In the vein of the “Dave Kyle said you can’t sit here” ribbon, I think I need to get one that says “Deb Geisler said I can wear this t-shirt.”

We shared an unusual link. About six or seven years ago Deb posted a story about a happening in northeast Ohio. More specifically in North Ridgeville, Ohio. I lived there for five years in the early ’70s and she lived maybe ten miles away. I, of course, commented and she always brought interesting news from the area to my attention.

And in a universe works in strange ways moment, I’m typing this while my recently adopted feral cat Junior (because he is the second orange cat I’ve teamed up with) is sitting right next to the iPad while I’m typing, and is a big reminder of

Deb’s oft-mentioned inherited cat Mischa.

I last saw Deb at Dublin 2019, an Irish Worldcon. We were meant to be co-hosts of the Future Worldcons Q&A session (we’d done sessions together before), but she had to pass due to health. Happily, I got to sit with her on a bench in one of the upper floors, and catch up a bit. My condolences to Michael and all her family and friends. She will be greatly missed.

Here’s email that Deb sent me just a day before the start of LoneStarCon 3 (the 2013 Worldcon). It was powerful and a big morale boost during critical and tiring days...it literally brought tears to my eyes. It was such a timely and unexpected boost...which are the best kind.

From: **Deborah Geisler**

Date: Wed, Aug 28, 2013 at 9:25 AM

Subject: Wishing you the very best

To: Randall Shepherd

Dear Randy,

As you bury yourself in all that has to happen to build the city we call Worldcon, please accept my very best wishes for a successful convention. You are going into our fannish family reunion having faced one of the harshest managerial challenges ever faced by a chairman. Do know that many of us who have sat in that hot seat understand and appreciate what you have done.

Bon chance, buena suerte, and good luck. I hope it is wonderful!

See you in San Antonio.

Best,
Deb

Vicki Karns on Facebook

Deb was an amazing colleague! She took me in as a roommate when I first moved to Boston, and she was always so willing to help and be a friend. I love the jewelry she made for me and will cherish it!

.....

By Patty Wells

I have many reasons to be grateful to Deb, but the one that would be of most fannish interest is that Deb is the reason I ended up chairing a Worldcon. For the Denver Worldcon in 2008, I was the division head for facilities and Deb had wanted to find out if this was something she might be interested in, so I immediately put her to work. (In the end she decided there were too many crazy questions to be answered and didn't care for it, but she entertained us with the occasional email she'd have liked to send.)

While at division meetings in the time leading up to Denver, there came a day when Deb and I were waiting for an airport shuttle. I had been concerned about the Seattle Worldcon bid for 2011 being the only one because between my hospitality contacts and some rumblings in my husband's field (high tech), it seemed like it was being hard for even groups with a lot of money to hold onto facilities. I had mentioned this to a few people who might be looking for a year to bid, but all had thought I was unusually paranoid (when I consider myself just paranoid enough).

I grumbled about this to Deb, who looked me in the eye and told

me I should bid against Seattle if I was that worried. I explained that Portland, Oregon, had a fine, then new, convention center, but not nearly enough bedrooms, and also I had my doubts about being a Worldcon chair. Deb said she'd seen plenty of ability in me, and I could find a place if I really wanted it. Deb was a very confidence-building person, as is only right for a born educator.

I thought about it all the way home and then started looking up every convention center in the country and landed on Reno, and the rest is fannish history. But I truly believe I wouldn't have had the nerve or the confidence without Deb.

On a personal note, my daughter Zoe was the teenager who wanted to get as far away from her mother as possible for college. One college I steered her to was Deb's university in Boston. As it happened, Zoe received a nice scholarship there, and indeed spent her freshman year on Suffolk's campus in Madrid, thus showing true efficiency in getting far away from Mom. But the rest of the time she was at Suffolk, Deb and Mike kept a bit of an eye on her and took her in when the heat in her apartment went out in a Boston

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By Patty Wells (continued)

winter. For having eyes on the daughter when I could not, I will always be grateful.

