



The WSFA Journal

June 2008

Steve Smith, Editor

Comments? Contributions? Contact editor at wsfa dot org!

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June 6 2008, First Friday

First Friday, June 6, 2008

Meeting called to order at 9:16 PM, Vice President Adrienne Ertman presiding.

Treasurer's report: \$11115.41

Capclave Present: Sam Scheiner wants volunteers. Areas that need people are the con suite, registration, data entry, and dealer room.

Capclave Future: Bill Lawhorn has guests. There's not much going on.

Capclave Far Future: Gayle Surette is working on putting together her committee. She has ideas for GoH.

Entertivities: Sam Lubell said that the Book event at Reiter's went well. 25+ people came, along with a number of writers, including Michael Swanwick and Yoji Kandro. Sam would like a writeup, if anybody has notes or a good memory.

Publications: Steve Smith announced that May journals are available. Paul Haggerty announced that the May Journal is online and that the e-mails for the new officers (such as they are) have been changed appropriately.

Awards: Cathy sends a reminder that she will provide prizes if enough people vote. Bill Lawhorn had hardcopies of stories. Sam Schnier said "hello" to Peter Beagle at Balticon. He was appreciative. Sam Schnier moved to change the deadline for voting to the 6th of July. For: 12, against: 2; abstain: 3. The voting deadline is now the sixth.

The **Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction:** Bill Lawhorn lost his June Asimov's but they'll be discussing it anyway.

Trustees: John Pomeranz is still working on corporate stuff.

Rules: Former secretary Adrienne Ertman handed the committee over to current secretary Steve Smith. [Now what do I do with it? -sgs]

Old business: The First Friday WSFA meeting in July will be at The Fabulous Bungalow, home of John Pomeranz and Cathi Overton on the 4th of July at 4PM. Verified that Paul has put the address on the Website. The general festivities will start around noon.

New business: Sam Lubell suggested sending a sympathy card to Aly Parsons. Since he suggested it, he was delegated to do it.

Bill Lawhorn suggested buying disposable plastic cups with a dodo printed on them. Cost would be \$300 for 1000 cups. If we wanted keepable "stadium cups" with dodo printing, the price would be in the \$550-\$600 range. Temp tattoos? People like cups. Mike Bartman suggested that we might get a better deal if we shopped around. Lee Strong moved to form a committee to check prices; there was no second. A point of order was raised as to whether the money should come from WSFA, in which case we'd need to vote on it, or from Disclave, in which case it would be the con chair's responsibility. Ernest Lilley moved giving Disclave \$300 for disposable cups; Charles Abel seconded, passed unanimously.

New people: none

Announcements:

- Adrienne has a new cellphone w/camera and **stopwatch**. She moved last weekend and thanks the people who helped, especially John Madigan, Cathy Green, and Will Frank. They were actually able to finish ahead of the rain.
- A friend of Sam Lubell is giving away books.
- Bill Lawhorn has hard copies of the WSPA stories. There will be Worldcon parties; see the May journal. He went to Artomatic (info available at <<http://www.artomatic.org/>>; it was good but tiring.
- Drew Bittner says that Cat has a new job with a nice raise.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:55PM.

Attendance

Charles Abel, Christina Abel, Mike Bartman, Drew Bittner, Adrienne Ertman, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sandra Marshall, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Rebecca Prather, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, Steve Smith, Lee Strong, Gayle Surrette, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh

June 20 2008, Third Friday

Meeting called to order at 9:22 PM

Minutes read.

Treasurer's report: Checking: \$11115.41 CDs: \$29098.52. Cash on hand \$15.00.

Capclave Present: There will be a meeting at the Scheiner's home on 5 July.

Capclave Future: No report. (Actually, Bill Lawhorn sent an e-mail but it was in French.) There were registrations for Capclave at Balticon.

Capclave Far Future: No report

Entertivities: This year's Smithsonian Folk Life Festival on the National Mall features NASA.

Publications: It was noted that Coleen has the Official WSFA archives. The secretary should whether they should be physically (as well as morally) transferred to the Secretary.

Ernest did not have a Future Washington report, other than to mention that Paul and Gayle are handling sales.

Rules: Adrienne has notes and will e-mail them to the Secretary.

Website: No report

Awards: The deadline for voting on the WSPA Award has been changed 6 July.

