



The WSFA Journal

July 2009

Steve Smith, Editor

Comments? Contributions? Contact editor at wsfa dot org

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Minutes

First Friday, July 3, 2009

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

Treasurer's report: Tina Abel

Same as last time, not counting tonight's checks.

Needs a trustee's meeting.

Trustees: Charles Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chris Newman

Very quiet.

Entertivities: Sam Lubell

- Sam got a letter from Fords Theater letting us know that they're showing *Little Shop of Horrors* in February, and they have a group rate. See Sam to sign up.
- Confluence has GOH Bill Mayhew. It's in Pittsburgh at the end of July.
- The traditional 4th of July party will be at the Fabulous Bungalow from noon until whenever.

- The deadline for Hugo voting is 2 hours 15 minutes from now.
- Fireworks! From Cathy's windows.

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

- The May 2009 *WSFA Journal* is in the hands of the Webmasters.
- Capclave Survey is on line ; 1 person has responded.
- WSFA press: nada

Capclave Present: Bill Lawhorn

- We've got guests, a hotel, etc; we might as well have a Capclave
- So far, we have 117 members total not counting guests. This is about normal.
- We're looking for programming ideas; send them to Sam Lubell. We need somebody to fix the restaurant guide.
- The Capclave blog <http://www.capclave.org/blog/> is up and running. Right now, Bill Lawhorn and Cathy Green have accounts. Other accounts will be added as the Chair dictates.

Capclave Future: Gayle Surrette

We have a GOH! Our Capclave 2010 Guest of Honor will be Connie Willis. And we have a hotel. And a chair.

Capclave Far Future: Cathy Green

Our current hotel is giving us a good-for-90-days-only offer.

Cathy has been talking to hotels a little further out on the Red Line, and also the Crowne Plaza Silver Spring and the Sheraton Greenbelt. The Hyatt Bethesda is showing some interest.

The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction: Bill Lawhorn

We could. Bill Lawhorn is reading books, rather than magazines, however.

Deadline for Hugos – 2 hours 15 minutes.

New Finance: Tina Abel

Nothing new

Flyer: Brian Lewis

- Final Report!!!! There was a motion to limit discussion to 10 minutes. Motion carried.
- The Committee Chair will mail a copy to the Secretary.
- The Secretary can make trivial changes with consultation with the Committee Chair.
- There was a deep sigh of relief from all present.

Awards: Colleen Cahill

If you don't vote soon, Cathy won't feed you and Colleen will cry. We're at 37%!

Lack of technology is no excuse. If you haven't got a password, e-mail Paul.

Old business:

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

New business:

Bill Lawhorn presented the results of a discussion with Sean Wallace and Mike Walsh about financing for future Capclaves. The problem is that convention expenses are rising faster than convention incomes; we can raise the membership fees only so much and we really need another source of income. Their idea is to revive WSFA Press to produce a small hardback, similar to the old NESFA books. Mr. Turtledove will provide something new or something to be reprinted. It should sell for \$25-\$35, with the more expensive ones signed.

Points of information:

- Expected cost: \$6380
- Expected profit: \$8000
- Any new stories would be ineligible for the WSPA.
- The project would be run out of Capclave budget, and income will go to the Capclave fund.
- The lead time for the printer is approximately six weeks.
- *Future Washington* was incredibly ambitious; this is much less ambitious

Bill Lawhorn made a formal motion:

For Capclave 2009, WSFA Press will produce a Harry Turtledove mini-hardcover, approximately 40-50K words. The proposed expense is \$6380 for 1000 books. Any money spent of earned will be handled in accordance with WSFA standard financial procedures.

Colleen seconded.

Chris Neumann proposed to postpone the vote until Third Friday. The vote was 6 for, 12 against. The motion fails.

Erica Ginter called the question. The vote was 14 for 4 against. Question called.

The final vote was 14 for, 4 against. Motion carries.

New people:

Chris Callahan & Dick Roepke came back (from 1972)

Robyn & Sylvia Rissell were in for their yearly visit.

Sean Wallace (2nd time)

There were 2 noncombatants.

