

# The WSFA Journal

June 2009

Steve Smith, Editor

Comments? Contributions? Contact editor at wsfa dot org

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## Minutes

### First Friday, June 5, 2009

Meeting called to order at 9:15 PM by President Lee Strong

**Treasurer's report:** Tina Abel says "boo!"

Due to some problems with the new management, we've closed the M&T (formerly Provident) bank account and opened a new one at BB&T. As the CDs mature, they'll get transferred also.

- \$4000 in the Capclave account
- \$9753.63 in the main account
- CD 1 \$5739.95
- CD 2 \$6000.00
- CD 3 \$5832.95

Grand total: 30326.53

We paid our taxes! \$0.00.

**Entertivities:** Sam Lubell

There was a dinner for three Russian fans at Gordon Biersch, organized by John Pomeranz at the behest of Michael Swanwick. There were 21 attendees. They want info on zines.

**Trustees:** Charles Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chris Neumann

Nothing!

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

All updated

The Webmaster is investigating spam filters for the WSFA e-mail. Unfortunately, they are \$10/month per account for the "good ones". He's looking at other options.

**New Finance:** Tina Abel

The audit committee is Tina, Chris Neumann, Barry Newton, Carolyn Frank, and Ross Chalmer.

The audit is underway. Lee's announcement was about the guy in the place. And a puma. He forgot the cheezwhiz again.

Lee Strong resigned from committee and Ross Chalmer takes his place. Mail will be going out soon.

**Capclave Present:** Bill Lawhorn

- We sold a few memberships at Balticon. The economy is down and it shows.
- People like the bookmarks.
- There will be a meeting June 13<sup>th</sup> at Peggy Rae's 2PM with dinner afterward.
- We will be doing reminder postcards at 3rd Friday.
- We slipped up – we didn't put any Capclave bookmarks in Larry Smith's Turtledove books.

**Capclave Future:** Gayle Surette

Contract is in order; it should get signed Thursday or Friday. As soon as it's signed, Gail will verify her GOH and we can go into full publicity mode. The contract is pretty much the same as last year. Unfortunately, this includes the same surcharge. (Note – it's a surcharge, not a tax. There seemed to be some confusion.)

We got contacted by the Hilton Silver Spring and the Hunt Valley (!!)

**Capclave Far Future:** Cathy Green

is elsewhere.

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

We're on our own

**Flyer:** Brian Lewis

Erica noted a misplaced comma and a missing period.

The discussion was referred to the Committee on Useless Debates.

**Awards:** Colleen Cahill

It's in the hands of WSFA. The stories are good; read them.

**Old business:**

None

**New business:**

Nope.

**New people:**

Nada

**Announcements:**

- The usual from the Host.
- Erica Ginter reminds us of the 3 lb bionic baby. At MLK school awards, she got 3 awards: Perfect attendance, GPA 3.5+, and the President's Achievement Award in Language Arts. This fall, she'll be going to Laurel High School International Baccalaureate Program.
- Tina Abel needs ties. She does Birthday parties for "mad science" and needs ugly ties. Must be appropriate for children; no santas need apply.
- Judy Newton has baklava
- Paul Haggerty says that NPR reports that all apes laugh when tickled. He wants to tickle whales. [*Not shave the whales? – Editor*]
- Mike Walsh got his 20 year clock from Johns Hopkins University Press. He's been there since September 1988. Also, last month was the 40th anniversary of his first con – a Disclave. Has a small Neil Gaiman (Britain only) and a new China Miéville for sale.
- Mike Walsh is our leading economic indicator. His sales were good at Balticon.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:08 PM.

**Attendance:**

Charles Abel, Christina Abel, Ross Chalmer, Erica Ginter, Lydia Ginter, Elspeth Kovar, Brian Lewis, Ernest Lilley, Sandra Marshall, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Steve Smith, Lee Strong, Mike Taylor, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap.

**Third Friday, June 19, 2009**

Meeting called to order at 9:14 PM by President Lee Strong. A quorum was not present.

**Treasurer's report:** Tina Abel

Not present due to family issues.

WSFA: \$8503.72

Capclave: \$3511.65

CD 1: 5739.95

CD 2: \$6000

CD 3: \$5832.95

Total: \$29588.27

**Trustees:** Charles Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chris Newman

Maintained a dignified silence.