E-mail report from Paul Haggerty:

I'm not going to be able to make it to the WSFA meeting tonight.

If anyone gets this in time, and doesn't mind passing the information on, the report on WSPA is as follows.

You have until the end of Sunday July 6th to vote.

As of today, only 11 people have done so. That's only about 20% of the membership, so we're nowhere near close to getting Cathy to slave away making fudge for us.

I sent out a e-mail today to all the WSFANs that I have email addresses for as a reminder and resending the access information.

If you're a WSFAN, wish to participate, and don't have a username/password yet, send an email to the webmaster at wsfa dot org address and let me know.

Hope you all have a good time tonight. See you all on the 4th of July.

Paul Haggerty

The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction: As a result of an internal debate (coup), at the First Friday they'll discuss the current issue of Fantasy & Science Fiction, and, and the Third Friday, they'll discuss the current issue of Asimov's.

Trustees: No report

Old business: Sam Lubell was to send a sympathy card to Aly Parsons, but has not done so yet. There was a brief discussion of the party/meeting on the 4th of July. Chief request – don't bring food.

New business: There was a brief discussion of WSFA quara, bylaws, and Schroedinger's Cat.

New people: None.

Announcements:

- From the Hosts:
 - Be aware that the Dogs of War are getting their noses into the cookies.
 - The prosperity spell worked. (That's what all those coins in the entryway are for). John got a new job and Candy's table sold out at Balticon.
 - Snowflake, the black bunny died. The black dog ate it.
 - There are two gallons of cider in the kitchen. Swill at will.
- Mike Walsh brought a galley copy of his latest Waldrop collection. It should be ready to go by the first of August. (Erica adds that it's good). Howard just had a quintuple bypass operation; he's OK and is up and being Howard. Mike also mentioned that Tor will be doing the trade edition.
- Colleen announces that this year's National Book Festival is set for September 27th. As in past years, it will be held on the mall in DC. Please mark you calendars! We will let you know as more information is available.
- Sam Lubell's cousin is still getting rid of books; they're up for grabs.
- Elspeth's move shifted again coming to next Friday. Thanks to Keith Lynch for help packing. There was discussion of the cat's iron lung. She has two recliners that are not making the move. One is going to Adrienne; the other is looking for aa new home. She reminds us that Hugo voting closes July 7th at midnight. Four of the five short story nominees are available online. Mike Walsh has paper copies. deadline 7 july midnight PDT.
- Lee Strong announced that his university alumni magazine was desperate for material so they did a full page article on his second career (writing science fiction) and contributions to a scholarship fund. Chris Neumann said that the picture of Lee in college made him look like Clark Kent. Several people asked to see it and Lee will bring it to subsequent WSFA meetings for the benefit of historical researchers.
- Adrienne's new apartment is nice but small. After moving to trendy, upscale, expensive Montgomery County she wants to go back to hippy PG county. She's looking for discount veggies, etc.

- Ern fired the company that he was with. He says that he used to be legally blind, but (Correctable to 20:100). Now has 20:20 vision in both eyes. He left his jetpack running, though.
- Barry says there's water on Mars.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:57 PM.

Attendance:

Charles Abel, Christina Abel, Mike Bartman, Colleen Cahill, Adrienne Ertman, Erica Ginter, Cathy Green, Elspeth Kovar, Ernest Lilley, Sam Lubell, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, John Madigan, Sandra Marshall, Chris Neumann, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Evan Phillips, Steve Smith, Lee Strong, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh

Reviews

The Incredible Hulk



Marvel Studios, 2008

Directed by Louis Leterrier

Reviewed by Lee Strong

This is the most morally confused film that I have seen since George Lucas revealed that the Jedi Knights really were traitors to the Galactic Republic. I think that the filmmakers were trying to capture the essence of the comic book character but they missed the mark by a very wide margin.

Our story opens in the slums of Rio de Janeiro where American expatriate Bruce Banner (Edward Norton) is working in a soda factory by day and conducting biochemical experiments by night. A US military black ops team attempts to capture him but he turns into a hulking monster and smashes his way out by raw force. He wakes up in Guatemala and begins a trek to Virginia where he links up with girlfriend Betty Ross (Liv Tyler) and where the military makes another attempt to capture him. Again, he hulks out and escapes for the moment. Along the way, Lieutenant General "Thunderbolt" Ross (William Hurt), who is both Betty's father and Bruce's former boss, reveals that Bruce became the were-hulk by conducting an unauthorized experiment using military funding. He authorizes real soldier Emil Blonsky (Tim Roth) to undergo a limited power up in a further effort to capture the rampaging menace. When Blonsky forces another scientist (Tim Nelson) to power him further up, a battle of the titans is on.

