



# The WSFA Journal

May 2009

Steve Smith, Editor

Comments? Contributions? Contact editor at wsfa dot org

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## Minutes

### First Friday, May 1, 2009

Meeting called to order at 9:26 PM

**Treasurer's report:** Tina Abel

Nothing new.

**Capclave Present:** Bill Lawhorn

Make one up. Chris Neumann has come up with a bunch of forms for different applications -- military rates, sanitized for Libraries (no money mentioned) student forms, and Mini flyers - 4 up for ad swaps. Idea to add coupon so they'll know where they come from.

More on general interest flyer.

Cathy Green, Sarah Mitchell, Bill Lawhorn and Brian Lewis showed the dodos at Ravencon

Bookmarks came in. They have WSFA info on one side and Capclave info on the other.

**Capclave Future:** Gayle Surette

Proposal from Hilton - contract got sliced off

Doubletree is Out. Everything they have is in "packages", and for some reason, they don't have a "con" package.

In the Hilton proposal, we're swapping rooms around. We still have to deal with the surcharge, which has gone up to 23%. We are getting the "presidential suite", though.

Warning – the cops will be tracking down loose liquor. Any parties that serve booze will need to make sure that it stays at the parties.

**Capclave Far Future:**

Not yet

**Entertivities:** Sam Lubell

Sam reminds us about the signing and discussion at Reiter's Books on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Greg Bear has been added to the roster of authors attending. These are SF authors advising Homeland Security. (Coming soon – sharks with lasers!!)

**Publications:** Steve Smith (Editor), Paul & Gayle Surette (Webmasters)

The Webmasters announce that change is coming! It will be Grand! It will be Glorious! They're just waiting for the upgrade to 24 hour day.

**Awards:** Colleen Cahill

Got the short list! On Time! Passwords will go out shortly! Same as last year. seven stories. 59 submissions. A lot of variety. One from outside US, even.

Cathy Green ash offered here usual bribe. If 65% of WSFA votes on the stories, she'll make fudge. If 80% votes, she'll make chocolate cheesecake. If 95% vote, she'll make personal boxes of fudge for everybody. *[If you've ever had Cathy's fudge, you know that this is a **serious** bribe – Editor]*

Everybody likes the blind voting. Please don't be a jerk – don't try to figure out who wrote them. Some big names got canned this time around.

The deadline for voting is August 15th.

**The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction:** Bill Lawhorn

Not here. F&SF is bimonthly.

**Trustees:** Colleen Cahill, Judy Newton, Lee Strong

Election meeting after the main meeting!

The tax stuff is waiting for amnesty from the IRS.

**New Finance:** Tina Abel

Started audit. She needs meeting of the audit committee. An email announcement is going out tomorrow.

**Old business:**

The WSFA flyer is close to its final form.

**New business:**

None

**New people:**

No

**Announcements:**

- From the Hostess: Potables are in coolers in the kitchen; labeled as to contents. DC is recycling now; please leave empty bottles on the table.
- Colleen tells us that on the 22<sup>nd</sup> at lunchtime, the LOC will have Brenda Clough talking about online fiction.
- Chuck Divine lets us know that Artomatic is running from 29 May 29 to June 5.
- Barry Newton What if LOC Tom Doyle
- Brian Lewis got three tuckerizations at Ravencon.
- Gail Surrette: If you want something on the WSFA calendar, send to WSFA webmaster.
- Mike Walsh: Has Swanwick books. He also has the new Johns Hopkins catalog. Titles include "Elegance and Train Travel", "Orgasm Answer Guide", and "Good Vibrations (not, alas, a companion to the previous book. It's about music physics.)
- Lee Strong announces that the George Mason used book sale is tomorrow & Sunday. He didn't like *Wolverine*.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:14 PM.

**Attendance:**

Charles Abel, Christina Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chuck Divine, Adrienne Ertman, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Brian Lewis, Bob Macintosh, Chris Neumann, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Bill Squire, Lee Strong, Gayle Surrette, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap.

**Election meeting:**

Start at 1014

President: Lee Strong. No nominations from the floor. Elected by acclamation.

VP Judy Newton No nominations from the floor. Elected by acclamation..

Secretary. Trustees' candidates: Steve Smith and Sam Lubell. No nominations. Steve Smith was elected.

Treasurer. Trustees' candidate: Christina Abel. No nominations from the floor. Elected by acclamation.

Trustees. Trustees' candidates: Coleen Cahill, Charles Abel, Chris Neumann. No nominations from the floor. All elected by acclamation.

Capclave 2011. Trustees' candidate: Cathy Green. No nominations from the floor. Elected by acclamation.