**Entertivities:** Sam Lubell

None

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

- Journals through April 2009 are on line
- The officers' pages have been updated
- The Capclave site is up to date
- We're moving to the new Website soon. The old one is a mess; the switchover will be sometime in the next 6 weeks. The new one in blog format so officers can post to it directly.
- Capclave just needs setup; next couple of weeks.
- No frames!
- Strike while the fire is in the water!

**Capclave Present:** Bill Lawhorn

- There will be a small origami party after meeting. We're sending e-mail reminders; the paper mail is only going to people we don't have e-mail addresses for. We'll send paper mail reminders to anybody whose e-mail bounces.
- Publicity; Chris Neumann is working on student/military discounts
- There are guests; list on Website.
- Next month, signup sheet!
- The Website has gotten a major update.

**Capclave Future:** Gayle Surette

We've signed the contract and paid the deposit. We're solid for 22-24 October. The Chair is trying to confirm GOH and is forming up the committee.

**Capclave Far Future:** Cathy Green

We got an offer from our current hotel, good for 90 days only. We're considering it,, but we're also looking at other hotels. Hilton Gaithersburg; they host UFO cons. Holiday Inn Gaithersburg. The Hyatt Bethesda is interested. The Hilton in Silver Spring likes us, but there's still problems with the football players. Other hotels we're looking at are the Hilton Gaithersburg (they host UFO cons; they should be able to handle us!), the Holiday Inn Gaithersburg, the Crown Plaza Silver Spring, and the Sheraton Greenbelt.

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

No. Origami tonight.

**New Finance:** Tina Abel

Chris Neumann reported for Tina. We have all the records for general account and substantial Capclave records. Books for the general account for 2002 are closed; 2003-2006 are more than 50% complete, and 2007-2008 are very close. Thanks to everybody who provided data. Audits of the convention accounts are underway. Special thanks to Ms Green, Mr. Lilly, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Walsh.

**Flyer:** Brian Lewis

Nope

**Awards:** Colleen Cahill

Paul Haggerty reported for Colleen. They're done. All that's left to do is wait for WSFA to vote and discuss next year. 25% have voted. Not bad! Remember, we need 60% for Cathy to make fudge for us. *[If you've ever had Cathy's fudge, you know this is a serious bribe. – Editor]* Remember, we only have until August 15 to vote. And Colleen will cry if we don't read the stories and vote.

If you haven't received your login and password, contact Paul.

**Old business:**

If you want to be on the address list, send e-mail to Cathy Green.

**New business:**

No quorum. (A quorum is fifteen members, two of whom must be officers)

President Lee Strong formed a “Charitable Activities Committee”. The first item he wants to consider is sending magazines to overseas servicepeople.

The Fabulous Bungalow will be hosting the 4<sup>th</sup> of July bash, as usual.

## **New people:**

Jenny Lobb found us on the Web.

Jennifer and Sean Wallace

## **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.
- Mike Walsh has books, including “Installing Linux on a Dead Badger”, for those who like zombie techie humor.
- Bill Lawhorn reminds us of postcards after the meeting.
- Lee Strong sent a letter to the estate of Edgar Rice Burroughs, officially requesting permission to write a sequel.

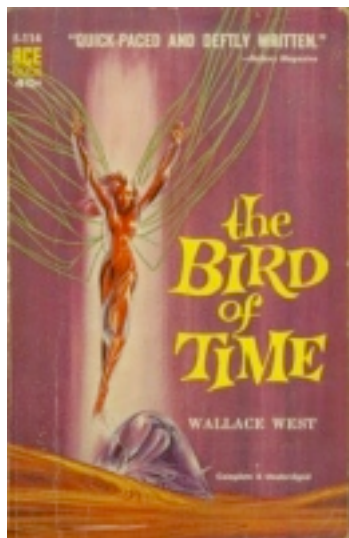
Meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:00 PM.

## **Attendance:**

Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Jenny Lobb, Sarah Mitchell, Chris Neumann, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Bill Squire, Lee Strong, Gayle Surette, Jennifer Wallace, Sean Wallace, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap.

# **Reviews**

## **Retro Review: The Bird of Time**



Gnome Press, 1959

Written by Wallace West

Reviewed by Lee Strong

This is one of my favorite books from the days when it was *just barely* still possible that Mars might be inhabited by canal digging, cactus farming humanoid beings. In this case, angels, or beings very much like them.

