

The WSFA Journal

July 2007

Adrienne Ertman, Editor

Official newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association

Comments? Contributions? Contact editor@wsfa.org!

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Editor's Notes

Hi, WSFAns! One newsletter tradition is the Statement of Intent at the beginning of an editor's term, so here's mine: this is your Journal, and I'm here to encourage you to use it. I'm living the high life of the young and reckless (well, the young) and look forward to sharing the occasional travelogue and book review, but I want to hear your thoughts as well. What have you enjoyed recently? Disliked? Where have you been? This is your space for formal and *in*formal club communication. Use it profligately. Or I will.

This month we have the June meeting minutes and Rich Lynch's thoughts on the development of DC fandom for your edification. Next month I look forward to posting some kitten and dodo short-shorts produced by the WSFA-forum mailing list. (See Elizabeth Twitchell for details.) Until then, enjoy the summer swamp - um, the pleasant summer temperatures of our fair Capital.

Adrienne Ertman, editor.

WSFA First Friday Minutes, June 1, 2007

President called the meeting to order at 9:21 PM.

Minutes were read.

No treasurer's report.

No formal Capclave Present report. Cathy Green reports 19 memberships sold at Balticon, compared to 30 at last year's. This isn't as bad as it looks, since Neil Gaiman drew a larger crowd than usual for Balticon. Also, 1 PM meeting at the Scheiner's Saturday, June 2 at 1 PM. Programming appreciates ideas: email programming@capclave.org.

Capclave Future is "in a holding pattern" and muttered something about inviting John Scalzi.

Capclave Far Future: reports that the con has a GoH: Harry Turtledove. Lee Strong asks, "who is your *alternate* GoH?" Far future is looking for a Guest of Honor liason to work with the GoHs in co-ordinating other events, such as a Library of Congress appearance or local signings.

Datclave: the silence is deafening.

Entertivities says the Reuters reading went "remarkably well", with 40 to 50

people in attendance. The bookstore is happy; media attention and/or lack thereof was mentioned.

Publications: Drew Bittner's last WSFA Journal was available in paper and online.

Websites: "just need information" – email webmaster@wsfa.org. Website hosting has been moved to Bluehost as a CapClave subsite; report degenerated into technical discussion of mailing list software available from Bluehost. Current mailing lists – WSFA_Announce and WSFA_Forum at yahoo – were discussed, as well as activity levels and putting internet information on the sign-in sheet.

Rules committee: has compiled changes to the rules dating back 22 years. It will be posted to the WSFA email forum, and eventually will be posted on the website. Lee Strong says "nothing too surprising" in the rules changes, and that the committee is close to finishing up.

Committee to Discuss SF planned to discuss the "June issues"(Asimov's, F&SF?) after the business meeting, including a Turtledove story.

Awards: recommendations are upcoming; short meeting after the business meeting to discuss how many to recommend. Website should be up by Friday, June 8; voting deadline is AUGUST 1st, 2007. Discussion about voting and notifying as many WSFA as possible about their voting privileges ensued.

Old business: incorporation situation still unresolved.

New business: Adrienne moved to create a WSFA secretary-in-a-box at the Scheiners and the Madigans the creating and funding of \$100 for this purpose was approved with one nay from self-proclaimed Luddites.

New people: none.

Announcements: WSFA Editor wants to see content – editor@wsfa.org.

The Scheiners announced a July meeting swap: First Friday will be in Maryland at the Madigans, Third Friday will be in Virginia at the Scheiners. Their daughter has graduated college (english and studio art double major) and is looking for full-time employment.

Elizabeth Twitchell announces a deepdiscount.com 20% off sale (code SUPERSALE) and her probable relocation to Chicago next summer when her employer moves.

Drew Bittner mentioned a "get smart" thing on the Mall and his participation in a new blog at buglesplanet.blogspot.com. The blog launches on Monday, June 4th, and is constructed as a news blog reporting on superhero activities.

Judy Newton reports that Spooky Action Theatre is staging an adaptation of Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven* through June 24th, Thursday through Sunday. The play is "donations optional". Judy proposed a WSFA theatre party.

Lee Strong reports that he has cataracts in both eyes; his agency is beginning its moved to Illinois, so listen for the bang from southeast Arlington; and as of First Friday, his retirement date is 246 days away and conveniently falls on the February 1st Friday in 2008. Datclave ribbing ensued.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:00 PM. Attendance: Mike Bartman, Drew Bittner, Will Frank, Cathy Green, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Sarah Mitchell, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Rebecca Prather, George Shaner, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, Lee Strong, Ivy Yap.

A Condensed History of D.C. Fandom

by Rich Lynch

Although Washington, D.C. fandom is not usually regarded as strongly “serious and constructive,” or “sercon,” in character, it didn’t start out that way. The first known pseudo-fan organization in the city, the Outsider Club of the late 1930s, was literary in nature and so strongly dedicated to supernatural fiction that it considered science fiction and its fandom undeserving of interest.

