

# The WSFA

---

# Journal

---

The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association

**February 2006 – ISSN 0894-5411**

**Ernest Lilley, 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, 16440 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613

**This and previous issues of the journal may be seen by going to** [www.wsfa.org](http://www.wsfa.org)

**Club Email Groups:** [wsfa-forum@yahoo.com](mailto:wsfa-forum@yahoo.com) / [wsfa-announcements@yahoo.com](mailto:wsfa-announcements@yahoo.com)

## Contents

- **From the Editor**
- **Musings and Mutterings**
  - President's Ponderings: SF to the Rescue
  - Capclave 2006 Author GoH Interview: Kim Stanley Robinson
  - Does The Car Of Today Look Like The Car Of The Future Past?
  - Mike B's Guide to Email Listing
- **Original Fiction**
  - The English Major's Revenge by Nancy Jane Moore
  - Mightier than the Lens (A Doc Smith Fanfic) by Lee Strong
- **Book Reviews:**
  - Cybernetica by Michael J. Cavallaro
  - Future Washington (Locus),
- **Media Reviews:**
  - Nanny McPhee
  - Roving Mars (IMAX)
- **Minutes And Reports**
  - First Friday 1/6/06, Third Friday 1/20/06
- **Events, & Announcements**
  - Upcoming Events
  - Food, Fellowship and Fortune Cookies

## From the Editor...

The good news is that we've got plenty of rich content, from original fiction to an informative

article on email and some reviews and essays besides. More good news is that I don't have enough room to ramble on...so I'll have to let the issue speak for itself.

Ernest Lilley – Editor



## Essays, Letters and Other Musings

**President's Ponderings: SF to the Rescue**  
by Samuel Lubell

Lately I've been seeing growing concerns that boys are not doing as well academically as girls. Newsweek even put it on their cover "The Boy Crisis." This comes across most clearly in college, where nearly 57 percent of undergraduates are female. But the problem starts much earlier than that as girls do better in school than boys at every age. One of the reasons is that girls read more.

Traditionally, in elementary school basal readers and even textbooks for older students, boys were the central character of stories; in part due to unconscious sexism on the part of writers and editors but also due to girls being more willing to read about boys than boys were willing to read about girls. This changed in the 1990s as people

worried that the schools were shortchanging girls. Now, people are worried that schools teach too many books about girls or girl concerns (such as relationships and characters) as opposed to boys who are more interested in action adventure (of course, such writers are stereotyping horribly.)

One frequently raised solution is to teach more nonfiction. English and reading teachers are opposed to that on several grounds, boiling down to the idea that there are plenty of other courses (science, social studies) in which nonfiction is read and much of the analysis that works on fiction doesn't work on nonfiction. "Now class, why do you suppose the author had the colonists fight the British." "Because that was what happened." "Class, what was the author trying to show by having Napoleon keep his hand inside his coat all the time?" "That Napoleon really did keep his hand in his coat."

So, what is needed are stories that satisfy the alleged boy need for action and adventure while still containing enough plot, character development, style, and symbolism to be discussed in class. Science fiction to the rescue.

Teaching science fiction in the schools can solve this problem. Kids enjoy science fiction – look at how many science fiction videogames and movies there are. Yet many science fiction books are deep enough to serve as the basis for class discussion. So one way to get more boys reading is to give them science fiction.



### Capclave 2006 Author GoH Interview: Kim Stanley Robinson

*Congratulations to Elspeth Kovar for picking a great Author GoH, and huzzahs to KSR for being*

*able to make it. The author was generous enough to answer a few questions for the Journal. - ed*

**WJ:** Where are you in the "Capital Signs" trilogy? Is it working out the way you'd wanted?

**KSR:** I am finishing the third and concluding volume. I don't think of it as the "Capital Signs" trilogy, although I am aware there has been a lot of title confusion there. I usually think of it as my climate novel, or the global warming trilogy, or the DC novel, or SCIENCE IN THE CAPITAL which was its first name and maybe should be the overall name. But a little uncertainty there is just the way it goes. As for the work, yes, it is working out the way I wanted, although there is much work yet to be done. I expect to finish the book in June, and to see it published some time in the spring of 2007.

**WJ:** After your wrote Forty Signs of Rain, the first book, a pretty dreadful movie came out which echoed some of the same concerns, but with more flash and less reason...although there were some pretty hot scenes in your book. Is it possible for media to get SF or can they only mess it up?

**KSR:** There have been some great SF movies, so there is no inherent reason for them to mess it up. But certain scenarios, taking years to transpire, can be better approached by novels than by movies. Maybe. Actually it's hard to generalize about differences between the two forms. Rather than think about it I prefer just to contemplate the problems that novels have depicting reality, and focus on that as I write them.