When I was out with Zoe for her Madrid orientation, I stayed with Deb and Mike. One evening, I was on campus waiting for Deb as she taught a communications class. While my teaching isn't nearly as

fancy, at community and business colleges as opposed to a private college, I've taught for a long time. I snuck outside the open door of her classroom to listen to her lecture and found her to be as great a teacher as a Worldcon chair.

Zoe and I will miss her.

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Deb, we miss you

by Edie Stern

I can't remember when I met Deb Geisler. Our friendship started somewhere around 30 years ago, or maybe more. I'm sure it had something to do with conventions. It might have had something to do with one of us being snarky in public (or at least at SMOFcon, possibly together). Especially after Joe and I moved to New York, it led to decades of friendship, convention work, New Year's parties, Alaska, potlucks, summer pool parties and, in recent years, the ubiquitous Zoom.

Deb was a devoted teacher and mentor to the young and not so young, a reluctant but enthusiastic cat owner, heir to family tragedy, purveyor of sweet rolls and port wine reductions, and a Worldcon chair. She was extravagantly, verbally, in love with her husband. Deb lived life fully, and with grace. She was capable, hospitable, comfortable, companionable, admirable, formidable. What these

last have in common is "able." That's our Deb.

My favorite memory with Deb took place right before ConJose. A handful of us (of the travelling Worldcon committee) had the wonderful chance to stay at a B&B in Napa Valley for a few days before the con. Even better, it was a B&B that was owned by a vineyard, and bordered on the fields. It was brilliant, with tables and chairs behind the buildings, steps away from the vines themselves.

One gorgeous evening, after a day touring, we brought back dinner and bottles of wine, and picnicked by the grapes. The talk was both about what we had done and what we were going to do (pre-Worldcon after all), and everyone was very jolly. Food was eaten, wine was consumed, spirits were, shall we say, high. We were all a little drunk. In the waning late August sun, the grapes were more

than inviting. It would be rude not to accept that invitation, so Deb and I made our way amongst the vines.

No one else wanted to join us, even though we'd extracted permission on checking in that we might go out into the field as long as we were careful. The grapes were warm, and heavy in our hands, the clusters lending themselves to rude comparisons. We laughed so hard that tears ran down our face, eating grapes as we went – fabulous. When we got back to the tables, someone had found another bottle of wine.

The next day, Deb had to leave early for her ConJose job. What I didn't realize until later was that her job was supervising the loading

dock. Our Deb had to be out in the summer sun, bossing amateur and pro truck drivers, hucksters and the like, all whilst harboring a wicked hangover. Her retelling of the day was much funnier than the living of it must have been.

Deb was a woman of many parts. There was quirk as well as snark. Just read the reports of Noreascon 4. It is so, so, so, very apt that her husband Mike gave her a fitting last party, laying her sword forged of meteoric iron atop her doctoral gown draped across the casket at the March 27 memorial. Deb's academic colleagues were nonplussed and a little uneasy. It was perfect.



By Mark Plummer

It was the day after Corflu when Sandra Bond drove a few of us out to the Hoover Dam. I hadn't previously appreciated that this awesome structure straddles the state line and so by driving across it we passed from Nevada into Arizona, meaning I was able to add one more name to the not-very-long list of US states that I have visited.

A few days later, at her house in rural Massachusetts, Geri Sullivan asked me how seriously I was 'collecting' US states. Geri's the kind of person who'd happily have loaded me into her car and then driven me 2,000 miles so that I could tick off South Dakota. But no, I wasn't really seriously collecting states, I said. It was just a sort of

background mental record. What I was collecting on my current US trip, I had decided, was past Worldcon chairs. I'd already amassed Ted White (1967), Mark Olson (1989), and Joe Siclari (1992) at Corflu itself, and, once we got to Massachusetts, a dinner at the Olsons' had further netted Leslie Turek (1980) plus a duplicate Mark Olson that I could later use for trading in the manner of the football cards of my youth. And then on our last day in the US, Geri drove us over to Middleton for lunch with Mike Benveniste and Deb Geisler (2004).