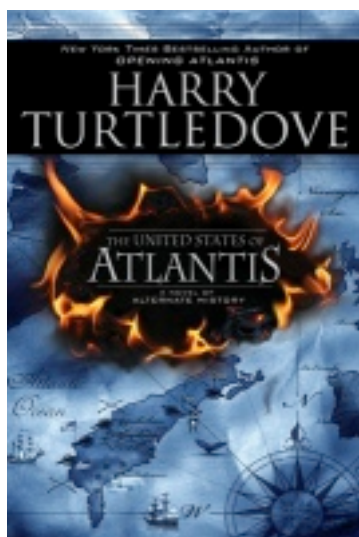
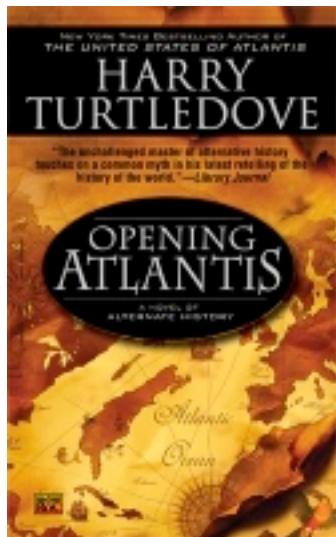
Our heroine Yahna is moping around because tradition demands that she marry two guys and a gal pal to carry on the Line of winged princesses that have governed Mars by telepathic communion since the Dawn. Into her unhappy life come two new Earthly expeditions to the Red Planet, one official, the other certainly unofficial. Smitten with a handsome Earthman, Yahna goes on a quest to recover an ancient teleport machine to link the two dying planets with each other and possible interstellar colonies. With some luck and basic good will, Earth and Mars can enjoy a fruitful future together.

Alas! Such dreams go a glimmering when a power mad space force officer captures the teleport and Yahna's true love, triggering a war that neither planet wants but that neither can avoid. The double ending raises some thought provoking questions about the role of science and especially psychology in human societies.

This gem from a bygone day – before those pesky astronomers rewrote the universe – features some good characterizations and gee whiz physical and mental science. Yahna, her fiancée the power mad Pitaret Mura, her boyfriend the con man Jack Harkness and their opponent the Keats-quoting Colonel Horace Brown, are all interesting, if not always likeable, people. The teleport and various mental disciplines are explored in some detail. And, unusually for its day, this novel also warned about the potential exhaustion of Earth's resources and recommended serious conservation measures to avert a crisis. Wise in its time and wiser now, not to mention good fun for fans of many ages.

I rate *The Bird of Time* as 3.0+ stars on the 5 star scale because it's got a good solid story of human and inhuman hearts. – LS

## The Turtledoves of Atlantis



A review of Harry Turtledove's *Atlantis* series  
Reviewed by Lee Strong

A *roman à clef* is a novel in which real persons, places or events appear under fictitious names. Such novels are more typical of mainstream literature but Harry Turtledove's recent Atlantis series demonstrates that alternate historians can use the device as well. Unfortunately, not always to good effect.

In this alternate history, Turtledove assumes that a chunk of the North American Eastern Seaboard is displaced eastward to the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean. When European

fishermen discover it, they name it "Atlantis" – and the *other* Western Continent "Terranova" – and begin the exploration and colonization of the New Worlds. The result is an alternate history strikingly similar to real American history but with a few name changes to protect the guilty.

Turtledove's first book, *Opening Atlantis* (Roc, 2007), is a collection of short stories about the early colonial period tied together by the various generations of the Radcliffe family. In various tales, the island continent is found, bought for a cargo of fish, explored, settled, fought over and pacified. While there are some differences between Turtledove's history and the real history of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century North America, they are generally slight. Pirates operate from a port city in western Atlantis instead of the Caribbean and French Atlantis is south of English Atlantis rather than north. And there are a few unique creatures to threaten and to feed the colonists. Otherwise, there's nothing especially alternative about this historical fiction about the exploration and colonization of a new continent.

In the second book, *The United States of Atlantis* (Roc, 2008), the English Atlantean colonists revolt

under the leadership of newly minted general Victor Radcliffe and politicians Isaac Fenner and Curtis Cawthorne. Anyone familiar with the real world American Revolution will quickly realize which American Founders are hiding behind Turtledove's meager disguises. The European-born characters travel under their own names or job descriptions. Again, there are some minor differences from real history – Radcliffe adds some Thomas Jefferson to his George Washington impression and is elected Consul rather than President – but, as with the first novel, the result is almost mainstream. In addition to the main military plot, there are two extended subplots about slavery that I found repetitive and ultimately boring. I agree with the thoughts but don't need to reread them in every chapter.

