

Scientifiction

A publication of **FIRST FANDOM**, the Dinosaurs of Science Fiction

New Series # 31, 4th quarter 2011

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

New Officers

After lengthy consideration, I have decided to name the following members as new officers:

- Robert A. Madle – President Emeritus
- David A. Kyle – Vice-President (East Coast)
- Erle M. Korshak – Vice-President (At Large)

Arthur L. Widner will remain Vice-President (West Coast), Keith W. Stokes will remain as the Secretary / Treasurer and Joseph P. Martino will remain as the Editor of SCIENTIFUNCTION. My sincere thanks go out to each of these people for their long-time service to the organization.

Recommendations

The latest issue of FANTASY COMMENTATOR is available from A. Langley Searles' widow (Dr. Alice Becker) at 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY, 10708. Founded in 1943, this journal has provided a unique home for scholarly work in all areas of science fiction and fantasy for nearly seventy years. The Spring, 2011 issue features an outstanding 150-page article that I consider to be required reading: "Inside John W. Campbell." It is

based on Campbell's actual letters (1936-1952) as interpreted and annotated by Sam Moskowitz. I encourage everyone to send Dr. Becker a SASE for information on the current title as well as a list of back issues of FC.

Last year, McFarland & Company issued an outstanding book by author Mark Rich, entitled C.M. KORNBLUTH: THE LIFE AND WORKS OF A SCIENCE FICTION VISIONARY (ISBN 978-0-7864-4393-2). It is a thoughtfully written, well-researched and fully annotated biography of an important but often neglected author from the golden age of science fiction. This is an indispensable work for those people who have a real interest in the history of our field.

First Fandom Awards

Each year, our organization recognizes the contributions of our members by presenting several distinguished awards: The First Fandom Hall of Fame Award, the First Fandom Posthumous Hall of Fame Award, and the Sam Moskowitz Archive Award. Please send all nominations to John L. Coker, III. Nominations of candidates for next year's awards will be accepted until March 15, 2012 and the winners will be announced next year in Chicago at the 2012 Worldcon.

Closing

I heard from a lot of old-timers during the holidays. Please write a letter to me and let me know your thoughts on how things are going. I am still asking members to send me their old photographs for inclusion in the First Fandom Photo Gallery. Take time to reread *ROADS* by Seabury Quinn, with illustrations by Virgil Finlay. I hope that everyone will have a safe and happy new year.

CONVENTION REPORTS*Archon*

Joe Martino

This is a regional 'con held near St. Louis. This year it was back in Collinsville, IL, after a year on the west side of St. Louis.

There was one innovative feature I really liked. In the registration area they had a poster with one of these QR (Quick Response) squares (think of them as 2-dimensional bar codes). If you snapped it with your smartphone, it took you to a web site with the latest version of the program. I suggested that next year they put it on the back of the program book, so we could carry it with us.

There were lots of steampunk costumes: hats with goggles, 19th-century adventurer (pukka sahib) costumes, costumes with lots of medals and strange weapons. One guy had a desert camo quilt. Here's one of the most interesting costumes I saw. I've seen "living statue" costumes like this in Italy, but never at a 'con.



There were some very interesting panels.

One panel was on the End of the World. With the Mayan Calendar long cycle ending in 2012, there has been a lot of interest in this topic. What would you do if you knew the world was going to end in 1 day? 1 hour? One interesting comment was that in the event of a major solar flare, plan on not living like you live now. Stockpile what you'd need for 30 days at least.

The asteroid Apophis, which approached the Earth recently, was the topic of another panel. Apophis is fairly small as asteroids go: 270 meters long, about 3 times the length of the Space Station. Near Earth Objects like Apophis have orbits similar to Earth's, but their orbits are rarely in sync with Earth's. Apophis passes near Earth only about every eleven years. However, a collision would be catastrophic: about 510 megatons equivalent.

Copyright infringement was the topic of another panel. Artists, photographers, sculptors, etc. have intellectual property rights in their work. If they appear in a movie or TV show, that may violate the artist's copyright. A speaker mentioned several court cases involving quilts. I paid attention to these because my wife is a quilter. In the cases mentioned, the quilter won, and the movie producers had to pay a license fee. A tattoo can also be copyrighted. Just because it's publicly visible doesn't mean it can be copied by another tattoo artist. These considerations are important to moviemakers and TV producers.

One panel was devoted to steampunk. Ordinarily the "punk" element involves outlaws and an underground, criminal element. Steampunk, perhaps more properly described as Victorian Science Fiction (VSF), doesn't necessarily involve such outlaw elements. During the Victorian era, whatever the function of something, it had to be beautiful. A cell tower, by contrast, is utterly functional. In fact it's ugly. A Victorian architect who built something like that would have risked lynching. Paranormal romance can also be laid in the Victorian age. If it involves clockwork and steam power, it can be steampunk. One librarian on the panel remarked that they have steampunk stickers they put on books they consider to be steampunk, regardless of the publisher's category. They want their clients to be able to find them. Steampunk is really a grassroots literature. Its only iconic characters are Holmes and Nemo. Even Robur

is a poor man's Nemo. Even the journalist in *War of the Worlds* doesn't drive the story. There are no characters like Superman, Kirk, etc. in Victorian literature. Even Doyle's Dr. Challenger doesn't drive the stories in which he appears in the same way Holmes drives his stories. Anime has grasped steampunk and incorporated it. If the Babbage Engine could have been built in the 1830s, it would have meant that micromachining was available. What else would have been done with that technology? What would the ability to crunch numbers on a large scale have meant? The Victorian era was a polite era. There were a lot of good things. For anyone not poor, it was a good time to live. There were advances in medicine, advances in technology, and explorations of every remote part of the Earth (source of the Nile, the North and South Poles, etc.).

