

So, you've been
to Roswell?

WSFA Picnic 1999

Sleeping with a
Married Man

Madeleine Reviews
The Barbed Coil

Writing Science
Fiction

Noah's Flood

Three in a Row

Spot in a Box

WSFA Calendar

WSFA Picnic 1999

By Michael Nelson

July 17, 1999 (Rain Date of July 18th)
11 a.m. to ?

Bill & Maren Mayhew's Home
11411 Cedar Lane
Beltsville, MD 20705
301-595-7920

WSFA Picnic Web Page:

<http://members.aol.com/michaelnel/index.htm>



WSFA shall be providing hot dogs, soft drinks, and beer. Please contact Michael Nelson at michaelnel@aol.com or 703-281-

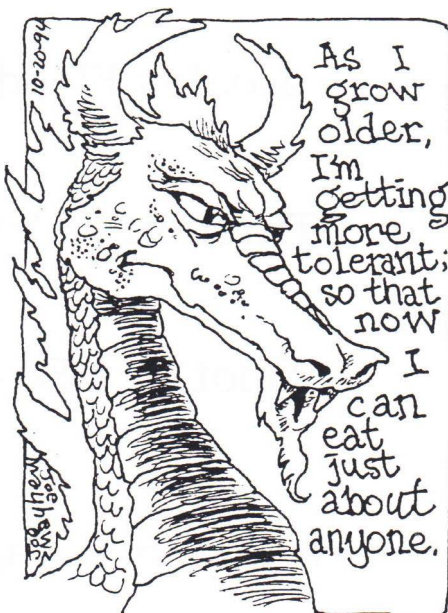
1935 to RSVP and to sign up for which items you will be bringing to the picnic. We are asking everyone to bring supplies or food for six or more people or to make a \$5 contribution.

It's important to let me know if you will be attending so that we can properly coordinate this event. I would hate for us to end up with 200 pounds of pasta salad and no marshmallows or even more horrible — to run out of beer! With that in mind, please let me know what beverages you would prefer (e.g., regular or diet soft drinks, beer, water, juices, etc.) as well.

What to Bring

We'll need things like charcoal (and charcoal lighter fluid), hot dog rolls, umbrellas, side dishes, ice, plates, cups, napkins, utensils, condiments, munchies (e.g., potato chips), hamburgers and other dead animal flesh, desserts, etc.

If possible, you should also bring lawn chairs, lawn toys such as Frisbees, and sun screen. Presently, we have one charcoal grill and are seeking a volunteer to bring a second one. We'll also need at least one more large cooler for drinks.



I shall be updating the WSFA Picnic web page regularly and should be attending the next WSFA meeting on July 16th to talk about the status of our picnic arrangements.

Directions to the Picnic

Bill is planning to display a sunflower flag in his front yard. Check MapQuest at <http://www.mapquest.com> for a map of 11411 Cedar Lane.

From Route 1 (Baltimore Avenue)

Get onto Montgomery Road. Go one mile and make a right turn onto Cedar Lane. After you cross Brandon Lane, 11411 Cedar Lane will be the fourth house on your right, across from the Emmanuel United Methodist church.

From Route 95

Take the Route 212 East (Powder Mill Road) exit toward Beltsville. Go one mile and make a right turn onto Cedar Lane. The Mayhew home will be approximately 3/10 of a

mile on your left, across from the Emmanuel United Methodist church.

Parking

The Mayhew driveway, on the street, and in the church parking lot (on Saturday).

Rain Date

If we are forced to postpone the picnic because of rain, an announcement will be placed on the WSFA Picnic web page and a recorded telephone message at 703-281-1935 (stupid answering machine will make you wait six rings before starting message) on the morning of July 17th.

Sleeping with a Married Man

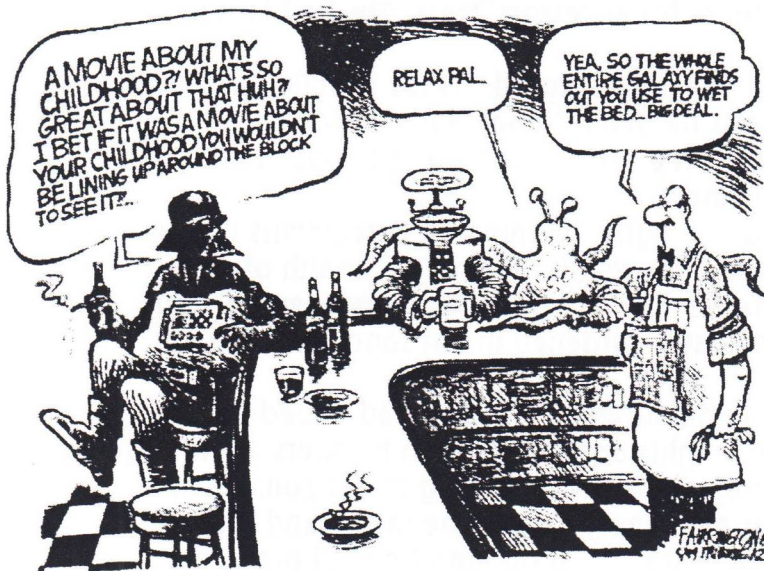
The June 4th meeting at the Gillilands started with Sam Pierce, on his first day of the job as vice president, leading a coup against the absent Prez and seized the gavel. "Shall we have a meeting? Let's get this done with."