I've known of Deb for about twenty years. We were at Noreascon 4, the Worldcon she

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By Mark Plummer (continued)

chaired, although I doubt our paths crossed, if nothing else because her concerns were doubtless on higher things. I only really came to know her in the run-up to Loncon 3 when she and we were parts of the chairs' staff. I remember thinking it striking that when assigning roles Deb chose to position herself not as an 'advisor' but as an 'assistant,' not telling the chairs what they should be doing but helping them to do it. During the four years or so leading up to August 2014 she was certainly a plain-speaking voice of sanity in the Worldcon maelstrom. She was, I think, somebody who didn't suffer fools gladly, although I imagine Deb herself would observe, channelling Eddie Izzard, that surely nobody does. I also remember her speaking up for the place of whimsy amidst the deeply serious business of Worldcon running. At the time I was unconvinced, and truthfully, I'm still not fond of that term *whimsy*, but I think over time I've come to see the real value of the idea as a defence against con-running earnestness. Indeed, a shield of umor, one might say. And writing this I'm reminded of Chicon 7 in 2012, just before the UK bid was confirmed as the 2014 Worldcon, where Claire and Deb

were standing in a corridor of the Hyatt and gleefully flapping the ends of the far-too-long sleeves of their Loncon 3 shirts at one another.

I was aware that Deb was seriously unwell when we saw her and Mike on our US trip. An oxygen pump in the hall rhythmically maintained an air supply through a long plastic tube which we all did our best to avoid treading on. I couldn't recall when I'd last seen Deb. Surely at some point since 2014. Spokane the year after, maybe? A hurried hugged greeting in a corridor or outside a party in Dublin in 2019? Seeing her in her home this year I'm not sure I would have recognised her as she certainly seemed physically diminished, but at the same time she was still very much with us, still mentally sharp, still keeping up with the world and possessed of plenty of occasionally snark-infested opinions about the Worldcon issues of the day. We had lunch and chatted for a few hours before Geri drove us to Logan airport and our flight home.

Two weeks later Geri told us that she'd died, and so now I value that afternoon all the more. And I still have a spare Mark Olson if any fellow collectors want to swap for a John Guidry.



Vicki M. Croce on Facebook

Deb will always remain an important person in my life and the kind of combination of strength and compassion I aspire to become.

By Claire Brialey

But we only saw her two weeks ago.

Just before we headed home from the US in March, Geri was able to take us to see Deb and Mike, and I'm so glad that happened. I didn't know Deb well enough – not to the extent that we were swapping recipes or that I'd have known easily what book to recommend to her – and that's my loss as well as the much greater loss that we're never going to get to talk to her again. I mean, not so that she'll reply; Deb was a great communicator, as you'd expect from someone with her professional experience, but even she had limits.

How I did come to know Deb, and to value her immensely, was semi-professionally: through con-running. [In a separate note, my husband] Mark has explained how she chose to be a member of the chairs' staff for Loncon 3 rather than acting as an adviser, where her experience would have been just as useful; and in that capacity she helped me a lot by demonstrating a different model (specifically, a competent middle-aged woman with personality) of senior leadership

within the Worldcon community. She also helped me to keep a sense of perspective through a judicious balance of snark, kindness, and fun.

Because of her Worldcon and professional standing, Deb might have been deeply intimidating but I found her immediately friendly and approachable; she might have been described as 'no-nonsense' but that definitely didn't mean no humour. She used her knowledge, insight, and judgement wisely, and I'll remember her with enormous affection; I'll possibly be able to do it without tears in my eyes by the time we get to Glasgow, where there's going to be a Deb-shaped gap. She was one of the good people, someone who made my life better, and I'm quite certain many other people could say the same thing.

And at least when you have known someone like that, you get to remember them as well. And so when I have a moment in fandom which requires a sense of perspective, I hope to let Deb say 'Bite me' in my head and so manage to smile and then get on with it.

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Marianne Plumridge on Facebook

Deb's intellect and impishness combined with her love of teaching and talking to people made her one of the loveliest people I've ever met. May she journey in peace and grace and light and, of course, love.