The first true science fiction fan organization in Washington was the World War II-era group known as the Washington Worry-Warts. It consisted mainly of notable fans such as Jack Speer, Elmer Perdue, and Milton Rothman, who had been assigned by the military to the city as part of the war effort. It was a bit too loosely organized to be called a club, and when the war ended so did the Worry-Warts, as there was not yet enough interest among locals to keep the organization going after the fans on temporary duty returned to their home cities.

In the end, it fell to the local fans to form a lasting science fiction fan club in the nation’s capital. In 1946, Charles “Chick” Derry began contacting fans he knew in the city with the idea of eventually forming a fan club, but a club did not come into existence for about another two years. It took a nearby Worldcon, in Philadelphia in 1947, to provide the needed momentum. Derry met another active Washington fan, Bob Pavlat, at the 1947 Philcon, and together they were able to generate enough enthusiasm from five other D.C. fans to form what turned out to be a lasting organization. The result was the Washington Science Fiction Society, which changed its name a few months later to the Washington Science-Fiction Association, or WSFA. Meetings were held twice monthly, and the first meeting site was a public building in downtown Washington.

By 1950, WSFA had grown enough that more activities were possible than just meetings every first and third Friday. It held its first convention, called the “Conclave,” that year; it was a one-day event that drew about 75 fans and was successful enough that it was repeated the next year under the name of “Disclave.” WSFA in the 1950s gained its character as a club with an emphasis on socializing, which it retains to this day. The meeting place moved to members’ homes, and each bimonthly meeting became the equivalent of an extended room party at a convention, a tradition that also persists to this day.

By the early 1960s, Disclaves had become multi-day events and were starting to become multi-interest, so WSFA decided to try something *really* interesting: sponsor a World Science Fiction Convention. It’s only other serious bid to host a Worldcon (for 1950) had garnered only enough votes to finish third of the four bids considered by the business meeting of the 1949 Worldcon. But by 1962, things were different. The club had the wherewithal and active membership base to support a bid, and also an influential fan (George Scithers) to act as chair. The bid won broad support at the Chicon III business meeting and the city of Washington was host to its first Worldcon, the Discon, in August 1963.

That first Discon was memorable for many reasons, not all of which involved science fiction. It was held just days after an event staged nearby that had helped to shape the world of the 1960s – the “I Have a Dream” speech of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Lincoln Memorial, only about a mile from the convention hotel. The convention itself honored Isaac Asimov with his first Hugo Award, Philip K. Dick with his only Hugo Award, and E.E. “Doc” Smith with the inaugural First Fandom Hall of Fame Award, but the person who was honored the most was its very deserving Guest of Honor, Will F. Jenkins, who wrote science fiction under the name of Murray Leinster.

The attendance of that first Discon was about 600 people, and the fallout was that the attendance of Disclaves steadily grew after that, reaching almost 1,500 by the late 1970s. But before that, Washington fandom (under the chairmanship of Jay Haldeman) won the right to host a second Worldcon, this time in 1974. In the decade that had elapsed since the first Discon, Worldcons had dramatically increased in size. Discon II, at more than 3,500 attendees, was the largest science fiction convention ever held at that point in time. The professional Guest of Honor was a writer who had burst upon the scene, to great fanfare, only a few years earlier: Roger Zelazny. Hugo Awards were presented to some of science fiction’s most notable writers: Arthur C. Clarke, Harlan Ellison, James Tiptree, Jr., and Ursula K. LeGuin.

Over the years, WSFA has hosted other notable conventions besides the two Discons., including the 2003 World Fantasy Convention, the 2004 SMOFcon, and a 1999 writers conference co-hosted with the Smithsonian Institution. The smallest but one of the most entertaining of these special conventions occurred on February 29, 1980, when a one-off “Datclave” was held in commemoration of a February with a fifth Friday (WSFA often hosts parties on fifth Fridays in months where there is one). Disclave itself was discontinued after the 1997 convention following a now legendary incident at the convention hotel, in a room occupied by people who were not members of the convention, that resulted in a large amount of water damage to several floors of the hotel. Disclave got the blame, and it became impossible to have serious negotiations with any suitable D.C.-area hotel for several years after that. It was not until 2001 that WSFA was able to once again host a convention. To accentuate the break with the past, the new convention was given a different name, Capclave, and emphasis was narrowed to highlight the science fiction short story. The first Capclave was deemed successful enough where it has become an annual event.

There are now more science fiction-related clubs and organizations in the D.C. metro area than just WSFA, including anime and gaming communities. The oldest of these is the Potomac River Science Fiction Association, which was founded in 1975 by WSFA members who wanted more sercon each month than the typical WSFA meeting delivered. And it turned out that WSFA’s influence extended even beyond the immediate D.C. metro area: the Baltimore Science Fiction Society was founded in 1962 by five WSFA member on their way home to Baltimore from a WSFA meeting. WSFA itself lost its hyphen in 1980 and is now just the Washington Science Fiction Association. The strength of WSFA has always been its membership, and over the years there have been many accomplishments by its members, including thirteen Hugo Awards, two John W.