Sam Lubell announced that WSFA would be switching locations in August, with First Friday at the Ginters and Third Friday at the Gillilands. We are having a picnic on July 17th. Show up say around 11 and close down when we finish. Joe said Mike Nelson will coordinate so we don't have 74 tons of potato salad. The club thanked the Gillilands for providing the ticket to *The Phantom Menace*. The treasurer was missing because he was at a bowling banquet. "With our money!" groused a member of the club.

John Pomeranz, for the Smithsonian committee, is pleased that things are proceeding on our special co-hosted Smithsonian SF Writing conference on October 22nd and 23rd. The keynote speaker is not confirmed but you will be pleased <see schedule in this issue!>. John Cult will be moderate and master of ceremonies. Agenda not changed. Winston told John that the Smithsonian is having a course on Science Fiction on Thursdays.

The entertainment committee had a nice time with *Star Wars*. Just before the pod race, the theater destroyed the tape. Everyone in the audience received free tickets. Lee asked if anyone wanted to see *Austin Powers*, but only a few hands were raised. Alexis said the war with Serbia has ended. No U.S. casualties. 5,000 Serb casualties. The Republicans are angry that there were too many Serb casualties. We should have brought them to the table for less. "Ah, a Serb story," joked Michael Walsh. "A-Serbic wit," rejoined John.

Joe asked about the web page. John said he updates it every six months or so. Sam Lubell said he updated it on Wednesday with picnic information and



a notice about the August meeting switch.

There was no new business. John is doing a fourth of July party/housewarming. Please don't burn down his new house. 5927 North 3rd Street. 5-cat-war. Eric said the History

Channel is running a show on SF. Mondays at 8. Mike Walsh reported that the *Library Journal* reviewed the Lensmen books. Joe is calculating who has the most Hugo nominations. John suggested that Joe get in touch with Laurie Mann who also has this. Lee Gilliland will have an art show at the Arlington Library. Candy Myers now Madigan is no longer living in sin but she is sleeping with a married man. She got married twice ("Bigamist" spat Eric) due to Army scheduling. "I was informed I was on 25 day standby so got married and then got married again on the original date. We got married twice so it would stick."

Tom Schaad had surgery but is recovering. The What If forum at the Library of Congress is having an event on anime. Winston is going to Westercon.

Right before Sam Pierce closed the meeting, Bob the Bowler came in and reported a treasury of \$4,003.66. "Let's have an austerity." Meeting adjourned at 9:41\

Attendance: VP Sam Pierce, Sec. Samuel Lubell, Treas. Bob MacIntosh, Trust. Lee Gilliland, Trust. Michael Walsh, Bernard Bell, Gail Dood, Eric Jablow, Keith Lynchh, Keith Marshall, Winton Matthews, Candy Madigan, Rebecca Prather, George Shaner, Lee Strong, Michael Taylor, John Madigan, Scott Hofmann, and Sheri Bell.

Madeleine Reviews: J.V. Jones' The Barbed Coil by Madeleine Yeh

This was proclaimed "The Best Fantasy Novel" of the year by SFX, a British magazine. I don't think it was the best fantasy novel of last year, but it is very, very good indeed. There are four reasons why its so good. First and foremost, its good because it is A novel. One single book. Not a duology, or a trilogy, or a quatrolgy or an infinitely long continuous series.

Five hundred years ago, the duke of Garizon had conquered his neighbors and made himself king. Fifty years ago, the neighbors returned the favor. The king of Garizon was killed, and his crown, the Barbed Coil, locked in a monastery. Now Izgard has retrieved the crown, and plans to reconquer his ancestors' feats. His first target, the city of Bay'Zell.

There Tessa, Ravis, and Camron gather to oppose Izgard. Tessa is pulled into that world by a miniature of the Barbed Coil. Ravis missed his boat, and Camron is prevented from leaving. This starts simply. Three people join forces to oppose a brutal conqueror. It rapidly becomes more complicated.

There is Magic involved on both sides of the fight. Illuminated parchments is used by Izgard to create monsters, and by Tessa to oppose this. There is a wealth of detail lavished on the techniques of this magic. Tessa does not draw with a goose quill pen and ink. She uses a pen that has been formed and hardened in hot sand, and acid ink made from oak galls and fine soot.