Announcements:

- Cathy – the usual. Cans & bottles on the table.
- Elspeth – She and Ben have adopted a cat.
- Colleen – LOC “What if” continues.
- Bill Lawhorn caulked his tub today. He is accepting donations for Elspeth's cat's next iron lung.
- Brian Lewis tells us that Bill Mayhew is GOH at Confluence in Pittsburgh.
- Mike Walsh has books.
- Ern Lilley says that seeing *Night at the Smithsonian* at the Smithsonian IMAX was a lot of fun. The movie is good PR for the Smithsonian.
- Steve Smith gives us the sad news that his cat Simba died.
- Sam Lubell tells us that we now have 1 hour and 5 minutes to vote for the Hugos.
- 4th of July meeting

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 1052PM. (Gasp!)

Attendance:

Christina Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chris Callahan, Erica Ginter, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Elspeth Kovar, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Ernest Lilley, H. P. Lovecraft, Sam Lubell, Chris Neumann, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, R2-D2, Robyn Rissell, Sylvia Rissell, Dick Roepke, Steve Smith, Bill Squire, Lee Strong, Gayle Surette, Sean Wallace, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap .

Third Friday, July 17, 2009

Meeting called to order at 9:16 PM by President Lee Strong

Treasurer’s report: Tina Abel

The Treasurer reports:

Due to the unfortunate incompetence of BB&T, I was instructed by the President and the Trustees to change banks. We opened up accounts at Citibank and do not foresee any future banking problems.

WSFA	BB&T	\$5,558.75
WSFA	Citi	\$1,000.00
Capclave	Citi	\$5,407.26
CD 1 (Feb)	M&T	\$5,739.95
CD 2 (May)	BB&T	\$6,000.00
CD 3 (Aug)	M&T	\$5,832.95
Total		\$29,518.91

President Lee Strong started a long discussion of “where the money comes from”. See the “Letter from the President” below for details.

Colleen Cahill suggested raising WSFA's membership fee; the current rate of \$10 per year has been in place for a very long time [*since 2000, to be exact – Editor*] and a raise would not be out of order . She suggests \$15 per year for students and active military and \$20 for everybody else. This would start in 2010.

The majority of the discussion involved WSFA Press and the new Turtledove book. The details are below in the WSFA Press section of the Publications Committee.

Judy Newton wants a bylaw change to force discussion of large expenditures, like the book.

Colleen's motion to raise dues was tabled.

Trustees: Charles Abel, Colleen Cahill, Chris Neumann

Nothing to add

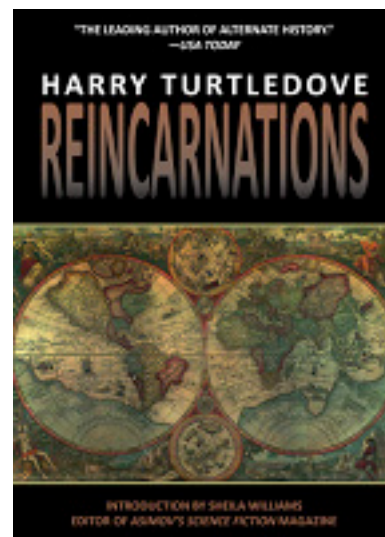
Entertivities: Sam Lubell

Is anybody interested in seeing Harry Potter? If so, see Sam after the meeting.

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

WSFA Press Subcommittee: Ern Lilley(?)

- Anyone interested in being on the committee should see the Secretary and the President after the meeting.
- Is there a WSFA Press logo?
- We have a title and a cover! The contract with Mr. Turtledove is in the mail.
- We need to make an inventory of our current stock of WSFA Press books – nobody is really sure how many we have or where they're stored. Once we know what we have, we can sell them.
- Ern Lilley says that SFRevu will sell WSFA Press books at its dealer tables.
- Charles Abel made a motion to rescind (i.e., cancel the entire book project and forfeit the money already spent); Chris Neumann seconded. The motion failed.



Capclave Present: Bill Lawhorn

- Registration is a couple up from last year.
- Thanks to Chris Neumann and Charles Abel for new members.
- Sam Lubell wants programming ideas. There will be a meeting at Bill Lawhorn's tomorrow at

2PM to discuss programming. Suggestions should go to the WSFA list and to Sam directly.

- The restaurant guide is OK
- Lee Strong has gotten stuff into the ERB publications.
- We'll be giving out bookmarks at the National Book Festival.

Capclave Future: Gayle Surrette

Is working on numbers for budgets & target dates.

