

PROBE

180



SPECIAL 50th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

PROBE 180

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June 2019

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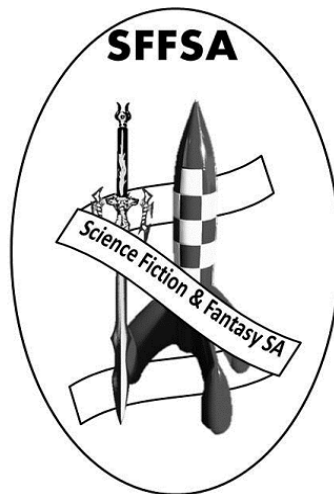
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Probe is typed by Gail Jamieson and other contributors.

Thanks to Michael Heitel who kindly requested the German SF artists for the pictures which appear in this issue. They are Stas Rosin, Andreas Schweitzke and Lothar Bauer



Layout is by Gail Jamieson and Ian Jamieson

Created in MS Word

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Contents

This issue of PROBE has far too many individual contributors for me to list them in this contents page. As all of the contributors know, they have kindly shared their reminiscences and feelings about SFFSA and Science Fiction and Fantasy (or been nagged to provide said reminiscences) and I hope that it will be good to see pictures of many of the names that have appeared in this fanzine over the years.

We have contributions from overseas correspondents and from the founders of the club, Tex and Rita Cooper. They can be proud of the baby they produced in 1969 and which has now reached its' half century

I've used an editors' prerogative and added a couple of the 99-word "wormholes" that we have written at various "MiniCons". I've chosen two that I enjoyed.

There is also a page or so with pictures of the T-shirts that the club has produced since 1994.

I've included the very first cover of PROBE as well as a "Blast from the Past"

You will also see three pictures which are a selection of those which were kindly sent from German artists on the request of Michael Heitel who has helped us with many covers over the last ten years or so. We thank him for his help.

And the Golden Anniversary of the Nova Short Story Competition.

There are also a couple of pictures of speakers who have come to our monthly meetings and entertained us. The usual books and magazines received are listed.

And as one of our contributors has said - I hope SFFSA is still going when we deliver our issue of PROBE to Mars!

Editorial

Gail

I joined SFSA in 1973, the year after I left school. I saw a small notice in the "Sunday Times" advertising the Club's Short Story competition. I've always been an avid reader and as my Dad only read Science Fiction and non-fiction I'd been reading Asimov and Pohl and Clarke etc for years. I had enjoyed writing essays at school and decided to try my hand at a story. I wrote a little story about a pair of intelligent dolphins who were studying man, in an Oceanarium. It got into the top 20 of the competition and I joined the club. I only started going to meetings in 1976 when I became mobile and I felt at home straight away. I must have joined the committee



almost immediately because when Tex Cooper, a founding member of the club and the then current Editor of PROBE decided that he was stepping down from Probe, I volunteered to take over. Up to that time PROBE had been produced using stencils and a Roneo machine. I found this impossible and being a student at Wits University managed to persuade Mrs. Wallace of the University Print shop to print PROBE 38 for us. Now I could use a typewriter and pritt stick and produced PROBE on A-4 pages, which she turned into the A-5 magazine which she printed for many years until she retired.

1973 was a year of changes for us as we held our first meeting at Total House in Braamfontein and not at someone's home. And annual subscriptions went up to R5.00 per annum!

I edited PROBE until issue 66 in January 1987, just before my son was born and I decided I needed to take a break. Then Tony Davis, Deirdre Byrne, Derek Hohls, Neil van Niekerk, Cedric Abrahams, and the late Liz Simmonds took turns to produce PROBE. In August 2006 Liz handed it back to me and I produced issues 131 to 143. Then Carla Martins took the hot seat and edited issues 144 to 158. Then finally at issue 159 I took over again and this is issue 180 produced in the year of the Fiftieth anniversary of the club which has now become Science Fiction and Fantasy South Africa.

I've had a great amount of fun and hope to continue doing so!

Chairman's Note

Andrew Jamieson

As most of you know, I am the current chairman of SFFSA (formerly SFSA, ah, one of the many things that have changed with the club). I have been chairman for the last nine years (this is my tenth year), and I have been on the committee for at least five more years beyond that. For the past several years I was convinced to write a Chairman's Note for the quarterly Probe fanzine our club produces. In it I have given my thoughts on many things, highlighted new technology, discussed my favourite TV series of the moment, and in general just put some of my thoughts on paper for others to read (hopefully enjoyably).



So, if you have read the last Probe you would know that I have already started speaking about the club's 50th anniversary and how I have basically been a member my entire life! That's quite a long time now. As such, instead of my usual Chairman's Note where I write about something current, I thought that for this edition I would share some of my thoughts and memories of the club over the past 45 years.

I do not recall what my first meetings may have been like, where I believe the members would meet in homes to talk all things science fiction and fantasy. No, my first memories are of Total House. Haha, I do wonder just how much my father remembers of all this, does his recollection match mine? Does he remember or know what his children used to get up to there? I remember that in order to get to the basement, you had to take some escalators down, and I recall my sister and I were small enough to fit into the middle partition between the up and down parts so that we could slide all the way down to the bottom. Ah the simple joys of children. At the bottom was the gallery for Total House. The walls were covered in a dark brown, furry fabric upon which various bits of art were hung. My sister and I used to run around the gallery area, running our hands through the furriness, making shapes, admiring them, then rubbing them out and making new ones. Behind the gallery and below the escalators was the main open area where we would show the movies. My dad would often take my sister and I into Hillbrow to go get the 16mm tape reels that would be used on a projector that we had (no idea where from, my dad probably

knows). Sometimes they had fun trying to get the tape and the projector to work together properly, things didn't always go according to plan, but it would always work out in the end. Oddly enough I don't remember any of the movies that we should down there, but I recall the furry walls quite vividly, amazing what the brain chooses to remember.

I don't recall much of the monthly meetings that were held, though I do recall visiting the home of Louis Lambrecht (haha, amazing that I even remember his full name), probably because there was a lot of us, a lot of children as well, and Louis had a nice big garden that we could all play around in. That... and because I remember my father would allow me to throw knives at a board in the garden. I was pretty good, better than some adults, always nice for a youngster. So whilst not much on the normal meetings, the big conventions held at Wits University, now that seems to bring back quite a lot of memories: Getting there earlier than everyone else; having to often find guards to let us into Senate House Basement; going into the main area where there was a big open space and a cafeteria on the right; about 4 stories of building above us, only for us to descend a level to the basement area. We had 2, 3 or sometimes even 4 theatres that we would use to show movies throughout the Friday and Saturday. We would have to setup the stalls, posters, arrows showing where to go find the convention, and as kids we would often run around and just enjoy being in a strange new place. Sometimes we would sit outside manning the stalls, other times we would watch the movies with the rest of the punters. Then at lunch time we would eat from the sandwiches that had been made and go exploring the mystery that was a university campus.

Two things always come to mind whenever I think back on those days. The first was the time my father was holding a raffle, and asked me to please pick a number from a bag. And low and behold the number I picked... was mine! Haha, that drew a few laughs and obviously a comment from my father. Still, I got to choose the book that I wanted, so all's fair in love and war. The other was the time we were showing *The Green Slime* (1968) in the theatre at the very end of the hallway. It had wooden panelling everywhere, and you could sneak in fairly easily if you wanted to, and my sister and I wanted to. If you have seen *The Green Slime* since then and you may know that it is quite a cheesy, decently made old movie that has some very fake special effects. Still, when you are just a youngster, sneaking into a dark room, and then watching these horrid, green, slimy things attacking humans, you can imagine that it frightened the bejesus out of us! We snuck out just as quickly as we had snuck in. To this day, and after having seen the movie as an adult, I still wonder what exactly it was that scared us so badly, as the movie really is in the C grade variety. It is sometimes odd the things that affect you as a youngster. I do recall fondly my memories of the conventions we used to hold in Senate House Basement, they were fun and we had quite a bit of freedom to do as we please back then.

My mother divorced my father many, many years ago, so most of my time in the SFFSA club has mostly been with my father and my sister, and it has been a very enjoyable part of my life. I've been into science fiction and fantasy since very early in my life when my parents used to have books in the house that I would read, even at school. Month after month, year after year I, and most of my family, have been part of the larger family that is the Science Fiction and Fantasy club. I started as a youngster, helped my dad organise many a convention, went to lots of meetings at the homes of many club members, grew into adulthood, probably with a lot of other members too, all the while still enjoying the entity that is the club. It has been something that has literally been there throughout my entire life, and I have really enjoyed most of it. It is a comfortable place where I can go, I know so many people there (not all, my dad is much better at that) that I can just relax and chat about anything... it doesn't even have to be about Science Fiction or Fantasy!

Being part of the SFFSA club has certainly been fun, meeting and talk to like-minded people is part of fun I have. Let us see where the next 50 years takes us.

Tex and Rita Cooper – Founders of SFSA – on the occasion of Tex's 80th

Voices from the past – from Rita Cooper



Fifty years ago, Tex, an avid and life-long Science Fiction fan was frustrated as he did not know anyone who shared his enthusiasm. He also wanted to discuss Science Fiction and Fantasy books, and we knew no one who even knew what Science Fiction was about!

As I had a background in Marketing, I said, "Why don't you write a letter to the Sunday Times? Say you would like to get together with anybody else who is also

interested in Science Fiction.” So Tex did write a letter – very laboriously on his typewriter. The letter was published – and the rest, as they say, is history! We were astounded at the number of letters we received, and I became the unofficial secretary, as I answered each letter and gave the date of the first meeting to be held at our home in Pretoria.

I truly can’t remember how many people came to the inaugural meeting, but I do remember thinking what a motley group of very nice people had gathered in our living room! The meetings and numbers grew, and as books was one of the main attractions of the meetings, it was decided to start a basic library of books, donated by Tex and other members.

Then Tex wrote a second letter to the Sunday Times to thank them for publishing the letter and saying the SF Club had now been established. This resulted in another wave of interest from enthusiastic fans, who all thought they were the only strange people in SA who were interested in SF!

Tex also began a newsletter, which he compiled, then typed up on wax sheets using two fingers, and finally using an old ‘Gestetner’ copying machine he bought, he would put ink on each plate and then put paper down and print out the copies of the newsletters, each page rolled out one by one by hand. When the ink was dry, we would spend days collating and stapling the pages together to make up the newsletter, and later the magazine. We still have the giant stapler Tex bought! Of course, this also grew, another competition was held to decide on a name, and the newsletters morphed into Probe magazine.

As there were several budding authors in the Club, it was decided to have a short story competition, open to the public, which also attracted new members. It is so gratifying to see that something we began so long ago is still going strong, and that the short story competition is still being held and is successful.

Later, the idea of having a national convention became popular, and so did the Club quizzes. Does anybody remember the SF quiz competition where Tex and Barry Ronge went head to head? I can’t remember the subject matter, but I know was a great evening!

Soon the club not only had a name, a mobile box of books...er, sorry, library; but also had a competition for an emblem (drawings featured in the last Probe) as well as robust monthly meetings where we had bring and share suppers, followed by movies hired and shown on a big reel-to reel projector. Many are the stories that come to mind of these events! Anyone out there remember driving out into the bundu where Bernie Ackerman lived, and we planned to have a braai at his parent’s home? Only problem, there was no proper braai, so we ended up using part of Bernie’s bed springs to do the cooking on the braai! Bernie remained an enthusiastic member

even when he eventually went to live in the Cheshire home, which was too far away for meetings. Then there were meetings where the battery on the projector went flat, and as there were several engineers in the club, it was not a problem – they always improvised and even used somebody's car battery if necessary.

I can also remember the “bring and share suppers” at our home. I soon realised that all the bachelors only brought bottles, so always had extra bread rolls and cold meats in my fridge to make up the deficits. It was always a place where families were welcome too – anybody remember Felicity Gentle and family? Then Niels Christensen who lived in PE, but used to come up to Pretoria for the AGM or special meetings, then there was Kevin, the SF artist who did so many covers for Probe, and Simon and Mary Scott in whose home we held many meetings, and where my second daughter walked alone for the first time! Our youngest daughter used to lie down on her blanket and pillow and go to sleep while the meeting went on at the Scott's home. I also remember a very young Gail, who was so enthusiastic! Glad it has lasted so long – thanks Gail! Of course, there was also Ian, and I remember thinking it was a tossup between Ian and Robert Reilly, who joined the club soon after arriving in South Africa from Scotland, as to whose accent I could understand better! These meetings were the heart of the club.

