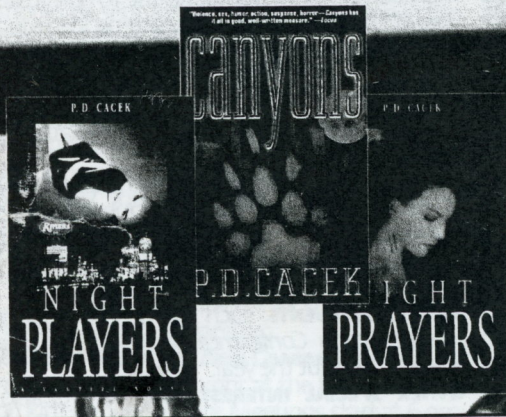




# PSFS NEWS

The Newsletter of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society

SCIENCE FICTION ■ FANTASY ■ HORROR



Our Guest for April 11, 2003:

**P.D. CACEK**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF P. D. CACEK

by Kenneth Roberts (from MileHiCon 32 program book)

What you don't know can hurt you. At least that's what many horror writers seem to sense, somewhere way down in their DNA. P.D. ("Trish") Cacek is one of those writers, a woman who wants to look into all the dark corners, and take her readers along to show them what's there. And her readers like that. A lot. Her humorous tale of vampire lust, *Night Prayers*, is going into a second printing, and her publisher is hounding her for a sequel. *Canyons*, which chronicles the misconduct of Denver's leading werewolves, is due out in December, and Tor Books has already been talking about the movie rights. And her latest novel, *New Hope*, which is still in the works, serves up perhaps her finest writing yet. Horror firmly rooted in historical fact is fast becoming one of Cacek's trademarks, and she takes her obligation to get the facts straight seriously. For this latest novel she went and lived in New Hope for months while she researched the background, and it shows. Pennsylvania is one of the longest-inhabited states in the US, and New Hope is one of its most-haunted cities, but until now there wasn't a horror writer around to ferret out its unique ambience.

One of the most striking things about Trish, for those who know her, is her uncanny ability to fabricate gripping fiction out of the stuff of everyday life. She's truly a lean, mean, fiction machine—always cultivating an inner garden of imagery, memories, hopes, and-of course-fears. But what gets planted in that garden and what grows there are two very different things. And that slight, deft, telling twist beyond ordinary reality is another Cacek specialty.

The perennial question, "Where do you get your ideas?" is an especially difficult question to answer in Trish's case. Born at the epicenter of American myth-making, Hollywood, she can still recall writing a story at the age of five in her Big Chief writing tablet—a scary story, of course. One creative impetus that she clearly remembers was seeing Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein*. Karloff scared the pants off of her, and according to Cacek she decided then and there, at the ripe old age of four, that she wanted to learn the trick of doing that.

Already addicted to adrenaline, she developed a passion for Poe after finding a collection of his stories in her mother's library.

(continued on page 14)



## ABOUT PSFS NEWS

**PSFS NEWS** is the newsletter and corporate minutes of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, published monthly as a benefit of membership.

**SUBMISSIONS** to PSFS News are welcome, in our quest for world domination. Anyone wishing to contribute articles (book or movie reviews, discussion group or convention reports, announcements, etc.) is encouraged to do so. Articles can be e-mailed (secretary@psfs.org) but they may be mailed, if necessary, to the PSFS PO Box. Deadline is two weeks before the next general meeting. E-mailed articles may be sent in nearly any format, but text or HTML formats are preferred. Artwork, Sketches, Comics, or Photos are also welcome in any graphics format, or we can scan originals if mailed to us (originals will not be returned).

**SCIFI-OGRAPHIES SUBMISSIONS** are open to any member who would like to send us approximately 300 words about themselves, and their relationship with science fiction. Submissions will be published based on available space.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS** - PSFS News is available free to active and general members of PSFS, and to any Science Fiction Club or organization wishing to trade newsletters. Non-members or inactive members may subscribe at an annual cost of \$15/year.

**PSFS NEWS** is published by the PSFS Secretary (Nathan E. Lilly) of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society.

**CONTRIBUTORS** (in order of submission received): Henry Leon Lazarus, Nathan Lilly, Darrell Schweitzer, Lee Weinstein, Mark Twain.

## ABOUT THE SOCIETY

**THE PHILADELPHIA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY** is a non-profit organization that meets to discuss and promote science fiction and fantasy in literature, the arts, and popular culture.

**MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY** is open to everyone. Becoming a member is easy. Attend your first meeting; we'll say "Hello." At your second meeting, you can nominate yourself for membership or ask someone else to nominate you. At the next meeting you attend following your nomination, you're eligible to be voted in as a General Member. Our current dues are \$24 for a full year (\$40 for couples). Attendance of 4 meetings each year maintains the status of Active Member.

**GENERAL MEETINGS** are held on the 2nd Friday of each month and feature a guest speaker involved in some area of Science Fiction or Fantasy, such as writers, editors, artists, etc. See *Meeting Notices* for more information.

**SPONSORED EVENTS**, such as *The Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference* (AKA *PhilCon*), are held throughout the year.

**OTHER SPECIAL INTEREST EVENTS**, are also sponsored by the society, such as the *Book Discussion Group*, which meets monthly to discuss a work of science fiction or fantasy; and the *Special Events Group*, which attends science fiction and fantasy movies and other events.

**COPIES OF THE BYLAWS AND STANDING RULES** can be made available to all Society Members by asking the Secretary.

## CONTACTING THE SOCIETY

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Contact board members by phone or e-mail us at board@psfs.org

<b>PRESIDENT</b> Hugh Casey	(215)674-8047*
<b>VICE PRESIDENT</b> Jeff Linder	(856)983-3074
<b>SECRETARY</b> Nathan Lilly	(215)439-8690
<b>TREASURER</b> Suzanne Rosin	(610)667-5248
<b>2 YEAR DIRECTOR</b> Debra Ruh	(215)739-9045
<b>2 YEAR DIRECTOR</b> Rebecca Marcus	(610)642-8694
<b>1 YEAR DIRECTOR</b> Saul Snitkin	(215)745-3765

\*no calls after 9p.m.

**CALL THE PSFS HOTLINE:** (877) 656-3914 for PSFS Meeting Information, to leave messages, and to receive last minute meeting cancellations.

**TO JOIN THE PSFS LISTSERVES** and receive PSFS related news via e-mail, send an e-mail to 'announce-on@psfs.org'. To subscribe to PSFS-Talk (general PSFS discussions), the address is 'psfs-talk-on@psfs.org'.

April 2003

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

For current information and announcements about PSFS visit [www.psfs.org](http://www.psfs.org)

**THE PSFS P.O. BOX REMAINS OPEN.** Due to a clerical error on our part the PO Box was closed for a short time. However the problem is solved and our mailing address remains: PO. Box 8303; Philadelphia, PA, 19101-8303

**COPIES OF ALL OFFICIAL PSFS CORRESPONDENCE** should be sent to the Secretary for filing in the Society's official records.

