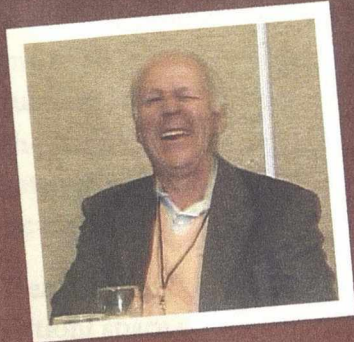


2 0 0 8 S U M M E R E D I T I O N

the MEMPHEN

A RETURN TO THE TRUE SPIRIT OF MEMPHIS FANDOM

RELAUNCH OF THE MEMPHEN



MSC wrap-up

Despite all of our efforts to offend him by leaving him out of the program book, Author and Science GoH Ben Bova



The Circle of Life

This issue is dedicated to our friend Vince Wakefield, who has worked tirelessly for Memphis fandom and who passed tragically too young on 3/13/08. We miss him.

It has been a good while since the last Bridges issue and we hope to continue to publish on a more regular basis. The club has had an recent decline in membership, which is sad after so many years. There are a number of reasons for this including matters of health, arrival of amazing small beings causing members to need to focus more on their families, and aging of the members, as well as the easy to blame personality conflicts.

One thing that we hope to do is rekindle some of the enthusiasm by restarting the newsletter. We hope that the SF community in Memphis (and cities nearby)

will become active participants by sending in submissions, letters, cartoons, critiques, movie and book reviews, etc.

Our hope is also to try to emphasize the social aspects of the SF community. Where have all the parties gone...? It is nice to be able to discuss the latest movie or book without someone saying "Oh yeah, you like that ray gun stuff, don't you."

This newsletter can only continue if lots of people share their thoughts and ideas - Welcome Aboard!!!

Congratulations!

On the birth of Ginger Stuart. Kudos to Carlin and Rene Stuart, the proud parents. And welcome, to the newest member of Memphis Fandom!



Reviews: New Releases and Old Favorites

Books review by Dana Bridges

The Sharing Knife #3 by Lois McMaster Bujold
Eos Books, April, 2008.

Let me start with a disclaimer - I have been a fan of Bujold's work for a long time. I adore the Vorkosigan novels and I re-read Barrayar and several of the "Miles" books to get myself out of the doldrums and self pity my illness had caused. Her writing, while stylistically dissimilar, reminds me of Heinlein's in that both have the page-turning ease of reading without sacrificing any of the richness of the story. Her characters are always interesting and even the "spear-carriers" appear to be real people.

Her "Chalion" series took her from her science fiction/ space opera Hugo and Nebula award winning comfort zone into a complex fantasy world. In addition to her usual strong characters, she invented a new theology/ mythos for this universe that was both original and fascinating. She has received well deserved acclaim for the Chalion books. *Paladin of Lost Souls* received both the Hugo and Nebula awards.

Now having mastered SF and Fantasy, she now tries her hand at Romance. Do not let this scare you off. These novels are fantasy romance in the same way that *Shards of Honor* was SF romance. While the relationship between the main characters is always a focal point, this is not a "boy meets girl and they are attracted but misunderstand one another until they either live happily ever after, or die in the last chapter" story. This is an action/adventure/fantasy where the relationship gives the author a chance to explore two different cultures from the perspectives of the native and the outsider at the same time.

Dag Redwing Hickory is a Lakewalker, one of a group of mages involved in a many generations-long struggle with supernatural menaces called "malices". Fawn Bluefield is a young farmer girl running away from home, when she runs into the weary patroller. The first book focused more on the farmer culture and the second, on the Lakewalkers. By this, the third book, the growing relationship is not in question, but it continues to affect the way the world sees them and the way that they see the world.

This book continues to explore the tensions between the two cultures. The Lakewalkers enforce inbreeding as their magical abilities are inherited. They also resent the farmers' lack of appreciation for the Lakewalkers' sacrifices and protection from the malices. The farmers resent and mistrust the Lakewalkers powers and motives as well.

The series has been enjoyable so far, but this book suffers from being a "middle" book in a series of four. While it was a good read, I wanted to yell "aaarrggghh!" at the end, because the conclusion was not satisfying enough. It is hard to be more specific without "spoilers" The episode ended with an adequate resolution, but the real conflicts are the cultural ones and the personal ones and they are still to be dealt with.

All in all, any LMB book is worthwhile and this one is very good. I expect the next book (due next spring) will wrap it all up in a satisfying conclusion. My suggestion though, is to wait until next spring, get all four books and read them together. Tune in next year. After I see the last one I just might think this series is better than "very good" but I won't know until then.

Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull

I don't care! Indy is back and that is all that matters! If you start judging the film by the criterion of whether it is worth waiting for almost 20 years... well, it is hard to find any film that could measure up. This film is a fine episode in the saga, just not the best. It is not the worst either - I reserve that for the Temple of Doom.

One of the problems with the movie is that it HAS been so long and therefore the urge to outdo all of the previous films is even stronger than usual. This creates some of the most embarrassing moments of the film.

I would be willing to forgive the refrigerator scene if it had not landed at terminal velocity sans one bruise on Indy's body. Which leads me to another issue: part of Indy's charm has been the fact that he is not totally indestructible but always is battered, torn, and bruised during his adventures. There was little evidence of this vulnerability during the movie. Perhaps they were concerned that at Harrison's age, it would seem less like an acknowledgment of our hero's humanity than evidence that he was turning into a crotchety old man.

But I digress, my award for the most embarrassing moment of the film is when his young protege does his Tarzan imitation. The Indy films require a strong suspension of disbelief anyway. Anything that is so wacky that it shocks you back into "why in the world did they film this" makes you start to question everything else and realize that there is a lot of camp that doesn't bear close scrutiny.

Could it have been better? Sure. But it is good enough. I hope that we will see further episodes in the life of Indiana Jones.

Hancock

When you see a movie for the first time, you have an initial visceral reaction. This colors one's overall evaluation of the film - for the better, or for the worse. This movie is fun. The actors are engaging. At the showing I attended, the audience laughed a lot and I really enjoyed myself. Due to this, I'm willing to forgive a lot. Unfortunately, there's a few things that need forgiving.

The title character, Hancock (Will Smith) is not your usual superhero, nor is he truly an anti-hero - he's just a jerk. We first see him drunkenly sleeping on a bench, cussing out the child who awakened him with a tale of ongoing crime. Despite his bad attitude, he goes after the bad guys anyway, but not without millions of dollars worth of ancillary property damage. Everyone hates the foul-mouthed, drunken, grimy superhero and he tries to pretend he doesn't care.

His life turns around when he saves the life of Ray Embury (Jason Bateman) a PR man with a heart of gold, who in gratitude decides to help Hancock with his image. He even takes him home to meet his wife (Charlize Theron) and son. His wife takes an instant dislike to Hancock but he continues to work with him.

Then comes the plot twist (I won't spoil it for you) where the whole focus of the movie changes, and Hancock begins to learn more about his origins. At this point more holes appear in the plot. Some of these can be explained away (though I should get a Marvel comics no-prize for it) and some can't. The mythos is not well developed and the film appears rushed. I have heard that 30 min. of the movie was cut and I wonder whether some essential exposition was left out. It's better to not try to think too much about the ending. I still would recommend the movie - it's a lot of fun, but the latter part doesn't hold up so well.

The Shape of Things to Come

The Energy Crunch by Dana Bridges

We are all worried about the oil crisis and certainly my van's drinking habit has become an expensive item, but the real problem is an energy crisis. Unlike many countries, America *has* a lot of oil, #&\$%-loads of it. The problem is that we are wasting it by burning it up for energy. What we need is energy: one place to get it is in earth orbit.

Other countries are revisiting the idea of space-based solar power. The idea has been kicked around by NASA since at least the 70's, but was felt to be too expensive. American scientist Peter Glaser is often credited with introducing the idea (outside of the SF community) in 1968. Now with lower payload costs and higher oil prices there has been a renewal of interest.

A single kilometer-wide band of geosynchronous Earth orbit experiences enough solar flux in one year to nearly equal the amount of energy contained within all known recoverable conventional oil reserves on Earth today." - Pentagon's National Security Space Office 2007 report.

Japan's space agency JAXA has announced plans to place a solar array in space and transmit power via microwave to a collecting station on the ground by 2030. They are currently testing a small scale prototype of the transmission process using a 2.4 meter transmission antenna to beam power 50 meters to a rectifying antenna, which converts the microwaves into electricity as a first step in their research.

China and India have plans under development and Russia and the EU have expressed interest as well, according to the Pentagon's report.

America is not at the forefront of space technology any more, but it would not take long for us to catch up. It would be expensive but it would be a wise investment. A country with unlimited energy will be rich, and every one of its citizens will be able to have a higher standard of living.

Imagine a future in which we obtain our clean energy from space and *export* our *surplus* oil to countries around the world. Take that OPEC!

It will take a change of attitude to adopt the long view. One of the few ways that a monarchy is preferable to elected leaders, is that the monarch might start a project that would bear fruit 20 years later, while elected officials are worried about their re-election and have to show a benefit before they are elected to another term.

I remember singing filk songs in the late 70's about solar power stations in space. A verse of the classic "Home on LaGrange" follows...