I realised afterward that I had also forgotten to mention how Tex kept up the international interest in the Club, as he started sending copies of Probe to overseas fanzine clubs in exchange for their magazines. He was also always interested in the Worldcons as well.

It must be very difficult for the current young generation to realise how isolated SF fans were at that time, with no internet, no TV in SA showing movies, no VCR even! SF books were tucked away in a corner of the bookshop with a few other strange titles or maybe, found under the children's section under fantasy and fairy tales.

In later years, Robert said it was one of the things that made them feel so welcome in South Africa and allowed them to settle down so well. Sadly, as time has passed, Simon and Robert are no longer with us, and Niels and others are scattered around the world, as are two of our daughters. Our eldest daughter, Debbie, now lives in New York state with her husband, and the youngest Tracey, is married and lives in Texas, USA. We are blessed that our third daughter Janet, still lives in Pretoria near us.

These days due to health problems, Tex is not able to type or to read his beloved SF books, but he remains an enthusiastic SF fan and supporter of the Club. Thank you for always sending us a copy of the magazine, Probe. It remains a highlight when I collect mail from our box and Tex sees ‘your’, or is ‘our’ magazine? Thank you to all concerned for keeping the flag flying so high.

Congratulations on 50 years! Well done to you all. May there be many more enthusiastic Science Fiction fans in South Africa who will keep Tex's dream alive for many more years.

Tony Davis –Chairman, Editor, and International Correspondent (Canada)



50 years of SFSA/SFFSA- a great achievement. Fandom can be a mercurial trend but our fascination with sf and fantasy and that proverbial "Sense of Wonder" held it together. I came to South Africa from Canada as a journalist in 1976 and I recall seeing a newspaper article with reference to a science fiction group with contact information. That led me to the Brunettes and Jamiesons. We met at Gail's flat and I had the pleasure of meeting other like-minded fans, Tex,

Elaine, Felicity, Simon, Louis, Janis, and many other names spring to mind. We had meetings, a library and a clubzine **Probe**. The social networking was wonderful. Being a journalist at **The Star** helped in my being able to promote our meetings. SFSA evolved from house meetings to public venues, like Total House in Braamfontein where we'd screen films and present talks, sometimes with academic guests. This led in turn to our first - South Africa's first – science fiction convention at Wits University in August 1978. I edited **Probe** for a few issues and at that time the calibre of some of our annual short story competition entries prompted me to recommend a "best of" publication. The Best of South African Science Fiction, Volume One, produced in 1982. It was sold at several bookstores in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The Directorate of Publications got a copy as did Texas A&M University in the States. I also sent a copy to Richard Geis' "Science Fiction Review" in the US as well. The book came to the attention of South Africa's **Frontline** magazine which had a nice write-up ("More than a matter of bug-eyed monsters") in its May 1982 issue. We later arranged for the national magazine **Scope** to print our first and second place short story competition winners in the February 13, 1987 issue – "Funeral Pyre" and "Playweb".

That mix of social and public meetings helped to keep the club going. Our monthly committee meetings were enjoyable as were the cakes Felicity provided at those Germiston gatherings. I also worked at the Chamber of Mines where I came across an sf notable there– a former SFSA club member from Mondeor, Claude Nunes. Claude and his wife Rhoda had authored several sf books (such as **Rebirth** in Ace paperbacks) and I took Claude a hardcover copy of his latest novel (**The Sky**

Trapeze) to autograph. His colleagues were amused by this and he autographed the book to me along with a note "I didn't know anyone had bought a copy" (I didn't have the heart to tell him it was a review copy.) I've since obtained Claude's original typed manuscript of **Rebirth** at a science fiction convention in the United States. All fond memories indeed. Now back in Canada, I still send **Probe** a copy of my "Ramblings" column from time to time.

Here's to another 50 years SFSA/SFFSA!

Lloyd and Yvonne Penny - In disguise – very long time Canadian L.O.C. writer



First of all, happy 50th Anniversary to Science Fiction and Fantasy South Africa, and to its members. In this world where interests change so easily, the ability to keep an interest like SF and Fantasy writing going, and have a club where you can all gather to share that interest is to be valued, and for fifty years? That is amazing, and should be cherished

Keep it going, and promote it to the heavens.

With this past December, I can say that I have been involved in science fiction fandom for 41 years. It has been overall great fun, with a variety of activities to take part in, and sometimes, excel in. I date back to 1977, but got into science fiction fanzines and its fandom in the early 80s. I got in through local publishing fans and our local amateur press association, TAPA. I was a journalism student at the time, so the idea of being in an APA was a natural idea. Through the APA, I learned about fanzines, from the APA manager and some of the members. I also learned much from senior fanzine fans like Mike Glicksohn, who showed me his extensive fanzine collection. One thing I learned was just how far away some of the zines came from, not just the US and Canada, but the UK, Australia, and sometimes further. I certainly learned that fandom was more than just local, or provincial, or even national, but international. The love of science fiction in all its forms spans the world.

My memory is suspect, but I think it was Tony Davis whom I met all those years ago who got me on the mailing list. I was responding to every zine I received with a letter of comment, which meant some substantial expenses with paper, envelopes, typewriter ribbons and postage. I cannot remember when first I received *Probe*, but I think it's been close to 30-35 years or so. I discovered many new writers, new

events, new artists...more proof that this fandom thing truly is everywhere, and so busy in SA.

Recollections of issues of Probe? Well, the cartoons were always new to me, and artwork is always desired in fanzines. A lot of the fiction was specific to SA culture, so the fiction told me something of the facts of SA. I also learned about SA fandom, and how like other fandoms, there are conventions and fannish get-togethers. SA fandom may look different, but reading Probe showed me that fans are very similar to fans elsewhere. We have our common interest, but we enjoy it more when we can share it with friends.

Fifty years of that common interest, and sharing it with friends, is a major achievement. Hang on to it for as long as you can. I am very pleased to have been a part of that, and I hope that relationship goes on for a long time to come. Happy Birthday, SFFSA!

Mark Sandham



My earliest memory of a stimulating talk at a SFSA event goes back to the 1980s. James Sey, then a lecturer in English at Vista University, spoke at the first mini-con I attended. James's skull was shaven; his skin was blindingly white; his clothes were Goth-black; and he wore black shades indoors. Someone asked him to define postmodernism, and he replied, 'Culture feeding in itself'. This remains a most useful definition.

SFSA is a talented bunch

One day Cedric Abrahams arrived in a shriekingly yellow electric car that he had built from a kit. The car was not subject to the law of inertia. It could shoot off at high speed, and was preternaturally silent. He gave a fine account of it to the Club, and was mercilessly revenge-heckled by the members.

A feature of SFSA is its sheer competence as a club: the high standard of organization of events, the exemplary e-mail communications – clear, literate, and considerate --, and the calm efficiency of the members who set up the audio-visual equipment.

SFSA is a talented bunch.

By his own admission, Digby Ricci is not an SF aficionado, and yet he is the Club's most frequent end-of-year speaker. This shows how tolerant the members are, but also what a fine speaker Digby is. To hear him in full rhetorical flight is a treat. His addresses display passion, a wide and detailed knowledge of the topic, and great fluency. Digby honours his audience by preparing his addresses meticulously, and by making the effort to attire himself stylishly

Memories of SFSA – Felicity Gentle

Frank, Felicity and Kathleen Gentle



The first meeting of S.F.S.A. that Frank and I attended, was in June 1969 at the home of Simon and Mary Scott. We had seen a small piece written in a newspaper and being a science fiction fan since discovering SF when my father was reading a book, one of the very few, from our public library I just had to see what it was all about. Frank had to come with because he was the driver at that time and although not very familiar with SF, soon proved to be a loyal fan.

S.F.S.A. got its official name a while later, after a vote was taken from members of the Club at that time. Man had just landed on the moon and S.F. was really coming true, and I see this happening more and more these days Not many people were there, I think Tex and Rita were there, Simon and Mary, Frank and I, and that is all I can recollect. After that first meeting there was no turning back, and many trips were made to Pretoria to Tex's home, where headquarters were established for some time and I was made secretary, taking minutes, typing them (on a small portable typewriter --where was a PC and the Internet when I needed it). It was a bit difficult as I had to use the post office to send my work to Tex. Just as well the post office worked better in those days.

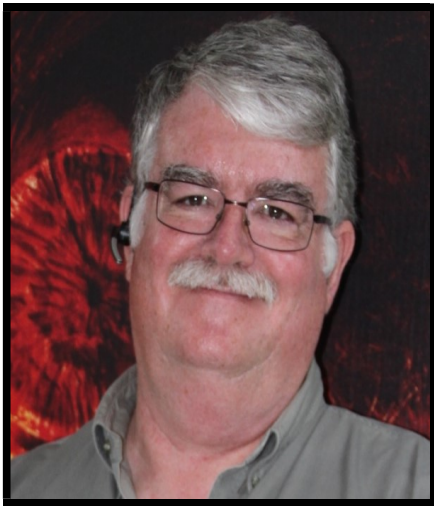
The Club went from strength to strength, gathering new members almost monthly and I remember typing and sending out notices of meetings and it used to take me a whole morning to get them into their envelopes and addressed. I think that by then I had a home PC and was better able to churn the notices out.

We had meeting in various venues, usually homes of members of the club. We often saw movies shown with the old time projectors and big reels of film and a wall for the screen. One such wall had wallpaper on it and although I don't know what the movie was I do remember how peculiar it was with a constant background of little flowers.

The first Convention was a most wondrous thing to me because I didn't know what to expect, and subsequent conventions were just as well enjoyed, although they contained much more work as we started serving tea and coffee during the intervals and then arranging the cheese and wine parties. These Conventions were held at Wits University. Missed a few talks and movies doing this but I could see it was enjoyed by all who attended. The cheese and wine party involved a great deal of shopping beforehand by Gail and I. Visits to the Observatory were also arranged.

When Gail joined the club, it was like a little ball of fire had taken over, and she has done more for S.F.S.A than a few people joined together. Just sorry we can't go to meetings any more as Frank and I are now too old for travelling very far and also do not go out at night. Sandton is a foreign country to us. Anyway, we enjoyed it while it lasted and, thanks to dear departed Simon, I was given life membership and still receive my Probe regularly.

Remembering SFSA – AL Du Pisani



I first became aware of SFSA in 1988 or 1989, while I was doing my National Service in Pretoria. But, since I did not have transport, I did not take it any further. The second time, in about 1990, I was in Johannesburg, and once again without transport. So it was only in 1992, once I had transport, and heard about SFSA the third time, that I attended my first meeting.

The only person I can clearly remember from that meeting is Norman. I joined immediately — to get access to the library. I joined the committee in 1994, this time to get early

access to the review books. Neither plan worked out as anticipated.

A couple of years later the committee did an investigation, and found that while people joined for the library, they stayed for the people.

I was Secretary for nine years. I served a second spell of about eighteen months a couple of years later. One of the things I had to do was to keep the membership list. I

started off taking care of a list of about 200 people and organizations. I ended up with a list of about 100 people and organizations.

Our club's membership collapsed as the existing and potential members moved overseas, got busy with other things, and as more and more alternatives became available. And every time we lost a more or less regular venue, some people stopped coming to meetings.

I can remember being envious of David Ralph, who had a contact in Canada who sent him VHS tapes of the latest Star Trek episodes as they aired. These days I can watch an episode of the newest TV series within 24 hours after it aired for the first time.

I stayed for the people.

Every now and then we went off on an excursion of some kind. To Tshipise in 2002 to watch a total eclipse. Camping at Magaliespark. Going to Tswaing. Not always entirely pleasant experiences, but memorable.

So it is that I went to Worldcon three times, each time with a party of SFSA people.

Strangely enough each Worldcon trip changed me in some way – Getting exposed to different things, and to doing things differently, changed me in ways that resulted in changes back home.

1998. I ended up spending the best part of a month in the USA. I arrived early, and went to a regional convention in Kentucky. Rivercon. No longer exists, because the organizers decided to call it a day. In many ways the highlight of the trip. Unfortunately, I have never since attended any convention that I enjoyed as much as that one. And I am still corresponding with some of the people I met there, and who took care of a stranger.

Rivercon had my kind of people. I regret that I did not have the money to attend the final one – I was explicitly invited. Heard later I had some notoriety as “The South African who came to Rivercon”.

I have dined out on my experiences flying from Louisville, via Chicago to Baltimore. Not the first leg, nothing exciting happened. But the second leg....