**WJ:** In the second book, Fifty Degrees Below, a small island nation is flooded out...then Hurricane Katrina did the same for New Orleans. Do you ever feel like you have to keep running faster and faster to keep ahead of reality?

**KSR:** Oh yes. I don't think you can run fast enough anymore, at least not when doing "near future" SF. I started this novel with the idea of surfing about five years ahead of the present date, but as everyone knows, waves can sometimes break faster than you expect, and they catch you. That happened this time.

**WJ:** I heard you on NPR's "All Things Considered" the other day talking about Science

Fiction and Michael Crichton's book "State of Fear". In his book he talks about "Why Politicized Science is Dangerous", but isn't he calling the kettle black? And isn't this exactly what Frank (the protagonist in the Capital Science trilogy) is trying to achieve, the dissolution of the division between science and politics?

**KSR:** An interesting question. "Politicized science" has to do with attempts to tweak or ignore or distort scientific results because of ideological objections to the ramifications of the results----yes, this is exactly what Crichton is doing, and so yes, he is the pot calling the kettle black---and the right wing assault on science does this all the time. Very often accusers accuse others of doing exactly what they are doing with the accusation, don't you find?

But my character Frank and his allies are calling for the science community to enter more fully into political decision making; thus, not politicizing science, but sciencizing politics, or to put it more clearly, to make politics more scientific. Also, to get the science community to advocate certain policies more forcefully.

As with Katrina, the world is catching up with Frank very quickly; you see scientific bodies getting more and more vehement about the need for action here!

**WJ:** What do you think about the space program? Will commercial spaceflight come around before the government manages to get a shuttle alternative operational? Is there any point to keeping the ISS going? Do we still need to send humans into space at all, or should we just send more plucky robots?

**KSR:** These are hard questions. I like the manned space program, as I think it is a very cost-effective and useful way of reminding us we live on a planet, and have to take account of that in our habits, our "economy" and so on. Comparative planetology is now a survival tool. As for the details of the space program, I often don't have a strong opinion, and am not fully informed.

**WJ:** Since you've lived in the area, you probably have some favorite places. Where do you like to eat?

**KSR:** We lived in Chevy Chase/Bethesda while there, and didn't get out much.

We liked Rio Grande but I saw recently that it had gone away; I hope somewhere else. There was a Chinese restaurant a couple doors down from Second Story that we liked; now I hear the Second Story store is gone from there. Hard to believe. There was also a Greek place on Connecticut with some tables on the sidewalk, it was wonderful and I bet is still there. We could park David in a baby chair and he would watch the trucks rumble by and be happy for an entire dinner hour. I also like the bars on the Georgetown waterfront right where Rock Creek hits the Potomac, and the Thai place near the Ballston stop and NSF.

But these are so random. It seems like I've been to a million once, all good.

**WJ:** What do you recommend to folks to see while they're here?

**KSR:** The usual obvious stuff, but especially the FDR Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, Air and Space, the National Gallery especially the special exhibits, whatever they may be. Also Great Falls. And the zoo. Also a walk around old downtown and Georgetown and up one of the avenues like Connecticut or Wisconsin.

**WJ:** Where do you like to go to get away from it all in the DC area?

**KSR:** I've come to enjoy wandering the forest in Rock Creek Park, which started as research for these novels, but has turned into an activity of its own. Also the National Zoo, especially the gibbon and tiger enclosures. I also like the riverbank from Rock Creek down to the FDR memorial; and the Mall in general. Sorry to be so obvious, but I only lived there a while, and was pretty focused on home while we lived there. I also enjoyed the Baltimore harbor, its aquarium and the Constellation; and the baseball parks; and the two little neighborhood parks closest to where we lived.

**WJ:** Will you be coming to town anytime before the con?

**KSR:** No, I expect the con will be the first chance I get to return.

## **Living In the Future: Does the car of today look like the car expected fifty years ago?**

by Carolyn Frank

*I went to the DC Auto Show recently and looking at the design concept alternate fuel vehicles and smart safety systems got me thinking about, and the forum discussing, why cars today look so much like cars of yesteryear. I asked Carolyn what she thought on the subject. - ed*

My father bought a new 1951 Studebaker, which someone still drives around Princeton today, and although it has a rather different shape (aerodynamic for its time) on the outside, it has an internal combustion gasoline fueled engine on the inside as well as a wheelbase about the same as a medium SUV. From my father's perspective, cars today are not that far different than cars back then.

30 years ago, I worked on a study on "The Use and Characteristics of the Automobile in the Year 2000" for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. This was in the midst of the energy crisis and we were forecasting out 25 years. Our forecasts were quite good -- I went back and validated our results a few years ago -- and although we did not forecast the SUV, our percentages of non-gasoline fueled vehicles was pretty close to reality. We'd investigated all sorts of batteries, diesel and botanical fuels, and more -- the basic knowledge was there at the time, but we could foresee that the demand was not going to be there then or now.