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** can be e-mailed to secretary@psfs.org, mailed to the Society's P.O. Box, or given to the Secretary in writing at the meetings. To have your announcements, events, articles, etc. published accurately you must give the secretary the information in writing (or e-mail).

**PRYDONIANS OF PRINCETON** meet once a month at the Mercer County Library, Lawrenceville, NJ. Contact: Prydonians@aol.com or visit [www.prydonians.org](http://www.prydonians.org).

**PAGE (PHILADELPHIA AREA GAMING ENTHUSIASTS)** meet every Sunday night at the Ethical Society on Rittenhouse Square. Meetings start at 6 pm and run till 10-10:30. They do role-playing, board gaming, historical (a bit of everything). Everyone's welcome. For more information visit <http://www.philagamers.org>

**BARNES & NOBLE IN BRYN MAWR** has a Science Fiction Discussion group that meets the fourth Tuesday of every month, at 7:30pm.

**THE 2003 NEBULA AWARDS® WEEKEND** will be at the Radisson Plaza-Warwick, 1701 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, April 18, 19, and 20, 2003. The basic room rate is \$82 per room, double occupancy. There are suites and other upgrades available. The price for the entire 2003 *Nebula Awards® Weekend* will be \$85 until March 21, 2003. The price then becomes \$100 until April 10, 2003. After that, the cost, if banquet space is still available, will be \$125 and will have to be paid at the hotel during the event. The cost for only the ceremony is \$40. More information and updates are or will be available on the SFWA website, <http://sfwa.org>, under "Nebula Awards®"

**THE LOST HIGHWAYS ART GALLERY** Radebaugh Opening is an exhibition in Old City, showing the rediscovered works of the mid-20th century futurist illustrator, A. C. Radebaugh. The exhibition-in-progress can be seen right now on line, at [www.losthighways.org](http://www.losthighways.org)

**THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA GAMING SOCIETY** is sponsoring Game Club Saturday at the Oxford Valley Mall-Community Room (upper level behind Zales), for anyone interested in playing board games, strategy games, military simulations (wargames and miniatures), railroad games, economic games, or family games. Bring your friends and your favorite games. Upcoming game days are: 15 Mar, 12 Apr, 26 Apr, 17 May. For additional information visit [www.epgs.org](http://www.epgs.org)

**SCI-FI AUTOGRAPH SESSION AT THE FREE LIBRARY** of Philadelphia on Saturday, April 19 at 1 p.m. in honor of the 2003 Nebula Awards. Authors scheduled to appear include Michael Swanwick, Robert A. Metzger, Kevin Anderson, Joe Haldeman, Gregory Frost, Jeffrey Ford, Jack McDevitt, Andy Duncan and David Sherman. A Free Event. Call (215) 686-5415 for details.

**INTERNATIONAL HORROR GUILD AWARDS** nominations for 2003, but NOT the final recipients, will be announced at the *World Horror Convention* in Kansas City on April 19, 2003. The final awards recognizing outstanding achievement in horror/dark fantasy for the year 2002 will be announced on May 23.

## NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS

Nominations for position of 2 Year Director that was left vacant as of March 14th, 2003 will be taken at the April 11th, 2003 PSFS. General meeting.

**PER THE BYLAWS:** "Only active members of the age of majority are eligible to be elected as Officers and Directors at Large."

Nominations may also be sent to the Secretary in writing. Written nominations must be signed by an active member, must be seconded in writing by an Active member, and include written consent of the nominee.

**PER THE BYLAWS:** "No nomination shall be accepted unless the person nominated is present at the meeting at which the nomination is submitted or that person's written consent to be nominated for that office is filed with the Secretary of the Society."

All nominations must be seconded. Elections will be held at the April 11th, 2003 meeting or (if for some reason the elections can't be held at that time) at the next General Meeting held.

**POSITION AVAILABLE:** A Director at Large to serve a two year term (with one year remaining).



## MEETING NOTICES

April 11th, 2003  
**P.D. Cacek** Author of *Night Prayers*,  
*Canyons*, *Night Players*

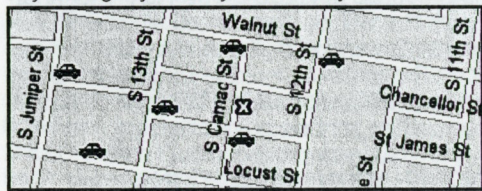
April 17th, 2003  
**Board Meeting** To discuss society topics.  
Contact board@psfs.org  
for time & location

May 9th, 2003  
**Todd Kimmell** Lost Highways Archive  
& Research Library  
Radebaugh curator

June 13th, 2003  
**TBA**

December 12th-14th, 2003  
**PhilCon 2003** The Philadelphia Science  
Fiction Conference at  
the Marriott Hotel

Unless otherwise specified, General Meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month at The Franklin Inn Club, located at 205 South Camac Street - the northeast corner of the intersection of Camac and St. James Streets, which is just north and east of the intersection of Locust and 13th Streets, in Center City Philadelphia. Business meeting starts at 8:00 pm. Program starts at 9 pm. Meeting dates may be changed by the Society when necessary.



## MEMBERSHIP STATUS

for March 14th, 2003

First Timers: 2  
Nominees: 0 New Members: 6  
Members: 48 (46 active, 2 general, 0 inactive)

\*Status changes are effective after meeting adjourns.

## GENERAL MEETING

These are the minutes of the General Meeting held on March 14th, 2003 at The Franklin Inn Club. The meeting was called to order at 8:00PM.

**PROXIES:** Mattie Brahen to Darrell Schweitzer.  
\*Proxies may be delivered directly to the Secretary either in person, by mail (must arrive before the meeting), at the meeting by another member of the society.

**CORRECTIONS TO MINUTES:** For the past several newsletters... Deb is not Rebecca and Rebecca is not Deb.

## OFFICERS' REPORTS

**PRESIDENT (HUGH):** Budget meetings are really, really hard. If we want the society to run without a deficit at all our annual dues would

need to be \$177.25/year.

This is my last official meeting as President. I've had a really great two years, and it's all really been worth it. It's been one of the most incredibly rewarding experiences of my life. I would like to thank every member of the board during the time that I have been President, most of whom have been the same since I was elected. Jeff, Saul, Suzanne, Rebecca, Nathan, have all been wonderful. Carol, who was the secretary the first year that I was president (and, dear God, there was no way could have gotten through my first year without Carol's constant reminders of things that I needed to do), and Will Flynn. I'd also like to give thanks to Gary Feldbaum who is our corporate counsel, our resident parliamentarian, our hotel negotiator, and also he has been a very good friend and advisor. This is a job that I could not have done without his help. Another persons who's help has been invaluable is Oz Fontecchio, also a wonderful advisor and good friend. And I've been very honored to call all these people friends.