In any case I arrived in Baltimore, and tried to check in to the hotel – And they had no reservation for me. After waiting in the lobby for a while, Ian and Gail arrived, and they managed to get my booking sorted out. See, I have a surname that is extremely easy to misspell – And when I arrived at the hotel with my passport, their booking was for a misspelled version of my name.

Bucconeer – I have mixed feelings about the convention. It was a disappointment after Rivercon, in that I did not enjoy myself as much. Many memorable experiences, including Kaffeeklatches with two authors I liked. A Fosfax dinner where I sat at a table with two shy people – we had nothing to talk about.

It was here that the SFSA attending party developed the habit of eating breakfast together – Start off the day with food and the presence of each other. These very large conventions can be both very exciting and very lonely experiences. Contact with people you know can be essential for survival.

At the briefing for Con newbies the 1 2 3 rule for Con survival was recommended– Have 1 shower, 2 meals and 3 hours of sleep per day. (Since changed to the 124 rule, since people are older and need more sleep.)

This was also the first time I experienced that people who would not admit that they knew Afrikaans in South Africa, would want to talk to me in Afrikaans, in the foreign land.

And then the convention was over, and I climbed into a car and drove around the USA for two weeks. Waking up each morning knowing not what I was going to do that day nor where I was going to sleep. But I survived, even enjoyed myself. Saw a bunch of interesting places. Met some interesting people. Many less than I had hoped for.

And then I came back. With a suitcase of books and some new attitudes. After I returned, I ended up buying a new car and a washing machine. I also started playing games with Liz and company.

I knew Liz before then, but the games playing after I got exposed in the USA, was what sealed our friendship. We played games for about a decade and a half. On 9/11 I got home, turned on the TV and saw the events in New York. And then had to turn it off and go to Liz to play games that evening. That likely kept me sane. And so we carried on playing games. Some years every Friday evening, some years just during the Public Holidays. And we also interacted at other events.

And then she got cancer and died. I still miss her.

2003. Torcon in Toronto. In many ways the convention was a mess. The program was not yet final when we arrived, and we had to get the day's program every morning, then plan where we were going to. Some good panels and I met some more people I really wanted to. But I also ended up in too many places where I felt distinctly unwelcome, because I was not in the right clique.

But I also met up with people I had met on my previous trip and had a memorable Fosfax dinner, including a very interesting conversation with one of the people I had

sat with during the previous trip, when we had nothing to say to each other. And then there was the party SFSA threw....

I stayed for a couple of days more, among other places going to Niagara Falls. And I stopped over in Zurich for a couple of days on my way back to South Africa.

Unfortunately I had cash flow issues towards the end of my trip, so I only came back with a lot of books and a couple of games. And no Anime. Much less than I had planned for and towards which I had saved.

I started watching Anime seriously as a result of that trip. I got some good advice on what to watch as a beginner at the convention, but then went my own way, with what I could find in South Africa. And it was a lot more than I expected. I thought at first that I would have to buy from Amazon, but between the extremely high postage costs, and the discovery of local shops that would cater to my needs, that plan fell by the wayside.

2007. Japan. I want to go back to Japan. The convention was OK. Unfortunately, some of the experiences that were supposed to be highlights, ended up being unpleasant, as I clearly did not belong to the approved cliques.

One of the unpleasant experiences was when I decided within ten minutes of meeting him, that an author I read and liked was an asshole. And that enough of his attitude permeated his writing, and explained why I had stopped reading him a couple of years earlier. It was funny how many of the authors I met in Japan I ended up disliking. (Not Geoff Landis – An utter professional in all respects. But I have not read any of his books)

I enjoyed Japan and want to visit again. Yokohama. My day trip to Tokyo. The bullet train to Kyoto. Spending some time in Kyoto and surrounds. Taking the sleeper train from Kyoto to Tokyo.

On my way back, I spent a couple of days each in Singapore and Hong Kong. Most people laugh when I say that Hong Kong felt like Johannesburg – Not a place I intend visiting again.

I came back with some tailored clothes, and discovered that I can actually get clothes that fit me made in South Africa as well.

When Sad Puppies boiled up some years later, I had experiences that mirrored some the complaints. Still admire the way the SF establishment managed to turn the story of people seeking fun into a narrative of chauvinism, racism, misogyny and fear of the other. Probably the reason I have utterly no intention of going to any Worldcon ever again.

I do not know if I would have gone alone to the International Astronautical Congress in Cape Town in 2011, if I had not gone to Worldcons in company. Utterly unpleasant travel down. Missing the opening ceremonies. Meeting all sorts of interesting people. Drinking wine with Phillipe, a salesman for SpaceX. Meeting with and talking to the Custodian of the Moon Rock. I still do not know what it was about me that caused him to slip away and then surreptitiously give me a NASA medallion, containing a little bit of metal that had been in space. (They are rare, and he did not want the other people to know that he had some to give.)

It took nearly five days before I realized that these were my kind of people, and that I could walk up to anybody and strike up a conversation.

Ever since I joined SFFSA, I have had good times. I have had utterly lousy times. I had experiences that unexpectedly warmed my heart. I had experiences where a casual comment hurt me, but I could not show it. I have been bored and miserable, but with people I needed to be with. I have looked forward to leaving my loneliness and spending time with people like me. And I have stood in the group and felt apart.

I hope to continue to do so as long as I am able.

Nick Wood -Thanks For Giving Me Over 40 years of Probes!



Congratulations to SFFSA for their 50th Anniversary - and 180 massive issues of Probe!

I was a high school laaitie when I placed in the Top10 in the Nova Competition in 1976, and thrilled to have a first SF publication 'The Minds of Man' appearing in an issue of Probe in 1977.

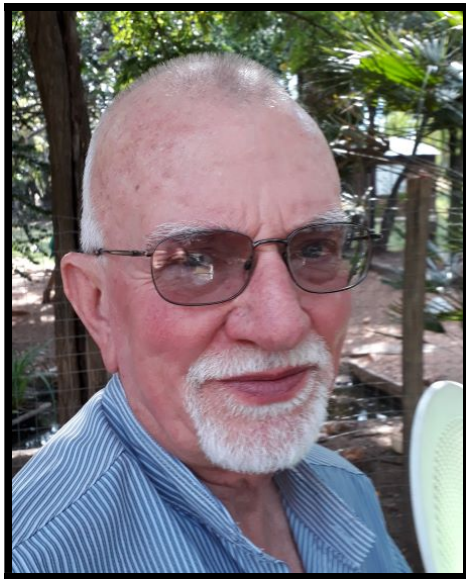
Into the 80s and 90s, the writers of the day I remember were WG Lipsett, Tex Cooper, Elaine Mommsen/Coetzee, Gerard Hope and Liz Simmonds. I managed to win and also place several times in the Top 3 and

Top 10 of the Nova competition, when I started being paid for stories in international SF magazines in the US, UK and Ireland.

Now also a pro-member of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) I've just sold a 3rd novel and have a short story collection coming out in 2020. If I had not been able to practice and hone my writing skills through the SFFSA Nova Competition, I would not be where I am now. So many, many thanks, SFFSA! (As an aside, my favourite editor in the 80s was Gail Brunette :-))

To the next 50 years of SFFSA!

Ian Jamieson – long time chairman and backbone of the club



I joined our club, then SFSA, in the early 1970's, I no longer remember the exact date. Once we had started monthly meetings we met at people's homes and in the beginning we met every two months in Johannesburg and every third month in Pretoria. After a while, however, we realised that the only Pretoria people were the hosts and we eventually decided to hold our meetings in and around Johannesburg.

For a while our meetings started to pull in more people, these were the days before T.V., and we were very lucky in obtaining

Total House, Senate House Basement at Wits, then the Marie Curie Theatre at Wits Medical school and even Cesco's Restaurant. Total house in Braamfontein, always brings back fond memories; the venue was free, and they supplied us with an urn. We brought the tea and coffee. There was also the use of a very modern 16mm projector. The venue could hold 70, or 80 people, but when we showed Ralph Bakshi's "Lord of the Rings" we probably had over 200 visitors. They were almost literally hanging from the ceiling.

And the people in the club, real character, some of them: Tex Cooper, who with his wife Rita, started the club, and was famous for his SF Quizzes: Simon Scott, famous for his ability to sleep anywhere, I remember I saw him once sitting on the floor supported by his hand behind him and sound asleep.: Felicity Gentle, who hosted our committee meetings, which we ran through very quickly so that we could tuck into her delicious buns and scones; Louis Lampbrecht, who was famous for being found inside the innards of some machine or other or halfway up the wall at Senate house attempting to make sound connections, and who made the model of PROBOT, after the drawings of Kai Bosse. Prof Ahmed Wadee, at one time Dean of Wits Medical Faculty, who became known as the "Sticky Bun Man". There were and are plenty more of course – too many too mention.

We have had some oddities at the club, not really surprising considering we are Science Fictions Fans. Two come to mind; the bad movie after the A.G.M. i.e. a movie while not being very good does *not* take itself seriously; and wormholes, which are 99-word stories written by various groups of members at our annual MiniCon.

And I have not even mentioned WorldCons, where anything up to 5000 fans gathered to see, listen and discuss Science Fiction and Fantasy in all its formats, and where you could talk to anyone, anytime.

GREAT MEMORIES – LIVE LONG AND PROSPER SFFSA

Donald Mullany – 50 Years of SFSA ...My Musings



My History and memories of SFSA are all centred around the Nova Award... so perhaps I shall start there. I was in a school play festival when the man doing the makeup mentioned SFSA for the first time. I was squirming under the lamps and I had mentioned that I loved Science Fiction (I called it Sci-Fi then) and was thinking about writing Novels after I left school that next year. "Oh have you heard of the South African club? They have a Writing Competition and everything. Have you thought about joining or sending stuff through?"

I admitted I hadn't.

The man was Barry Ronge and the year was 1981. He brought me through a Probe 49 from his car boot and I was mesmerized by WG Lipsett's "A Piece of Rope" and Elaine Mommsen's "Mtaki". I stopped squirming while I read and my makeup was done in record time. I devoured the rest of the Probe overnight and returned it the next morning. He gave me the contact details of the Club.

All the other SF journals I purchased with my pocket money every Saturday; Asimov's, F&SF, Analogue... all of them said to start writing with Short Stories; learn the craft and keep at it. Here was living proof that people were doing this, just down the road from me, in South Africa... I joined for the year (it was cheaper than the trainfare to the CNA in the Carlton Centre where I had my subscriptions) and got Probe 54 posted to me. I was blown away by 'The Talent Scout' by Richard Loader and 'The Missionary' by Young[Bill Young?] with that issue.

Then... Matric happened, I finished that and my Journeyman-ship with the Weather Bureau from Bethlehem and did a sea tour of the Antarctic for their radio towers before the National Conscription beckoned. I lost touch with my Parents and with the SFSA for awhile. This would be a recurring set of circumstances throughout my relationship with SFSA, I still had not actually met anyone from the Society. Jenny brought me through many years later for the first time.

When I had saved enough to put myself through 'Varsity in 1986, I reconnected with the Society and encourage the Tolkien Society members to join as well. I took a Country Membership for Probe, and it used to pitch up at the UND SRC mailbox. We would all take turns with it on an honour card system. I started a correspondence with Claude Nunes who had the most beautiful prose I had ever read, and met up regularly with Bernie Ackerman at the Cheshire Home just down the road from me. Gerard Hope and Nick Wood were on fire that year with the Nova awards but Bernie said he wasn't ready to submit that year and I should go ahead anyway.

I can't remember my submissions from those years. I had a constant problem keeping to the word count. I would normally try and submit a SF piece and a Fantasy piece each year; but by the time I had chopped down my word count, they would suffer from my immature editing and I wasn't happy with them, myself. Claude Nunes had advised me that what South Africa needed was a great African SF story, and I was sold on the idea that African and South African tropes needed to be established and explored.

Genre Fiction more than any other reflects the society in which the genre is based. How society adapts and transforms technologies to suit themselves is constantly fascinating to me. What my Nova campaign did teach me was persistence. To get the work done and get it out, to get into the habit of finishing stuff and putting the polish and fiddling aside for later (or for other editors). I shall be eternally grateful to Claude and Bernie for encouraging this habit.

Bernie submitted the next year in 1991 "Do Robot farts smell of Brimstone?" and was absolutely delighted at his win. My Masters Degree was in trouble and it was time to move on from Durban for me. I relocated to Johannesburg and toured South Africa with a team of people bringing the small country branches online and installing ATM machines over the country and in East Africa.