By Ben Yalow

I first met Deb when Jim Hudson recruited her for Noreascon 3 (N₃). She was teaching at Suffolk University, and her students looked like they'd be ideal interns for the con. As a bonus, we got the professor.

And it was an incredible bonus. She knew all the things that we (along with the rest of fandom) were terrible at – marketing, organization structure, and group dynamics/team building. We all had so much to learn, and she was so able to teach.

She enjoyed what we, and she, were doing – so she stuck around after N₃. She did things herself – but, even more importantly, she was able to help guide all of us into becoming better versions of ourselves.

When I chaired Boskone a few years after N₃, she was able to help

me be a better chair. The same was true for other Boskone chairs and Worldcon chairs. And a few years after that, she took on being a Boskone chair herself and showed, by example, what an excellent chair could do.

When MCFI was ready to bid again, it was clear who would need to be chair. She guided us through a messy bidding process, and in the end was a brilliant chair for Noreascon 4. Having been working on Worldcons for five decades, there are only a tiny number of chairs I would rank as outstanding – she clearly was one.

Even more importantly, she was an outstanding person who made everyone around her better. Fandom will miss that. And I certainly will.

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David Weingart on Facebook

I've really tried to come up with some story or memory about Deb Geisler. Others knew her far better than I did. If you were active in SF fandom, you probably knew her. She was smart, funny, and had a wicked sense of humor.

That's why I have a memory of her trying to get my support at Chicon 7 for a motion put forth by her, Michael Benveniste, and Geri Sullivan that "Yngvi is not a louse." (IYKYK) She even had fancy ribbons for people who were going to show up at the Business Meeting to vote.

Alas that I couldn't. I was going to be out late filking and partying, and there was no way I was getting up for the Business Meeting.

It's been well over a decade, but I still can picture that whole conversation in my head.

Deb was a great person and the world is poorer without her in it.

Michael Benveniste

The sequel – before the 2019 Worldcon, Deb and I took a Danube River cruise. The name of the ship we were on? Ingvi, and it was far from lousy.

Remembering Deb Geisler by Sharon Sbarsky

I'm privileged to have known Deb Geisler for 45 (or so) years. She will be missed by everyone who knew her.

I believe that I first met her in May 1989 at the NESFA Clubhouse. I parked in our small parking lot and was surprised to see a car with Ohio plates. She was inside meeting people on the Noreascon 3 committee. She contacted us to find an intern position and ended up on our committee for the Worldcon and eventually a member of MCFI as well as NESFA.

Deb chaired Boskone 36 in 1999 and later that year was voted to be a "Fellow of NESFA."

She chaired the Boston in 2001 bid (which later moved to Orlando but didn't win) and again the Boston in 2004 bid. This time we won the site selection. I was webmaster for the bid site and had created the initial convention site. The morning that the site selection winner was announced in the Business Meeting, I was updating the internet. She was announcing that the web pages would be ready as soon as I "pressed the button" and I walked into the meeting and gave her a thumbs up.

Besides the web pages, I was also in charge of our "social media," which at the time was mostly posting to Usenet. We had a press release ready to go a week later... but that was September 11, 2001. Deb called me to say "it's not going out today, we'll send it another

time." It was more important to her to take that step back.

At Boskone 39 in February 2002, British fan Peter Weston came up from Corflu in Annapolis, but he didn't tell anyone he was coming. Because he was a Guest at Boskone 37 he had a Life Membership so when he arrived at Registration where I was working I gave him his badge. Because he was a Noreascon 4 Guest of Honor, I knew that Deb would want to see him. I checked the program schedule and found she was on an item to tell local fans what was planned and what to expect for the Worldcon. When I entered the program room with him, Deb was surprised to see him and was speechless (for a few seconds!) She quickly recovered and introduced Peter to the room.

I was chair for Boskone 40 in 2003. In January at Arisia, there were fan tables for both Boskone and Noreascon 4. But as a twist, I was sitting at the N4 table and she was sitting at the B40 table. We both had a lot of fun pointing to each other saying "and she's the chair!"