Also someone who does not get enough recognition—I'd like everyone to recognize Hank Smith—he is the single hardest working member of the society. I'd like to thank every member of the society for your support, your encouragement, and the reams and reams of advice—not always solicited, but always appreciated.

**VICE PRESIDENT (JEFF):** Thank you Hugh, for not dying while I was VP.

**SECRETARY (NATHAN):** Sign in. Get a newsletter. We've received e-mail from Wombat about New Zealand tours of *Lord of the Rings* shooting locations. The Hotline has been updated. We receive fanzines/newsletters from other groups if anyone would like to read them.

**TREASURER (SUZANNE):** We have money. As a reminder, next month is the new fiscal year. Bring your dues.

<b>Vanguard:</b>	<b>\$36,814</b>
<b>Savings Green:</b>	<b>\$196.35</b>
<b>Blue Checking:</b>	<b>\$1144.52</b>
<b>Green Checking:</b>	<b>\$2605.90</b>
<b>PayPal:</b>	<b>\$274.18</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$41034.95</b>

**2 YEAR DIRECTOR (REBECCA):** Rebecca Marcus has resigned the position of 2 Year Director. Elections will be held for the position at the next general meeting (April 11th, 2003).

**2 YEAR DIRECTOR (DEB):** none.

**1 YEAR DIRECTOR (SAUL):** none.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**PHILCON 2002 (JEFF):** Unless anyone has any surprises for me... which seems to crop-up on a fairly regular basis, we are looking at about \$2,000 surplus. So, considering the additional expenditures, the move, and our attendance, we did not unwell. We have room for financial improvement.

...Way to not avoid using  
that double negative, Jeff...

**PHILCON 2003 (HUGH):** We will be having a meeting at 12PM on Sunday, March 30th at the Lithuanian Music Hall to discuss Philosophy, Policies, and Procedures. It is located at 2715 E. Allegheny Ave. directions can be e-mailed out if you contact chair@philcon.org. Everyone is invited to attend. We will begin with an opening report/proposal by the PhilCon 2003 Chair, after which we will open for general discussion.

Also, we have some great news about our Special Guest: Peter David—he's option his novel *Howling Mad* to Beacon to make a movie.

**SPACE SCIENCES (HANK SMITH):** Hank Smith has a list of events to be held in the near future. Please contact him for details.

**PROGRAMMING (OZ):** Oz introduced Karl Kofoed. See *Meeting Notices* for future guests and dates.

**SPECIAL EVENTS (OZ):** The Lost Highways art gallery Radebaugh exhibit opening went well.

Contact Oz for future features, locations, and dates.

**BOOK DISCUSSION (OZ):** Contact Oz for future features, locations, and dates.

**MOVIE GROUP (OZ):** Contact Oz for future features, locations, and dates.

**WEBMASTER (NATHAN):** We've signed on with a new host. Within a month a new website should be up. It should enable us to do many, many things that we've discussed.

April 2003

## BUSINESS

### OLD BUSINESS:

**PHILCON 2004 CHAIR ELECTION:** In February, Jeff Linder moved, Hank Smith seconded, to open PhilCon '04 convention committee as an other body. Passed unanimously. Hugh Casey nominated Jeff Linder for PhilCon '04 chair. Votes were taken in March and Jeff Linder was elected to the position of PhilCon 2004 Chair.

**JULY & OCTOBER MEETINGS MOTION:** Hank Smith motioned, and it was seconded, to move the July and October General Meetings from the 2nd Friday to the 3rd Friday of the respective months (July 18th; October 17th) so as not to compete with local conventions. The Motion passed unanimously.

...Let's give it up  
for water on Mars...

### NEW BUSINESS:

**BUDGET MOTION:** There was some discussion of the budget as proposed by the Board. The Budget passed unanimously.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** 10:28 P.M.

## BOARD MEETING

These are the minutes of the Board Meeting held on March 6th, 2003 at Deb Ruh's house. The meeting was called to order at 8:13PM.

**PROXIES:** none.

**CORRECTIONS TO MINUTES:** Again, Deb is not Rebecca and Rebecca is not Deb.

**ATTENDING:** Hugh Casey, Nathan Lilly, Suzanne Rosin, Rebecca Marcus (by phone), Deb Ruh, Saul Snitkin (by phone). Others Present: Oz Fontecchio, Gary Feldbaum.

## BOARD REPORTS

**PRESIDENT (HUGH):** I'll be President for another three weeks.

**VICE PRESIDENT (JEFF):** no report

**SECRETARY (NATHAN):** I'm considering contacting local bookstores to see if they could give us shelf space to leave PSFS newsletters in their science fiction sections (it was felt that this was a good idea overall and it warrants further discussion).

Concern 1: is it a wise idea to put our meeting minutes in bookstores for anyone to take?



Concern 2: Who will be doing the distribution? The only people right now in the society who regularly take flyers and other materials to get them out in front of the public is Hank Smith, and Hank Smith.

I will do a cost analysis to see if this is really a cost effective idea. There will be changes to the layout of the newsletter to make this viable.

**TREASURER (SUZANNE):** no report

**2 YEAR DIRECTOR (DEB):** Fix the minutes Nathan.

**2 YEAR DIRECTOR (REBECCA):** no report

**1 YEAR DIRECTOR (SAUL):** Having seen the proposed budget, as far as I'm concerned there need be no changes.

## BUSINESS

### OLD BUSINESS:

**WEB HOSTING:** The board was given the authority to choose a web host for the society website from among the hosts recommended by the Webmaster (Nathan Lilly). Ipowerweb.net was selected unanimously (The Secretary did not vote due to having a business interest in one of the selected hosts).

**NEBULA AWARDS® BANQUET:** The event is pretty high on the scale of formal. You see a high proportion of men in suits and women in dresses.

*...you even see Darrell Schweitzer in a suit and tie...*

It was asked if there will be a Kosher meal available at the Banquet. The answer was: "There will be a Kosher meal, but not necessarily for Passover." (Contact the Nebulas for further discussion.)

### NEW BUSINESS:

**BUDGET:** There was much discussion. The budget was ammended and voted on to put before the Society. It passed unanimously.

*...ER! There's your personal frog...*

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** 10:15 PM.

## PHILCON 2002 DEBRIEF

These are the minutes of the PhilCon 2002 Debrief held on March 2nd, 2003 at The Dashoff's residence. The meeting was called to order at 1:05PM.

**PROXIES:** none.

**CORRECTIONS TO MINUTES:** none.

**ATTENDING:** Hugh Casey, Jeff Linder, Nathan Lilly, Tony Finan, Todd Dashoff, Joni Dashoff, Oz Fontecchio, Gary Feldbaum, Hank Smith, Lisa Blanco, Tim Binder, and others.