I unfocused for awhile but one of my colleagues Jenny de Klerk was interested to discover I had a 'Nova Month' where I would run through my scribblings and assemble them while I was on the road. She had also written for Nova [Bloodguilt?] and encouraged me to continue, and by now I had actually met up with some of the Club members in Midrand. [Liz, Gail and Ian]

I left the Bank and returned for some contract work in Durban. Bernie and I submitted again in 1995, his 'Junk' got 2nd place and I got an honourable mention for 'The Tale of Core1 and Arc3'. By now I was pitching hard for a South African category in the Nova Awards to reflect some of the localization in South Africa. I was convinced that newer, diverse membership was the key for Club survival. By now my Lahee Sports Club, other Hobby Clubs and Book Clubs were starting to suffer from flagging membership, of becoming insular and drifting away in the various State of Emergencies and political turmoil of the day.

Deirdre Byrne and Nick Wood bought my pitch and we started planning a campaign for the 30th Anniversary and 'Best of' Anthology. While I wasn't wheedling with Ian, they cajoled the members. I teamed up with Deirdre Byrne and started to sort through the SFSA submissions for a 'Best of' compilation... my own writing was not getting a look in as Yvonne Eve Walus dominated those years. Her neat form, encapsulated prose and rich poetic phrase was mind-numbingly consistent. She really was a hard act to challenge.

After finishing the contracts in Durban and saying goodbye to Bernie whose condition entered its final phase, I went on to permanent shift-work with IBM. My SFSA Club attendance and own health began to suffer as a result of the 24/7/365 obligations. Dave Freer had rolled the inaugural ZA Award with 'Candy Blossom', while Yvonne and Liz Simmonds continued their onslaught on the Nova General places.

By now I had started my Chemotherapy and was shy of coming through to the meetings. A Juvenile section was added to the Nova categories and I faded into the shadows to concentrate on beating the Crab. My only contact with SFSA for these years was the Library and Mah Jong with Liz on a semi-regular basis; and a semi-professional eye on the quality of the Nova submissions.

Grant Charlton had side-tracked many of my story ideas into RPG Modules for the ICON/GENCON Games Conventions, which I was happy to do then. The idea of 'jazz-writing' with several POV characters all living through the same story-frame looked at one point like it would go mainstream, but it did not take off. It was good practice and I was completely absorbed in creating the support Modules for the Games Conventions from 1992 to my final retirement with the medium in 2008. None of it was good for my Nova Submissions, unfortunately.

In 2005 I relocated back to Durban and took up another country membership, delighted at some of the maturing pieces I began to notice coming through in the Probe that were sent to me. I started touring sub-Saharan Africa in 2007 with oil companies and security companies. I would consume the stockpile of Probe that awaited my return in their brown envelopes. I would tear them open and read them out of sequence just to read something that was not an Operations incident or a Financial Report.

My own writing had matured as well, the collection of novellas and long pieces were ready to be assembled and my decades-long world-building regimen was complete. I had not submitted to the Nova since 1999 and nothing else was actually suitable in length or tone for the Probe. The collapse of the Oil markets in 2009 forced me to switch to Coal mining.

Abigail Godsell's 2010 'Taal' piece was a marvel to read. It had taken me a long time to see new, fresh eyes and talent showcased in SFSA and confirm my original intention to bring the categories into the Nova. Nick Wood was also making waves overseas with his original work, and all of these diverse voices were picking up notice in the right circles for International markets.

The collapse of the Coal markets in 2014 forced me switch back to Banking and projects in South West Africa, specifically Namibia. One of the major constraints of Software Development and Banking industries is the Intellectual Property restrictions while employed by companies in this sector. While outside of South Africa, I could consolidate all of the writing into a single brand name and begin to utilize the digital channels to put out my own work. I proceeded to set up an Independent Publishing house for my new brand.

In 2017 after a long absence, I finally attended my first SFSA public meeting since 1999. It was good to see many familiar faces after nearly two decades away as a Country Member, or a lapsed member... I am great at lapsing. The last big gathering I had attended was the 30th dinner at Megawatt Park, and many more the time we crowded into the Roma Rotunda near the Wits campus. Grant Charlton has remarkably bony knees for someone that tall, getting a bench next to him tended to be injurious at best.

Congratulations SFSA on your 50th Anniversary! I have always had fun times with the Club and will no doubt stick with SFSA for time to come.

Gavin Kreiuter -

I fell in love with SF when I first read Asimov's Foundation trilogy (at the time, it was a trilogy) more than twenty years after it was originally published. I suppose I have always been a slow starter. I continued to spend many years reading SF novels. But, like most intelligent people who can't see their nose until someone gives them a mirror, I was unaware about – and did not even consider – a South African SF club. It was more than a quarter of a century later that a work colleague (Andrew Jamieson) mentioned it to me while we were discussing SF. I said I was a slow starter. I joined SFSA initially for the social interaction, but was soon (thanks, Ian) roped into a disastrous stint as Meetings Convenor. I fared a bit better as Nova Organiser,



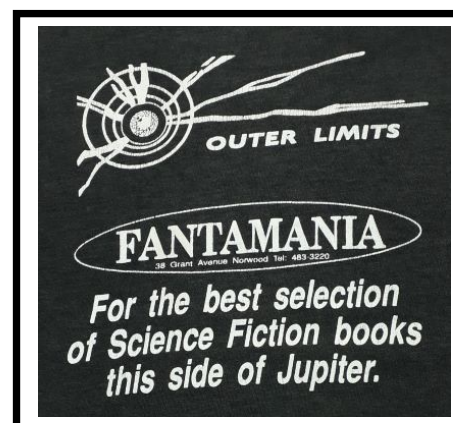
and soon could add inactive Librarian and amateur Website Maintainer to my CV. But my passion still lies with short stories, as they are closest in spirit to the original reason for forming the club.

The social aspect remains a major source of pleasure. There have been some interesting times in the past, and I hope some more to come in the future. I recall a particular weekend when we went camping in the Mountain Sanctuary Park. Of course, we chose the weekend that experienced the severest storm in decades. I had borrowed a pup tent which only had two pegs. More than sufficient for a calm night, but not so great in a storm. I found myself, after midnight, drenched while lying on the *roof* of my tent. On the inside. It had rolled over in the wind, and the pelting rain found easy access to it. I tried unsuccessfully to restore a semblance of gravity before giving up, and spending the rest of the night in the back of my vehicle. The back seat flattens to a large enough surface area to accommodate my sleeping bag. There was some consternation come morning, when the others wondered what had happened to me. In spite of that, it was a wonderful weekend; especially the hike up the mountain to the crystal clear waters of the cave pool on what I believe is called Perdewater Grotto.

My only regret is not knowing about, and therefore not joining, the club in the late seventies. I couldn't have done it earlier than that, because I wasn't in Johannesburg when the fledgling S.F.S.A was formed in 1969. It's fascinating to think that it was formed a few weeks before the first human footprint was formed on the Moon. I do hope that Probe and SFFSA will still be around when the first human footprint is formed on Mars

SFSA and SFFSA T-shirt designs

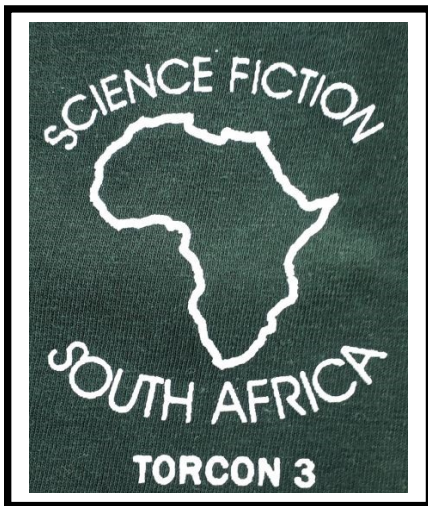
AfriCon "Yesterday's Future" Johannesburg 1994



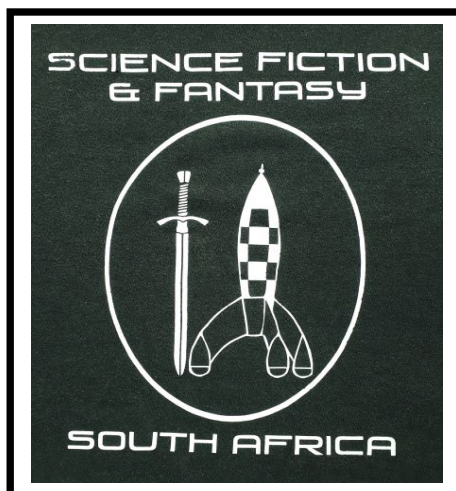
Bucconeer WorldCon Baltimore 1998



Torcon WorldCon Toronto 2003



SFFSA T-shirt circa 2014





It was a dark and stormy night ...

The venue for that Science Fiction South Africa meeting was the Hall in the Botanical Gardens at Emmarentia, where, subsequently, orchid shows, flower arranging shows and bonsai exhibitions have been held. I arrived with a friend, found a spare seat where nobody could see me, and sat down to listen to my new Masters student, Jeanne Martens, discussing the “war of the sexes” in science fiction. She spoke with extraordinary confidence and assertiveness of the hostility that prevails between women and men and its imaginative depiction in science fiction and fantasy. I was fascinated, and Jeanne

subsequently graduated with a Master of Arts with specialization in English. I promptly joined the club.

In the next few years, I delivered a few talks on recondite matters such as “Literary Theory and Science Fiction”, “Science Fiction and the Other” and “Some SF short stories”. Most of these were attended by well-meaning audiences who asked me unanswerable questions such as “Have you read (insert title of little-known SF or fantasy text)?” I collected several SF(F)SA sand-blasted whisky glasses, which I always accepted gratefully. I was cajoled into joining the SFSA committee, under the august leadership of the legendary Ian Jamieson, and we met every month to eat biscuits and discuss pressing matters such as “how to attract more members” and “where to hold our miniconventions and conventions”. I eagerly volunteered to edit *Probe*. My co-editor was Cedric Abrahams. Together, we put together about ten issues of the zine. It was a wild ride as I found myself poring at midnight over my dial-up Internet connection, hoping to transmit large files with intricate text art to Cedric, where I had pedantically corrected every grammatical detail and Cedric had inserted fantastical art. It was enormous fun, especially writing some of the features myself and reviewing clubzines from distant shores. I also thoroughly enjoyed adjudicating the Nova Short Story Competition, and especially reading the comments of the rest of the committee, who seemed to believe that the general standard of entries could be, shall we say, raised a bit. At one stage, the Library was housed in my home, which involved putting up some extremely wonky shelves in the hall and then writing letters of thanks to all the members who donated books. The books are long gone, but the shelves are still there, and hardly anyone ever came to view or borrow the books.

I have been a member of SFFSA for twenty-nine years and have now achieved the dubious privilege of being a “senior” member, much to my surprise. The club has changed in those nearly three decades, but perhaps, not as much as it should have. We are a greying fan base: even some of the younger generation have turned grey. The phrase “torn and bloody but unbowed” applies to some of us. Others are better described by “Age shall not wither, nor custom stale [their] infinite variety”. We have had wonderful braais (I attempted to braai a brinjal once), watched appalling movies and read heaps of books of widely varying qualities. I can only say “Long live SFFSA!”

Gary Kuyper –Author and Artist



Howdy, y'all

Gail Jamieson personally requested that I write a few paragraphs for *Probe* regarding my history, experiences and overall impression of SFFSA since joining this illustrious and long-standing club (50 years – half a century – wow!!!).

I apologise if I may have written more than a few paragraphs and become a little self indulgent, if not *over-indulgent*, in my reminiscing (I guess Gail, being Editor, could always trim away some of the unnecessary fat), but in order to tell of my relationship with the club, I need first tell some of my personal background. In doing

this I hope that there are some members who will enjoy a nostalgic trip down memory lane with me.

I really must credit my mother with my interest, not only in science fiction, but also for that of reading and writing. From a very early age I loved to page through her collection of *Classics Illustrated* (For the uninformed – the great classic novels rendered in comic book form). Besides such literary greats as: *Wuthering Heights*, *Treasure Island* and *Les Miserables*, also included were : *The Invisible Man*, *The Time Machine*, *Frankenstein*, *First Men in the Moon*, *20 000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and my all-time personal favourite, *War of the Worlds*, with its imposing cover of a towering and menacing tripod machine. Needless to say it was these latter titles and their ilk that caught my interest and imagination.