*We don't need no oil, or a Tokamak coil.
Solar stations provide Earth with juice.
Power beams are sublime, so nobody will mind.
If we cook the occasional goose.*

*Home, home on LaGrange,
Where the space debris always collects.
We possess, so it seems,
Two of man's greatest dreams...
Solar power and zero-G sex.*

*Words: Bill Higgins and Barry Gehm c. 1978
Music: "Home on the Range"*

I just never thought that 30 years later we would be no closer.

MidSouthCon Beginnings by Greg Bridges

The last few years now and again there have been discussions of Midsouthcon's origins. I realized that with the deaths of Dal Coger, Claude Saxon, Darrell C. Richardson, and various gaffations that for the most part there were only a few other people that were around when things began with what is now Midsouthcon.

Midsouthcon is at its core a literary Science Fiction convention, at least the con committee that worked on it from the beginning had the intention of making it that, with the emphasis on literary - authors, editors, artists, etc. Science Fiction conventions in general have their origins in SF fandom which began in the last 1920's with *Amazing Stories* magazine, etc. The first SF cons were in the 1930's and I suspect you can find more about that in the Wikipedia.

Memphis Fandom got restarted in 1970 (after a brief small group here in the early 1940's was dissolved upon being Drafted for WWII) with the formation of the Mid-South Fantasy Association by Dr. Darrell C. Richardson, Tom Foster, Claude Saxon, myself and others. It was primarily focused on the literary aspects of SF altho discussions of other genres that have derived from SF writing - comics, SF movies and television - often occurred.

Most of us in MSFA were active in SF Fandom by reading and contributing to vs fanzines, via Amateur Press Associations (APAs) such as Southern Press Alliance (SFPA). We were later in contact with Meade Frierson's Southern Fandom Confederation (SFC) which was formed to support SF Fandom in the South shortly after MSFA's founding. Many of us attended Southern Cons - Deepsouthcon, and Worldcons, etc. At those cons I'd often see Meade and he'd always ask WHEN is Memphis going to have a con?

Throughout that time I was working full time and going to college, I couldn't see myself having the time to put on a con. Then, too, by the mid 1970's some of the people active in MSFA such as James W. Harris had gaffated. Dr. Dalvan Coger had joined MSFA early on and tho he was always supportive, working as a History Professor at U of M, he didn't have the time to set up and run a new

con. Dr. Darrell C. Richardson was in a similar position working as an Editor for the Baptist

Brotherhood as well as his many other activities, tho he too was supportive.

An early member of MSFA was P. L. Caruthers who remained active in MSFA till she moved to Little Rock then to Alabama. She was active in SFPA and in SFC, attending what cons there were in the south at the time - mostly Deepsouthcons and relaxicons known as Halfacons which were put on in various SF Fan cities.

As I remember Halfacons were put on in New Orleans by Stvn Carlberg and Don Markstein (neither of whom now live in NOLA). P.L. was friends with them thru their zines, in SFPA where the question of a Memphis Con came up. Stvn and Don suggested they help P.L. do a Halfacon in Memphis!

So with P.L. doing most of the ground work in Memphis they put on Stvn and Don's Halfcon in Memphis in 1977. It should have been P.L, Stvn and Don's Halfacon considering she did most of the work on getting it done. We members of MSFA helped with putting out flyers and publicity then getting things done at the con, etc.

Halfacons were what are called relaxicons - with little or no programming, guests, etc. to keep down the costs but still have a good time for SF fans to get together (a good example of that nowadays is Cave Con in Cave City, KY). I do seem to remember a small movie room and dealers room. Stvn Carlberg and Don Markstein served as what might be called Fan Guests from NOLA. It was a fun time for all of us. P.L. calligraphed the name tags on a deck of cards with the number of attendees getting about halfway into a second deck of cards - about 75 attendees.

That was Memphis's first SF Con. Soon after this several people working on that Halfacon started talking about wanting to do a more traditional SF with guests, artshow, programming etc. In 1978 Tom Johnson and Louis Armour got together with P.L. Caruthers to do a con, then during their brainstorming, Tom came up with the name for

the con - Just Imagicon, which is from the 1930's British SF musical movie Just Imagine. They scheduled the con for May 1979.

The three of them - Tom, Louis and P.L. - did most of the early planning such as getting a contract with the Hotel, setting the date and contacting guests, etc. As the MSFA group learned of it we pitched in as we could in various ways, mostly disseminating flyers locally, making sure the national Fanpubs would know of the con, etc. Louis Armour even put together a 16mm short that ran as ad on a local TV station.