The past of all three characters rise up to haunt them. Camron had hoped for a straight forward battle, the gallant armored knights against uncouth invaders. A fitting action for the son of the man who had destroyed the previous king of Garizon. Ravis's past is more complicated. The most famous mercenary around, he raised and trained the army that he now opposes. Tessa, whose history is of running from all problems, now has to stand and fight a very large problem.

This novel has real characters: believable, varied people, inhabiting a rich complicated world. The minor characters: duchesses, embroiders, bankers, monks, nurses and queens are also well drawn. The world is not original, an early Renaissance

world faintly reminiscent of Italy: with knights, and archers, merchants, and fisherman. But its not a lazy copy of this world. It has a map and a history.

Writing Science Fiction

Cosponsored with the Washington Science Fiction Association

Weekend Seminar. Friday, October 22, 6 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 23, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Fifty years ago, science fiction was consigned to the pages of pulp magazines with lurid covers. Today, science fiction has come of age. Science fiction (like the overlapping genres of fantasy and horror) is a near-constant presence on the best-seller lists, authors known for their mainstream fiction use science fiction elements and themes in their work, and science fiction blockbusters dominate movie and television screens.

With this success has come a burgeoning interest in writing science fiction. In this seminar, award-winning authors, editors, and representatives of the SF publishing industry offer advice for the new writer and writers new to science fiction. Focusing on the elements and techniques that make SF unique, these experts will provide a fascinating introduction to the art and business science fiction writing.

The moderator for the forum will be John Clute, the editor of the literate and comprehensive "The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction," "The Encyclopedia of Fantasy," and "The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Science Fiction." Clute's knowledge of science fiction, from the early pulps to the current day, is unrivaled, and he is among the most astute observers of the genre today.

Friday, October 22

6 to 7:15 p.m. Panel Discussion: What is Science Fiction and How Do I Know if I'm Writing It?

What defines the science fiction genre? Are there elements - for example, science - that are necessary for science fiction. Must a definition of SF exclude fantasy and horror? How does the field's past inform the current state of SF writing, and what current trends point to its future?

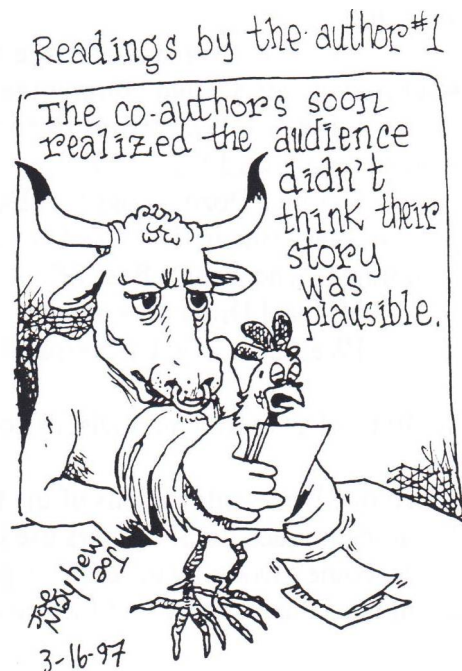
Panelists:

Brenda Clough (Brenda Clough's latest novel "How Like a God" involves computer programmers and the Mesopotamian god-king Gilgamesh.)

David Hartwell (Currently at Tor Books, Hartwell has been an editor of SF for more than 25 years and has received multiple Hugo nominations as Best Editor.)

Michael Dirda (APPEARANCE TENTATIVE)

SUBJECT TO PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS. Longtime SF reader, Michael Dirda is the Pulitzer Prize winning Senior Editor and Writer for the Washington Post Book World.)



7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Keynote Address: William Gibson: Making a Life in Science Fiction

William Gibson's stories have been hailed by scientists, policymakers, and futurists as visionary prophecies of a near future remade by technology. Gibson's classic novel "Neuromancer" and his subsequent dark tales of computer-enhanced urban jungles may not have invented the post-modernist SF subgenre of "cyberpunk," but they certainly set the standard by which all other such work -- or, indeed, any modern SF -- must be measured. With the release of his new novel, "All Tomorrow's Parties," Gibson talks about his life as a successful science fiction writer, explaining how he got into the field and offering advice about opportunities and pitfalls for new writers.

8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Opening Night Reception [tentative]

Saturday, October 23

9:30 to 10:20 a.m. Panel Discussion: The Building Blocks of SF

What are the basic elements and themes of science fiction. What can authors safely assume their readers know about faster-than-light travel, robots, biotechnology, computers, etc.? How and when should a writer violate those assumptions to increase a story's impact? What plots have been done so frequently - or done so well by others - that writers should avoid them?