## REPORTS

**CHAIR (JEFF):** All in all I think it was a fairly successful event. We haven't gotten the final hotel bill yet, so we won't have final numbers until that is finalized, but it looks like we've made a small but significant surplus.

Self-criticism: Communication was not one of my strong points. I need to do more pre-planning. Despite the fact that I knew what I was getting into, I had no idea what I was getting into. I hope to do better in the future as Hugh's Vice Chair next year, just by having familiarity and having a plan in place for what's going on.

**VICE CHAIR (HUGH):** As Vice Chair I'd like to thank everyone for all the effort that they put in. Everybody did a great job and most of the time they were doing it under really difficult circumstances, but everybody pulled together and did a great job with it. I really appreciate everyone's input and everyone's help.

Granted that attendance was not where we were hoping that it would be—it was not out of the ballpark from previous PhilCons. In fact if I remember correctly we did better on attendance than in some previous PhilCons (in a new time period, in crappy weather).

We had a lot of new attendees, and a lot of those new attendees were younger members—new to PhilCon and new to PSFS. I really hope that we're going to continue this trend. Boosting attendance for the coming year and in years subsequent are going to be a big concern of mine.

Again, one of the points that I want to make clear is that we were looking at 2002 to be a rebuilding year. We knew with the vast number of changes that we were inflicting on people that we would take a hit, and we spent some funds and time building a structure that we could use, that now that we've got some of the bugs worked out, to build our attendance back

up over the next few years.

**SECRETARY (NATHAN):** no report

**TREASURER (SUZANNE BY E-MAIL):** Thanks to my escorts every night to the box. You did a fine job of making sure that I was not mugged. To all those who helped me along the way to use the credit card machine and balance the boxes when I needed that extra help.

Now on to complaints: Most of us had cell phones. I was very easy to reach by cell phone. Do not yell at me that you could not find me in the Treasurer's room. I was allowed to visit the convention and do convention things. Along with run around and make sure that different things were running smoothly.

The Treasurer's room is not OPs. To find out what happened to tables, TVs, VCRs, etc. or just to flip out because you have a gripe. The only people who are allowed in the Treasurer's room are: The Treasurer, The Treasurer's designated assistant, Heads of the Convention, Heads of Departments, and People from Registration (is they need something—not to come in and hang out). The doors to the Treasurer's room should remain closed at all times, not propped wide open so that anybody who wants to can wander on in. The key did work and the door could be propped so that the door did not close all the way, it just looks closed.

Registration people should sit closest to the door so that they can stop anyone from going in and who does not belong there. And no one except Registration, Con Chairs, and Treasurer should be going behind the registration desk.

The Treasurer is not personally in charge of collecting money—especially when she is in the Treasurer's room working. Each department at the next convention will be in charge of collecting their own fees.

Only the heads of their respective departments are allowed to request money. Don't send a runner unless the Treasurer receives a phone call from the Head that a person is coming and the reason why. NO EXCEPTIONS. No one is to come in and demand money from the Treasurer.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**REGISTRATION (JOE NEFF BY E-MAIL):** Green room went quite smoothly, thanks mostly to my fiancée Amy, who jumped into the job with both feet. This freed me up to work main Reg. most of the time.

Some of the problems and proposed

solutions: Problem: some Pros knew they were on the program but their info never made it into the registration database, ergo, no badge was made. Solution: we need to improve communications between programming and registration. For last minute changes give a list of additional names to registration on Friday morning and that can prevent a lot of headaches during the Con (this is something for Joe and Oz to work on).

Problem: some Pros brought a guest but did not let us know ahead of time, ergo, no badge was made for the guest. Solution: Give the Pros every opportunity to tell us who their guest is. Let them know "Guest-to-be-named-later" is preferable to surprising us in the Green Room.

Problem: we did not have good procedures in place for handling Press. Some of them got the run-around until we could locate the liaison. Solution: a little training of Green Room staff would help fill the gap until the Press person could be located. Some press kits could be moved from OPs to Green Room for convenience.

Problem: Reg. is on 5th floor, Green Room on 3rd, Dealers on 4th—badges are located across the Con. Some folks got a bit of a runaround looking for their badges. Solution: Master list of both Green Room and Main Reg. list where every preprinted badge is located.

Problem: Reg. had no record of PreRegs bought early in the year. This made some people irate. One guy even brought his cancelled check. My response was, "Give that man a badge and a free book!"

*...Give that man a badge and a free book!..*

**BABYSITTING (WINNIE):** The room was fine. I need to get more staff, with the understanding that they need to put in at least four hours.

**LOGISTICS (J):** It was an unpleasant discovery that I couldn't leave the truck in the loading dock.

**PROGRAMMING (OZ):** In general, for the division as a whole, programming played to rave reviews. David Gerrold said that, "if the attendees had half as much fun as I did this must be the best convention ever." Connie Willis said that we were interesting, well-organized, etc. We got a lot of good positive comments, which I won't go all over again because I



assume you saw them all on PhilCon-Talk. The overall reaction was extraordinary. The best we've ever had.

One issue is obviously is what happened on Friday night with the noise and that whole party thing. The inability to actually access those program rooms was an issue, people being turned away and told they couldn't go to our program was an issue, and people actually participating in our program being drowned out was an issue.

Programming had a debriefing just for the programming committee, members of the group peeked in on panels. This year we had, relative to the size of the attendance, an extraordinarily high attendance in all of the panels, including people who did nothing but attend panels all weekend long.

**CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING (DEB BY OZ):** Children's Programming went very well this year. It was put together in five weeks. There was larger than usual attendance in the Children's room.

**ART PROGRAMMING (REBECCA BY OZ):** We had a solid Art program that seemed to be well attended.

**ANIME PROGRAMMING (OZ):** We added an Anime track this year. The Anime Track room was small—it was full but not over crowded, so we found a niche for folks in that area.

**GREEN ROOM (J):** Green Room came in under budget. One note I would like to go back to receiving money for the Green Room pre-con. Also we need to address a policy for children in Green Room.

**OPs (TODD DASHOFF):** OPs this year spent an inordinate amount of time answering one question: "Is this Green Room?" We need to fix the signage. Also, OPs should not be used as a coat room.

*...the twitching has mostly gone away...*

**COSTUMING/MASQUERADE (VICKI):** Most of my outside groups have met since PhilCon and there have been several comments that the perception of PhilCon programming being extraordinarily boring. In that it's only authors on panels, except for the obligatory artists on art panels. The suggestion is that we can look at how Arisia and BaltiCon do it: they survey almost everybody for program idea inputs, and

*...Yes, we did look into moving to November. No, we can't...*

when they have the ideas they send them out to everybody who's been on a program item soliciting their participation on panels. Because I know for a fact that there are a bunch of people who are traditionally thought of as Costumers, that are things like software engineers, nuclear scientists, analytical chemists, etc. That's the impression that certain people that are either still coming or have stopped coming, because there is nothing to do outside of the Masquerade.