There are many other convention-related stories to tell. But an important fact about Deb is that she took the time to take care of her friends when they needed it. Two things in particular were: she made sure that I was with friends when I found out my mom died, and she had me stay at her house to recover after I had my gallbladder removed.

There were many aspects to Deb Geisler by Joe Siclari

I knew Deb for over 30 years. She was good at telling stories. As with all good narrators, the stories sometimes changed a bit. But she was proud of getting things accomplished.

Deb enjoyed cooking and was great at hosting parties with her husband Mike. *[Slumber parties, New Year's, with sweet rolls in the morning along with lots more.]*

Deb was a well-respected college professor, who even brought some of her students into fannish activities including working on conventions. *[Don't you wish you could have worked on conventions for college credit?]*

Deb liked swords and whips.

Deb was a great travelling companion, knowledgeable and friendly, and she knew how to have a good time whether it was on a small boat in Alaska's inner channels, kayaking, testing the grapes at a vineyard in Napa, or explaining a strange local custom she found in Spain.

But everybody who knew Deb knows this.

Deb was part of the Boston area fan groups, NESFA, possibly the most structured and organized organization in fandom, and later MCFI, the longest-running Worldcon organization. In the mid-1990s, she quickly rose to be the head of MCFI, and ran two bids to host the Worldcon. Before she bid, she worked.

For my Worldcon, MagiCon, in 1992, Deb had to deal with some last-minute media arrangements with Francis Ford Coppola. Whenever a potentially sticky publicity problem gets handled without a mess, it's always appreciated by the rest of the committee and the chairman in particular. *[This one was very sticky!]*

For Deb's Worldcon, Noreascon 4 (N4) in 2004, I had offered to run the Publications area. To get me on the Board, Deb made this a division-level position, which had both good and bad points for her. I have pretty good convention-running experience so I was able to provide some decent advice. I am also sometimes a bit of an insolent smart-ass. Deb handled my comments with humor, often turning them in useful ways. Serious advice to a committee chair should always be given in private. Smart-ass comments should be given in public so they can be slapped down. She listened to thoughtful advice and took it from everyone to improve the convention in innovative ways. First Night at N4 was an example. Edie and I wanted to personally do the progress reports as a window on the quality of the activities that could be expected at the convention. Deb liked the idea even though it would require a substantial investment of time and money. Deb was willing to take the chance and let us put in not only the staff effort but

money, including raising advertising rates for all publications. [It didn't hurt that *Idea's* editor was critical to our efforts.]

Deb did have a fannish failure. But there was one story she always like to tell about how we negotiated a hotel contract where the hotels ended up paying us: before the success of N4, Deb ran a bid for Boston in 2001 and when hotels were uncooperative, decided to carpet bag the bid to Orlando. I had previous experience with the Orlando Worldcon and hotels, so Deb asked me to work with the hotels. While negotiating with various profit centers, we managed to get Disney hotels to agree to pay us **more** than we had to pay them for facilities. Alas, we lost that bid.

Lastly, Deb was a member of the secret Society of Past Worldcon

Chairmen. She never joined officially because no one ever does. No one can disclose their membership for fear of revealing its secret rituals. What incorporates you into the SPWC is that you seriously and intelligently figure out how to get an unorganized, opinionated, and sometimes intelligent gaggle of fans to work together for years to put together an extremely detailed planned activity that most of them have never done before. It takes organization, planning, people skills, and especially patience. Deb put on a particularly successful version of this with Noreascon 4 twenty years ago. Ever since then, nearly a dozen fan groups asked her to be an advisor, either on the record or off.

Writing all this is a sad reminder that there is a Deb-shaped hole in the SMOF as well as my world.