Then, of course, there were the movies. No TV in those days so any news on what was happening in the world was a pre-main feature reel called *SA Mirror*. Another

pre-main feature reel was the *Republic Pictures* series known as *cliffhangers*. A series that had you coming back each week to find out how the hero had survived the last deadly dilemma. My favourites were *King of the Rocket Men* and *The Undersea Kingdom* featuring *Lon Chaney Jnr.* (Better known for his portrayal of The Wolf Man) and a bunch of scary robots that had me cowering in my seat behind a large tub of popcorn. There was an interval back in those days, yet smoking was still allowed inside the theatre so that there was a beam of flickering light highlighted all the way from the projection booth window to the screen – a screen with such iconic memories as: *Jason and the Argonauts*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Fantasi*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Hiring 16mm movies was the equivalent of hiring DVD movies today. These gave me my first look at the original *Star Trek* series. Strangely enough it was *Spock* and not *Captain Kirk* that caught my boyhood interest and imagination.

I will be turning 60 this year which means that I was around 10 years old when SFSA was established. Yet it was not until high school that I first learned of the existence of the club. It was my mother that found the article hidden away in some obscure part of the daily newspaper – a *science fiction short story writing competition* (Not sure if it was called the *Nova* back then???). Although I never joined the club way back then, I did have a go at entering the competition, banging out my adolescent *masterpiece* on an old Olivetti with one finger. It didn't win any prizes. I don't know what happened to any copies of the story, but I do remember it having to do with the Earth passing through the tail of a comet which caused some rather nasty adverse affects on most of humankind. I expect it was rather juvenile and filled with unnecessary gore and violence, as well as spelling and grammatical errors. Still, my mother proudly and lovingly posted it off for me.

It would be many years after first learning about the SFSA from that short story competition before I eventually became a member, and a great many more before I finally managed to see my first work published in *Probe*.

In truth, I'm not really sure when I joined what was then SFSA (Perhaps the club has some sort of record regarding this matter???), but I do know that it was at a time when *Robe* (The shorter newsletter version of *Probe*) was being mailed to the members. And *Probe* was an all black and white publication, including the cover.

To make a long story short, in 2010 I decided to give up my position as a science and math lecturer at a college, take a package, and become a full-time writer. Part of my writing career, which began many years earlier, involved some journalism which required that I also submit photos with my articles. This led to my avid interest in photography, which led to me later taking a keen interest in *Photoshopping*, which later led to...well, read on.

Over the years I have had the privilege of seeing many of my stories published in *Probe*, but the honour for which I am most proud was for producing the artwork (Using *Adobe Photoshop*) for the very first colour cover. The artwork, although full

colour, was meant to be reproduced as a monochromatic cover, but Gail (Bless her great heart) felt that it would lose much of its impact and nuance. Although the cost of producing the cover was substantially more, *Probe 137* came out in glorious colour. This paved the way for all the subsequent colour covers as well as the unfortunate demand for an increase in club fees (So, now you know who to blame – lol). But I hope that all members have since enjoyed the delight of receiving the new vibrant *Probes*.

I must confess, although I have been a member of SFSA and SFFSA for many a year, my attendance at the monthly meetings was anything but exemplary. Most times Pretoria just seemed too far a drive to Joburg to make an effort (And this before the exorbitant Petrol Prices). I did however make a definite point of being at the annual dinners. The last few I attended, before relocating to Strand in the Western Cape, were at Cesco's Restaurant, and were highly entertaining and enjoyable.

My current impressions of the club are still positive and optimistic. Some may feel it's time to put the ol' gal out to pasture, but I would like to think that 50 is only a *start!* SFFSA has recently begun to branch out into other areas besides the *literary* world of science fiction and fantasy. I find *Andrew Jamieson's Chairman's Note* a rather refreshing and enjoyable read. His honesty in his likes and dislikes brings to mind a scene from that great movie, *Being There*, in which *Peter Sellers'* character *Chancey D'Gardner* admits, 'I like watching television.'

You may find this unusual coming from a writer, but I admit that I am quite into the gaming scene (Having worn out a few Playstations and Xboxes in my time). I am particularly fond of *Skyrim*, a fantasy/adventure game featuring the whole gambit of the genre – swords, sorcery, dragons, et al. As there are many gamers out there, I believe it would be in the club's best interest to also cover this area of interest in its reviews and updates. Also, let's not forget that all memorable movies and/or games begin with great stories – *not* great graphics.

In a certain sense writers achieve immortality through their work. This is also true of artists and filmmakers. 50 years is a long time. Much has come and gone in these particular fields and genres. Gone are some of the greats such as *Ursula K. Le Guin*, *Ray Bradbury*, *Terry Pratchett*, *Stan Lee*, *Jack Kirby*, *Frank Frazetta*, *Stanley Kubrick*, *Gene Roddenberry*, *Leonard Nimoy* and *Christopher Lee* – to name but a few whose work has been carved in stone for future generations to enjoy and admire.

Closer to home is *Liz Simmonds*, a SFFSA member for many years and a storyteller of remarkable note. I was always thrilled to see one of her stories featured on the contents page. She and her work are both sorely missed – but constantly remembered and appreciated.

In closing, I am grateful and happy that Gail still uses my artwork for covers and continues to publish my stories in *Probe* - even though some may not have received any awards or such. So, thank you, not only to Gail, but to everyone else involved,

for all the hard work and effort that has kept a well-oiled machine up and running for such a long time. May SFFSA continue not only to survive, but also to *thrive*. After all, *Science Fiction* and *Fantasy* are still going to be around for a very, very long time.

In the immortal words: 'Live long and prosper.'

Gail Jamieson – Science Fiction - a way of life

I've had my say as Editor earlier in the magazine, but the club has meant much more to me than just editing the club magazine.

When I joined, reading science fiction still seemed to be a little on the strange side and I was delighted to find people of like mind who were happy to talk about the books they were reading.

A couple of things really stand out when I think of SFFSA over the years. In 2002, 27 members of the club travelled north to see the Total Eclipse of the sun. We set up our tents braaied and went to bed early.



We got up at about 04h00 and prepared to watch the sun disappear. By the time the sun had risen, it had indeed disappeared. The day was completely overcast and the

mood of the many people waiting was a bit bleak. But as the time for the eclipse approached the clouds suddenly parted and we could use our special glasses and watch the amazing event take place. Very slowly the eclipse started and the shadow of the moon moved over the sun. At last we saw the diamond ring effect and suddenly there was total silence as if even the birds were holding their breath. It wasn't a long eclipse, but I shall never forget the true oneness we felt with the Earth and our solar system. All too soon the light reappeared and the clouds closed over again.

Terry Pratchett, who we entertained and who entertained us. His stories about Orangutans were hilarious and when he came to sign our books, he said he was going to do it differently for a change and made us sit in a circle and then proceeded to go around to each person and sign their book. My young son, Kyle was with us as he is an avid Pratchett fan and he was delighted with the notation which said: "To adults of all ages".

Over the years we have met so many interesting people and been enlightened by so many entertaining speakers in so many fields. From literature, to physics to astronomy to astrology, to science and science fiction and no-one who heard the lecture on “Games of Thrones” by Digby Ricci, our after dinner speaker, who claims not to be a SF fan, will ever forget a talk that we were sorry to hear come to an end. We’ve heard about flying cars and low orbit take offs and returns to Earth; about nanotechnology; hard materials and lighter planes, green housing; about Tuberculosis, and even about stone tools. And come to realise that an interesting speaker can keep us entertained on just about any topic.

WorldCons. Imaging a gathering of up to 5000 SF and Fantasy fans in one place. As you walk along a corridor you might have seen Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw, Robert Silverberg, Jack Chalker, Robin Hobb, Geoffrey Landis, David Brin, James White, Gene Wolff or even Terry Pratchett and Ian Banks. You may even be lucky enough to get into a “kaffeeeklastch” with twenty other fans and be able to have a conversation with one or more of them. Lectures, discussions, quizzes, movies, Filking “The hills are alive, and they look hungry...”) and the parties. Oh the parties! At Torcon 2003 we held a South African party and from around 20h00 to 02h00 the next morning we had more than 600 fans come by to say hello. What a night!. Ian and I were lucky enough to attend 5 WorldCons and I think that nothing SF that we will even do will be able to top that.

I value the many friends I have made over the years and whose friendship has often gone way beyond SF. Long discussions around the table at our December meetings at Ron Cowley’s home, I could go on and on..... SFSA and later SFFSA has been a part of my life for more than forty years and I can’t imagine it will ever fade from it.

May the Force Be with SFFSA for many more years to come.

Grant Kruger at the SFFSA Party at Torcon 2003



Reminiscences of SFFSA - Brett Ward

Although people know me as a new member, I was in fact briefly a member more than twenty years ago, before I moved to Pretoria and life generally got in the way.

The one person I distinctly remember who is still around is Norman, who at the time lent me a couple of books, and kindly forgave me when I lost one - a novel by M. John Harrison. I also borrowed two books from the library - one of them being *Hothead* by Simon Ings. I'm ashamed to say I completely forgot to return them when I stopped being a member, and as far as I know still have them. Unfortunately all my stuff is in storage, but I intend to make up for it by donating a large number of books to the library when I finally make a permanent return to South Africa.



I also remember attending a mini-con called "Yesterday's Future", which was very well attended. At the time, Anne Rice's vampire novels were all the rage, and I remember people at the con reading them while standing in queues.

Finally, I also remember attending a meeting where a TV crew was present. They were asking people "What is science Fiction," and I had my answer all prepared: "Science fiction is fiction that speculates about history." At the time I thought it was very profound, but unfortunately no-one got round to interviewing me.

"Tomorrow is too Late"

Chronos was expecting ten to the party. The days of the week were fairly prompt - although Friday seemed a long time coming. Monday as usual wore blue while graceful Tuesday was consoling woeful Thursday.

Yesterday was boring people with stale news as today was making unfair bets with him.

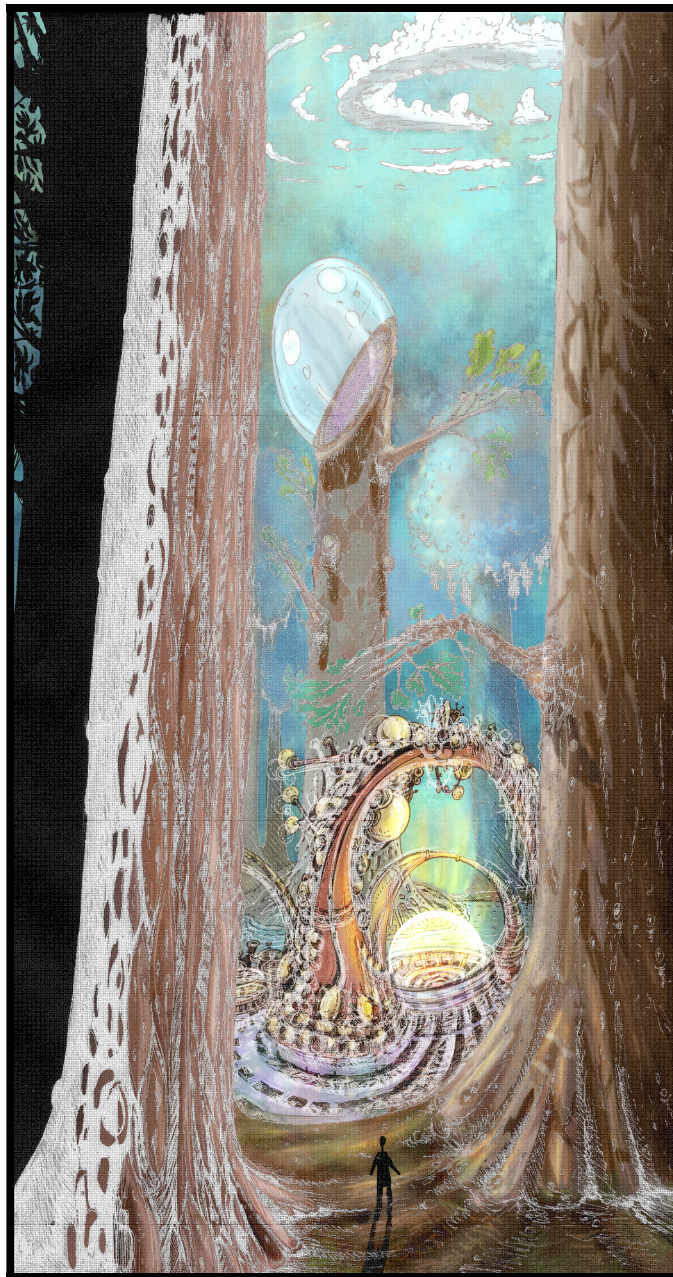
Monday Monday and Ruby Tuesday were playing on the gramophone.