Rooms were not reset at the proper time. Do not end up in a position where the Technical director and the Masquerade director are the same person.

There are people who are willing to volunteer and fill a full day and fill a 6-8 hour track of costume programming if PhilCon will do it (these are people who have stopped going to the convention).

The Hall Costume idea seemed to be good, but we need someone truly in charge of it on site, if it's done again.

I've received negative comments on the date. I recommend that when we visit other conventions ask people—would they rather have a \$70 room rate in November or a \$170 room rate in November?

**HOTEL (GARY):** This was an interesting year, but we knew that moving into a new facility, it was going to be. The Hotel threw us some curves that we did not expect, which unfortunately absorbed time that would have been useful given to administrative details of the convention, but instead had to be given to reorganizing the convention and dealing with some less than cooperative members of the staff there.

We're reorganizing which facilities we'll have for next year. We'll have different Friday & Saturday night problems—we'll be moving those events over to the Ballroom in the other wing and other rooms elsewhere in the facility.

I'd like to thank everyone who worked on us with this: Vicki, who did more than she should have been asked to do, and our Hotel Liaison, who had to walk into this mess. She had to deal with 95% of the constant changes and

problems and challenges (I think is the word I want to say).

We need to make sure that we have some communication devices available. Not everyone has a cell phone in their pocket. We made some assumptions about how people are going to communicate. We have to get some convention provided communications.

That's pretty much it. Most of what we have to do is deal with changes of a new facility.

**GAMING (LORENZO):** It was challenging this year, especially with this being my first year that I'm stepping into this position. The interesting thing was getting over peoples perceptions. The second thing was the allocation of space—it kept shrinking/expanding shrinking/. We lost some potential new attendees. Some people we had to tell no because they don't just bring fifteen people, they bring two hundred. The RPGA doesn't come small, they need a huge amount of resources and because we couldn't fix those resources we couldn't bring them. If we knew we had the resources that we had ended up with we could have brought them.

The other benefit was that Anime was across the hall, because what would happen is they would open the door from Anime and immediately flow into gaming. People leaving gaming would immediately flow into Anime. The negative side to that was I had to tell people that we had a dealers' room.

This year I started early. This year should be a lot better. I have to apologize to Oz, because I thought I could get programming people for panels, but when I told the they had to pay they said "no", when I told them later that they didn't they said well "let me see" (Jeff: Lorenzo was misinformed about the panelist policy).

**(TONY FINAN):** Not having an established GM policy really hurt us. At one point we were told that we couldn't do it that way (note: told by Hugh who was later beat up about it).

WizKids alone accounted for about 25% of our new members. By Rich Pryor's figures we had app. 94 new people—25% of them were in gaming and never left gaming.

*...because that's what gamers do...*

Another thing that hurt us—and probably cost us 100 memberships—was LARP. That cost us between 75-90 members. This is one of the

reasons that I think why gaming should be given more resources (Hugh: We didn't have one this year because the local LARP group that does it no longer exists).

One thing that I do have a negative comment about. Game room was staffed, mostly, by PAGE volunteers. There were, at any point, four or five gaming volunteers. Gaming was the first department to open, and it never really closed. There wasn't so much as a cross-link to the PAGE website. There was no mention on the website of gaming at all.

**FILM/VIDEO/ANIME (TONY FINAN):** Over all, compared to previous years, it was a disappointment. Most people nowadays have pretty decent Home Entertainment Centers. Basically what you got to enjoy this year was watching a film that you could see in your living room, on uncomfortable chars, with a sucky audio system.

Placement: Nobody knew where we were.

Lack of Appearance in the Program books: Mostly my fault. Since I couldn't confirm the type, or existence, of my equipment I was unable to program until well past the publication deadlines. This can be easily remedied with better communication between the departments. I do suggest the reappointment of FVA coordinator in the future.

Lack of Second Track space: We have a very mixed audience. My solution was to run regular film for the first 9 hours and anime for the rest of the weekend.

*...I got complaints the whole weekend for doing that, which means it was probably the right thing to do...*

We will be scheduling interactive programs next year (film discussions). We think this would be rather unique, I haven't seen anyone else who does this.

Inclusion of other area fan groups for area specific programming—possibly a main ballroom performance with a group like Exhumed Films and/or a showing of Rocky Horror Picture show in conjunction with a local cast (such as TNP).

Thanks to Greg Schauer, the proprietor of Between Books—he lends PhilCon the use of a great number of brand new titles for use at the convention.



**SCIENCE PROGRAMMING (HANK SMITH):** I enjoyed. I'm glad to be doing it again. I'm open to suggestions. I'm sorry I didn't have the descriptions for the program book, I'll have them next year.

**PUBLICITY (HANK SMITH):** I'm concerned that people have such a narrow attitude about PhilCon, because one of the things that I did when I first started working as an assistant was broaden the types of businesses that we take flyers to (gaming, costuming, art supply, etc.).

*...its a wonderful thing,  
except its horrible...*

**HOTEL LIAISON (LISA BLANCO):** Room blocking needs a lot of work. We had a whole lot of problems assigning rooms. Late assignments was a problem that will be worked on in the future.

Thanks to Todd, because I conscripted his office to my office. PhilCon newsletter does not belong there, please move it.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS (LISA BLANCO):** I did not do a press kit because I did not get information about different people. I don't know who talked to each GoH, how to get in touch with them, I need information from them well ahead of time (9 months out). Having a GoH liaison would be helpful because I need artwork from the Hildebrandt Brothers and I need it now.

We should focus on all the little art shops, comic shops, gaming stores, etc. that will help us in the future. The whole point is that we should do better with targeting our flyers to the people who are going to see them.

I dropped the ball, I wanted to do bookmarks for PhilCon, I had a whole plan laid out, a whole printer laid out. I thought it would make a better pick-up than the flyers. I just didn't get artwork and other stuff together to get it out.

**ART SHOW (JONI DASHOFF):** The artists are now web savvy. A lot of people hit the PhilCon sent and sent info to info@philcon.org. Did they actually look at the rule? Well, not all of them—I had to send e-mail back saying that the rules were posted (thank you Nathan). That specific web page for the Art Show did seem to help—for the Art Show we had one third new artists this year, than in previous years. At least some category seems to be doing web searches.

Art Show had to deal with a new location, however, the floor plan did work out reasonably well. The lighting was much better than we thought, and the lower ceiling did help. There were lower ceilings along the front and sides due to ducts. My engineers have decided how to handle it for the future. It was a moot point this year.