Literary Award Committee: Trustees' candidates for three positions: Cathy Green, Elspeth Kovar, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Gayle Surette, and Mike Walsh. No nominations from the floor. Cathy Green and Gail Surette were elected directly. There was a tie between Mike Walsh and Elspeth Kovar. Mike won the runoff election. *[This is the first time I can remember a tie in a WSFA election. We've had Australian ballots that went to the last round, and people winning by one vote, but no ties – Editor]*

Thanks to Cathy's dog as election watchdog. (ballots and dog were stuffed)

Adjourned unanimously at 10:43.

### **Third Friday, May 15, 2009**

Meeting called to order at 9:15 PM by Vice President Adrienne Ertman

**Treasurer's report:** Tina Abel

\$8978.32, plus ~\$16000 in CDs

**Capclave Present:** Bill Lawhorn

- We have bookmarks!
- There are guests!
- No other major issues.
- There'll be a big push for registrations at Balticon

**Capclave Future:** Gayle Surette

George Shaner says we have a contract from current hotel, although it's not signed. A copy has been sent to the executive committee; there is some confusion over the new rules. The Chair needs a copy of the new rules.

George isn't too happy with it, but it could be worse. We have the same room rate. The Gaithersburg Hilton is an alternative but it's not optimal. Their numbers are similar.

**Capclave Far Future:** Cathy Green

Is celebrating winning

**Entertivities:** Sam Lubell

Sam reminds us about the signing and discussion at Reiter's Books on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Publications:** Steve Smith (Editor), Paul & Gayle Surette (Webmasters)

February and March journals are ready.

The Website has a notation about the meeting swap in June.

**Awards:** Colleen Cahill

Stories are on line. Read them, they're good! We have a good mixture of story types. No sanitation engineers this time but there are talking beer bottles.

Passwords have been sent out; please e-mail the Webmaster if you didn't get it.

VP got spanked for a rude comment about the inadequate size of Bill Lawhorn's PIN.

**Flyer committee:** Brian Lewis

The flyer is in its final form, except for a couple of typos. Typos were discussed. Motion to make the flyer an official documents for Balticon pending review. Passed unanimously. Motion by Brian, second by Lee Strong.

**The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction:** Bill Lawhorn

**Trustees:** Colleen Cahill, Judy Newton, Lee Strong

Elections! Thanks to voters.

John Pomeranz is hiding in bushes outside IRS, waiting for an opportune moment to sneak our paperwork in.

**New Finance:** Tina Abel

There will be a meeting after the meeting. They need to do something this weekend

**Old business:**

None

**New business:**

None

**New people:**

First meeting: Tad Daily from LA Nuke Disarmament He's a member of LASFS. They claim to be the oldest SF organization -- since 1934.

Second meeting: none

Third meeting: none

**Announcements:**

- Host: Come to Maryland Fairy Festival. Buy things! Otherwise the same old same old.
- Adrienne Ertman is on vacation. She's going to Chicago, and then on to Wiscon.

- Colleen LOC What IF next Friday Noon Internet publishing empire
- Tina Abel wants old neckties, the uglier the better. They should be appropriate for children, though.
- Bill Lawhorn's condo association has gone redneck, with a Honda on blocks. (Actually, the wheels were stolen.)

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:52 PM.

**Attendance:**

Charles Abel, Christina Abel, Colleen Cahill, Adrienne Ertman, Carolyn Frank, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Candy Madigan, John Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Chris Neumann, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Ivy Yap.

## New Officers

President: Lee Strong

Vice President: Judy Newton

Secretary: Steve Smith

Treasurer: Christina Abel

Trustees: Charles Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chris Neumann

Awards Committee: Cathy Green, Gail Surette, Mike Walsh

Congrats, everybody!

## Events

### Book Signing at Reiter's Books, May 20, 2009

#### U.S. Mission for Sci-Fi Writers: Imagine That

#### Novelists Plot the Future Of Homeland Security

By David Montgomery, *Washington Post* Staff  
Writer

Friday, May 22, 2009

The line between what's real and what's not is thin and shifting, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has decided to explore both sides. Boldly going where few

government bureaucracies have gone before, the agency is enlisting the expertise of science fiction writers.

Crazy? This week down at the Reagan Building, the 2009 Homeland Security Science & Technology Stakeholders Conference has been going on. Instead of just another wonkish series of meetings and a trade show, with contractors hustling business around every corner, this felt at times more like a convention of futuristic yarn-spinners. Onstage in the darkened amphitheater, a Washington police commander said he'd like to have Mr. Spock's instant access to information: At a disaster scene, he'd like to say,

"Computer, what's the dosage on this medication?"

A federal research director fantasized about a cellphone that could simultaneously text and detect biochemical attacks. Multiple cellphones in a crowd would confirm and track the spread. The master of ceremonies for the week was Greg Bear, the sci-fi novelist whose book "Quantico" featured FBI agents battling a designer plague targeting specific ethnic groups.

"What if we had a black box that IDs DNA on the scene?" Bear asked a panel of firefighters and police officers. "Put a swab in the box. How long would it take us to do that? Would that be of interest to anybody here?"