Panelists:

Roger MacBride Allen (Critics have favorably compared Roger MacBride Allen to both Heinlein and Asimov. Allen is the author of several mainstream SF novels and a best-selling Star Wars trilogy.)

Catherine Asaro (Catherine Asaro's ability to tell compelling stories based on hard science won her a Hugo nomination this past year.)

Lawrence Watt Evans (Known for his engaging fantasy novels, Lawrence Watt Evans won a Hugo award for his SF story, "Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers.")

Gardner Dozois (Gardner Dozois has won 10 Best Editor Hugos for his work editing the premier magazine in the field, "Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine," and his definitive annual anthology, "The Year's Best SF.")

Michael Dirda (See above)

[We may move Catherine or Lawrence to another panel.]

10:30 to 11:20 a.m. Panel Discussion: Extrapolating the Future

Much of SF presents visions of the future (or at least a future). What techniques do SF writers use to imagine and portray a world yet-to-come? Does SF successfully prophesize the future or is SF set in the future more about the present?



Panelists:

S.N. Lewitt (Punk sensibilities imbue Shariann Lewitt's works, which include cyberpunk and military SF novels.)

Catherine Asaro (see above)

Michael Swanwick (A Nebula award winner for his novel, "Stations of the Tide," Michael Swanwick received an unprecedented three nominations for this year's Hugo award for Best Short Story.)

Elizabeth Hand (Artfully blending SF and fantasy, Elizabeth Hand's poetic novels include two set in a far-future Washington, D.C.)

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch (on your own)

1 to 1:50 p.m. Panel Discussion: The Science of Worldbuilding

Unlike writers in other genres, SF authors frequently must imagine their own worlds - alien planets, orbiting cities, interstellar spaceships, and more. SF readers are often unforgiving of settings that ignore (or fail to explain why they ignore) commonly accepted scientific principles. The panel demonstrates some worldbuilding techniques and discusses some of the resources available for non-scientist writers who want to create a new world.

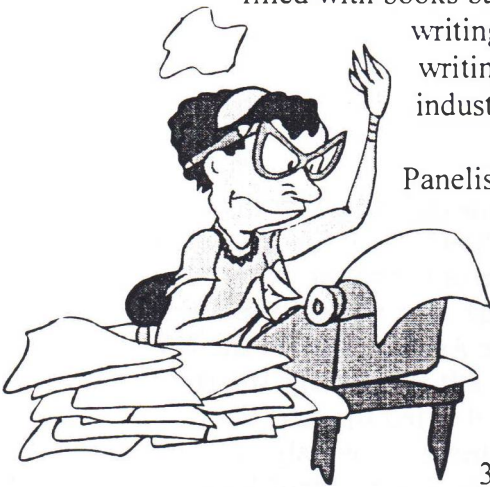
Panelists:

Eric Kotani (Eric Kotani really is a rocket scientist, and this scientific background is evident in his SF works.)

[Need a couple more here, perhaps Catherine Asaro as one]

2:00 to 2:50 p.m. Panel Discussion: Writing for Franchised Worlds

Check the SF section at your neighborhood bookstore, and you'll find much of the shelf space filled with books based on TV shows, movies, and other "shared worlds." How is writing in someone else's universe different from other types of writing, and what opportunities exist for writers in the shared world industry?



Panelists:

Roger MacBride Allen (see above)

Ann C. Crispin (Ann C. Crispin has written several Star Trek novels as well as other works of SF and fantasy. She is active in the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA).)

Lawrence Watt Evans (see above)

3:00 to 3:50 p.m. Panel Discussion: Characters: Human, Alien,

and Other...

What's the motivation of a bug-eyed monster? How can you show character development in an immortal alien intelligence existing as pure energy? SF writers have struggled to portray non-human characters as something more than everyday people dressed in rubber suits. How do writers create believable characters that aren't human and yet are comprehensible to human readers?

Panelists:

Gardner Dozois (see above)
[need to add more here]

4:00 to 4:50 p.m. Panel Discussion: The Business of Science Fiction

What should writers know about the SF publishing industry? What outlets exist to sell your work, and how should you get them to buy it? What traps and tricksters lie in wait for the unwary new author?

Panelists:

Brenda Clough (see above)
Ann C. Crispin (see above)
Betsy Mitchell (Betsy Mitchell is an editor with Warner Books.)

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. Book signing

Throughout the Workshop: Creativity Exercise: Alien Artifact Identification

Practice your creative skills. Throughout the seminar, several unusual objects will be displayed and seminar participants will be encouraged to write brief descriptions of what these items might be. Several creative and well-written examples will be read on Saturday afternoon during the book signing.

NOAH'S FLOOD

by

William Ryan & Walter Pitman

Reviewed by Alexis Gilliland

I'M OPEN
MINDED, BUT
ONLY IN NICE
WEATHER.