Someone who should receive lots and lots of kudos is Neal. I was told that we were not going to have hired security, and it turns out that there are emergency stairwells that lead into our area. For next year if all we are going to have is sleepers, we'll need two just for the Art Show.

Most of the artists did not have a problem with the change of paying up front, rather than taking it out of commissions later. Those who had poor sales this year may not show up next year, but most of them are thrilled with the idea of the Brothers Hildebrandt.

The buyers were not fair for the location and the calendar, and I could have fixed location because I have an Art Show sign that I never put out. Traffic flow past: if we're in the programming area then both dealers and art show will get the foot traffic past. Having Gaming in the front of the dealers room would have helped (which was the plan until we found out it would have cost us \$1000/year).

The artists and staffers are reasonably happy—but the buyers were not there. We're not getting Teachers, Art Students, etc. due to the date. We sell out the art show, but we need to do better at selling it to people who will draw (a crowd).

The only compliment that I could make was that there was too little traffic because so many people were at programming.

**STORAGE (JONI DASHOFF):** I would like to thank the various departments by inadvertently color coding the departments (OPs picked red, Children's picked blue, etc.).

**DEALERS (JEFF):** Most of the dealers were disappointed with the number of sales. Most of them however felt that there was a lack of foot traffic, but a lot of them did feel that it was economic. The most common answer for people not buying was: "I'm not sure if I'm going to be employed next year..."

On the plus side the dealers did understand the table disaster. We did offer any of the dealers a \$5/table refund—not one dealer took it. The dealers loved the layout.

## BUSINESS

**OLD BUSINESS:** All of it.

### NEW BUSINESS:

**INDEPENDENT REPORT:** Tony Finan gave an independent report illustrating that PhilCon needs to pay serious attention to the type of convention that it is, the types of people that it attracts, and most importantly who the convention is for. Copies of the report are available from the Secretary (secretary@psfs.org), Hugh Casey (chair@philcon.org), or Tony Finan.

There was much discussion at the meeting. The report was later posted to the PSFS-talk and PhilCon-talk mailing lists—at Hugh's request—where there was also much discussion.

There will be a Philosophy, Policies, and Procedures meeting held on March 30th, 2003. Contact Hugh Casey (chair@philcon.org) for details.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** 5:02 PM.

## THIS SPACE FOR RENT!

Well, not this one, but one very much like it.

*If you would care to sponsor PSFS News, to help support the society and the newsletter, you may purchase either a half page (this size) or full page space (pending approval of the PSFS board). Contact the secretary by e-mail (secretary@psfs.org) for more information.*



## SCIENCE FICTION FOR APRIL 2003

by Henry Leon Lazarus

Science Fiction concerns itself with the future and that usually means futures of humanity. Human beings usually remain unchanged despite able to cross the vast gulf between the stars. The reason is basic biology. Once a species has specialized in its niche, it rarely changes and it never devolves. It can, and species frequently do, die out if the niche disappears and it cannot adapt. We humans moved out of our niche millennia ago and are easily the most adaptable creature on the planet. To kill us off today would probably involve destroying Earth's ecosystem. Even then some humans might survive. Crocodiles and sharks are still around for millions of years, so too should us naked apes.

I bring this up because I've been so angry at the final quarter of Stephen Baxter's tale of *Primate Evolution* (hard from Del Ray) from the primate that survives the comet that killed the dinosaurs some sixty-five million years ago to the far future when the last descendent dies out. Think of the tale as the sort of thing that James Michener might have done - stories about pre-humans across the eons as they grow in intelligence. It is a marvelous look at primates grew and adapted with neat tales of survival in the Jurassic period when dinosaurs, a tale of monkeys trapped on a group of tree branches as they float across the Atlantic, a Hansel and Gretel tale of two youngsters surviving after they got lost in an ice storm during the cave era, and then we get to civilization. Mr. Baxter hates civilization and the two views of history and pre-history that he shows evokes the worst of civilized life. So in 2031 he kills off civilization and has humans devolve to mindless beasts. I was upset. I couldn't get it out of my head. The tale could easily have been Mr. Baxter's breakout book, letting him cross over to general fiction, maybe into bestseller-dom. Read the book for the beginning, but be warned about the ending.

Richard K. Morgan introduces a neat, hard-boiled character in *Altered Carbon* (trade from Del Rey) that takes place in a future in which changing bodies is simple (allowing the rich immortality), and so is sending recorded minds to colonies on other stars. Alas, matter has to travel sub-light so that skipping from one world to another means changing bodies. Takeshi Kovacs, retired member of the elite soldiers who police the future Earth Empire, is brought to Earth to prove that his employer didn't commit suicide. After all, what would be the point when a back-up less than two days old would be quickly created in one of the rich man's cloned bodies. To add to Takeshi's problems his sleeve (the body he was given) has a history as an ex-cop whose mind is serving a prison term. Plots within plots, torture in virtual states in which the pain can be continued through death after death. It's a cold world and I'm looking forward to the Takeshi's next adventure.

It's a shame that *For Love and Glory* (hard from Tor) is probably the late Poul Anderson's last work because it represents one of his better ones and I would love to see more stories set in this background. In some ways it is a tale of a man who has knocked around the galaxy for nine centuries, and a century-old woman of a high-ranked family who has discovered that she enjoys investigating potential new colonies and discovering their problems on the ground in the field. What brings them together is a working relic of a species that roamed the galaxy a few million years ago. Before that they meet accidentally at another forerunner relic, then Lisa finds clues to a one in a billion years event, and Hebo visits a very changed Earth to re-order his memories (a must after nine centuries). There are strange sights, full of wonder and, of course, interfering villains. A trek across wilderness to rescue a lost companion, and a landing near a forerunner machine still operating. I'll miss Poul Anderson. His work was always thought-provoking.

Raymond E. Feist introduces us to a new character in his complicated 'rift war' background. *Talon of the Silver Hawk* (hard from Eos) watches his whole tribe die when he returns from his manhood ordeal. Saved and trained by the good guys into a master swordsman, he starts his path to vengeance in this first tale. While the tale is not very complicated, *Talon* is an enjoyable characters and I look forward to his continuing adventures.

John Varley, the writer whose work blew everyone away in the early nineties, has a near-future tale of wish-fulfillment physics - zero energy space drive. An ex-astronaut, his emotionally-retarded, genius cousin, and four high school graduates put together *Red Thunder* (hard from Ace), a space ship made from tanker ships that they use to rescue the American Mars expedition and, also to get to Mars before the Chinese. Mr. Varley keeps his hand-waving to a minimum - concentrating on the very real backgrounds of these young men and women who never got a real education in school, but have learned a lot on their own. Light fun, but don't take it seriously.