Tom and Louis were a bit over ambitious, esp. in their choice of hotel, the Rivermont. At this time the Peabody was closed so that the Rivermont was the most expensive hotel in town - in room rates and in Facilities costs. They were also over ambitious in inviting guests, having L.Sprague and Catherine de Camp, Kelly Freas, and Theodore Sturgeon with his wife, as well as others such as the SFWA Secretary (Peter Pautz), Bob Asprin, Grant Carrington, etc.

It was a fine SF con, enjoyed by all. The break even point in paid attendance was to be over 500 and, more importantly, needed room nights at the Rivermont was 175 or so room nights to get the facilities free (as I remember). What Just Imagicon got was an actual attendance of 350 and room nights of about 75 or 80. Since they did not bring in enough to cover their costs, they had to pay full price for the facilities. It was quite a shock for Tom and Louis. Louis had to get his father in law to pay the difference as he had co-signed the hotel contract. Tom wore himself down to the extent that he never recovered, his poorly controlled diabetes causing him to remain ill off and on until he died in Dec. of 1979 of heart failure.

SOOO, after that, most of us were a bit taken aback. By this time Nancy Collins (later to write SUNGLASSES AFTER DARK) had become active in MSFA and moved from Jonesboro, Ark where she had been in college at Arkansas State U. to Memphis which made it easier to attend fan events and MSFA meetings. She said "why don't we just do another relaxicon?" The rest of us said "Sure!" and so was born those little cons of the early 80's that she chaired - Imaginitzacon and Imagicon. P.L. Caruthers helped at first with Imaginitzacon before moving away. With P.L.'s direction, these

next 2 cons we did were held at the same hotel used for Halfacon - the Holiday Inn Overton Square. We held Imaginitzacon in Sept. 1980.

After that con Nancy started planning another - Imagicon - for Sept. 1981. These cons increased incrementally in membership each year. After Imagicon, Nancy Collins moved to NOLA. We looked at each other and said, well there's not much else we can do with that name. After discussion we all really wanted to use the name Midsouthcon BUT Andy Purcell had put on Midsouthcon I in Huntsville, AL in 1981. We had heard he had no intention of doing another one so when I ran into him at a con about that time, he said that was true and when I asked him if we might run with Midsouthcon, he said he had no problem with that (what the other Huntsville, AL fans thought - I don't know)

So we did, BUT with Andy Purcell having done a Midsouthcon I and the fact that the first Deepsouthcon in 1965 had been called Midsouthcon I, we felt that there had been enough Midsouthcon I's so we started Memphis' Midsouthcons with number 2. We planned our Con for August 1982, right before Worldcon.

And that is the way the convention known as Midsouthcon got its name.

Addenda - There are a few that say, "well, the name is different so its not the same" but everyone that worked on MSC II worked on the previous Imagicon - most worked on all of the others, from planning to publicity to executing the event. I say its the same, just with a different name! - GEB

Announcements

Club Meetings

The MSSFFA (the 501 (c) (3) version of MSFA) meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at the Central (Main) Library in Memphis, located at 3030 Poplar. Meetings start at 6:30 pm.

If you are closer to Jackson, TN the next meeting of our local SF club will be Sunday, July 20th at Perkins restaurant at 3 pm.

Letters

Unfortunately, as this is a re-start, we have none. Please rectify this before our next issue :-)
Letters should be sent to:

Memphen
c/o The Bridges
141 Stonehaven Circle
Jackson, TN 38305

Or email 5bridges@charter.net

Submissions

Please help us by sending in your thoughts, ideas, reviews, fannish news, articles, etc. We need you!

Please send all submissions or announcements to:

Memphen
c/o The Bridges
141 Stonehaven Circle
Jackson, TN 38305

Or email 5bridges@charter.net

The Jackson Connection

Since the inception of MSFA, the membership has (with a few exceptions - see the article on the origins of MidSouthCon) consisted primarily of Memphians. Thus the name of this zine - Memphen :-)

Jackson, TN, however, has grown large enough to support its own SF community. There are several people in Jackson and surrounding areas who simply can't make the trek into Memphis, but nonetheless would like to participate. Therefore we intend to try to grow a branch of MSFA (ok, MSSFFA) here in Jackson.

Greg Bridges, one of the founders of the original MSFA has lived here in Jackson for 12 years now and with 3 young children (not to mention the cost of gas) travel to Memphis for meetings has become increasingly problematic. We still plan to go in once in a while, but most of our meetings and parties will be here in Jackson. Memphians are welcome of course, but most likely will have the same trouble with traveling back and forth as we have had.

The initial few meetings may move from one day of the week to another as we need to figure out what works best for our group members. We plan to emphasize the social aspects of the club - no need for Robert's rules at this branch :-)

Please consider coming by. You can call for more info if you like at (731) 664-6730.

Dana

Thats all folks...