Raising a glass to Deb



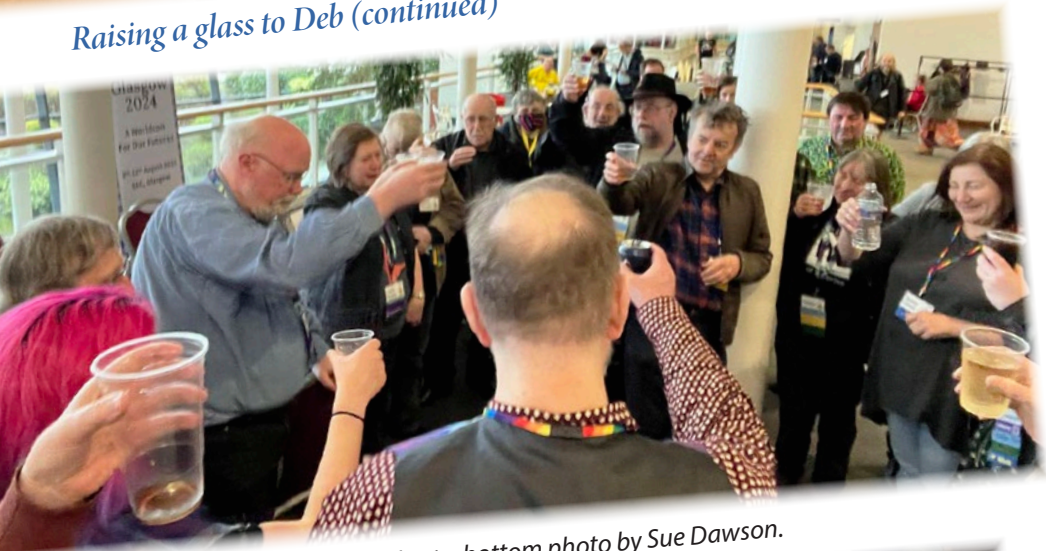
Fans at Levitation (the 2024 Eastercon in Telford, England) gathered at the Glasgow table to raise a glass in memory of Deb, led by Mark Plummer. Photos by Vincent Docherty.



continued >



Raising a glass to Deb (continued)



Top two photos by Vincent Docherty; bottom photo by Sue Dawson.



It's Ragù! by gloria lucia albasì

A smile. A word. A new friend is made.

Deb Geisler struck me as a woman who lived a broad range of experiences, from which she was able to parse wisdom that she freely and generously shared with others.

I first met Deb at a barbecue and pool party hosted by friends, Edie and Joe. An interesting woman to converse with, Deb would give you her full attention, her presence. Not a small thing in the 21st century.

Deb was a gifted foodie and we chatted a few times on gastronomy. “Gloria, maybe you know: what is that meat sauce, the meat pasta sauce particular to the north of Italy?” Personally I was clueless. We aren’t big on meat sauce in my large, extended family. So, alas, I had no answer.

One year I was working on a bit of a, uh, dumpster fire regarding a fannish code of conduct “matter,” ahem. I asked Deb for some advice. As we talked, Deb said the funniest thing: “I didn’t run a Worldcon, I chaired a Worldcon. Others did the work.”

As for the advice, Deb stated: “What I’d do is follow the letter of



*Found art, New York City, 8 May 2024.
Photo by Gloria Lucia Albasì.*

the rules and procedures, ignore the person’s status or popularity within the community. Put it out of your mind.” Exceptionally effective counsel.

Deb contained multitudes. Having been a Noreascon Chair (among other things) and all-around groovy gal, she was a font of wise words. And knowledge. Remember: all knowledge is contained in fandom. Though perhaps somewhat less now.

While it may seem otherwise, it was only a dozen or so times that I interacted with Deb in real life. That’s how awesome she was.

Awesome.

Oh, is it Ragù alla Bolognese? Yes!

It’s ragù.

.....

Elaine Brennan on Facebook

Deb was a brilliant light in the world who will be sorely missed.

Graphic design, Deb, and me by Geri Sullivan

Deb never met a new output device or material she didn't faunch after. I first heard of food quality inkjet printers from her, ChefDoodler (the pen that lets you draw in sugar), 3-D printers, and other new printing technologies. MCFI bought a large format inkjet printer during the run-up to the 2004 Worldcon, Noreascon 4 (N4). A couple of years later, Deb bought a long roll of silk that fit the printer. I found copyright-free photos taken by the Hubble Space Telescope online, and we spent a delightful, quiet afternoon at the NESFA Clubhouse printing a few utterly beautiful silk scarves.