The biggest changes to the nature of cars in the past 50 years have been in the areas of safety and computer technology. In the 1980s consumer interest groups promoted safety, the government began to prescribe safety and the automobile manufacturers began to feature safety in advertisements. In the 1950s I remember helping my mother pull pieces of windshield glass from car crash victims on the street corner where we lived. Modern safety glass disintegrates on impact. In the 1950s aside from various cuts and bruises, people sometimes walked away from car crashes due to the relatively large size, heavy frame and slow speed of their vehicles. Other times, whiplash, forced ejection, or impediments such as steering wheels caused major injuries.

Today seat and lap belts, airbags, built-in crumple zones and many other features enable a far higher percent of crash victims to walk away from their totaled vehicles.

In the 1950s existing computer mainframes barely fit into a huge laboratory. Now every car built has 600+ computer chips running everything from ignition control to monitoring emissions. As computers have noticeably quicker reaction times and often can be programmed to have far more sense than the average driver, the future will only see more and more technology built-in. For example, the technology already exists to link cars together into a train-like set for computer-controlled high-speed movement along major thoroughfares.

As a means of enabling one or more people to travel distances over a mile or two quickly and easily from their precise origin to their selected destination, cars will remain the dominant form of personal transportation for the future in developed countries. We've wandered down this particular technological path and the amount of in-place infrastructure, from roads to gasoline stations, will probably keep us using cars in some form for the next 50 years as well.

## **Mike B's Guide to Email Listing**

By Mike Bartman

*Mike offers us some thoughts on alternatives to the current Yahoo WSFA groups. While Yahoo doesn't cost us money, we can be sure that TANSTAASFL, applies here and hidden costs make it worth considering alternatives for the future. Fortunately we have a wealth of talent in WSFA to help ferret out those alternatives. This month Mike looks at what he considers essential in a club email system, **Note:** I ran short on time editing the issue, but really wanted to include Mike's piece. I've cut it down a bit and changed some of the phrases without his having a chance to check it over, but next month he'll be back with suggested systems and can straighten out anything I've mucked up. - ed*

E-mail has been around for decades, as have e-mail lists. There are Internet standards at all levels of this, from hardware to manners. Some standards are mandatory, some are optional and some are just good ideas...but any time you

diverge from standards you lose participation. Since it seems appropriate that all members be able to participate in the club's official list(s), sticking with standards, particularly lowest-common-denominator standards, seems necessary.

Two of the more common standards problems involve HTML (HyperText Markup Language...i.e. web page codes) and MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions. MIME is a way to describe the content of a message, so that the reader software knows how to interpret and display the data. MIME data types include HTML, Rich Text, plain text, images, audio, video, and applications.

MIME can be useful in its place, but it is *NOT* a lowest-common-denominator feature, and many mail programs don't support it, or don't support it very well. It can also be a problem for lists that have a "digest" option, where all messages from a particular period of time are concatenated and sent as one message. Mixing plain and MIME messages often results in an unreadable mess for everyone, unless the mail server is very smart and sends the digest as a "multipart MIME" message, with each digested message in a separate section, appropriately marked. Even then, those readers that don't deal well with MIME, or don't support it at all, are in trouble. In addition, these features, especially HTML and the application MIME types, can be dangerous from a security standpoint, and so some people whose mailers can support them have them turned off, and many companies or ISPs filter or otherwise suppress these, especially HTML, in e-mail arriving from the internet.

The lowest common denominator for internet mail, whether direct or through an e-mail list, is a plain text ASCII message with no MIME features at all. Note that this is different from a MIME message with a "Content-type: text/plain" header line. That's a MIME message, and can cause problems for some mail readers, and on a list, can result in replies not showing proper attributions and quote marking of included text from prior messages.

A plain text, non-MIME message is the most efficient and safest method of sending an e-mail

message and constitutes the lowest common denominator for mail. The text just gets displayed to the reader using his preferred font, color, size, etc. and there's no way to make it run any dangerous programs the way you can sometimes do with HTML and MIME.

Plain text ASCII mail is also "handicapped friendly", unlike the fancier extensions. Software can enlarge fonts, set colors and whatever else is needed to make the messages readable by those with age-related or other difficulties, while with HTML and some MIME text extensions these are generally determined by the sender and not easily alterable by the reader with most software I've seen. With a plain text message you read in your chosen font, rather than some font that you may not even have available, but that the sender liked. Screen resolution can also affect readability with MIME mail...that 6 pt font on the 640x480 VGA monitor may look fine, but at 1600x1200 on an 18" screen you need a magnifying glass to find it!