I had a *lot* of trouble with this epic. Superhero stories are intentionally morally simple with fairly clear cut heroes and villains. The comic book Hulk has always been somewhat morally ambiguous but I think that scriptwriter Zak Penn went too far in that direction and lost his bearings. As a result, we are asked to sympathize with characters that are physically pretty but not morally good and condemn characters that may be emotionally unappealing but aren't obviously evil. Bruce Banner stole money from the American taxpayers, conducted a personal experiment that turned him into a monster and now refuses professional help to control his problem. The slums of Rio are actually incredibly violent places, the exact opposite of where a

person with anger management issues should live. Another scene shows him drinking coffee, proving that the super scientist hasn't learned from his mistakes. Has he ever heard of Prozac? Betty Ross is a liar who blames her father for Bruce's condition when the story shows that General Ross had little to do with it because Bruce's experiment was clearly off mission. She seems to be projecting her own guilt at participating in Bruce's experiment onto Dad rather than dealing with her own issues. Her new boyfriend, Dr. Samson (Ty Burrell), is an ass pure and simple. Any psychologist who claims to be able to instantly and infallibly spot liars is one himself. And these are the "good guys" and "good gals"!

In contrast, I think that we are supposed to see the police and military led by General Ross as the principal villains. I didn't see that. The military is clearly trying to restrain a serious danger to public safety and trying to use nonlethal weaponry for most of the film. What are they supposed to do with a terribly destructive menace? Ignore it? Throw pillows at it? Is the military causing Bruce to hulk out? No. He's doing it himself when he voluntarily enters stressful situations when he knows he has a super problem. General Ross has his own ethical issues but his attempts to create super soldiers and clean up the resulting problems strike me as very legitimate. He also warned Blonsky about the dangers before that experiment kicked off. Blonsky, as the Abomination, very clearly *becomes* a true menace to society, but, again, he's off mission and he didn't start the biological arms race that is central to the story.

I also think that Marvel Studios needs a better military advisor. They commit a number of errors that might not be critical to the story but certainly detract from it. Among other things, the US Air Force does not have helicopter gunships; the Army does.

On the other hand, I liked Bruce's volunteering to fight the Abomination and he is clearly trying to restrain himself when he is hulked out. That gives this story a better moral footing and harkens back to the original comic book character who redeemed himself by his conscience and his good deeds. The cinematography and casting are excellent. The unpowered Blonsky's mouthing off to the Hulk is incredibly stupid but I know adrenaline junkies who would do just that.

I also liked the tributes to previous Hulk actors such as Bill Bixby, Lou Ferrigno and Stan Lee. And I was especially interested in the inclusion of references of other elements of the larger Marvel Universe including SHIELD and the unnamed World War II and modern super soldier projects.

My overall evaluation of this film is very mixed. I think that it captured a lot of the "true" Hulk trope but failed to tell a solidly moral or realistic story. I therefore rate *The Incredible Hulk* as 1.5 stars on the 5 star scale because the hero is not very heroic. Roar! Critic smash! – LS

Indiana Jones and the Hollow Earth

Bantam Books, 1997, 2008

Written by Max McCoy

Reviewed by mortal Lee Strong

The debut of the fourth Indiana Jones movie put me into a mood for more Indy and so I dragged this novel out of my To Be Read stack of books. Having read it, I now want to drop it into a bottomless pit.



The theory that the Earth is hollow, or at least has vast systems of super sized caves within its crust, was once a respectable scientific hypothesis. Alas for Pellucidar and other exotic locales, pesky real world geologists replaced those dreams with a semi-solid sphere of rock and magma. The Indiana Jones Universe, however, is more *exotic* in nature and so our heroic archeologist and finder of wonders must take the earlier theory seriously when a dying explorer bequeaths him a logbook with clues to the fabulous realm. His search, however, is massively conflicted because the Nazis kidnapped his latest not-Marion-Ravenswood girlfriend Alecia Dunstan in a previous novel and he wants to rescue her before undertaking any black operations for his Uncle Sam. Conveniently, the Nazi Thule Society members are using Alecia to locate the entrance to the Hollow Earth so that they can contact the ubermenschen living in the fabulous city of Thule and get an advantage for the impending World War II. Indy is therefore off to the Arctic in hopes of rescuing his latest lady love as well as defeating the latest Nazi scheme.