Harry Turtledove is a professional historian which is not always a good thing when writing alternative history. Both in his Atlantis series and in several previous works, he adopts a real historical model and adheres very rigidly to it. The historically literate reader can often anticipate plot developments before the author reveals them, thereby spoiling a lot of the entertainment value of the book. With few strange creatures or landscapes and no exotic technology to interest the reader, the books are ultimately rather pedestrian. A third book in the series is promised; let us hope that Harry drinks more coffee as he composes it.

I rate *Opening Atlantis* and *The United States of Atlantis* as 2.0 stars on the five star scale because the imaginative content is very limited. – LS

## Land of the Lost



Mosaic Media Group, 2009  
Directed by Brad Silberling  
Reviewed by Lee Strong

I'm generally not a fan of remakes and this clanger is Exhibit One on my list of reasons why. If something is good enough for people to want to remake it, it was generally so good that any remake would be worse than the original. This unintended parody is an example how beings with brains the size of walnuts can take a charming idea and make it really bad.

The original *Land of the Lost* was a low budget but adequate Saturday morning science fiction show many years ago. The Marshall family (1 adult and 2 kids) fell into a spacetime warp and wound up in a land of dinosaurs, monkey people and sleestaks, i.e. lizard people. They survived by using their brains and making friends with the nonhumans. They discovered that the Land is actually a pocket universe that acts as an "Overflow Bit Bucket" for the larger multiverse. Unlike many other TV shows, *Land* came to a happy conclusion with the Marshalls eventually escaping back to their own universe. The special effects were not that special but intelligent scriptwriters, including Larry Niven, managed to tell some nice stories about human, prehuman and nonhuman hearts and minds.

The 2009 movie version has a much bigger special effects budget but no heart. Quantum paleontologist Dr. Rick Marshall (Will Ferrell) has been hooted out of mainstream science because of his theory that tachyons can be harnessed to provide cheap, clean energy. A disciple, Holly Cantrell (Anna Friel), encourages him to pursue his dream. Naturally this results in Marshall, Cantrell and sideman Will Stanton (Danny McBride) plunging thru a spacetime warp and landing in the junkyard of



the cosmos. Marshall attempts to enslave prehuman Cha-Ka (Jorma Taccone) and elude Grumpy the dinosaur (Himself) and Enik the sleestak (John Boylan). Much of the film is their slapstick efforts to avoid being eaten or beaten.

The cinematography of this film is very good but practically everything else isn't. Marshall and Stanton are unlikeable characters, especially the arrogant scientist whose blundering, mood swings, and self absorption dominate the story. Holly and Cha-Ka are people that you'd like to meet but they're strictly spearcarriers for Marshall's ego. Moreover, it seems like the majority of the dialog and physical action is toilet humor, which was definitely not to my taste. Stanton's question to Marshall, "Don't you get tired of being wrong?" best summarizes the entire film.

I rate *Land of the Lost* as 1.5 stars on the 5 star scale because it does have a plot, setting and characters; just not ones that you should spend any time with. – LS

## **WSFA History**

### **Ten Years Ago**

#### **June 1999**

The meeting heading for the Third Friday meeting was "Don't Drink the Tadpoles".

The lead article was by Mike Nelson, on the absolutely vital topic of building bookcases.

### **Twenty Years Ago**

#### **June 1989**

Same as last month

### **Thirty Years Ago**

#### **June 1979**

Same as last month. [*Doncha just love these combined issues? – Editor*]

## **Letters**

### **From the Editor**

As I mentioned last month, I've switched from Microsoft *Word* to Open Office. One of the side effects is that the cut-in thumbnails (ouch!) are trivially simple. In *Word*, they all had to be individually hand aligned. It's another one of those long-term bugs where the Word Mavens say either "that never happens" (yes, it does) or "all you have to do is grom the fragis" (that was the first thing I tried) or "RTFM" (I did. There's a reason why there are all those thousand-page "how to use it" books out there).

Feh. The price of Open Office is better, too (free).

Also, thanks to Barry Newton for the new WSFA logo. It's the same as the old logo; just cleaned up and smoothed out.

— Steve Smith, Editor, *The WSFA Journal*