When you know in advance that all recipients of your message can deal with MIME messages, have the needed font, color and other capabilities, go ahead and use them if you like. This is usually true in an office environment where everyone is using the same software. On an e-mail list it is almost never true, and such features should not be used...stick to plain text ASCII, no MIME

I think WSFA should have as a top priority item for a list solution that it not require these features in order to participate, even if some members try to send messages containing them. MIME messages should either be converted to plain text, or returned to the sender, not distributed to the list.

### ***Other Requirements***

Besides supporting lowest common denominator standards for the reasons given, any e-mail list solution that WSFA settles on should have a few other aspects. Among them, in no particular order, are:

- Low and Predictable cost (i.e. not tied to message volume)
- High availability (not down much, if at all)

- No content restrictions (no censorship by the provider...we'll handle that within the club)
- Flexibility (one list, several lists, moderated, unmoderated, etc. as we choose)
- Archiving of messages for future reference
- A web interface (so people can participate when traveling, or if they just prefer that method)
- Restricted posting (only subscribers can post...to avoid spammers and other annoyances)
- Privacy (we may not mind the list being in every search engine, but then again, we might)
- An option to turn all mail into plain text (no MIME), perhaps on a user-by-user basis.
- Virus filtering (if it allows non-plain e-mail at all)

The remainder of this article, next month, will look at some available options, and how well they address these requirements

#### Links of interest:

MIME - [www.mhonarc.org/~ehood/MIME/](http://www.mhonarc.org/~ehood/MIME/)  
 RFC 1855 - Netiquette Guidelines - <http://www.dtcc.edu/cs/rfc1855.html>

## Original Fiction

### The English Major's Revenge

By Nancy Jane Moore

*Nancy Jane Moore lives in Washington, DC, and contributed to the 2005 WSFA Press "Future Washington" Anthology. I loved this little story, though I couldn't quite use it in the anthology, so I was delighted that she offered to let us run it in the WSFA Journal. - ed.*

**No, I wasn't stoned.** And I didn't have a damn acid flashback. Just because I inhaled in the Sixties doesn't mean I hallucinated the whole thing.

I saw it, I tell you. A flying saucer. In broad daylight. Big as life. Bigger. I watched it land on the National Mall, right in the heart of Washington, D.C.

Everybody saw it, even the tour group. We were standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, right at old Abe's feet. I was reciting the Gettysburg Address for them. I do good Lincoln.

I was saying, "We cannot hallow" when it touched down. My jaw dropped. I pointed. Everybody turned. Most of 'em screamed.

Yeah, really, a flying saucer. Like something you'd see on the late, late, late show. You know, when you fall asleep with the TV on and wake up to bad special effects.

It looked like one of those aluminum covers they use in Chinese restaurants. Silver colored, with slanted sides and a large flat top. Big sucker, too. Stretched from Independence Avenue to Constitution, and that's a good two blocks.

I swear to God, little green folks came out of it. What? Hey, gender-neutral, you know. I'm a PC guy. Besides, maybe they don't even have sexes. One came closer to us and actually said, "Take me to your leader."

You know, they say signals from old television shows travel out in space. "My Favorite Martian", "Doctor Who." I guess the green things learned English from them. For all I know, old movies gave them the idea for their spaceship design.

Except, of course, the darn thing worked. I mean, they sure as heck didn't come from this planet. We got some very weird people on Earth, but I've never heard of any that were under three feet tall, with squashed-caterpillar green skin and antennas.

Yes, thank you, I will have another beer. I plan to keep on having another beer. No, you idiot, I didn't mistake a bunch of midgets in E.T. costume for aliens. I got a real good look at them. When they said, "Take me to your leader," one of the kids on the tour pointed at me. Well, I was the tour guide.

I tried to communicate. I pointed toward the White House, and said "leader," but they didn't seem to get the idea.

So I herded 'em onto the tour bus. The tourists came, too. Figures. Tourists probably fear Washingtonians more than Martians.

I went for my usual patter. "Next stop, the White House."

One brat actually said, "But we already went there," before his mother shushed him.

I pulled the bus as close to the side gate as they let you get these post-9/11 days. I pointed at the gate and said, "Leader." This time the green ones got the idea.

Really freaked out the Secret Service when the green folk got off the bus. They started jabbering into their walkie-talkies.

The green things kept chattering something that sounded like "We come in peace." That's another thing the Martians always say in the late movie. I heard several of the Secret Service guys mutter, "Yeah, right."

The guards started firing guns when the green folk headed toward the White House. Didn't do any good, though: Their guns exploded. Last I saw the aliens walked right through the side door.

I gotta tell you, the way those guns exploded, I sure hope the aliens meant that bit about coming in peace.

I got no idea why the military didn't see 'em land. Or why all our fancy radar didn't see 'em coming years ago. Probably they got some kind of force field that hides their ship. You know, like Romulans.

Sure the government told me to keep my mouth shut, but it's still a free country, ain't it? And they can't keep us all quiet—some of the tourists already talked to the National Enquirer.