Capclave Far Future: Cathy Green

Cathy has made no commitments. She has a meeting with the Hyatt. WARNING- any hotel contracts that she comes up with will fall under our new rules.

The Committee to Actually Discuss Science Fiction: Bill Lawhorn

There is SF!! They'll be discussing *Asimov's*.

New Finance: Tina Abel

Working on rules for transitions for the next time we get a new treasurer. (Secret handshakes & suchlike.)

Awards: Colleen Cahill

- Colleen has decided that crying doesn't work. She's going to mailbomb anybody who doesn't vote. The force of her fury broke her chair.
- 14 out of 41 have voted.
- We have one meeting before the deadline.

Flyer: Brian Lewis

Brian took 20 copies of the flyer to Shore Leave; none came back. This was the he only flyer that completely sold out.

Old business:

None

New business:

- There were no volunteers for a Fifth Friday party. Everybody needs to stay home and read SF.
- We're going to switch meeting locations in August.
- In September, we should be back at the Scheiners' for First Friday. [*Has anybody heard from them? – Editor*]

New people:

The new people got scared off.

Announcements:

- Candy & Kindra Madigan are in a play *A Devils Christmas Carol* as part of the Capital Fringe Festival. Kindra plays an “uber-bitch” and Candy plays a complete whiner. [*Descriptions from Kindra – Editor*]
- Colleen Cahill reminds us of the National Book Festival on the Mall on September 26th. Authors include Katherine Neville, Rick Riordon, and Shannon Hale.
- Mike has WSFA Press books
- Steve Smith lets us know that *Sense & Sensibility & Sea Monsters* (the sequel to *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*) ~~has escaped~~ will be released in September.
- Gail Surette's mother is in the hospital they may have to go to Maine and bring her back on short notice.
- Lee Strong tells us that the Edgar Rice Burroughs Estate folks like his proposal for a sequel to *Beyond the Farthest Star*. They're doing contract things.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:06 PM.

Attendance:

Charles Abel, Colleen Cahill, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Sam Lubell, Sarah Mitchell, Chris Neumann, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Bill Squire, Lee Strong, Gayle Surette, Mike Taylor, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh.

Short Story

[This story is set in a universe where some things happened a whole lot differently, starting with Elizabeth I naming Edward Seymour, Lord Beauchamp as her heir, instead of James Stuart VI of Scotland. But, as always, some things remain the same. Mr. Strong plans to continue writing stories in this universe. – Editor]

What Would You Have Me Do? By Lee Strong

Without a command, [Robert E. Lee] returned to Arlington to wait to see what Virginia would do. He was called to Washington and offered command of a new army being formed to force the seceded states back into the Union. Lee, while he opposed secession, also opposed war, and “could take no part in an invasion of the Southern states.”

-- Poor Richard's Encyclopedia, 1988 edition, s.v. “Lee, Robert E(dward).”

“General Lee to see the President.”

“Yes, sir. This way, please.” The usher gave a dignified bow to Lee and moved out of his way. The grave Virginian officer stepped into the vestibule of the white painted Executive Mansion, hat in hand. The usher closed the great door behind him, shutting out the cold late winter air and the murmuring of the crowd gathering outside the cordon of soldiers.

Before Lee could enter deeper into the Mansion, he was stopped by a handful of armed soldiers, clad like him in the dark blue of the US Army. Lee repeated his mission. Their leader, a major, eyed the Virginian coldly and nodded. “Your pardon, General Lee, but we can not be too careful. I recognize you from when we fought together in Mexico. Please pass, sir.”

The Virginian nodded to the younger man and said something polite about the latter’s gallant service. The soldier’s eyes softened a bit as Lee stepped past the guard.

The usher escorted Lee thru a side door and up a flight of stairs. In the near distance, the visitor heard the little noises of a great house and office at work. His own footsteps seemed to echo. *Perhaps it is the weight of history. I oppose secession but I can take no part in an invasion of my home.* The letter making his own resignation from the US Army official burned in his pocket.

Following the usher, Lee passed into the Reception Room to the Executive Office. To his dismay, he was again challenged by soldiers, this time with a colonel in command. Lee noted that his interrogator’s holster was unbuttoned, the heavy sidearm ready for action. Fortunately, this man knew him from fighting with the Indians.