Chronos was pleased with the turnout as he handed out minute sandwiches - which of course led everyone to clamour for seconds

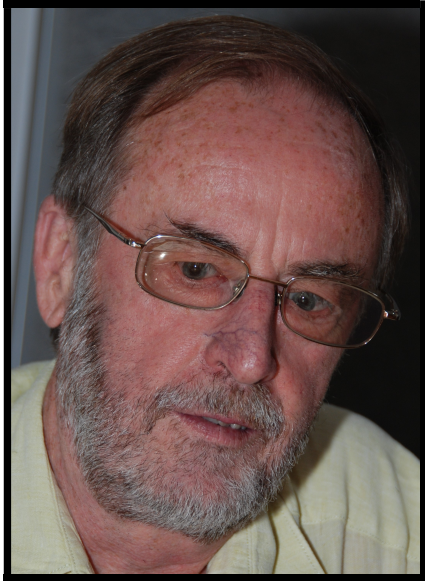
Promptly at midnight everyone left, and as usual, Tomorrow was too late to join in the fun

Frans Tomasek, Liz Simmonds, Andrew Jamieson

Stas Rosin A Special Place



Trevor Derry



It was soon after I met Liz Simmonds in 2000 that she introduced me to SFSA, as it was then. I'm not a mainstream SF reader, but I am a scientist by profession, and a reader. I found lots to interest me in the lectures and meetings, revolving around both science fiction and science fact, and I realized how much of the average person's ideas about hard science come by way of SF

So I let my arm be twisted into giving a few talks myself, on relevant science fact. There were talks on the wave nature of light, with demonstrations twice – by request!), (on what nanoscience and nanotechnology involve, on why you can't shrink a submarine crew so that

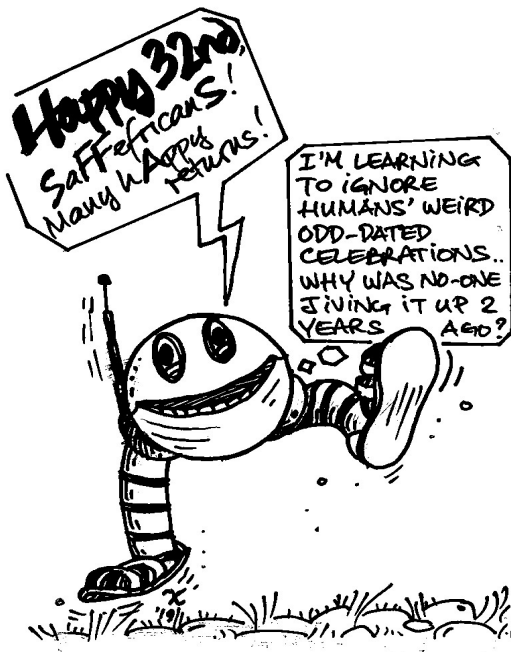
they can enter the venous system and expect familiar physics principles to work in the same way at that scale, on the (seriously proposed) Space Elevator and why it would go wrong, and on possible life forms on other planets. I pointed out why this would have to be carbon-based – carbon is unique – and judging from what Earth has had for most of its long history, we should expect to find only bacteria, if ever we could get there. Some of my academic colleagues also chipped in, with subjects drawn from astronomy, chemistry, literature, etc.

I have fond memories too of excursions we took, to the total solar eclipse in Limpopo (definitely one for the bucket-list!) and to the impressive meteorite crater at Tswaing near Pretoria. Maybe there'll be a few more.

Long –time member and recent speaker – Prof. Ahmed Wadee



Kai Bosse – S.A. now German member and PROBOT Cartoonist



PROBOT thinks SFFSA humans should have celebrated 2 years ago. A “hint” from Kai – PROBOT counts years hexadecimally!

Kai has been living in Germany since 1985, and since 1999 in the country's capital. Contact to science fiction and s.f. groupings (e.g. Germany's oldest forum, SF-Netzwerk.de) still happened on a regular basis. He is working in I.T., still single, travels quite a bit, reads a lot (esp. comics).

Carla Martins – Probe Editor, Club Secretary and Movie Fundi



I cannot express how excited I was in 1998 to learn through a newspaper write up that there was a science fiction club in Johannesburg. The only other person who shared my love for science fiction and fantasy through movies, books and comics was my brother. I went to my first meeting feeling very excited and decided to become a member during the meeting. I had finally found a community who were fans and shared my love of science fiction and all things fantastical.

Since joining I have made close friends over the two decades (I cannot believe it has been two decades!) whose friendship I value very much. I have had such fun attending the monthly

meetings where I heard passionate speakers speak on a multitude of subjects. I have also been a member of the committee participating in the portfolios of public relations, meetings organiser, and secretary and was also the editor of Probe. During the last couple of years, I have also organised movie excursions with club members where we catch up on the latest science fiction and fantasy movies that arrive on our shores.

After all these years I am still passionate about the club and of course science fiction and fantasy and the friends that I have made.

Philip Machanick – International and SA Member



I first encountered what was then SFSA when I was in high school in Port Shepstone (in what is now called kwaZulu-Natal) in the 1970s. The short story contest was advertised in the *Sunday Times* in a letter to the editor. I joined and may or may not have entered the contest that year – I know I have entered a few times. It was only when I moved to Johannesburg in 1980 that I actually attended club meetings. As I recall, they were at one stage at Wits, which suited me well and later moved to Total House, which was also pretty convenient for me.

I discovered SF in my local library a little before I met SFSA, where I read many of the old classics – Asimov, Heinlein, and so on.

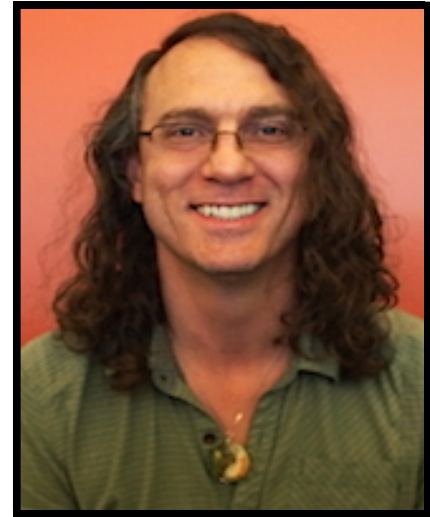
In 2002, I moved to Australia, where the direct connection broke but in the meantime the Internet has made the world less remote – and returned in 2011, but to the Eastern Cape, which might as well be as remote as Brisbane, Australia.

Looking back at how the field has developed, writing has become more literate and is less about predicting tech – but the space opera aspect is still there, with new writers like John Scalzi showing there is life in the old format. How the world has developed since the 1970s indicates how hard it is to predict tech. Asimov had human-like robots way before they were practical yet no one of his era predicted the rapid advance in computers to the extent that you can carry a phone in your pocket that's way more powerful than any computer you could buy back then. SF for me is more than escapism; it is about expanding the imagination. Though many of the predictions turn out inaccurate, I have to ask if we would have someone like Elon

Musk doing the great work he does to revolutionise so many industries if it had not been for SF.

Grant Kruger - Of SFFSA, Fandom and Conversation

I've lived in the US since 1995 and I'm still a member and in touch with SFFSA. For years after leaving SA I even ran parties for the club at annual Worldcons in several countries. You might wonder why. I have wondered myself. The truth is I have known many of the members since childhood and I think of them as family. Same for those I've gotten to know when reconnecting with the club on South African vacations. I'm always going to be a part of SFFSA and not just because I have a lifetime membership. They're my people. We're connected.



My blood family and I were a single-mother

household with two kids (soon to be three) when we discovered the club -- then named SFSA -- back in 76 or 77. I was 9 or 10. I remember how much we loved the monthly meetings; the fascinating talks, the awesome movies, the library, the tea and biscuits, the other nerdy kids. I especially remember the meetings at Total House Gallery, with carpeted gallery walls that we could "draw" on and that had space for imagination to soar.

We were at the first conference too...and it was love at first sight. Computers, so many movies, talks, cheese and wine, exotic college campus locale and joy. We didn't miss any for years.

We were members throughout my childhood and into adulthood. There were books and book reviews, outdoor parties at people's houses, planetarium meetings full of wonder, a great club zine (this one) and the unique and delightful short story competitions. I don't really have a bad memory about the club. Oh, there were members who left or faded away, people I missed, even the occasional jackass, but my SFSA/SFFSA memories are all joyful and happy.

And always there were the people. Nice nerdy, thoughtful, kind people full of great conversation. In many ways it is the conversations that mattered most to me. I needed those conversations. Back in the 1970s SF&F genres were frowned on...as was pretty much any forward thinking or free thought. Apartheid and extremist religious propaganda were thick on the ground, forced on us in school and by then expected societal norms of behaviour. As a family of avid readers, SF&F literature were an escape from all that, a gateway to more just and interesting worlds, to deeper and more complex ideas and to the liberation of boundless imagination. They

let us see possible futures beyond the limited options apartheid was going to allow and showed us many possible alternate futures, or let us imagine them.

Books were great, but often hard to find, so the club took that experience to the next level. It normalised it. Outside of the club it was so different. Joburg thought itself liberal and maybe it was for the time and place, but not by any objective progressive measure. Conversations were self-censored at best and ugly at worst. SFFSA gathered a different crowd. Sure, membership was still mostly white, but not exclusively so, itself remarkable for the time. As kids we could listen in and take part as we chose and the conversations were rich and nourishing to our intellect. They were an antidote to the isolation we felt the rest of the time.

I even met my first wife at a SFFSA meeting. We're still friends. She used to help me run some of those SFFSA Worldcon parties, along with random other SFFSA folks abroad (Janis, Antonio and Barrett). I made buttons to give away, covered the walls with tourism posters from the SA embassy and posters I'd made about the history of SFFSA. People loved learning about South African fandom, enjoying our accents, eating SA goodies and drinking SA booze. They'd tell us how awesome it was that we were helping put the world into Worldcon. We even sold a bunch of international memberships!

Our top party attendance was over 800 people, which was staggering. That's more attendees than a large number of conventions get. Through the years we gained a reputation for being the last party to still have chocolate and one of the last parties to close their doors (a couple of times we were the last). I often saved a bottle of something nice from SA to share with the last few fans at our party after we officially closed the doors. Those were fun times.

By far the best parties we hosted were the ones when a group of SFFSA members from SA had attended in numbers because they would all get involved, so we'd have even more SA goodies and a host of cool accents to greet people. I loved those larger parties so much I don't know how to explain it. Maybe because it was like a family reunion that spanned my two favourite fandoms.

The parties fizzled out when I became the only South African attending Worldcon regularly and I ran out of helpers. I miss them... somewhat. It was a lot of work and expense, but so much fun. It is also because I stopped going to as many Worldcons. I used to volunteer at all of them and had some significant staff roles, but at some point I drifted away. In part I was tired of fannish politics. Sometimes it got ugly and I hated that, especially since I usually like the people on both sides. I saw Worldcon shoot itself in the foot repeatedly and I didn't want to get sucked in to that side of things anymore. But also I moved to a progressive city. Before that I'd spent a lot of time living in verkrampste US states with social constraints and problems that would look all too familiar to South Africans of our era. During those years I again needed fandom, really needed fandom. Conversation of the kind I described above was again so hard to find. The one big difference was SF&F were not reviled, so there were more fans and more conventions. I was a regular at a number of cons around

the region like Deep South Con, MidSouthCon, Con†Stellation, CoastCon and every year my ex and I made our biggest vacation plans around Worldcon. And at every con I met awesome people, some of them conservative, all of them people you could have a conversation with.

I was following the survival pattern from Joburg back in the ugly days. Fandom kept me sane. I used to tell people that I'd have more great conversations in a day at a conference than in a year back home. They thought I was exaggerating. I wish I was. I could talk science, politics, climate, South Africa, whatever, and get real opinions and questions. Then it was back to the lands of watching what you say and avoiding deep discussions.

Fandom has been a place for me to belong when I have lived in societies obsessed with othering. It all boils down to one thing: conversation. Unbridled, intelligent, uncensored, unrestrained, imagination-filled, joyfully boundless conversation... leading to deep friendships... to family. Much of what I used to get from fandom I now have just from friends living here in wonderful Portland, Oregon, but I still love and stay in contact with every fannish friend I have ever made. How can one ever forget that connection?

So here's me, an SFFSA member for life, from the bottom of my heart. And I'll still hang out every single time I make it back over there.

Happy 50th, SFFSA. Thanks to everyone who has ever been a part of running the club, its zine and events. You made something wonderful.