Anyway, you said the President's been acting pretty strange lately. Pulling all the astronauts off the space station – and convincing the Russians to pull out, too. Canceling all funding for the Star Wars program. Even saying we're not going to try for Mars after all.

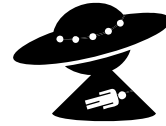
I figure the aliens told him to.

You ask me, they came because of TV. Seeing movies like "Independence Day," not to mention

watching the war du jour on CNN, they must have figured they had to stop us before we actually got out into the universe.

Well, of course the ship's gone. About a million NASA guys came and took it away. That's probably NASA's new job: alien valet parking.

Hey, the government's got to do something with all those scientists and engineers.



### **Mightier than the Lens (A Doc Smith Fanfic)**

By Lee Strong

"Congratulations, Lensman!" boomed the jubilant Port Admiral. "You brought an end to the career of the dread space pirate Roberts"

"Thank you, sir," replied the wiry Lensman modestly.

"Tell me, tho. How exactly did you capture him? Your written report wasn't clear on this point," inquired the earnest wight's superior.

"Well, sir, I used my Lens." The handsome Lensman's voice was unusually quiet.

"Ah, you invaded his mind and held him helpless while you slapped duralloy handcuffs on him?"

"Well, sir, no. He was wearing a mind shield that rendered him immune to mental attacks."

The Port Admiral's handsome brow furrowed in thought. "Well, how did you use your Lens to capture him?"

"Well, sir, I blinded him with it. I held it up in front of his face and the ever shifting, polychromatic scintillations caused him to flinch and cover his eyes. Then I slugged him with a chair."

## **Book Reviews:**

**Cybernetica** by Michael J. Cavallaro

Review by Judy Newton

Does The Government want to control your thoughts? Do the entertainment conglomerates influence the culture of the country (world) in dangerous ways? Could these trends continue into

the future until, with the assistance of technological advances in mind control, individuals are bent to the will of faceless, soulless corporations?

If you like books written by ideologues, in which the plot is entirely devoted to illustrating the evils of a current trend, then *Cybernetica* is for you. The eponymous city is a hyper-technologised environment opposed by technophobe outsiders – a plot familiar to fans of cyberpunk and a long tradition of novels and video from Philip K. Dick to “Johnny Mnemonic.” A small band of hardy heroes must overcome the power of the seemingly all-powerful corporations and foil a plot to control the population through a brain-to-computer interface system called “sublimation.”

Short for “subliminal animation,” this technology has the power to regulate the actions of everyone under its control through surgical implants. Fortunately for the hardy few who oppose this insidious action, this does not yet encompass the entire population.

Those who would engage the forces of evil are two shady characters afflicted with “blindsight,” not under the control of the sublimation implants; a famous actress marked for corporate assassination; and a biologically enhanced bodyguard with a different set of implants, beholden to the ninja-like group who trained her. We are asked to believe that these four can oppose the factions vying for global power.

Of course there is a band of outsiders gamely opposing the powers-that-be with terrorism, spit and bailing wire. The “drifters” are trying to bring down civilization from the outside. Our friends find help in unlikely places, including the inventor of sublimation himself.

This book is not so much a novel as a polemic, written to warn against the dangers of groupthink to society by a writer who believes sincerely that this might someday happen to us. The like-minded will enjoy it; the rest of us may not have the patience to plow through the turgid plot and misuse of language so frequent as to be amusing. This book is rife with what we can only hope are typos and a goldmine for Thog’s Masterclass – despite coming from a man who claims to have worked for years as writer and editor.

Self-publishing can be a valid outlet for expressing views not sanctioned by the publishing establishment; it can also be a chancy enterprise for the reader. In this case, Michael Cavallaro would have benefited from a few other eyes on the text than his.

**Future Washington**, Ernest Lilley, ed. (WSFA Press 0-9621725-4-5, \$16.95, 294pp, tp) October 2005. Review (excerpt) by Rich Horton

*Here’s an excerpt from another FW review, this one is the second from Locus. RW is also on Locus’ online list of the best SF of the year. -ed*

Original anthology *Future Washington* presents 16 stories of the future of Washington DC. Not surprisingly, I suppose, many are overtly political, though the political viewpoint varies quite a bit from story to story. A few are comic, a few tragic. Some concern Washington mainly by being about American politics more or less from the inside, others deal intimately with DC’s geography. Several stories feature Washington underwater due to rising sea levels. On the whole it is quite satisfying.

....

This project of the Washington Science Fiction Association is a first-rate original anthology, and serves as another reminder that small press and nontraditional publishing outlets are increasingly important sources of good new short fiction.

(Reprinted with permission by the author and *Locus Magazine*.)

## **Media Reviews:**

**Nanny McPhee** (A Working Title Production, 2006) Reviewed by Lee Strong

*“The person you need is Nanny McPhee.” -- Mysterious voice coming out of a mail slot when all hope has been lost.*

And you should do what the little voices tell you to do by seeing this pleasant little outing for children of all ages!