Finally, the usher escorted the puzzled Virginian thru the Ante Room and into the den of the old lion himself. The door closed firmly behind him.

Lee automatically began to repeat his mission but stopped partway thru the phrase, confused and even alarmed. The room was familiar enough and so were its four occupants. The source of confusion was the absence of the man that he had come to see.

The middle aged man behind the Presidential desk rose in greeting. The few seconds thus consumed gave Lee a chance to gather his thoughts. He spoke, “Mr. Vice President, I am here at the request of President Scott.”

The Vice President sighed, his buff English face a map of sorrow. He started to speak but stopped before words actually emerged, awash in some fierce emotion.

A lanky man standing next to the Presidential desk spoke up in a prairie rasp. “General Lee, are you aware of the events of last night?”

The Virginian’s brow furrowed. “No, Mr. Lincoln, I am not. I would assume that these events are related to the extraordinary security that I encountered when calling upon the President. I was challenged not less than three times by military officers of ascending rank. Once would be unusual. Three times seems... significant.” He eyed the Vice President thoughtfully. The latter quietly indicated that Lincoln should continue.

“General Lee, last night a band of assassins entered the Executive Mansion and murdered President Winfield Scott in this very office. Mr. Henry Seymour is now the President of these United States.” Lincoln gestured to indicate the former Vice President.

The Virginian gasped. The room seemed to spin around him. Nothing like this had *ever* happened in the United States. *Assassination? A word for European empires and Asian autocracies! Not the*

United States! True, a madman had attempted to assassinate Andrew Jackson when the latter was a candidate for President but, thank God, that man had failed. Now...?

“How did it happen?” whispered the Virginian, his hands crumpling his hat.

“By treachery,” replied the tall Midwesterner. “Do you know Senator Louis Wigfall of Tejas?”

“Somewhat,” admitted the Virginian. “I do not normally share his social circle but he visited the military garrisons in Tejas stridently demanding that we renounce our oaths to the Union.” The letter in Lee’s pocket burned even hotter than before.

“Last night, Senator Wigfall and several accomplices entered the Mansion and requested an audience with the President. The Senator claimed that his accomplices were delegates from Tejas who had come to Washington with new proposals to end the current crisis and bring the seceded states back into the Union.”

Lee nodded numbly. Winfield Scott was renowned as a warrior. He had fought to defend the United States longer than the Virginian had been alive. Yet, he had also been a peacemaker in Aroostock, Mexico and Oregon. He would have wanted to hear any new proposal, even an unlikely one, if there was a chance that the so-called Confederate States would listen. The assassins had obviously studied their target well.

“When President Scott received Wigfall and his party, they engaged him in some argument. No one else was present but the butler heard the President shout ‘Senator Bartlett as President? A milksop! He will never be President!’ at one point. Shortly after that, Wigfall and his party left and the butler discovered the President’s body bludgeoned to death.”

“Bludgeoned? An old man? Only a few days from his retirement after a lifetime of service to his country?” Lee was horrified. Truly, war was a terrible thing but there was *honor* in meeting one’s enemies openly on the battlefield. This *assassination*.... This cowardly act of common *murder*.... Committed under the *pretext* of a peace negotiation? There was *nothing* honorable about it.

“Did the assassins escape then?” he breathed.

“So far, those assassins are at large,” confirmed Lincoln. “No one expected such a thing even with the nation divided as it is. The Army is hunting them as we speak.”

Lee noted the Midwesterner’s phrasing. “You said ‘those assassins.’ Were there more?” *Please, dear Lord, no!*

Lincoln sighed deeply. “I am afraid so. Wigfall’s band was one of a wide spread conspiracy operating in the darkness of the night. Other bands attacked the residences of Mr. Seymour, Mr. Seward and Mr. Trask as well as the railroad carriage of Mr. Hamlin....”

Lee interpreted, “The Vice President, the Secretary of State and President-elect, the Secretary of War, and the Vice President-elect. Truly a ‘coup d’etat’ as the French would say. I see that Mr. Seymour is well. Are the others as well?” His hat was a twisted ruin in his hands.

“No.” Lincoln’s plain spoken denial was more devastating than any oratory. The latter swallowed and whispered, “Pray continue.”

“Mr. Seward is still alive. He received a knife wound to his throat but the doctors believe that he will recover.”

“In time for the Inauguration?”