Franz Tomasek and Simone Puterman –SFFSA Retrospective



It's been a while since I thought of my introduction to SFSA, late in my high school career. The annual convention was being held at Wits University and I picked up on this either through a flyer posted at Wits or the Tonight section of The Star, back when people subscribed to newspapers and had them delivered every day. The convention was well enough attended that it spread over two lecture theatres in what was then Senate House: the large SHB5 and smaller SHB2 or 3. I knew this was a place I would fit in when one of the questions in the icebreaker quiz in SHB5 was: "Who wrote Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers?"

"Harry Harrison," I piped up, while the rest the room looked at one another in puzzlement. I'd read it a few months earlier from the pretty decent collection at the

Rosebank library. Another memorable convention was the club's 25th anniversary convention in Midrand, Africon '94 – Yesterday's Future, which was also a two-track affair. I convinced my parents to give up their 72cm TV for the day for the one track – a big screen for the time and a beast to move. The convention was a success for attendees but blew a bit of a hole in the club's finances, since we underestimated the costs of the t-shirts for early bookers and of using the venue's in-house caterers. Moving further afield, the next year saw Ian attending WorldCon in Glasgow and the idea of a coordinated trip to WorldCon in 1998 took hold. A group of us duly descended on Baltimore, with a bunch of club t-shirts a couple of us had had printed for resale. We soon discovered that the land of the free was anything but when it came to the red-tape around selling them, so that wasn't much of a financial success. There's a lesson here somewhere but at least I still have my t-shirts. We reprised the effort in Toronto five years later. The printed programme for the convention was something of a mess for reasons we can now relate to: a widespread blackout in North-Eastern America. Our club party was a roaring success, though. Each of us brought something South African to nibble on, the embassy contributed posters and a local liquor store had a case (and only one) of Castle for us to buy. I still have the t-shirt we printed for that trip, too. One of the draw cards the club had in the '80s and early '90s was that it was challenging to feed your SF habit out in the mainstream. You needed to know where to look to find SF & F books, with Estoril's in Hillbrow being a good option for new books you couldn't get elsewhere. The club had a library. Finding other fans to discuss your latest finds with was difficult. The club, by definition, had them. Video was just beginning to make itself felt but was expensive and the selection was limited. The go-to option for a home movie evening was still 16mm film, which was pretty cumbersome to organise. Much easier to let someone else do it for you. That's probably why the screening of Ralph Bakshi's *The Lord of the Rings* at Total House in Braamfontein ended up with people on all the chairs that were available, on the floor and standing at the back. We lost the use of that venue, which was primarily an art exhibition space, because users couldn't resist writing and drawing unfortunate messages in the long pile carpet that covered the walls. As I recall, we used to go around at the end of meetings to smooth them out but perhaps we missed some or other meeting organisers weren't so careful. Later on, we got the use of the HP auditorium in Marlboro through one of our members, James Dean, who was an employee. That was nearly as plush and far more technically advanced but he moved on to the USA and HP relocated, so we lost our access. There have been several other venues but there has always been a core group of members who attend meetings. I suspect I've been part of it for quite a while, having even been shanghaied into speaking three times, going by my collection of SFSA and SFFSA glasses. Here's to many more years with the club and the core!

[PS He also met me through SFFSA, and we've been together for 10 years now – Simone.]

Thomas Reckenwald – a long time German Member



It must have been at a US worldcon in the early 2000s when I found my way to a room party organised by a certain science fiction club from South Africa. An SF organisation in the same time zone as Germany – only with opposite seasons – and communicating in a language I can understand sounded interesting, and so I met Grant Kruger who told me about SFFSA and its activities.

In 1982, when I got in contact with local fandom fanzines were still the main communication media. In 1982, when I got in contact with local fandom fanzines

were still the main communication media. So I subscribed to some and bought copies offered at conventions. Now I shelter the archives of the Science Fiction Club Deutschland (SFCD) and its audio tape collection in my mother's house besides my own fanzine collection. When I learned that SFFSA produces a regular zine I immediately used the opportunity to become a member, probably paying the membership fee for a couple of years in advance – international money transfer wasn't easy in those days before PayPal.

Since then I find the issues of PROBE in my analogue mail box, having no clue how much time it took for them to travel from South Africa to Germany. But the beautiful stamps on the envelope are always welcomed by my colleagues or their stamp-collecting friends. OK, we have beautiful stamps in Germany too, but when Gail was looking for cover illustrations I was thinking about the long tradition of illustrators in German-speaking fan- and prodrom. Pictures are easier to translate than texts so I hope the recipients of PROBE got an impression at least of the visual aspects of our creativity in the area of SF/F.

Next year the SFCD will celebrate its 65th birthday. 1955 was also the official beginning of the space race, but the founding of SFFSA in 1969 coincides with a much more famous year in the history of space exploration. From a distance of 12100 kilometres I congratulate SFFSA and its members for providing a home for fans of the fantastic literature in South Africa over the past decades – and hopefully at least until copies of PROBE arrive at the first colony on Mars.

Alberto Panicucci and the founders of the RiLL Club - Italy

Valeria de Caterini, Francesco Ruffino, Edoardo Cicchinelli and Alberto



If I must be totally honest, I don't remember how I arrived for the first time at the website of SFFSA. I suppose I was browsing and waiting for news about a literary award named NOVA organized in Finland, but a lucky example of serendipity brought me... to South Africa!

A little excursus: my name is Alberto Panicucci, I'm Italian and I'm on the board of the TROFEO RiLL, an Italian literary award devoted to fantasy, horror and science-fictional short-stories (we annually receive 300-350 entries). Since 2013 our club (RiLL Riflessi di Luce Lunare) partnered various European and extra-European literary contests, including their award winning short-stories in our yearly anthology (MONDI INCANTATI). One of our earliest foreign collaboration concerned the Turku Science-Fiction Society and the Finnish Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association, which organize the NOVA Prize... and at that time I often lost the URL of their (Finnish) website!

Anyway, at the beginning of 2015 I browsed the internet, I found SFFSA and its NOVA literary award. I had never heard of it.

It is a bit unusual, for an Italian person, to link South Africa to speculative fiction or to fantasy literature (even though professor Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein), rather than Nelson Mandela or the magnificent nature of this country so distant from Italy. However, since the first messages with Gavin Kreuter and SFFSA staff I understood this partnership would be mutually profitable and long-lasting.

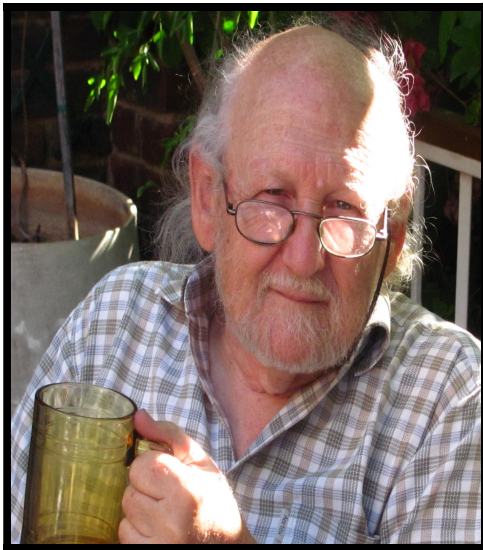
From 2015 onwards, Mondì Incantati anthology published four short-stories from the NOVA Competition, and in return PROBE offered its readers four winning short-stories from Trofeo RiLL. This is an effective way of putting our countries in contact! Moreover, I can presently say to know South Africa better than in 2015. For example, I know the postal services are VERY slow and internal distances are VERY large. In such a context, the creation and maintenance of a network among people interested in the speculative fiction and fantasy is a VERY difficult task. Therefore, the 50th

anniversary of SFFSA is a really significant target.

I learned (working to RiLL and Trofeo RiLL) that the good results a club derives from the personal dedication of its members over time, even when this effort seems to be excessive or incomprehensible to most of people. Therefore, RiLL is glad to collaborate with SFFSA, a club that has a long and remarkable history. Personally, I'm honoured to write this little intervention on PROBE, expressing the consideration that RiLL has with respect to SFFSA.

I'm not sure, but I think no Italian club devoted to fantasy or science-fiction has been active since the late '60s like SFFSA. This increases the importance of the anniversary for our South-African friends... and RiLL is very happy to celebrate this "birthday" with them!!

Ron Cowley - Those were the Days - SFSA From Three Decades Ago to Now



If blame is the right word, blame it on Steve, who I had known for many years. When he found out I also shared an interest in Science Fiction, he insisted that I come along to a meeting of the Society, of which he had been a member for some time. That was the start of quite a few years of my membership.

In those days (the early 1980s) the meetings were held in the Total House basement in Braamfontein. In that cosy little room (next to a small art gallery) crammed

every month the enthusiastic, knowledgeable and well-read (in the SF sense) members. Entertainment usually consisted of a suitable film – 16mm black & white reels (usually in the correct order). Braamfontein was a different place in those years – I could leave my open Austen-Healey in the street without worry.

The MiniCon in those days was usually held at the Johannesburger Hotel in Hillbrow, again with no worries about street parking. The well-attended full-day sessions (talks, discussions and debates) were split with a good lunch at the Hotel restaurant. I also remember one event (a MiniCon), held at a house in Norwood, that celebrated the 25th anniversary of the club, with the founder (Tex Cooper) present, although he was no longer involved.

The full Annual Convention was in the Senate House Basement. Such were the numbers (both lecturers and attendees) that parallel sessions had to be held. These

were talks, films, discussions, debates on relevant topics. A certain professor also used to vend sticky (Copenhagen) buns. And at the end there was always the Cheese & Wine gathering.

Then there was a hiatus – change of job and a more distant residence, and it was in the late 90s that I was invited back to be treasurer. Things had changed – the enthusiasm was still there, but numbers were smaller. The regular meeting venue was a lecture theatre at the Wits Medical School. The format now was a talk (usually on a scientific topic) followed by a sometimes related film. Over the years, the venue migrated to a smaller lecture theatre at Wits, to a conference room above a restaurant, to the current venue Nexus in Randburg.

Over the years, we have had some fascinating talks, ranging from Tolkien to dinosaurs, early hominids, zombies and flying cars among others. For a few years, we merged with the 'Trekkies' to hold joint meetings, two of which I remember well. They were 'engineering' talks about fictional technology, made real by the presentations of their 'commander' Owen Swartz, and were on the 'beam-me-up' transporter, and the workings of warp drives. It was a pity that the joint meetings didn't last – who knows what other advanced gadgetry we would have been taught about.

Other meetings became almost 'traditional', such as the annual dinner, at varying venues, in November, at which a speaker (regularly Digby Ricci) entertained us over a good meal and several drinks. The MiniCon and the December Bring & Braai social were usually held at my house in Ferndale, and the AGM in January was always held at the Jamieson household.

Irregular features were excursions to interesting places, usually with some related interest. Those I was involved in included a camping trip up north to see the Total Eclipse in 2002, when the clouds cleared at the last moment to give us a clear view of the rare event. In 2004, the camping trip to the Vredefort area was more of a fun trip than one scientifically connected. A trip to the Tswaing impact crater North of Pretoria in 2006 is remembered for the good weather for the long walk around the rim, and for the incredibly uncomfortable bunk in the hired hut. In 2010, we all went out to the Hartebeestfontein tracking station where we learned something of how it all worked. The last one that comes to mind was an exhibition on space exploration in 2016, which had all manner of models and life-sized reproductions of spacecraft.

When I look at the pictures I have (dating back to about 2004 – my first digital camera) two things come to mind. One is an element of sadness at seeing the faces of those departed, either having embarked on their final voyage of discovery, or a voyage to distant lands. The other is how many of the faces of the current surviving 'hard core' members appear in those early pictures, and are remembered well beyond the 'illustrated era'.

Having been on the committee for some years, I have seen firsthand the issues involved in organizing and managing the club. For SFFSA to have lasted this long (50 years) is both a tribute and a monument to the effort, tenacity and dedication of the Jamieson family. All I can add is my thanks for keeping the show on the road.

Janis Benvie What SFFSA (or SFSA as it was when I joined) means to me.



I honestly can't remember when I joined – it just seems to have been art of my life always. I t was nice feeling that one Saturday a month you were assured of an interesting speaker, a good(ish) movie an some pleasant company no matter what else was going on in your life. And then there were the 'cons – 2 days of the same as well as Ahmed's Chelsea buns to look forward to.

Then I foolishly went to the UK for 9 months to travel and ended up staying for 22 years, and that's when I realised how much I missed that part of my life.