I think I first heard Deb geeking about output options when she learned she could order custom 10x10-foot rugs printed with the Lensman Family art Bill Neville drew for N4. One was placed at each entrance to the Concourse Exhibit Hall at the convention. She sent one with me to Toronto when I was the Fan Guest of Honour at the first SFContario in 2010 to be used as a thematic decoration and to help protect the floor at the All Worldcons, All the Time Bheer Tasting that Randy Byers, Pat Virzi, and I hosted there.

In November 2006, color laser printers were far from new technology, but I'd been dithering over the options and possibilities. It was a big buying decision, and I feared getting it wrong.

Randy Byers and I stayed at Deb and Mike's house while we were finishing the last few pages of layout and printing Science-Fiction Five-Yearly (SFFY) #12 at the NESFA Clubhouse. When we climbed their front steps after the first full day of SFFY production, we found a large box marked "Dell Color Laser Printer 3110cn" sitting next to the front door.

I opened the door and called out, "Where do you want the color laser printer?"

"It's up here," came the response from their upstairs loft office. "We're installing it now."

Randy and I checked: the box at the door was unopened and heavy.

"There's one here, too."

The Dell website had been, umm, troublesome. Deb accidentally ordered a second printer after it appeared her first order didn't go through.

This offered the perfect solution to my color laser printer indecisiveness. I knew Deb and Mike would have thoroughly researched the options and made a good buying decision. We confirmed that my Apple equipment worked with it on the printer they were installing, and Dell made it easy to transfer the ownership of and warranty on the second printer to me. I paid for the extra printer and they were saved the trouble of returning it. The timing was great; we enjoyed printing several SFFY pages in color the next day.

“What happens when you move it a pixel to the left?”

Deb and I collaborated on many design projects over the 25 years of our friendship, nearly all of them for print. But where did we start?

In the summer of 2001, before N4 became a seated Worldcon, Deb sent email asking me to design the convention’s logo. I intended to pass on the job because my design skills are far more type-oriented than graphics-oriented for something like logos. But as I composed my reply, I found myself writing, “If I were to design the convention’s logo, it would be very type-oriented, either reversed out of a star field, or with a star field fill in the letterforms....” The process of writing about why I probably wasn’t a good fit for the job gave me the idea for how I’d do it. So I did. Others have written about how Deb helped us be our best selves. It’s so true! Over and over and over again with me, and I’ll be forever grateful for that.

We worked together on a flyer for Boskone 43 in 2006, when Donato Giancola was the convention’s Official Artist. If I remember

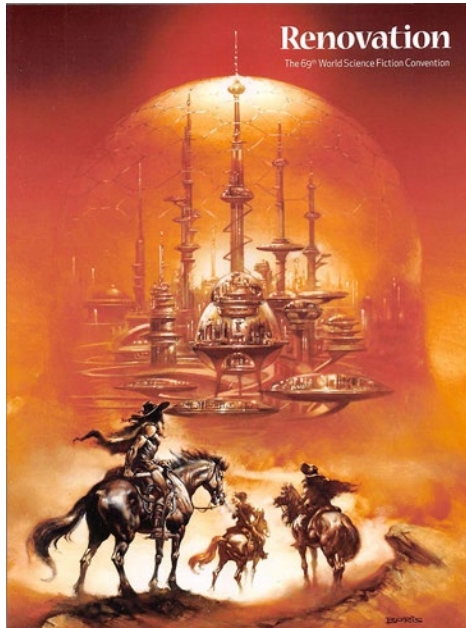


We used this version of the logo the most.

correctly, Deb was looking at my computer screen as we were working on a design and for the first time suggested that I move one of the elements “just a pixel to the left.” Darned if it didn’t make it better! She adopted the phrase to describe her role in our collaborations. It was a completely Deb move; she did so much more than put the perfect artistic finishing touch on whatever we were creating together.