“The very question that we posed to his attending physician. We are not sure.”

“Dear Lord,” breathed Lee, this time aloud.

“Mr. Hamlin and his wife are dead as is Secretary Trask. The Hamlins were en route to Washington when a mob entered their railroad carriage, dragged the Vice President-elect outside and hung him for allegedly inciting servile insurrection. He was a vigorous opponent of slavery and his enemies took his opposition as incitement. His wife was apparently fatally struck as she attempted to prevent her husband’s murder.”

Lee nodded mutely. *The horrors of the Roman and Napoleonic Empires imported to America...! What was it that Lincoln had said a year ago when John Brown attempted to incite a genuine slave revolt? ‘The enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution.’ And the killing of a woman!*

The present day Lincoln paused and asked quizzically, “General Lee, many of the night’s events have already appeared in the newspapers. I am surprised that you are unaware of them.”

The letter in Lee’s pocket blazed forth in white hot fury. The Virginian stumbled as he spoke. “I have been preoccupied, sir. I came to this house to res....” He caught himself before the fatal syllable escaped his lips. Lamely, he rephrased himself. “I came to this house to restate my love of our nation and abhorrence of secession.” *That was truthful enough; merely incomplete.*

Both politicians nodded in unison. Lee sensed rather than saw the approval of the two military officers standing patiently to his right. He gently requested, “Pray continue. I believe that you have not yet plumbed the depths of this iniquity.”

Lincoln made a half bow of agreement. “Secretary Trask was killed in a gun battle between the assassins and officers present with him in his home. Those officers captured two and chased the others to their refuge.” The Midwesterner paused, staring into the distance. “That refuge is the Embassy of the Empire of France. Soldiers have surrounded the building but have not yet entered. Ambassador Jussarand has refused to hand over the assassins claiming that they are political refugees.”

“Dear God!” exclaimed Lee. Again the room whirled around him and he felt sick. As he struggled to master himself, he remembered Scott in Mexico City. *The old warrior, conqueror of armies, liberator and ruler of Mexico, sitting in a throne borrowed from the Bishop’s Palace, the young Napoleon II captive before him. Scott could have humiliated the young man, so obviously out of his depth trying to play his father’s role as warlord – beaten him – thrown him to the Mexicans howling for bloody revenge after centuries of tyranny. Instead, the warrior had become the peacemaker. True, he had dictated the Treaty of Mexico City rather than negotiating it but it was a generous treaty – capable of bringing peace to four continents. If only it had been fully honored.... Perhaps the rumors that the young Napoleon’s assassin.... The first Napoleon had seated himself on the throne of France by violence and so, it seemed, had his grandson.*

“What would you have me do?” Lee’s voice was barely audible. The ticking of the clock in the Executive Office seemed like thunder in comparison.

The new President spoke, “General Lee, President Scott asked you to accept the supreme command of

the Federal armies. I also ask you to accept.”

Lee’s thoughts whirled. *I oppose secession but I can take no part in an invasion of my home. But my home has already been invaded. The invaders were here in this very room, murdering a great man, a great mentor, a great peacemaker. The war has already begun and it has been thrust upon us.* He straightened his bent frame, his bowed head.

“Yes sir, I accept. If General Wool consents.... He is my senior in rank.”

Major General John Ellis Wool spoke up. “I agree. President Scott wanted you as General in Chief of the United States Army. With you in command, we can swiftly subdue the seceded states and overawe the doubters. You can save the Union, Robert.” He thrust out his hand and shook Lee’s. A moment later, Rear Admiral Jeremiah Putnam shook Lee’s other hand. When they released their new superior, Seymour and Lincoln added their own approvals.

Numbly, Lee nodded. His head cleared. The heat from the letter in his pocket had abruptly vanished. *I will destroy it later – in private. No one will ever know of my momentary weakness.*

His gentle voice gathered strength as he spoke, “As General Wool has said, we must strike swiftly. We must disrupt the secessionists’ plans before those plans are realized. It is easy enough to understand what those plans must be. They have formed a pretended government sitting in Montgomery and must soon form an army and a navy to enforce their decrees.”