"Absolutely!" said a police official from Fairfax County.

The dozen or so novelists sprinkled throughout the breakout sessions had camouflaged themselves in GS-conformist coats and ties, but they would have fit right in anyway. Science fiction writers tend to know a lot about science. And the ranks of federal and commercial R&D departments are stuffed with sci-fi fanatics.

The cost to taxpayers is minimal. The writers call this "science fiction in the national interest," and they consult pro bono. They've been exploring the future, and "we owe it to mankind to come back and report what we've found," said writer Arlan Andrews, who also is an engineer with the Navy in Corpus Christi, Tex.

Andrews founded an organization of sci-fi writers to offer imaginative services in return for travel expenses only. Called Sigma, the group has about 40 writers. Over the years, members have addressed meetings organized by the Department of Energy, the Army, Air Force, NATO and other agencies they care not to name. At first, "to pass the Beltway giggle-factor test," Andrews recruited only sci-fi writers who had conventional science or engineering chops on their résumés. Now about a third of the writers have PhDs.

The communities converged again Wednesday evening when the scene shifted from the conference hall to Reiter's Books, the beloved old science-focused shop on K Street NW, where the writers signed books and led discussions.

Harry McDavid, chief information officer for Homeland Security's Office of Operations Coordination & Planning, had a question for Catherine Asaro, author of two dozen novels, about half of them devoted to her Saga of the Skolian Empire. She also has a PhD in physics. McDavid's job involves "information sharing" -- efficiently communicating information about response and recovery across agencies, states, business sectors. How, he wanted to know, did Asaro come up with the Triad system in her novels of flashing thoughts instantly across the universe?

"It evolved along with the story," Asaro said. Basically, she applied principles of quantum theory -- one of her specialties as a physicist -- to a fictional theory of "thought space."

McDavid has no plan to add telepathy to Homeland Security's communications strategy. That wasn't the point of his question -- or of the agency's invitation to science fiction writers in the first place. He's looking for ways to break old habits of thought.

"We're stuck in a paradigm of databases," McDavid said later. "How do we jump out of our infrastructure and start conceptualizing those threats? That's very cool."

All this attention from Uncle Sam does wonders for the self-esteem of science fiction writers. Despite the cultural acclaim of a few superstars, some others feel spurned by critics, dismissed by academics, ripped off by Hollywood -- another misunderstood subculture.

And yet: Would the space program have flourished so quickly without a generation of engineers and scientists that grew up reading Robert Heinlein? Has anything been invented that somebody didn't first imagine and put in a story?

"I would now go so far as to claim that only readers or writers of science fiction are really competent to discuss the possibilities of the future," Arthur C. Clarke wrote in 1962, before completing "2001: A Space Odyssey."

In this spirit, Homeland Security first reached out to science fiction writers a couple of years ago. At last year's conference, the attendees rated a panel led by the writers as the best of the week "by far," said Chris Christopher, the agency's conference director for science and technology.

The department can't point to a gadget on the drawing board that was inspired by one of the novelists. But Rolf Dietrich, Homeland Security's deputy director of research, says the writers help managers think more broadly about projects, especially about potential reactions and unintended consequences.

"They have a different way of looking at things," Dietrich said.

A Homeland Security manager is trying to imagine what kinds of construction infrastructure and architecture the economy will support in 50 years, and the science fiction writers will try to help, said Andrews.

At Reiter's, a place for science browsers since 1936, the dystopian future includes the possible demise of another struggling independent shop. It's getting hard to pay the rent, said owner Barbara Nelson. On the shelves was at least one factual hard-science text edited by one of the fiction writers on the panel. The tome, "Observatories in Earth Orbit and Beyond," was marked down to \$130 from \$179. The same unsold copy had been here a year ago.

This annual sci-fi security event, co-sponsored by the Washington Science Fiction Association, is the only night of the year Reiter's sells novels. The fans lined up for autographs of their newly purchased fiction, ignoring the science.

## **WSFA History**

### **Ten Years Ago**

#### **May 1999**

Hugo nominations included WSFA's Rich and Nicki Lynch (Best Fanzine for *Mimosa*) and Joe Mayhew (Best Fan Artist).

### **Twenty Years Ago**

#### **May 1989**

Has the WSFA Christmas address list. [*I'm not the only one that's a little slow .... --Editor*]

### **Thirty Years Ago**

#### **May 1979**

Alexis Gilliland reviews John Varley's *Titan* (didn't like) and *Buck Rogers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century* (like).

## **Letters**

### **From the Editor**

For those who follow such things, I've switched from Microsoft Word to Open Office Writer. For some reason, Word didn't like the WSFA logo and would only print about a third of it. OO seems to produce better HTML, too – I might be able to avoid a lot of hand conversion. We'll see.

— Steve Smith, Editor, *The WSFA Journal*