Scott Westerfeld's tale of *The Risen Empire* (hard from Tor) is both a wonderfully complicated tale, impossible to put down and a disappointment because this only half the story and the tale stops midstream. The Emperor got his power from doling out immortality (sort of vampiric because you have to die first) and his sister has been held hostage by the Rix, a cult of genetically modified humans who worship the artificial intelligences who rule their worlds and who want to introduce such an intelligence into the world that the Emperor's sister lives on. Opposing them are a starship captain with rather neat weapons, including nano-sized ships guided by remote control and used for intelligence gathering, huge rail guns that can turn a body to pulp (from orbit) if aimed exactly. The captain, a war hero who had been tortured in the past, might have to commit suicide if he fails in the rescue and his lover, a Senator on the capitol planet is trying to use politics to keep him alive. There's also a Rix survivor trying to pass a secret about the Emperors sister and about the method of immortality that she needs to pass on. I wish I knew how it all ended, but I guess I have to wait a year.

It's 1684 and in an alternate world where Sicily is the country of Tyrrhia, a haven of religious freedom not only for Christians, but also for Jews, Muslims, and most of all, Gypsies who control the silk trade. The Catholic Church plots to increase its power with the daughter of the last king, passed over in favor of a cousin. Luciana's sister was accused of murder and then seemingly committed suicide. But the conspirators, who have a black magic wizard with them, don't reckon facing Luciana, gypsy leader, magic user and her husband Stefano, Duca De Draco and brother to the Queen. Treason must be stopped and the evil Cardinal sent back to Rome. Then there is the matter of Luciana's sister's body stolen so her soul can be used for evil. Elizabeth Gilligan's *Magic's Silken Snare* (paper from DAW) is a well-developed, alternate-historical novel that introduces a writer with great promise. I look forward to the continuing adventure as the long separated husband and wife learn to work together and protect their country.

I have a bunch of continuing tales this month. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro has another of her tales of Count Saint-Germain, a three thousand-year-old vampire who can be found in interesting historical periods. In this tale he builds *The Palace* (paper from Warner) at the end of the fifteenth century in a Florence ruled by Lorenzo (the magnificent) Medici. What happens to Florence after Lorenzo's untimely death is a cautionary tale for our times, because Florence comes under the thrall of Savonarola, a monk who pushes piety on the city.

Eventually Saint-Germain, who fled when it became too dangerous to remain, has to return to rescue his beautiful secretary/student/housekeeper who has been accused of heresy because of her association with the Count. As usual Ms. Yarbro has the historical details (though some of the real events are compressed) correct. This is a nice series that one can dip into at any point. Warner is reprinting the previous volumes if you get addicted to these wonderful historical vampire tales.

Alan F. Troop has another story about *The Dragon DelaSangre* (paper) one of the many were-dragons that date their lineage to the age of dinosaurs. In the first book he married, had a child, only to have his wife murdered by humans (since humans are a nightly snack, turn about is fair play). Now his son is five years old and his wife's sister has come of age, so back he goes to Jamaica with his son to wed the sister. Nothing, of course, goes as expected under the Dragon Moon (paper from Roc) and in-laws can be treacherous if they are dragons. Fun and just as intense as the first. Now is there going to be a third?

The elfin factions come to *The Battle of Evernight* (hard from Aspect) in the conclusion of Cecilia Dart-Thornton's trilogy set in a fairy tale world. With name and memory regained, Tahquil rushes across her land, armed with the knowledge of how to return to Faeran through the only unclosed gate, hoping to save her lover, the lost king of Faeran. As usual the best parts of Cecilia Dart-Thornton's are the make of her wondrous land where swan maidens fly, and ogres roam. This tale sends Tahquil through the darkest parts of the land and lacks a truly happy ending that it would seem that fairy tales require. Still, it marks Cecilia Dart-Thornton as a writer to be watched.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer fans should really love Laurel K. Hamilton's tales of Anita Blake. Anita is a twenty-something who raises the dead for a living (for legal testimony) and has a Vampire Executioner License (only if court ordered) which also, technically, makes her a federal policewoman. She is linked magically to her two boyfriends, the vampire master of the city and the head werewolf in *Narcissus in Chains* (paper), her life got very complicated when she finally opened her links to her boyfriends and discovered that along with extra powers, prude that she is, she also got a sexual hunger, the ardeur that must be fed. The result was a lot of soft porn and a weaker Anita. *Cerulean Sins* (hard from Berkley) gives her the weapons to deal with it, when he has to mentally fight a vampire using it to weaken her. There is also out-of-town assassins and, of course, a murder. While this tale is a must for fans of the series, it is not a place for newcomers, fans will love the fact that our old hard-boiled Anita is back and ready for new action.

*Hidden in Sight* (paper from DAW) is Julie E. Czerneda's third adventure of the shape-changer ESEN. This time plots concerning the moon where the mother of her original clan died put ESEN and Paul on the run again. There is no question that Beholder's Eye (paper), the book that introduced the young ESEN and the other members of her clan is one of those perfectly plotted tales that answer all questions necessary. The sequels have been fun, but they have been a bit forced. This was quite enjoyable because ESEN is such a treat, both child-like and adult at the same time, and with a love of life that transcends shape. I like her so much that I look forward to another unnecessary adventure.

David Sherman was a marine and his books star Marines. *Rally Point* (paper from Del Ray) continues the story of two marines escaping from the forces of an evil demon intent on conquering their world. They've picked up a number of friends and are still looking for safety when the enemy discovers. This book is routine until the end, readable only because the characters are very likable. Then there is a big battle and Mr. Sherman trots out

the way the magical weapons work on this world, and I started giggling in sheer fun. Not because it was stupid, but because Mr. Sherman has a great sense of humor and the small demons have a lot of quirkiness to them. I wish the book had more of the humor and less of the routine.

The eighth Starfall tale, written by David Sherman and Dan Cragg has plenty of action as an alien invasion of a human world fights a *Kingdom's Fury* (paper from Del Ray) along with the marines of the Starfall. A few books back the marines met a small group of the lizard-like Skinks on an isolated planet. Now the Skinks are in full force on a planet on the outskirts of human space settled by religious fanatics. There's plenty of action as the marines have to train the scared Kingdom forces while facing unknown numbers of the aliens, and their acid weapons. They are not push-overs. While there's none of the humor of the previous tale, David Sherman and Dan Cragg have a good sense of what science fiction requires, creating problems the marines have to think through as well as just shoot at. People not too overwhelmed by our current war, will find the series fun.

According to Kevin D. Randle, few decades from now the media will have gotten much dumber, despite a Martian and Lunar Colony, so that one could mix an interview of UFO abductee with an announcement by a local astronomer of possible *SETI Signals* (paper from Ace). Add in a politician looking for a boost in his career and you have a very funny beginning to a tale of first contact. I laughed, but basically refuse to think the general public is dumb enough to riot over generated fears. I think, also, that Mr. Randle has made an elementary mistake over the order the signals would come in. However I enjoyed the tale enough to look forward to the next in the series.