The lifestyle there is very different and people are not so open and friendly, and social life centres around going to the pub and drinking too much, neither of which appealed to me very much.

There don't seem to be the same sort of SF fans there - the only group I joined for a while, met in a pub (not surprisingly) and consisted of playing games – not necessarily SF and then watching a movie – usually Star Trek – not a lot of time to chat.

So here I am back in SA and people often ask me why I came back and I can honestly say apart from the lure of family and friends, the sort of lifestyle and sociability of group like SFFSA made it an easy decision.

James Dryja SCIENCE FICTION AND ME, MYSELF, AND I



In 1980 I was transferred to the City-of-Gold – No, not New York, Johannesburg.

Well, when a Capetonian gets to work at the Head Office in Jozi, streets-paved-with-gold! the anticipation..... but not the realization!

But, one of the plus sides was the Science Fiction Fantasy club – at the SFF Convention I was in SFF heaven with crowds at Wits' Senate House basement: Every auditorium had an event, be it talks, movies, exhibitions, movies... well as a movie-man I gotta sav it twice.

Ralph Bakshi's animated version of Tolkien's "Lord of The Rings" was MY highlight (despite the admittedly incomplete ending). So, I followed the SFF Club, to Total House still in Braamfontein, later Wits Medical School, and beyond.

It was amazing to meet Ian Jameson, Gail Brunette – later Jameson, and others I had only heard about. Heard about how? Well, every year letters appeared in the Cape newspapers inviting entries to the annual SFF short story Competition. And here I was, rubbing shoulders with the committee!

Well how did all this start? Do introverts have vivid imaginations deep inside? And revel in stories of mystery and imagination (sorry Edgar Allen Poe). It must be admitted that my father working in the library helped. And not just any library! The depot of the Cape Provincial Library Services! Well school holidays mostly found me deep in the recesses where SFF was located, where I discovered Wyndham, Simak, Asimov, Clarke....yes, it was the 50's – 60's Golden Age of SCIENCE FICTION! This of course permutated to school essays.....eye-popping stories for English teachers' late-night marking. But entering the competition! Me nor I never considered Self good enough!

The SFF movies of that Golden Age were phenomenal too: Atlantis and more and more! Especially end-of-world sagas due to the East vs West Cold War. (Or is it West vs East?) But I was more of a reader than a viewer at that time. However, Spielberg's SFF movies spellbound me, climaxing in ET (no, not Terreblanche, The Extra-Terrestrial)! Loosely a sequel to Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Saw it repeatedly!

So, then we, brother and I, bought a cinema in Hillbrow, later becoming known as Mini Cine Cult Cinema. We had a grand ol' time with SFF, art, cult and Music movies.

Some years later, Ian Jamieson approached me to join the committee....what an honour! For someone who stopped paid adverts and only marketed the cinema, being the marketing member was a cinch, I thought.....and it was, until the print media made changes- no more "what's on" columns. Radio media publicity however continues!

It's been – still is – a grand old time in SFF SA, imaginative talks at monthly meetings – a sterling job by Ian, at an inspiring SFF venue no less-, short story competitions, the Probe magazine you are reading excellently put together by Gail!.....and more n more!

SEE YOU NEXT TIME!!

Andreas Schwietzke - Mutter Flora

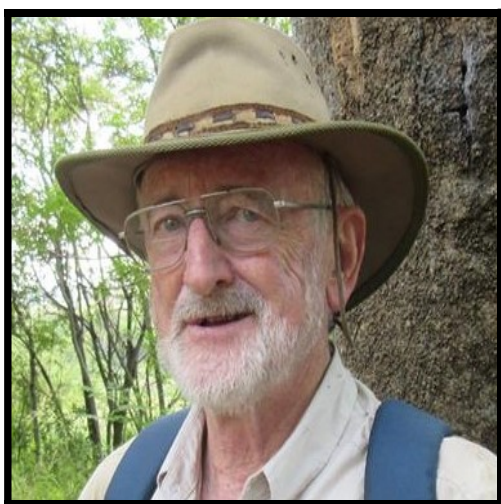


First Cover of PROBE.

The first 7 issues produced were newsletters and after a vote had been taken on the name of the clubzine Mary Scott edited this first issue, Volume 1 Number 8. The cover was designed by Kevin MacDonnell. The date is June/July 1970



Norman Pringle – Long-time SFFSA library user and supporter



I don't recall exactly when I joined SFSA --- sometime in the mid-eighties. I remember seeing two movies at Total House in Braamfontein just before the club lost the use of that venue. I have attended meetings fairly regularly since then.

My special interest has been the club Library. When my partner Maureen and her children moved in with me, I cleared my shelves and

donated my existing SF collection to the Library, and since then I have regularly passed batches of my books to the librarian after reading them. And I have really enjoyed drawing on the resources currently held at Gavin's house (Deirdre had the Library years before). Gavin brings to the meetings anything I request from the list on the SFSSA website.

Only recently, I discovered the pleasures of re-reading, and I have requested books borrowed or donated years ago. Some are missing from the Library list; some are listed but missing --- no doubt owing to black-hearted borrowers retaining them in their collections. Yes, I'm looking at you!

Neural pathway construction of my time as an SFFSA club member

It all started many, many, many, many, many time units ago with an invitation from a friend to attend a Star Trek mini con hosted by SFFSA at the Donald Gordon medical centre. This was before our meetings were held in a deep underground lecture hall, presumably to protect from any alien detection scans as I can't remember the exact location. The mini con was both fun and enlightening getting to meet many other fellow star trek fans, and I'm still trying to ascertain why I joined the SFFSA club instead of the Star Trek club, aliens again? I remember a hilarious evening



meal at Mike's Kitchen watching YouTube videos like girlfriend 2.0 and others talking all matters sci-fi wondering why our food was getting cold. Who would have guessed that only a few years later I would be the one actually standing up on stage delivering my first talk to the club entitled "The Borg". It was a lot fun putting together but less so actually delivering it to everyone. This would never have happened without the "encouragement" of a certain Scotsman as I'd never have chosen to do this without a little push in that direction so thanks Mr Scotsman. With more talks and many, many, many entertaining meetings under my belt I find myself on the committee of the club (Definitely some alien mind manipulation involved to get me there). Meetings with starship pictorial games had some very odd-looking spaceship illustrations appearing on paper with all the resulting laughter. I particularly enjoyed playing guess the sci-fi movie soundtrack, and then there is the matter of sci-fi charades; this really gets the tears rolling (joy or fear I'm still determining) as we all try to communicate with our teams with arm flailing, butt showing, rolling on the floor or groping testicles to convey the title of the movie we picked out the hat. All while curbing the urge to blurt out the title when your team members all look at you with blank stares. All in all, it's been a fun adventure so far and looks to continue that way until aliens invade, meteors hit, or giant lizards appear from an alternative universe or something.

RADM Owen "Blackbeard" Swart Commanding Officer, USS Dauntless NCC-74214 Acting Coordinator, Region 8 STARFLEET

Being invited to speak at SFFSA events has been a thoroughly satisfying experience. It offered me an opportunity to take some of the facts, syntheses and even hypotheses about the *Star Trek* universe that keep me up at night, and share them with a willing audience. It's been a feature of my Starfleet career since I was a lowly Science Officer, right through to being the Rear Admiral in charge of the 8th Fleet of *STARFLEET The International Star Trek Fan Association Inc.*

I wish SFFSA another 50 years of exploring the final frontier! Live long and prosper!



Magazines Received

Stapledon Sphere (formerly the newsletter of the Middle Tennessee

Science Fiction Society [aka the Nashville SF club]

Reece Moorhead reecebm@gmail.com

Issue #24 March 2019

Issue #25 April 2018

Issue #26 May 2019

Ansible David Langford

March 2019 380 <http://news.ansible.uk/a380.html>

April 2019 381 <http://news.ansible.uk/a381.html>

May 2019 382 <http://news.ansible.uk/a382.html>

WARP is now on line, download it from our website:

http://www.monsffa.ca/?page_id=6915

Cathy Palmer-Lister
Ste. Julie, Quebec, Canada
cathypl@sympatico.ca
<http://www.monsffa.ca>

Books Received

JonathanBallPublishers

Ken Liu Broken Stars Head of Zeus R315

Brandon Sanderson Mistborn:Secret History Orion UK R240

Cassandra Clare Queen of Air and Darkness (The Dark Artifices) Simon & Schuster
U.K R235

B. K Evenson The Complete Aliens Omnibus 7 Bloomsbury R210

Mimi Yu The Girl King Orion UK R240

S.A. Chakraborty The Kingdom of Copper Harper Collins UK R305

Victoria Schwab Shades of Magic Volume 1: Steel Prince (Graphic Novel)

Bloomsbury R325

Peter V. Brett Barren Harper Voyager

Alastair Reynolds Shadow Captain Gollanz London

Justin Call Master of Sorrows Gollanz London

Victoria Aveyard Broken Throne Orion UK R305

Tad Williams Emprer of Grass Hodder & Stoughton R325

Alison Weir Six Tudour Queens: Anna of Kleve, Queen of Secrets Headline UK
R325 (Historical)

Amanda Lovelace Slay those Dragons Simon & Schuster UK R240

J.R.Ward The Savior Little Brown R325

Stephen Donaldson The War within Orion UK R325

James S.A. Corey Tiamat's Wrath Little Brow R325

Blast From the Past –Bucconeer WorldCon 1998

Neville Beard, Gail and Ian Jamieson



Rescue

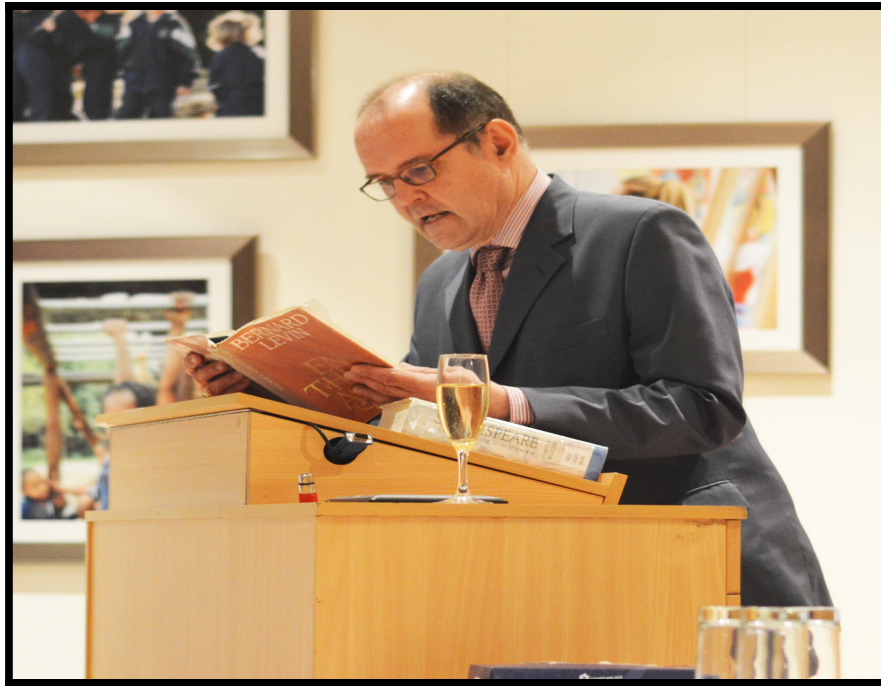
Here fumes rust the sky
A croaking vulture gliding by
Wasted humans work the mine
Alien foremen watch them pine
A rebel faction plans to fight
Currently, no help in sight
Watching from an unseen height
The Space Patrol observes their plight
In the spaceship plans are made
And men prepare a daring raid
Coded flashes in the stars
Alert a rebel from the wars
He wrecks the Aliens radar gear
Their laser weapons cannot bear
Below, the miners' spirits soar
Down the troopers Shuttles soar
Aliens to their doom we send, The end

AL du Pisani, Iain Sinclair, Norman Pringle

Eclipse Trip 2001... and what are they doing...reading



Digby Ricci – Entertaining End of Year Dinner Speaker



SFFSA Nova Short Story Competition Golden Anniversary



One of the main objectives of the club has always been to promote the writing of Science Fiction and Fantasy by means of the short story competition. This year in addition to the usual cash prizes, we will be offering these two trophies permanently. They will be given to the winner and to the highest placed club member (or second highest if the winner is a club member).

Go to www.sffsa.org.za for entry forms and competition rules.

Lothar Bauer - Gater



SFFSA TURNS 50



1969 - 2019