This book is only so-so at best with many flaws. Well over half of the volume is taken up with dubious subplots in which Indy travels to Kansas City, the American Southwest and New Orleans for encounters with Nazi second story men, rattlesnakes, a new female sidekick Ulla Tornaes, and his old nemesis Belloq. While I liked the scene in which a Nazi thoughtlessly gives his party salute to a room full of African-Americans, almost all of this portion of the volume is pointless padding. Belloq's appearance is flamboyant but really a waste of time and Ulla could bridge the Atlantic with the chip she carries on her shoulder. When we finally get going with the main plot, the adventures still seem second rate at best. The real world geography is hopelessly muddled and Indy and Ulla seem to flounder around rather than pursuing a coherent plan of action. The climatic encounter with the lost civilization of Thule is *very* rushed and seems to lack both color and coherence. The resolution to the search for Alecia is surprising but such originality is a point of light in an otherwise dreary novel.

I rate *Indiana Jones and the Hollow Earth* as 2.0 stars on the 5 star scale. Now, where's the nearest bottomless pit? – LS [*Try Journey to the Center of the Earth 3D -- sgs*]

The Sky People



Tom Doherty Associates, 2006

Written by S.M. Stirling

Reviewed by Lee Strong

“Nearly every planet and star having atmospheric conditions at all approaching those of Barsoom shows forms of animal life almost identical with you and me.” -- Dejah Thoris, *A Princess of Mars*, by Edgar Rice Burroughs

Love is stronger than hate. I proved this to myself at least when I picked up an author whose previous work I hate when he chose to write a

universe that I should love. Also, the book was free at the public library and I love saving money.

The Sky People is the first of at least 2 burroughsian novels set in an alternate universe in which Venus, Mars and many extrasolar planets are both habitable and inhabited. Mariner and other space probes discovered these new worlds in the 1960s leading to a more aggressive space race, a less aggressive Cold War, and science fiction taking its rightful place as the dominant form of world literature. All in all, a better universe than ours.

Unfortunately, Mr. Stirling simply does not present an interesting story to match his interesting universe. A Soviet space shuttle crashes on Venus, gifting its Neanderthal inhabitants with AK-47 rifles and ammunition. Quickly learning how to use 20th Century weapons, the Neanderthals drive their H. sapiens rivals away from the Cave of Mystery. Members of the American colony set out by dirigible to aid their Soviet counterparts, dodging dinosaurs, saber tooth cats, thunderstorms, spies, and romantic entanglements on the way.

I very much like sword & planet stories and give Mr. Stirling credit for his bold attempt to revive them and on a firm scientific basis. Mr. Stirling's literary skills have greatly improved since his overwritten Drakian paeans to tyranny and I enjoyed his multiple tips of the hat to Burroughs' work. However, that said, the story was neither colorful nor exciting. The action just wasn't very lively and the characters seemed to be sleepwalking thru their paces rather than having an adventure. Nor did I find the Venusian human and inhuman fauna very interesting. I've seen all of these elements (aliens, dinosaurs, dirigibles, mysterious superscience, etc.) before. I need something fairly original to really enjoy the story and Mr. Stirling failed to provide much if any originality.

I rate *The Sky People* as 2.0 stars on the 5 star scale because the story is an adequate pastiche, not a colorful excursion into an exciting universe. – LS

WSFA History

Ten Years Ago

June 1998

We played the ever-popular game of Let's Amend the Constitution. Judy Kindall and John Pomeranz described the legalisms connected with the Corporate charter and how the proposed amendment would handle them. [*The more things change ... -- sgs*]

Twenty Years Ago

June 1988

At the election meeting, there was actually a contested election. It was for Vice President, and was won by some guy named Steve Smtih.

Letters

From the Editor

Whew! Nobody died. At least that's something.

-- Steve Smith, Editor, *The WSFA Journal*