

Scientifiction

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INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

Over the years I have been fortunate to have met many of the members of First Fandom. For those of you who don't know me, I would simply say that I am a science fiction enthusiast. I am a reader and collector, a photographer and a historian. When asked if I would be willing to assume the presidency of First Fandom, I said that I would be honored, knowing that I would be standing on the shoulders of such great predecessors as Robert A. Madle, Art Saha, Ray Beam and Joanie Knappenberger.

In order to continue moving forward, it is often useful to look back. So, I'd like to share a brief summary of the origins of First Fandom, based on my conversations with Bob Madle and other original members.

Let's roll the clock back fifty-three years to October 1958, when one day, Don Ford called Bob Madle, saying that C.L. "Doc" Barrett was having a small group over at his place in Bellefontaine, Ohio. Present at that gathering were Doc Barrett, Don Ford, Lou Tabakow, Bob Madle, Ben Keifer and Stan Skirvin. During the afternoon's conversation, Bob suggested that what science fiction needed was a new organization, one

in which the old-time fans are paramount.

Don was immediately for it, and said that they could give recognition awards to the great authors of the past, and that a magazine would be published periodically. Everyone agreed that it should be a fun organization but serious things would also be accomplished, such as keeping the history of SF in front of the fans of SF today. Membership credentials would be required. It would be a "Last Man Club," with the last First Fandom member alive in a certain year toasting his departed colleagues with a privately-held fifth of liquor. Don suggested that Bob Madle be president, since it was his idea. Lou and Don would share the secretary and treasurer's duties, and Lynn Hickman (who was contacted by telephone) became the official editor.

Now, fast forward to the present, where, as has been cited in the past, "FIRST FANDOM IS NOT DEAD." We are an organization with an active membership, a strong set of officers, a fine quarterly newsletter and a set of distinguished awards that are presented annually.

During the next few months, we will be issuing an updated membership roster. If you have any new information that you would like to

have included, please send it to me as soon as possible.

On another note: For the past twenty years, I have been assembling material to publish a First Fandom Photo Gallery. I now have several hundred pictures with captions but I need your help to finish the project. If you are interested, please send me any photographs (with information on the back such as names, dates and places), or if you have scans of your pictures, I could use a CD or USB drive containing those images.

Please send all packages via the U.S. Post Office, INSURED, so that they will not get lost! Let me know if you wish to have these photos returned or if you want them to be placed in the First Fandom Archives.

In closing, I want to recognize the hard work and steady leadership that Joanie Knappenberger has provided to our organization for many years. She graciously opened her home and her heart to so many of us who share her love of science fiction. We look forward to continuing to see Joanie and her family at SF conventions for many years to come.

Thank you for your continued interest and support,

John L. Coker III

PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

It was truly awesome honor to be chosen to be the President of First Fandom almost twelve years ago. I started out reading SF when I was about seven. I started going to conventions with Bob Tucker (grandfather) when I was fifteen.

Being named to this position for me was a real RED LETTER event in my life right up there with my marriage, birth of my daughter and winning the Big Heart Award.

I have done my best to preserve and carry on the traditions that the founding members created.

As fandom ages we must pass down the literature, history and heritage of this great genre. I now find myself at a crossroads, one that I am excited about and very sad at the same time. I have been promoted at work and the job responsibilities are much more extensive. I feel that I will not be able to devote the time and the care to my beloved First Fandom that I would like to. After much discussion with other members and prayerful consideration, I have decided to pass the mantle to another member of First Fandom that we trust, someone who has been a tremendous asset to me and to First Fandom through the years. His photos and published books on fans and fandom are chronicling our history and traditions and will keep them alive for this and many generations to come.

I would like to formally introduce you to the next **President of First Fandom: John L. Coker III.**

His enthusiasm and passion for our beloved group and Science Fiction as a genre will keep your legacy alive far into the future that you envisioned so very many years ago. He will be continuing on with several projects that are already in place and has some great ideas to implement. I feel that this storied group is in wonderful hands.