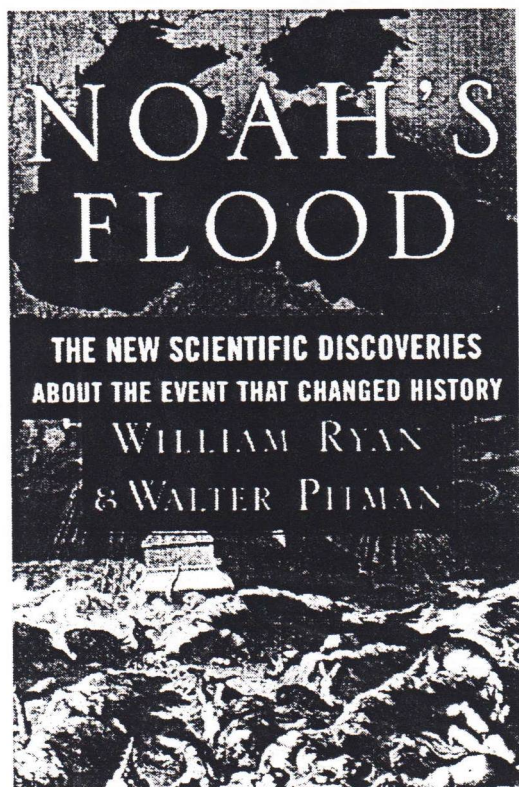
Like a river, the book follows a meandering sort of plan, starting with the discovery that the Mediterranean Sea had once been dried-out salt flats until the Straits of Gibraltar were breached five million years ago. We learn that when Russian engineers drilled to find bedrock for the Aswan Dam on the Nile River, they went down 900 feet into the silt-filled gorge the river had cut when the sea it emptied into had dried up, and the Mediterranean Basin had refilled itself instantaneously--in geological time. The Gibraltar dam broke and the world ocean flooded in, taking only a few years or decades. Humans had not yet evolved.

The meanders continue, as we see how sea level changes in response to the advances and retreats of the glaciers, and how a time line is established to correlate the state of the world's oceans and the world's climate. The authors are looking for a "recent" event that would be contemporaneous with the biblical account of Noah's flood, written no earlier than about 1000 BC as an

adaptation of an older legend in the service of a then-new theology. That precursor legend is found on Sumerian clay tablets, than which there is no earlier writing, in the tablets recording the Gilgamesh legend. On one tablet Gilgamesh takes a great journey to seek immortality from the hand of Utnapishtim--the Ur-Noah, whom the gods have rewarded with immortality for saving the human race. The authors suggest that our hero's journey takes him through Anatolia and the Bosphorous into the Black Sea where the old man lives, and when they get together, the story of the great flood is told. Another meander deals with how the story-teller tells and embellishes his tale, and how style and cadences of the guslar--the story-teller--is imprinted on those ancient clay tablets, suggesting that the tale was preserved orally from the time of the event.

Then we set the stage. At the end of the last glaciation, the ice sheets melted and the sea level rose as the meltwater from the North American ice sheet poured into the Atlantic from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, disrupting the flow of the Gulf Stream and bringing to Europe the thousand year cold, dry spell called the Little Dryas. First the Black Sea, then a body of fresh water called the New Euxine Lake, rose and spilled into the Mediterranean, then as the Little Dryas hit it receded, and the shore of the New Euxine Lake became an oasis of warm, watered land around which farmers gathered. There is a suggestion that they were there for about 600 years. At the end, about 5600 BC, the shore of the New Euxine lake was 350 feet below sea level, and the Mediterranean Sea first pushed through the Dardanelles to make Marmara Lake into the Sea of Marmara, it then pushed through the Bosphorous, a silted up riverbed and cut a gap though which flowed ten cubic mile of water a day, 200 times more than flow over Niagara falls.

For the people living on the shore of the New Euxine Lake, their world had indeed come to an end. In Gilgamesh, the god Enlil decides to wipe out humanity for disturbing his sleep, but the god Ea tells Utnapishtim to tear down his house and build a boat, and to take what a farmer needs--seed and livestock. There is the building of his boat, and then . . .



The Flood roared like a bull,
Like a wild ass screaming the winds
howled

The darkness was total, there was no
sun.

The waters rose six inches a day, and kept on rising for two years, flooding houses and fields, towns and nations. We then take another meander, to follow the people who fled the flood; post-5600 BC there was this great influx of sophisticated farming peoples into Europe, Anatolia, the Fertile Crescent, and the Nile Valley. The Indo-Europeans appeared as if from nowhere, and studying their languages, we learn that Anatolian--on the south side of the Black Sea--was the first to branch off, followed by everything else. Man might have come from Africa, but the Indo-Europeans dispersed from the shores of the Black Sea after a great flood that never receded.