We collaborated again on the Renovation Worldcon Souvenir Book in 2011. Deb ran lead on

the editing – obtaining material, polishing it for publication, and deciding what went where in the 158–page book. I completed a lot of the layout at Deb and Mike’s kitchen table, going over to Middleton so we could work together in person. So many satisfying,
text continues on page 41 >





BOSKONE 43
A regional science fiction convention filled with wonder!
FEBRUARY 17-19, 2006
BOSTON, MA

Guest of Honor
Ken MacLeod
Jamming the culture of space

Official Artist
Donato Giancola
Lustrous images & stunning realism

Special Guest
Cory Doctorow
World's most wired human being

Featured Filker
Steve Macdonald

Membership: \$43
until January 16, 2006
(Rates higher at the door)

www.boskone.org

Details on back.
Art © 1993 Donato Giancola

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Bruce Coville on Messenger

I loved working with Deb on **The One Right Thing**. I loved what she chose and how she arranged it. She knew exactly what she was doing and did it beautifully! Mainly I have this memory of laughing with her and feeling like the project was in great hands.

happy memories. And, oh, the outstanding food values at every meal! The dolmas, bbq shrimp, caprese salads, niçoise salads... and sweet rolls, of course.

Convention flyers, postcards, progress reports, souvenir books, and other items commonly have outstanding graphic design these days, but it was still a rarity 20+ years ago. Deb and I helped raise the bar while we added joy to our days working together on those

graphic design projects and more. It was such a win, such a blessing in my life, and in hers, I believe. When I think about everything we did, it staggers me. As the tributes here demonstrate, I was but one of many, so many. What a legacy she leaves!

That said, right now I'd rather have her here, alive, and healthy. I'm far from alone in that, so very far from alone. If only we could make it so....



By Esther MacCallum-Stewart, Chair, Glasgow 2024

Deb was the benchmark for good chairing for Worldcons. She was funny, sanguine, and smart. She did not take any shit (in fact, I think her last words to me in person were as the moderator of a Worldcon Question time and were something like 'For goodness sake, shut up and stop waffling, Esther!'), and she was incredibly competent. Deb was well known for her snark, but looking back over my messages to her, I also see someone who was passionate, thoughtful, and furiously organised. There are messages grumbling, sharing information, and just offering support. She had a knack of messaging when things were really awful and just sending a quick 'it'll get better' message, or just a finger up in the air at whoever was being frustrating. Underneath this was a deep understanding of how to be a compassionate, thoughtful

leader, and how to encourage people to be their best.

Chairing a Worldcon is not easy. You have to be patient, committed, and compassionate. There is a lot (a LOT) of wrangling cats, a huge amount behind the scenes and out front, a whole army of people telling you what to do. I think it was Deb who coined the saying 'If you chair a good Worldcon, dozens of people will hate you. If you chair a bad one, hundreds will.' (And if it wasn't, she made it hers anyway.) She called being a chair 'one of the most interesting, rewarding, irritating, life-changing, joyous, and overwhelming jobs for which you won't get paid.' She also said in the same message that I used the lower case too much.

I REALLY MISS YOU, DEB.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.





*Deb made
Jewelry...*



All photos in this section were taken by Michael Benveniste unless otherwise indicated. Many thanks to Michael, Vicki Karns, Leslie Turek, and Ann Broomhead for sharing Deb's jewelry in Idea.

Images without captions were items Deb made and kept for herself or had in her art show sales inventory.

Collection of Geri Sullivan.





Collection of Leslie Turek.





Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.



Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.



Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.







Collection of Geri Sullivan.



Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.





*Photo by Ann Broomhead,
from her collection.*







Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.



Collection of Geri Sullivan.



*Photo by Ann Broomhead, from her collection.
Ann's husband, Tim Szczesuil, commissioned the set
(necklace, earrings, and hair sticks) as a gift for her.*



Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.



Photo by Vicki Karns, from her collection.









Photo by Geri Sullivan.



(Silence)

Inside back cover

This is a blank page on the printed edition

Note: in Idea 14, Remembering Deb has a photo of the urn made by Vincent Villafranca on this page and also includes a remembrance from James Bacon.