Our hero, Mr. Brown, is a recent widower with 7 unruly children. Well, hellions might be a better term since the film begins with them eating the



baby. Well, not really, but tactics like this have driven away 17 other nannies and cleared the way for Mary Poppins' very weird cousin, the decidedly strange Nanny McPhee, warts and all. Wielding her magic walking stick, Miss McPhee quickly takes charge of the Brown household and begins teaching her charges the Five Lessons of Life, primarily by giving the children *exactly what they demand...* but then forcing them to *accept the consequences* of their decisions. While the Brown children are learning about life, Mr. Brown is wrestling with his rich Aunt Agatha's demands that he re-marry and quickly, too. When a thoroughly unsuitable stepmother looms, the children appeal to their magical nanny to work a little more magic, only to discover the power of the Five Lessons to solve problems without magic.

This film is obviously similar to Nanny Poppins, er, ah, I mean Mary Poppins but noticeably darker in tone. The Brown family is suffering real emotional loss and financial and social pressures, not the mild dissatisfaction of Poppins' Banks family. And some of the various pranks, both those of the children and the Nanny, are not in the best of taste. However, a basic playfulness keeps things under control and moving along. The story and plotting are not very deep – I spotted the major romantic outcome about 5 minutes into the film – but they do touch on real human drama in a way that Poppins only brushed over lightly. The characters and settings are rather clichéd but slapstick energy and Nanny McPhee's lessons and appearances keep things moving along. And who couldn't love a dancing donkey?

I rate Nanny McPhee as 3 stars on the 5 star scale. The other Lessons of Life you'll have to discover for yourself! – LS

**Roving Mars [IMAX]** Director: George Butler  
Review by Judy Newton

*Philip Glass scores IMAX screen images of the Mars Rovers. Now playing at the National Air and Space Museum at both the Mall (10:15 am, 11:55 pm, 2:20 pm, 5:00 pm daily) and the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center (11:00 am, 1:00 pm, 4:00 pm daily).*

The first surprise of "Roving Mars" occurs in the first few moments—a dramatic introduction by

Paul Newman. This sets the stage for the compelling rationale of a project devoting resources and time to looking for hints of life on other planets. Specifically, the nearest reasonable planet in our neighborhood—Mars.

Seamlessly blending animation and real-life images of exploration by two plucky robots, Spirit and Opportunity, the movie follows the project team as they design the two Mars rovers. Problems include development of a parachute which would withstand the strains of entry into the Martian atmosphere, and the mechanics of folding up the rovers to fit into the rocket, yet contain all the instrumentation needed on the planet's surface. An especially interesting sequence involves the six wheeled "legs"—each moves independently, allowing the rover's instrument platform to remain stable while in motion over the rocky surface.

One of the best sequences shows the deployment of various stages during the flight from Earth to Mars. The takeoff sequence of the rocket from Cape Canaveral, thundering through the floor of the theater almost like being there, segues into animation depicting the process of transforming into the tiny payload as it approaches the Martian surface. Only the distracting presence of sound in space mars the enjoyment of this scene, but it's not enough of a problem to spoil it.

Scenes of Mars landscape filling the Imax screen are mostly saved for the last sequences in the film. They're worth waiting for, and the story leading up to them is entertaining. Here is another good reason for Imax theaters. Go see it—it's as close to Mars as most of us will ever get!

## **WSFA Meeting Minutes**

**First Friday - January 6th, 2006**

Location: The Gillilands'

Started at: 9:15 PM - Ended at: 10:32 PM

Acting Secretary: Alexis Gilliland

**Officers:** Sam Lubell (President). Cathy Green, (Vice President). Bob MacIntosh (Treasurer),

**Trustees:** Elizabeth Twitchell, Lee Gilliland, and Barry Newton; Colleen Cahill (Capclave Future), Alexis Gilliland (Acting Secretary),

Note: Elspeth Kovar made a brief appearance during announcements.

Members: Lee Gilliland, Sam & Judy Scheiner, Judy & Meridel Newton, Adrienne Ertman, Nicki & Rich Lynch, Jennifer Rosenbaum, Chris Springob, Bill Lawhorn, Gayle Surrette, Paul Haggerty, Lee Strong, Erica Ginter, John Pomeranz, Kathi Overton, Madeline Yeh, Don Lundry, Steve Smith, Elaine Brennan, and Rebecca Prather.

President Sam Lubell called the meeting to order at 9:15, and read an email from Elspeth Kovar on Capclave present. Several new additions to the con committee were named and a GoH is still pending. Volunteers are needed.

The Treasurer reported \$6649.64 in the checking account, and that dues were due and payable for the new year.