Campbell Awards, one Skylark Award, one British Fantasy Award, and one Locus Award. WSFA sponsors a monthly fanzine, *The WSFA Journal*, that first saw publication in 1965, and WSFA members are involved in a monthly cable television show about science fiction, *Fast Forward*, and two specialty book publishers: Old Earth Books, whose publications have received both Locus Award and World Fantasy Award nominations, and the WSFA Press, which has previously published collections of stories by Disclave guests and recently published a short story anthology, *Future Washington*.

Additional information about WSFA and its activities can be found at the WSFA web site (www.wsfa.org) and the Capclave web site (www.capclave.org).

Note: "Worldcon," "World Science Fiction Convention," and "Hugo Awards" are registered service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.

Minutes of the WSFA Third Friday in June 2007 (Lee Strong)

The regular business meeting was called to order at 9:25 p.m. 15 June 2007 in the basement of Madigan Manor. Secretary Adrienne Ertman presided in the absence of the President and Vice President. Lee Strong acted as Secretary.

The absence of a quorum was suggested and we held the opening of the meeting to allow more members to arrive. Enough members arrived to meet the requirement of 15 paid members. Bill Lawhorn moved to adjourn. The motion was denied.

Adrienne read the minutes of the last meeting. They were approved by unanimous consent.

Capclave Present: Chair Colleen Cahill stated that we have a lot of information to place on the website. We will have 5 different workshops. We sold 19 memberships and 6 copies of *Future Washington* at Balticon.

Capclave Future is not here; it's in the future.

Capclave Far Future: Bill conquered the island of Catan on his Xbox following the evacuation of his building due to a smelly diaper and 2 cans of spinach. He then invoked a secret rule of the union contract and demanded lunch at management's expense. That plan didn't work. Sheila Williams, editor of *Asimov's*, will be our Editor GOH. She will discuss article selection.

Datclave: Mike Walsh got a brochure from the Gettysburg tourist bureau. The con is still in the research phase.

Entertainment Committee: Our Fearless Leader is in the *Beauty and the Geek* competition. He didn't say in which category.

Publications: Adrienne asked the members to send her stuff. Nothing obscene or any personal attacks. We have moved our website hosting. Former Secretary Drew Bittner has not sent her his last Journal.

Rules Committee: Lee reported that the committee sent the Rules document to the Webmaster. The rules have not been published on the WSFA website as of 2 July 2007.

Awards Committee: The Awards website is now up. The committee blamed Peggie Rae Sapienza for the delay. Bill kissed up to Peggie Rae in *The WSFA Journal*.

Paul is distributing userids and passwords for WSFAns to review and vote on the 8 finalists. Read the voting rules in PDF format. Vote by emailing Sam Scheiner or directly on the site. Vote #5 for the best and #1 for the least best. There were several suggestions for ways to insure that the voters understand the ballot.

The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction: Adrienne gave permission, “Bill, now you may talk.” Bill talked about *Asimov’s* latest.

Library Committee: Colleen reported that the committee had found 4 copies of WSFA Press books that we didn’t have.

The Trustees had no report.

Old Business: The issue of incorporation was raised but there was no new information. There will be a meeting switch in July: The First Friday meeting will be “in this room” and the Third Friday meeting is in Virginia.

New Business: Elizabeth Twitchell moved that the Pomeranz/Overton 4th of July party become the Fifth Friday in June party. Passed unanimously.

New Tradition: Alexander Slate was present for his first WSFA meeting. He’s been a fan since the 1970s and an ex-fanzine editor of *Texas SF Inquirer* and *Philosofy* published by the Fandom Association of Central Texas (FACT). He learned about WSFA via the Internet.

Announcements: *The WSFA Journal* is yours. Please submit materials. Our hostess de jour announced the usual Madigan Manor rules.

Colleen announced that the American Library Association will meet in the Washington area starting the week following the Third Friday meeting at the Convention Center. Colleen will be a booth bimbo for the Library of Congress. John Scalzi, Kelly Link and others will be present. Go to ALA.org for further information.

Elizabeth announced a contest for a 100 word story with kittens. Elspeth Kovar suggested dodos instead. Bill suggested red laser beams. Subsequently several entries were offered on the WSFA Forum.

Mike Walsh announced a box of books at \$1 each. Colleen announced free books.

Nicki Lynch got an envelope addressed to Dragon Press.

Abner Mintz returned to WSFA after 10 years absence.

Mike Bartman announced that Saturn has 2 small icy moons spewing plasma into space.

Adrienne announced that humans manufacture more RNA than previously thought.

Bill moved that we adjourn and we unanimously adjourned at 9:56.

WSFAns and visitors present were: Adrienne Ertman, Bill Lawhorn, Paul Haggerty, Colleen Cahill, Samuel Lubell, Mike Bartman, Alex Slate, Rich and Nicki Lynch, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap, Shirl Hayes, Mike Taylor, Sarah Mitchell, Michael Walsh, Elspeth Kovar, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Abner Mintz, and Lee Strong.