The book meanders, with many asides and discursions, and yet it held my interest throughout. It sets one to thinking of the power of melting ice to alter

human history. Then we come to the present day, where--it may not be happening--the greenhouse effect is warming the climate. The glaciers are receding, yes, but only in the mountains; the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica seem as coolly imperturbable as ever. If they are not, if they melt, the world ocean will rise by another 200 feet.

Three In A Row

The 6/18 Third Friday opened with Prez Judy's "Okay it's 9:15 by my watch." Alexis Gilliland made noises of going to a convention early in October. The Gillilands will take the two meetings in September if the Ginters will take the 1st and third in October. Erica will clear it with Karl <It cleared.> "It is our anniversary but I doubt he has something planed since we will just be back from Australia. We may or may not have a Third Friday because the Gillilands will be at Albacon.

"I'll kill you," Lee threatened her husband in front of dozens of witnesses. "Three in a row. You get to clean."

Treasurer Bob reported \$3,849.16. A cry of aaargg, was heard. "Let's have a party?" "Let's have a fund raiser." There was no convention report. The entertainment committee is juggling WSFA meetings and conventions. Ross Perot is not running, but has his ear to the ground. He is the only man who can do that standing up. The Christian Coalition lost its tax-free status, no thanks to Judy who reclused herself from that case.

Judy said John Pomeranz will do a schedule for the Smithsonian SF Writing Event October 22-23. **William Gibson will be the featured presenter.** John Clute will moderate. Lot's of big names. Should be mailed out in August. "Does this satisfy our tax status?" asked Elspeth. Judy put on her tax lawyer hat and said, "Yes." Someone asked if WSFA members would get a special rate. Judy said we should be getting the same rate as Smithsonian Associates.

In the absence of Mike Nelson, Bob MacIntosh gave details of the picnic. It will be the 17th of July at 11 o'clock. Bill Mayhew is a kind and gentle man. The rain date is the 18th but parking would be close to impossible. A debate over what constitutes rain was settled by saying if it is too wet to barbecue. Mike is talking to Bill. He needs chairs and if someone has a grill please bring it. We'll supply soda and hot dogs so we need people to bring buns and condiments. Michael is coordinating the food list. Nominal \$5 expense if want to attend without bringing anything. Joe says the party will last until Bill shuts us out. We might have a burn afterwards. We'll get a witch. Bob said to let Mike know if coming.



Judy asked if there were any committees. Joe said he was a committee of one, "BSFS asked me to see how WSFA would feel about Balticon moving to Memorial Day." Elspeth said, "I have a sentimental objection since that was our weekend. Part of Disclave was that it was the first day of summer. But we haven't used it in some time." A majority of the club voted yes. "But they have to change their name to Balticlave," insisted Mike Walsh.

Erica has new sofas. Next up, the family library. The Library of Congress will host the Journal of Irreproducible Results on June 30th. September they will have Robert Sawyer, October Tari Harper (flying herself from Oregon) and Nov. Kate Elliot. Joe wants to get rid of his couch with a sofabed. If anyone can get it out of his house, it's yours. The censored season finale of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* will be shown on July 13th.

A computer program was demonstrated to the club SETI@home to search for intelligent life in the universe from your own home using the same technology used to break DES encryption (lots of computers doing a screen saver.) Meeting adjourned 9:45.

Attendance: Pres. Judy Kindell, Sec. Samuel Lubell, Treas. Bob MacIntosh, Trust. Lee Gilliland, Trust. Michael Walsh, 2000 Chair Covert Beach, Elspeth Kovar Burgess, Geoffrey Drumheller, Alexis Gilliland, Erica Ginter, David Hines, Keith Lynch, Nicki and Richard Lynch, Keith Marshall, Joe Mayhew, Meridel Newton, Evan Phillips, William Squire, Colleen Stumbaugh.

Star Trek: TNG Fan Fiction

The characters in the following story belong to Paramount but what they do belongs to the author.

Spot in a Box

By Gail Dood

The Enterprise was very quiet and the Command crew was enjoying some much needed time off. Data sat at the desk in his quarters working on his musical arrangements for future crew concerts. Earlier in the day he had heard some noises emanating from the quarters next door which seemed odd for those quarters had been unoccupied for as long as Data had been aboard the Enterprise. Later, he decided, he would see who his new neighbor was. For the time being he was happy to be working on his music. These moments were the closest thing to pure enjoyment the android could understand.

As he tuned his music disc up and down trying to get the best sound, he detected a movement to his left. Then again. He switched off his console and stood up. There it was again--a little movement, this time just under his desk. He squatted down for a better view. There it was again, and this time he heard some soft sounds as well, almost like a human infant crying. Startled, Data got on his hands and knees and peered under the desk. There he saw what appeared to be a soft little ball of fur. He cupped it in his hands. The furry object trembled for a moment and then began crying plaintively again and licking Data's fingers as if searching for food. Data raised his hands to eye level the better to see this little denizen of his room's shadows. He turned it this way and that trying to determine what it was.