Please give John all the support and encouragement that you have given me over the years as he leads us forward. His contact information is posted at the end of the newsletter.

Joan Knappenberger

CON REPORTS

Renovation

The WorldCon was held in Reno, NV this year. I stayed at the Atlantis Casino Hotel. Casino indeed. The first floor was given over entirely to a casino, except for a small dining room. Slot machines galore, a poker room, keno runners taking bets, and a huge tote board with current horse races and sporting events on which you could bet. The hotel got into the spirit of the 'con. Some of the slot machines had Star Trek themes, and some of the drinks in the bar had science fictional names.

The 'con itself was big and well run. Here are some of the panels I found interesting.

Zombies. Zombies have become very popular. They represent death. Zombies give us more of a visceral thrill than other kinds of monsters. Much of the zombie literature has an ironic edge to it.

Cover Art for E-Books. On a dead tree book, the cover serves to attract the attention of the reader. Is this needed for an e-book? Instead of covers, we may see a resurgence of interior illustrations in e-books. One of the most powerful assets we have in SF is the visual. We need to keep this in e-books. If there is a cover, it must be readable on a small screen.

This limits the level of detail that can be in the artwork.

The Golden Age of SF. This was the nearest thing to a First Fandom panel at RenoVation. The panellists were Mark Olson, Erle Korshak, Jacob Weisman, and David Kyle.



(Kyle escaped before I could get the picture.)

When was the Golden Age: Generally considered to be the 1930s – 1950s. There were no authors specializing in SF before Gernsback provided them with an outlet. Smith's *Skylark* series was written in the 1920s but couldn't be marketed until after Gernsback. John Campbell changed and made modern SF with his story "Who Goes There?" Prior to Campbell, most SF was space opera. Campbell brought human beings into the literature. Once there was a market, writers responded to it. Lots of small presses were founded in the 1940s. However, once the major publishers realized there was a market, the small presses couldn't keep their authors.

Applying Quantitative Analysis. Is Fantasy different from SF? And how can you tell which category a story belongs in? The presenters at this panel wanted to see if there was

some quantitative method of distinguishing SF from other literature, and of actually defining SF. They collected stories from “year’s best” volumes of SF and of Fantasy. They used a computer program commonly utilized for linguistic analysis. Conclusions:

The difference in cognitive words between F and SF is small but statistically significant.

Social and emotional terms are more common in F than in SF.

SF contains fewer personal pronouns than F but more first person pronouns.

No difference in future orientation, but SF has more auxiliary verbs than F.

SF has more negative and quantitative terms than F.

So, scientifically there is a difference, but as always seems to be the case in social sciences, “more research is needed.”

The Real Middle Ages. What do writers leave out, and what do they get wrong? Almost everything, and everything. Writers about the Middle Ages have a problem of getting the attitudes and ideas right. Choices that we consider to be personal, such as choice of a spouse, were often driven by economics. Privacy is a fairly modern notion.

Near Earth Objects. A NEO is defined as any body that comes within 1.3 Astronomical Units of the sun. About 20% of NEOs are hazardous, in the sense that they may impact the Earth. Any with a diameter over 140 meters are potential disasters. Any with a

diameter over 1 kilometer are potentially extinction events.

Prometheus Awards. The Prometheus Award is given annually by the Libertarian Futurist Society, for best libertarian science fiction. The Hall of Fame Award was to George Orwell for *Animal Farm*, an anti-totalitarian novel critical of the Stalin regime in the USSR. The Best Novel award for 2010 went to *Darkship Thieves*, about the bad effects of cloning human beings, and how these might be controlled by public opinion rather than by a law.

Heinlein Society Meeting. The annual business meeting of the Heinlein Society was held. Routine, including election of officers. The Society is trying to expand its presence at local ‘cons. The Society will offer a prize of \$500 for the best paper on Heinlein at Popular Culture Association meetings. It will offer scholarships of \$500 for students beginning space studies. Blood drives are continuing, with a good turnout at recent DragonCon. For Heinlein fans, this outfit is worth joining.