SCIENTIFICTION QUIZ

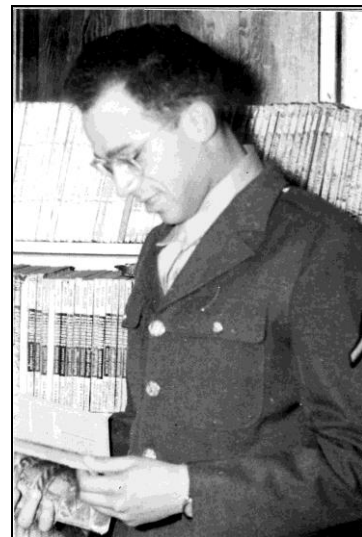
(By John L. Coker, III)

Questions:

- (1) Who was the first person to be a Worldcon Toastmaster, a Worldcon Guest of Honor and a recipient of the Big Heart Award?
- (2) What is the name of the science fiction author who was hired to write screenplays for *The Big Sleep* (directed by Howard Hawks) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (directed by George Lucas)?
- (3) In 1934, this person wrote the first convention report. It took place in a spaceship a hundred years in the future. He sent the report to *Wonder Stories*, where editor Charles D. Hornig accepted it and

printed it in the letters column. The story featured the world's first Chinese fan. When the story appeared in print, the author's name was listed as Hoy Ping Pong. This byline was used frequently over the ensuing years in this author's fan magazines. Who was the author?

(4) Identify from the following photographs these fans in uniform from World War Two:



FOSSIL SF REVIEW

Heinlein, Robert A., *The Past Through Tomorrow*, ISBN 0-739-1051-2, New York, Ace Books, 1987.

This anthology includes all of Robert Heinlein's Future History stories. The stories cover the years 1939 through 1962. As such, these stories bracket the "Golden Age." Although they are all clearly Heinlein stories, they also reflect changes in the SF field over the years in which they were written.

The opening story, "Lifeline," has an interesting history. Heinlein learned of a short story contest sponsored by *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, with a prize of \$50. Heinlein wrote the story, but realized that he could get more money if he sold it to *Astounding*. He submitted it to Campbell, the story was accepted, and the rest is history.

"Lifeline" includes a lot of hand-waving and smoke-blowing, but it includes an attempt to provide a "scientific" explanation for the "what if" element of the story. This was a break from the tales of "superscience" that tended to appear in the magazines of the day, including *Astounding*.

The next story, "The Roads Must Roll," is more political than scientific. It postulates "roadways" like moving sidewalks, replacing railroads. But the story is not about the mechanics of such a system. The real story is the effect of such a system on the political life of the nation.

The next several stories involve atomic energy or space travel. In the space travel stories, the science comes close to being real, just not yet realized. Even so, there is

considerable emphasis on character, not just on the science.

"Logic of Empire" is almost all about the politics of empire, and the characters caught up in those politics.

The final story, "Methuselah's Children," has virtually no science in it. The story is almost entirely about the political effect of a small group of long-lived people.

Overall, the collection provides a lot of good reading, and shows how both Heinlein and SF developed over nearly two decades.

WE GET LETTERS

I got a nice letter from Larry Farsace. He enclosed a clipping from the *Rochester Times-Union*, for March 4, 1935. It was an article about him as a 14-year-old boy, and a picture of him using a telescope at an observatory. If you Google his name, you'll get a lot of hits about him. Nice going, Larry. He's been doctoring. You can send him a cheer-up card:

187 N. Union Street
Rochester, NY 14605

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

In issue #27 there appeared a review of *From the Pen of Paul* by Ben Indick. Erle Korshak wrote me to ask that I add that the book is available from Shasta/Phoenix Publishers, 8680 Commodity Circle, Suite 200B, Orlando, FL 32819. Prices range from \$24.95 for the trade paperback edition to \$395.00 for the Ultra Deluxe Edition. Web site is www.shasta-phoenix.net. The book is also available from Bob Madle.

Unfortunately Erle's letter arrived while I was wintering in CA. It got packed up with all the other stuff I was bringing home. I found it only when I was doing some cleaning up. Sorry, Erle. I hope later is better than never.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

(1) Robert Bloch was Toastmaster at Pacificon (1946), the Guest of Honor at Torcon (1948) and received the Big Heart Award in 1960.

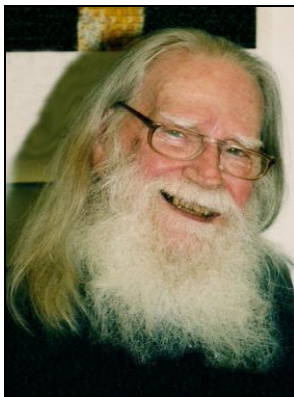
(2) Leigh Brackett

(3) Arthur Wilson "Bob" Tucker

(4) Pictures (in order): James "Rusty" Hevelin, Ben Jason, Forrest J Ackerman, David A. Kyle, Milton A. Rothman.

LAST MINUTE NEWS

We just learned that beloved life-long fan, James "Rusty" Hevelin, 89, died on December 27. He became active in fandom starting in the 1930s as a fanzine publisher and collector.



Rusty was the 1975 DUFF winner, Fan Guest of Honor at the 1981 Worldcon, co-founder of PulpCon, and recipient of the Big Heart Award (1986) and the First Fandom Sam Moskowitz Archive Award (2003).

EDITORIAL NOTICE

Keep those cards and letters coming, folks. We need material for *Scientifiction*. Convention reports (including photos), reviews of fossil SF, reminiscences, personal experiences with early writers and editors, biographical sketches of prominent early fans, and anything else you think the rest of us would enjoy reading. Write it, put it in an envelope, and send it to me. Or e-mail it to me at jpmart@bright.net.

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