Data thought of ancient seafaring vessels and the rats and mice that lived on the ships, but to date there had never been a rodent infestation on a star ship other than the tribble infestation on the first Enterprise many years ago. He examined the small furry creature again and noticed a long tail, definitely not a tribble, but what? He remembered children's books he had read his first months on earth after starfleet rescued him, and then he knew. It was surely a young cat! But how did it arrive on the Enterprise and, more surprising, in his quarters with the door--the only point of entry--securely shut. The young cat started its crying again and Data, now able to guess what the problem was, addressed his replicator: "Computer, a feline supplement."

He removed the food from the replicator and set it before his hungry guest. The cat dove into the food and seemed to inhale it. Data seated himself at the desk and watched in amazement. The bowl was emptied in seconds. Its hunger satisfied, at least for the time being, the cat jumped to the desk top and rubbed itself against Data's arm, purring loudly in gratitude. Data rubbed its silky head. The purring became louder. "What a nice cat," Data

said, "but where did you come from?" Knowing he was not likely to get an answer soon to that question, he began to think ahead. "If you live with me you should have a name. But what shall it be? I know very little about human pets and the naming of them." Once more the children's book came to mind. "Once I read about a wonderful pet named Spot that was a delight to its owner," he said to the now sleeping cat. "So how about 'Spot?' We will be a family like the characters in the book." The cat, though snoozing, had one ear pointed in Data's direction like a satellite dish, not missing a sound from his rescuer. Data petted the cat. "Nice Spot," he soothed, and the newly named Spot purred in contentment.

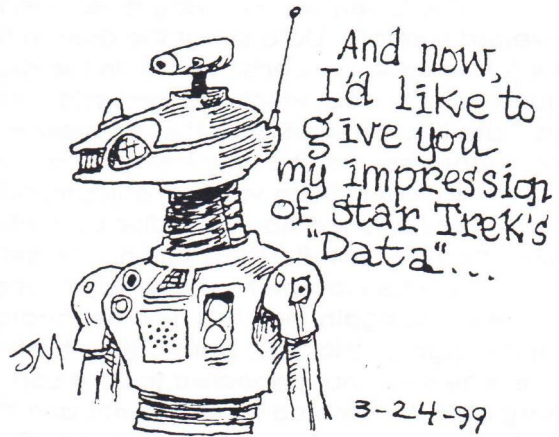
Data had considered spending the evening in 10 forward but with his new little roommate, he decided it might be better to spend the evening at home. This was the first time he had thought of his quarters as home. Odd. Spot was having a definite effect on him. He decided to take notes on the differences Spot was making--but later. First he must make sure the little cat had all it needed. He sat at his computer and searched cat files. There were lots to study, but the great surprise was the decline of cats on Earth in the past centuries. From protecting the granaries of ancient Egypt where they were worshipped, to being thought of as in league with the devil during the Salem witch hunts where they were slaughtered by the thousands. In the twentieth century they were a favorite pet and at times were more popular than dogs. Even though less affectionate than dogs, cats were much cleaner and easier to maintain in small homes. Data found what he was looking for and called upon the replicator once more for assistance: "Cat litter--in a box." He hoped Spot would know what to do with it. He set the box in the sleeping room he rarely used. He then carried the sleepy cat in and placed one of its paws in the box. Spot snapped to attention and jumped in the litter and did what was expected of him. Once again Data watched in amazement. "Good Spot," he said. All was under control. He and Spot curled up on a chair and Data felt for the first time that he had a family.

Early the next morning Spot let Data know in no uncertain terms it was feeding time. The replicator once again produced food to the cat liking and once again it was inhaled with great vigor. Data was not due on the bridge until much later so he went back to his desk and started doing some research work for Captain Picard. He heard some thumping in the quarters next to his and made a mental note to find out who had moved in. Moments later his door chime sounded. "Enter," he called. The door slid open and young Wesley Crusher entered. Spot and Wesley saw each other at the same moment. Spot jumped off the desk and crawled underneath, all the while hissing. Wesley shouted, "Data how did you get my cat out of the box."

"What box are you talking about? Spot appeared in my quarters yesterday afternoon and we are quite predisposed to each other by now. I guess it was you rattling about in the empty quarters next door but what on earth were you up to with this poor little cat?"