I had to buy the latest tale of murder in Shirley Rousseau Murphy's small California town, Molena Point where the talking cats, Joe Gray and Dulcie (they even use cell phones when needed). This time it's *Cat Seeing Double* (hard from Harper Collins) as a plot to blow up the Police Chief at his wedding, along with a dead ex-husband in a contractor's home send the cats skulking. I've loved this series since I got the first one as a review copy. There's not much depth, but the cats are so much fun I don't care.

Older reprints this month include Mary Brown's delightful fantasy trilogy with talking animals, *Here There Be Dragons* (trade from Baen); David Weber's first series about the moon as a huge machine, *Empire from the Ashes* (hard from Baen); James P. Hogan's *The Genesis Machine* (paper from Baen); two older Andre Norton tales, *Darkness and Dawn* (trade from Baen).

Collections this month include the 2003 *Nebula Awards Showcase* (trade from Roc, edited by Nancy Kress) with stories picked by the Science Fiction Writers Association; Nalo Hopkinson's *Mojo Conjure Stories* (trade from Aspect) - her first collection; James P. Blaylock's 13 *Phantasms* (trade from Ace); *Thrilling Tales* (trade from Vintage and edited by Michael Chabon) with new stories in various genres; and *Future Wars* (paper from DAW edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Larry Segriff) with new stories.

Paperback reprints include Peter F. Hamilton's tale of future humans and a *Fallen Dragon* (Aspect) that I had to start reading to remember; L. Warren Douglas's final tale of his mediaeval witch who learned that all magic comes in cultural concepts, *The Isle Beyond Time* (Baen); Cecilia Dart-Thornton's second tale in her fairy tale world *The Lady of the Sorrows* (Aspect). Trade paperback reprints from Tor include Patrick O'Leary's tale of life after death in a Philip K. Dick manner and Denis Darners tale of a early twentieth century anarchist brought to our time by a meddling time traveler, *The Watch*.



(continued from page 1)

She still admires him. "He's dated a bit," Trish says, "but his situations-walling people up alive, for example—and the ambience he created, these things stay with you." She went on to earn a degree in creative writing, and by the early '90s was beginning to have her short fiction regularly accepted. She fell in love with Colorado while visiting relatives, and when a shift in her husband's career provided the opportunity some years ago, she moved here.

She continued to hone her talents in the Northern Colorado Writer's Workshop, and in 1996 was awarded the Horror Writer's Association's Bram Stoker award for "Metalica", a short story that had appeared earlier that year in *Hot Blood: Fear the Fever*. A collection of her '90s-era fiction, *Leavings*, appeared in 1998, and *Night Prayers* followed shortly thereafter. What's next? Apart from the sequel to *Night Prayers*, Trish is keen to move on to a trilogy she's tentatively entitled *Little Birds*, set in Auschwitz.

When asked what it is that most motivates her as an artist, Cacek replies, "Fiction is what a writer leaves behind. It's what we leave to posterity—our bid for immortality."

She's well on her way.

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## SCIENCE FICTION COMIC

by Darrell Schweitzer



'Ignore him. Some people will do anything for attention.'

## CONVENTION CALENDAR

April 12-13, 2003

**Concinnity**  
Milwaukee, WI  
Science Fiction & Gaming

April 17-20, 2003

**Norwescon 26**  
Seatac, WA  
Science Fiction

April 18-20, 2003

**Minicon**  
Minneapolis, MN  
Science Fiction

April 18-20, 2003

**Nebula Awards® Weekend**  
Philadelphia, PA  
Science Fiction Writers

April 19, 2003

**World Horror Convention**  
Kansas City, KS  
World Horror

May 2-4, 2003

**Malice Domestic 15**  
Arlington, VA  
Mystery  
May 23-26, 2003

**Balticon 37**

Baltimore, MD  
Science Fiction

December 12-14, 2003

**PhilCon 2003**  
Philadelphia, PA  
Science Fiction

## BOOK DISCUSSION

by Lee Weinstein

January's topic of discussion was *Solaris* (1961) by Stanislaw Lem, a Polish writer.

We started out by discussing the author. Lem has written numerous SF novels, including *The Cyberiad* (1974) *Memoirs of a Space Traveler* (1982), *Tales of Pirx the Pilot* (1979) and others.

One of the members said that Lem had a falling out with SFWA in the 1970's and had his membership revoked when he charged that American SF was juvenile.

*Solaris* was filmed in the early 1970's by Andrei Tarkovsky, a Russian filmmaker, and very recently an American film version was released. It got good reviews, but bombed at the box office, probably due to poor marketing.

One of the members found 53 reviews of the book on the internet, most of them positive, indicating this book has maintained its popularity over the years.

Several members concurred that this is a literary novel more in the tradition of Kafka or Borges than Wells or Verne.

The plot concerns the exploration of the titular planet, a world which should have an unstable orbit because it orbits a double sun, but mysteriously maintains its stability. The world is covered with a living ocean, which is assumed to be responsible. It is hinted that the planetary ocean is, in effect, a vast brain.

Chris Kelvin, the protagonist, is sent to the research station maintained above the planet, and finds one of the research team dead, and the two others rather incommunicative. Kelvin discovers the ocean is able to probe memories and create simulations of people from the past. Soon Kelvin is confronted with a recreation of his wife, a woman who had committed suicide years earlier.

As he deals with her and the other scientists on board, Kelvin discovers huge archives of the results of centuries of study of the planet.

The discussion touched on the depiction of scientific research in the book and how the scientists seemed to try to make the planet fit their theories, rather than vice versa, and the political implications of this. The main theme of the book seemed to center around the nature of intelligence and the possibility, or impossibility, of communicating with or understanding an intelligence that is totally alien. Someone pointed out that the book is supposed to be quite witty and satirical in tone.

in the original Polish, but much of this has been lost in the translation.

The group felt that the relationship between Calvin and his resurrected ex-wife was realistically depicted. The other characters were somewhat sketchy. Some people noted the datedness of some of the technology described, such as sulfa drugs, books and tapes.

Many felt that some long passages of lecture, although intrinsically interesting, slowed the story to a standstill in places.

Generally, the reaction to the book was positive. We gave it a rocket rating of 2.8 of 4.

## SELECT QUOTES OF MARK TWAIN

"We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it—and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove-lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove-lid again, and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one anymore."

"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society."

"Hain't we got all the fools in town on our side? And hain't that a big enough majority in any town?" (*Huckleberry Finn*)

"If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man."

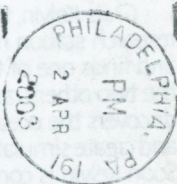
## STUPID BITS

Charlie Chaplin once won third prize in a Charlie Chaplin Look-alike contest.





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