Lee looked at Seymour, his voice now firm, his grave face now resolute. “The Army and Navy of the United States must move swiftly and together. The Navy must blockade the ports of the seceded states and prevent any foreign intervention, especially French intervention. The Regular Army must march south and secure the principal cities and garrisons of the so-called Confederate States. President Scott manfully refused the secessionists’ demands that our garrisons be withdrawn from the seceded states so th... those people are weak everywhere. We must relieve those garrisons and occupy the capitals that the secessionists hold without delay. Mr. President, you must call up the militias of the loyal states and call for additional volunteers. It is possible that we face a two front war, one front against the secessionists and one front against Napoleon III. And, naturally, you must address Congress as quickly as it can be assembled.”

A giant map of the world opened up in Lee’s mind and he began moving troops and ships across it. “The Army of the Atlantic must occupy the yet loyal states of Virginia and Roanoke and enter the rebel state of Sparta without delay. The Army of the Center must march south into Franklin and then to Montgomery in Tombigbee. Units from our Caribbean states will occupy Florida and Louisiana. We should ask the Mexicans for a corps to occupy Tejas while we are mobilizing the Army of the West. And we should accept the offers of horse and elephant cavalry from Venezuela and Thailand. It will be good for morale to show our loyal citizens that we are not alone in our fight for freedom and to show our allies that we value their contributions.”

Seymour’s face furrowed. “Elephants? Are elephants of any use in modern warfare? And is not North America too cold for elephants?”

Lee smiled. “Elephants make excellent pack animals and engineers. I propose to use the Thais to reinforce our garrisons in India where the climate is suited to them. It is possible that Napoleon III intends to reconquer India and Australia while we are distracted by secession in North America.”

Seymour nodded his approval. “Yes, yes, the government will support your proposed movements with

all the power at its disposal.” Lincoln somberly agreed.

Lee was struck by a political question. “Your pardon, Mr. President, but your term of office expires in a few days. Who will be President if Mr. Seward does not recover in time to take the oath of office?”

The President again gestured to Mr. Lincoln.

The Midwesterner intoned quietly but clearly. “In the event that Mr. Seward is unable to become President and since the Vice President-elect is dead, the office would normally devolve on the President Pro Tem of the Senate Mr. Joseph Bartlett. However, he is under suspicion of involvement in the conspiracy. He was taken into custody this morning. He denies any involvement but his elevation was apparently a chief goal of the conspirators. We simply do not know at this time. Assuming his inability, the office would then pass to the Cabinet officers in the order in which their departments were created. The first in line would be Mr. Seward as Secretary of State.”

“Pray continue.” Lee recalled that Lincoln had been a lawyer before joining the government.

“Further assuming Mr. Seward’s inability, the office would next pass to Mr. Abbott, the Secretary of the Treasury. Unfortunately, he is in Central America at the moment. He is negotiating with the United Provinces for rights to construct an interoceanic canal thru their province of Nicaragua.”

“I believe that we must assume his ‘inability’ for the moment,” stated Lee crisply. “We will need an active President here in Washington, especially if we are to fight France and its allies as well as the secessionists.”

“I agree,” intoned Lincoln in his grave voice. “The next person in line would be the Secretary of War. After that would be the Attorney General of the United States.” He paused and bowed his head.

Lee interpreted, “Yourself.”

“Yes,” responded the Midwesterner simply. He paused again but resumed. “If the Presidency should fall to me in the event of Mr. Seward’s inability, you may count on the continued full support of the Government. The Union must be preserved.”

Lee bowed slightly to the current President and then to the potential President. “Gentlemen, God willing, it will be.”

He turned to his new subordinates. “General, Admiral, we have much to accomplish and little time to accomplish it in. Let us leave the President to his political tasks with full confidence that the soldiers and sailors of the United States will not fail in their military tasks.” The three military officers saluted crisply and excused themselves.

As they left the Executive Office, Lincoln was struck by a historical comparison. *In 1852 and 1856, the people of the United States had rewarded General Winfield Scott with the Presidency because of his military successes. Would General Lee receive the same reward in 1864?*

WSFA History

Ten Years Ago

July 1999

Star Trek: TNG Fan Fiction: *Spot in a Box*, by Gail Dood. [*Yeah, Wesley's a jerk. What else is new? – Editor*]

Twenty Years Ago

July 1989

“You know how many science fiction fans it takes to screw in a lightbulb? Three thousand, four hundred and ninety-five!”

Thirty Years Ago

July 1979

There was no July *Journal*.