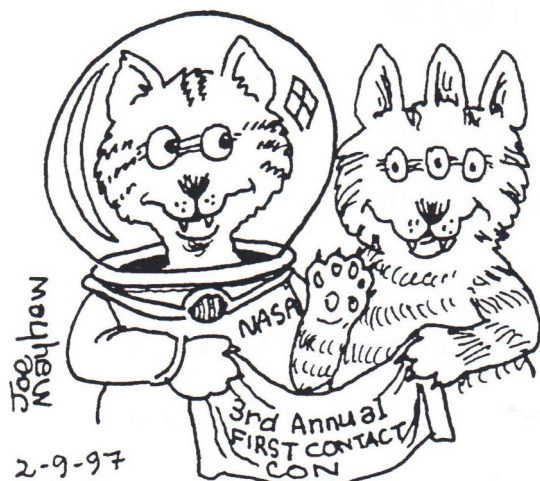
"We are beginning to study quantum mechanics at the academy and I decided to try Dr. Schrodinger's experiment while on my spring break here on the enterprise. One of my friends procured the cat and I began the experiment next door. Data, I even improved on the original guidelines by attaching a heart monitor to the cat to see if at anytime the cat was both alive and dead."

"But Wes," Data exclaimed, "that would violate the terms of the experiment. It is only when we do not know anything at all about the actual state of the subject that we have to assume it exists in all possible states. However this was never intended as a physical experiment but one of the mind. After all who would put a cat in a sealed box with a vial of cyanide and a mechanism to kill it? Certainly not the illustrious Dr. Schrodinger. Ah, yes."



There was a bit of radioactive material in the box as well. And when the material emitted a subatomic particle, it would be detected by the mechanism which would trip a hammer, break the vial and the cat would die. A most diabolical way to introduce impressionable students to the 'many-worlds' implications of quantum mechanics."

"Data, I realize I shouldn't have done this experiment and put the little cat in jeopardy, and I promise I'll never try an experiment on a living creature again, but how did you get the cat out of the box?"



"Wesley, I assure you I never saw your box or entered the quarters you were working in. Yesterday the cat appeared on my carpet and seemed to be a bit nervous but after some petting and a bowl of food, he seemed to be all right and very much at home with me as he does today."

At that moment Spot came from behind the desk and spit and hissed at Wesley. "Now, Spot," Data coaxed, picking up the cat and stroking its silky fur, "it's okay. You have a home with me and no more dark boxes for you."

"Data," Wesley laughed, "you named him Spot? That's a dog's name."

Data shrugged. "Well, Wes, he seems to like it well enough, and he does have a few little spots on his head. See, right here." Spot squirmed in Data's arms as Wesley approached

for a closer look. "Easy does it, Spot," Data soothed as he walked to the replicator to order a bowl of food for the uneasy cat.

"Well, Data," Wesley sighed, "it looks like you have yourself a pet if you would like."

"Yes, Wes, I enjoy his company and could never turn him over to you as frightened as he is of you."

"That's great, Data. My mother is terribly allergic to cats, anyway."

"I will remember to keep her out of my quarters."

Wesley smiled to himself imagining Data and his mother in this room alone. "Still," he continued, "I have one problem with all of this."

"And what might that be, Wesley?"

"How did the cat get out of my box and into your quarters?"

"I am afraid that question will not have a factual answer as neither of us observed the cat climbing out of its death trap. However, one answer could come from the ancient Egyptians who believed cats had supernatural powers."

"I don't buy that for a minute. There must be a scientific explanation."

"Then how about this: according to quantum theory, a particle may not only exist or not exist, it may disappear and come into existence somewhere else."

"Yes," Wesley agreed, not sure where Data was headed with this argument.

"Theoretically it's possible--though not very probable--that you could be bouncing a tennis ball off a wall only to have it suddenly disappear through the wall and reappear somewhere else."

"Remotely possible with a tennis ball perhaps but, of course, quite common at the quantum level. In fact it is called 'quantum tunneling' at that level, and quite a useful phenomena in microscopic electronics."

"So--wait a minute, Data--you're saying the cat in my box, through some quantum quirk, tunneled through the box and wall and ended up in your quarters?"

"I see no other explanation!"

THE END

WSEFA CALENDAR

Pay attention. This is confusing.

Friday, July 2: WSFA First Friday Meeting (at the Gillilands' as usual).

Friday, July 16: WSFA Third Friday Meeting (at the Ginters' as usual).

July 17 WSFA Picnic at Bill Mayhew's house 11 am until late.

Friday, August 6: WSFA First Friday Meeting SWAP (held at the Ginters' in **Maryland**).

Friday, August 20: WSFA Third Friday Meeting SWAP (held at the Gillilands' in **Virginia**).

August 26 - 29: CONucopia in L.A.

September 2 - 6: 57th World SF Convention: Aussiecon Three in Australia

Friday, September 3: WSFA First Friday Meeting (at the Gillilands' as usual).

Friday, September 17: WSFA Third Friday Meeting SWAP (at the Gillilands' in **Virginia**)

Friday, October 1: WSFA First Friday Meeting SWAP (at the Ginters' in **Maryland**).

Friday, October 15: WSFA Third Friday Meeting (at the Ginters' as usual).