The Activities Committee announced that she is going to Egypt but will be back in time or the next First Friday. The Entertainment committee reported on Wal-Mart's Wine Venture. The Publications committee was in Las Vegas, but Gayle reported that the next journal was in progress and submissions were welcome.

There was no old business.

Under new business, Colleen Cahill expressed the sentiment that an anonymous letter circulated to WSFA members was objectionable, and that whoever was doing it should stop. There was general agreement, and Bill Lawhorn felt left out.

Announcements followed, including Harry Harrison for Library of Congress (guest), Sam Scheiner is in his new house, John Pomeranz promoted an origami party at Peggy Rae's and J. Andrew World is teaching an art course in Catonsville, MD.

Elspeth Kovar stopped by during announcements to say that she would not be coming to WSFA meetings at the Gillilands' anymore. Nor, she said, would her ride, Mike Walsh, who was waiting for her in the car outside. If the club didn't think she could run Capclave properly while staying away from half the meetings, she suggested we talk about it later.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32.

### **Third Friday – January 20, 2006**

**Location:** The Madigan's

**Started:** 9:26p **Ended:** 10:16p

**Officers:** Samuel Lubell (President), Cathy Green (Vice President), Elspeth Kovar (Capclave Present), Ernest Lilley (Secretary), Bob Macintosh (Treasurer), Barry Newton (Trustee), Elizabeth Twitchell (Trustee)

Note: Colleen Cahill (Capclave Future) made a brief appearance via speakerphone

**Members:** Mike Bartman, Drew Bittner, Katherine Bittner, Chuck Divine, Adrienne Ertman, Carolyn Frank, Alexis Gilliland (Entertainment), Paul Haggerty (Webmaster),

Sally Hand, Bill Lawhorn, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Candy Madigan (Host), John Madigan (Host), Deidre McLaughlin, Walter Miles, Judy Newton, Sam Pierce, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Bill Squire, Gayle Surrette (Webmaster), Madeleine Yeh

**Visitors:** Will Maynard

**Previous Minutes:** "Just the Highlights" were read by the secretary.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Treasurer's Report:** Cash on hand: \$5515.82  
CDs \$15295.90.

**Capclave Present:** Elspeth announced Kim Stanley Robinson as Guest of Honor and Tom Whitmore as fan GoH. The first is the celebrated author of the Red, Green and Blue Mars series and currently working on a series set in DC (a chapter from which is in the WSFA Press Future Washington Anthology) and the second was Chair of ConJose and is well known among the ranks of SMOFdom. Cathy Green has offered her place for Capclave meetings. Elspeth will be sending reports to meetings held at the Gillilands' through Elaine Brennan (Programming), though not at every meeting, as Elspeth will not be attending meetings there. The committee is still missing someone to run Town Square, which Elspeth stressed is a very important part of the con. A minder for the ConChair is also needed to keep her on track. Treasurer is Steve Smith, Facilities is Jan Price, Publicity is Cathy Green,

Publications is Michael Nelson, Dealer's Room is Judy Scheiner (with an assist by Richard Scheiner), GoH Liaison is Michael Walsh, Website is Gayle Surette and Paul Haggerty.

Concerns were expressed about Mike Nelson's ability to handle publications for the Capclave Present as he has not yet finished the Chapbook for Capclave Past.

There are currently 47 memberships sold, and a table has been reserved at Lunacon. A ¼ page ad there has been held pending the GoH confirmation. The Dodo-Logo appears on flyers, Mike Nelson needs to be consulted on what the ad will actually look like.

Ernest asked if any materials would be available for Boskone and offered to hand out literature from the SFRevu dealer's table. Elspeth said that she would like to do something like what Colleen had done for Balticon. Flyers are in the works.

To the concern that she would not be available at Gillilands' meetings and that anyone briefed by her would be unable to respond to questions, Elspeth further said that she would respond on the WSFA list (Keith's List) to queries. She also said that she would cross post to the WSFA-Forum as there had been issues about messages showing up on only one or the other list and it had been getting to be a bit of a problem.

Elspeth discussed her strategy for choosing a GoH and mentioned that both more authors and SMOFish folks would be attracted by this choice of GoH.

**Capclave Future:** Colleen is off at the American Library Association meeting and there was no supplementary report.

**Capclave Past / World Fantasy Past:** Mike Walsh was not present due to a foot injury. It was pointed out that we can't close the books on the con until the Chapbook is finished. Sam had discussed the state of the book with Mike Nelson and he is "researching" paper. Sheets will need to be sent down to Howard Waldrop (GoH Past) for him to sign and return.

Sam emailed Mike Walsh about late World Fantasy payments but had not heard back. Elspeth points out that he's been on the road (and now off

his foot) and Rich Lynch asked if someone else could take it up. Bob Macintosh expressed that he had offered to take it on, but that Mike had not taken him up on the offer. Writing the debt off was suggested and dismissed. Mike's absence from recent meetings was discussed. Various offers of assistance were made, and Sam said he would follow up on it.