Joe Martino

Context

This is a readercon, held in Columbus, OH. Emphasis is on books and stories, not on media.

Self Publishing. Getting published is becoming more difficult as publishers become conglomerated. Self publishing gives the author more control, but also means the author must do everything a publisher would, including marketing and distribution, to get the book into the hands of a reader.

The Heroine's Journey.

Traditionally, the hero goes out and does something; the heroine stays home and things happen to her. However, this is changing, with more stories in which the heroine has a physical journey instead of an internal one. Even so, the disparity between what we accept from a male character and from a female character is so great it's not even noticed.

Interesting Bad Guys. In the first *Star Wars* movie, Darth Vader had no motivation. He was just a Nazi wandering around. The villain must have some motivation. A good villain has character. He must be sympathetic.

Joe Martino

TEST YOUR MEMORY

**"A Science Fiction Quiz"
(by John L. Coker III)**

1. What is the title of the first science fiction fan magazine that was published by an editorial staff that included Allen Glasser, Julius Schwartz, Mort Weisinger and Forrest J Ackerman?
2. Who was a card-carrying reporter in 1924 for Gernsback's *Science and Invention* magazine, and later went on to set the print by hand for all of the issues of *Science Fiction Digest* as well as the *Souvenir Journal* for the First Worldcon?
3. When Walter J. Daugherty went from Los Angeles to the Third Worldcon in Denver (1941), with whom did he carpool?
4. Which early fans came to worldcon masquerades dressed as

Ming the Merciless (Chicago, 1940) and *The Gray Lensman* (Los Angeles, 1946). Who made their costumes?

5. Who were the first two people to be guests of honor at three different worldcons?

(Answers are on last page. No prizes for your score, except the satisfaction of getting them right.)

BOOK REVIEW

Grimwood, Ken, *Replay*, ISBN 978-0-68-816112-5.

This isn't exactly fossil SF. It was originally published in 1986, and later reprinted in 1998 and (the edition I have) 2002. However, I thought it worth reviewing.

The author uses a common SF theme: the person who returns to their younger self, but with their memories intact. However, he plays several variations on that theme. In this story, the event that sends him back is his death from a heart attack, and he ends up back in his college freshman self.

The first variation is the one everyone thinks of: the man who knows the future can get rich. And Jeff, the main character, does just that. By betting on the right sporting events, then by investing his money in the right stocks, he becomes a multimillionaire. Despite that, his life is empty. He is unsuccessful in preventing the Kennedy assassination. He botches the meeting with the woman he had married the first time around, and loses her. He eventually marries a woman who comes from a rich family, who went to the right schools,

where they brainwashed her into superficiality. They have a daughter who is his pride and joy. Then he has another heart attack and again finds himself back in his college freshman self, with his fortune and his daughter gone as though they never existed

I won't run through all the other variations the author plays, but they do raise a lot of questions. Would you want to repeat your college years, with all that studying and taking exams and so on? What would you change, if you could? Would the Universe even let you change some major event like the Kennedy assassination? Are you the only one reliving your past life? If there are others, how would you find them? Would you even want to find them?

I recommend the book. It's well written, and I enjoyed it. I wish I'd read it when it first came out, but better late than never.

Joe Martino

[Keep those cards and letters coming, folks. We need reviews of fossil SF, con reports, and reminiscences.]

ANSWERS:

1. The Time Traveller, which debuted in January 1932.
2. Conrad H. Ruppert, who also set the type for all eighteen issues of The Fantasy Fan.
3. Robert A. Heinlein (who was the convention's guest of honor) and Heinlein's wife, Leslyn.
4. At Chicon, David A. Kyle wore the prize-winning costume that Leslie Perri originally made for Donald A.

Wollheim. At Pacificon, Dale Hart appeared as the Gray Lensman in a costume made by Myrtle R. Douglas (Morojo).

5. The first was John W. Campbell, Jr., who was guest of honor in 1947, 1954 and 1957. The second was Robert A. Heinlein, who was guest of honor in 1941, 1961 and 1976.



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