Letters

From the Editor

We now have official WSFA flyers, on the WSFA-Forum website, in color and in living black and white. The files are rather large because the images are sized for printing at 600 dpi – it's a lot easier to lose resolution than it is to gain it. Much like life.

— Steve Smith, Editor, *The WSFA Journal*

From the President

Fellow WSFAns,

Our club has serious financial problems. We are spending money faster than we are earning it. Potentially, we could be effectively bankrupt as early as November of this year.

We have traditionally depended on our conventions to pay for themselves and generate enough profit to pay our routine expenses. Many people do not realize that we spend about \$1,500 per year even under ideal circumstances. This includes \$600 for food and drinks at the meetings, \$500 for insurance, \$250 for the WSFA Small Press Award, and about \$150 for incidentals. Many people also do not realize that, overall, Capclaves have so far been money losers for the club. Overall, the 8 Capclaves that we have hosted have lost a total of \$2,233.76 or an average loss of \$279.22 per Capclave. The same is true of other clubs' conventions. Many people will remember that we got about \$40,000 from the 2003 World

Fantasy Convention. That's what we're living on now, but that money is running out because we're not replacing it as fast as we're spending it.

As close of business 16 July 2009, we have \$11,538.75 in various checking accounts plus about \$300 deposited today plus about \$15,000 in three Certificates of Deposit (CDs). We are currently committed to spend about \$11,000 to fund Capclave 2009 and \$6,380 to fund the Harry Turtledove book. Our commitments total more than \$17,000 dollars – which is over 140% of our ready resources. Because we expect to sell additional con memberships between now and the date of Capclave and because many of our con expenses come due after Capclave, we anticipate at least paying for Capclave 2009. However, any organization whose anticipated expenses are so much larger than anticipated revenues is flirting with financial disaster.

I see three major scenarios ahead of us. The pessimistic scenario is that the current economic downturn causes Capclave and the Turtledove book to tank and we lose several thousand dollars. In this case, we will have to tap our CDs to pay the bills for Capclave 2009 and the book. There will not be sufficient funds to pay for Capclave 2010 much less our routine expenses. The middle of the road scenario is that the con and the book break even. In this case, we do not have to tap our CDs but fund Capclave 2010 out of our liquid assets. However, our non-Capclave expenses will drain our liquid assets as well and we will soon fall below the minimum amount necessary to fund a convention much less another book. In this scenario, I would project that we could fund Capclave 2010 but Capclave 2011 would be very questionable. The optimistic scenario is that Capclave and the Turtledove book both do well. In this case, our revenue sources pay our expenses and things are rosy.

Since we're hoping for a huge profit from the Turtledove book, let's look at it in more detail, especially considering the historical record of WSFA Press. Isn't this book supposed to generate more than \$8,000 profit on a \$6,380 investment? Under ideal circumstances, yes. However, any profit assumes that we actually sell more than 319 books. Historically, this has been WSFA Press' fatal flaw: we can produce books readily enough but we don't sell most of them. To date, one WSFA Press book has sold out. Over a hundred unsold copies are still burdening WSFA's closets and shelves as well as the debit side of WSFA Press. Even if this book works and works well, will we always have a Big Name Author to sell our books for us?

What should we do? We have many possible options. I see three major approaches at present: (1) pulling in our horns, (2) working harder to make our present financial model work better, and (3) looking for a new financial model. Raising our annual dues to \$35 a person would pay for our routine expenses. Selling the WSFA Press books would add several thousand dollars revenue. On the other hand, we could save several thousand dollars per year by canceling our expensive and, to date, money losing cons and books.

I suggest that we (1) carry out our existing commitments but (2) conserve our existing resources while (3) looking for a new financial model. I suggest that (a) we host Capclave 2009 as planned including working to advertise it as widely as possible, (b) cancel the Turtledove book, (c) consider canceling Capclaves 2010 and 2011 including not accepting any pre-registrations until we are sure that we can afford these cons, and (d) taking a fresh look at what we want our club to be and how we do our business.

If we want cons, how do we fund them? If we want books, how do we make them pay? And who will bell the cat?

The floor is now open for discussion.

-- Lee Strong

[If anyone wishes to respond formally to this letter (or anything else in the Journal), please e-mail your responses to editor at wsfa dot org. – Editor]