**Entertainment Committee:** In the interest of brevity the Entertainment Committee passed. This was in itself deemed entertaining.

**Publications Committee:** The January journal was handed out before the meeting. The February journal is being worked on and more content would be welcome. (Send submissions to: editor@wsfa.org) .

Future Washington: We received a report from our distribution center showing sales through 11/14/05. Gross receipts were about \$1200 while Net (after their costs) was just under \$1000. Ernest noted that author Steve Sawicki had sold another \$100 worth of books at signings, and that we had received another and more favorable review of the book in Locus. He assured the club that he would make sure we had permission to use the review before reprinting it. Bookseller Larry Smith wants us to bring up more copies at Boskone in mid-February where a number of authors (and the editor) will be appearing.

Website: Paul reports that the December and January Journals are online and that he got a "pretty good handle" on website organization. Also that he's gotten a number of emails from prospective members, so we should be encouraged. WSFA.org's web registration still needs to be changed over from Keith Lynch, which is in the process of being done by both Keith by email and Sam by snail mail.

Mailing Lists: I've been asked why aren't we posting on both the WSFA (yahoo) lists and Keith Lynch's email list, and responded that the club had voted to move to move club sanctioned communications over to Yahoo, at least for the moment (see Minutes of the First Friday - November 4, 2005 meeting). Mike Bartman asked what people who were not willing to use Yahoo were supposed to do, and I responded that the club had voted on this and there had been no

objections. Further that it had been discussed at meetings both at the Gillilands' and the Madigan's. Mike commented to the effect that a vote taken at the Gillilands' did not reflect the entire club, to which Sam affirmed that "All WSFA meetings are official WSFA meetings if we have 15 people or more." Elspeth inquired if there was an objection to reposting on Keith's list, to which Ernest pointed out that he neither had objection, nor providence with regard to Keith's list.

**Old Business:** Gayle requested that Mike Walsh (or Mike Nelson) come up with a cost and schedule for the chapbook, but as we do not know the number of pages or weight, shipping cannot be accurately specified yet.

**New Business:** Sam inquired of Alexis if he was still up for hosting the next meeting without Lee, and he said that he was.

#### **Announcements:**

Colleen Cahill (Capclave Future) called from the ALA meeting...and Ernest put her on speakerphone...with the announcement that on January 31<sup>st</sup>, Nancy Jane Moore will be speaking at the LOC. Colleen demurred from delivering a report on Capclave Future.

The secretary and host made the usual announcements, aided by the club, which knows them pretty well by now. SABE, TWBB, DFTDC.

Drew Bittner notes that Spamalot will be coming to the National Theater in Washington DC from the end of June through July 30. Proving that no good deed goes unpunished, he was tasked with setting up a group event. It was pointed out that groups of twenty or more can get a ten percent discount on tickets.

Elspeth noted that the only life support that Fribble (her undead cat) was on was an IV.

**Visitors/Returnees:** Will Maynard admitted that he was here for his first meeting and had found out about us twenty-five years ago while at John's Hopkins, but hadn't gotten around to coming.

Sally Hand reported that she was back from North Carolina (for good).

**The Bill Lawhorn Official Motion (to adjourn):** So moved by the titular member, and the meeting ended at 10:16pm (by Sam's watch)

## **Sightings, Events, & Announcements**



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

**01/29 Chinese New Year:** Happy Year of the Dog to all!

**02/03 - First Friday Meeting: Gillilands' (VA)** Lee will be returning from the land of the Pharohs when we least expect it.

**02/17 – Movie: Night Watch [limited release]**  
Director: Timur Bekmambetov  
The Plot: In Moscow, the forces of Light and Darkness do battle. (It was a hit in Russia in 2004, and its opening to limited release over here. It has shape shifters, vampires and sorcerers...and they all bite. Who knows, they might even turn into a white bunny.)

**02/17 – 7:00PM Dinner and a Meeting –** We'll be getting together at the Hunan Hamlet (10820 Rhode Island Avenue Suite J, Beltsville, MD) again before meeting at Madigan's. Would somebody please remind me I've got a 20% off coupon in my pocket? - Ern

**02/17 – 9:00 PM Third Friday Meeting: Madigan's (MD)** The white bunny bites.

**02/24 Film: Ultraviolet**  
Director: Kurt Wimmer  
The Plot: Toward the end of this century, genetic meddling turns some of the world's population into beings with enhanced speed, strength, and intelligence (Milla Jovovich stars as the missing element, er, link).

**01/20 – Event Past: Food, Fellowship and Fortune Cookies at Hunan Hamlet**

When things go wrong, don't go with  
them.

Lucky Numbers 48, 26, 11, 38, 2, 14