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Looking Forward to 2004

By Keith Lynch

There are several events to look forward to in 2004. Of course I'm only listing predictable events. As always, the unpredictable events will turn out to be the most memorable.

As the year begins, the federal CAN SPAM law takes effect. I expect it to greatly increase the amount of spam, as it basically legitimizes unsolicited bulk email for the first time. Enjoy email while you still can.

Two rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, are to land on Mars in January. I hope they're more successful than the last few attempts at Mars landers. In July, Cassini is to enter orbit around Saturn -- the first-ever Saturn orbiter. It's unclear whether the Space Shuttle will resume flights this year. Americans are aboard the International Space Station, but they are getting there and back via Russian launchers.

In Unix (including Linux and BSD) time is counted in seconds since January 1st, 1970. At 8:37 am EST on January 10th, this time will roll over to 31 bits. This should not cause any problems. When it rolls over to 32 bits in 2038, that may cause problems in poorly written systems. When it rolls over to 33 bits in 2106, that will break everything, unless it's recoded to be a 64 bit integer, in which case there should be no problems for billions of years.

On April 20th, Gravity Probe B is scheduled to be launched into a polar orbit around the earth. This is NASA's most-delayed probe. It's been in the planning stages since the 1950s. It's basically the most nearly perfect gyroscope ever, intended to measure two effects of General Relativity.

When Magellan's crew sailed 25,000 miles west and found themselves back at their starting point, they attributed this to the fact that the earth is curved. They were mostly right, but not entirely. One inch of this is currently believed due to the curvature of space in earth's gravity well. In other words, the equator is not quite 360 degrees around, but is just about one inch shy of this, the difference being made up by this hypothesized "geodetic effect". Gravity Probe B is expected to be able to not just detect this effect, but to measure it to a high precision.



Contemporary with Magellan lived Copernicus, who wrote that the rising and setting of the sun, moon, etc., were not because the sky rotated, but because the earth did. The sky stood still. Like Magellan, he was mostly right, but not entirely. Einstein conjectured that our planet drags some of the nearby space-time along with it, so the whole sky does very slowly rotate, at a rate of about one revolution every thirty millions years. Gravity Probe B should be able to measure this tiny effect to a high precision. Of course it may not be launched in 2004. It's been delayed before. And in may be delayed again. We'll see.

Unfortunately, it only tests the weak field effects of general relativity. Nobody doubts that it will find the expected numbers, assuming it works at all. We'll only get interesting results when we can send a probe to somewhere with strong fields, such as a neutron star or better yet a black hole.

In late spring, the seventeen year cicadas will return. They will be so numerous that in places it will be impossible to walk without stepping on several of them with each footstep.

Every creature has a way to defend itself against predators. Some are poisonous, some can outrun them, others outfight them, others simply hide. We outthink them. But the cicadas have a unique strategy: being so numerous they can't all get eaten. This won't work for an annual creature, since the predators would increase in numbers. Nor would it work for a creature that returns as often as every two or three years, for similar reasons. It's not chance that their return rate is a prime number. A fifteen year locust would be prey for a three year or a five year predator. But a seventeen year locust can only be prey for a seventeen year predator. No doubt one will eventually evolve, drive the locusts to extinction, then go extinct itself. I'm sure this has already happened numerous times over the ages.

At sunrise on June 8th, there will be a transit of Venus, in which that planet gets directly between us and the sun, appearing as a tiny black dot on the sun's disk. You can see it with welder's goggles. You can also see it without welder's goggles, but in that case it may be the last thing you ever see. I learned of this transit in a 19th century astronomy book which I own. It mentions the recent 1882 transit, and bemoans the fact that it won't recur until June 8th, 2004, long after everyone alive in 1882 is dead. Of all the people who know about the transit, I wonder if I'm the one who learned it from the oldest source.

The New York Avenue station on Metro's Red Line is expected to open in late 2004. This will be the first station that was not part of the original 1970s plan which was finished in 2001. It's also the first in-fill station, i.e. a station constructed between two stations that are already operating. You can watch the construction whenever you ride between Union Station and Rhode Island Avenue. Of course it may not open in 2004. Throughout its history, Metro has been notorious for lengthy delays.

Capclave will be in Virginia for the first time ever. This will be the first time in more than a decade that WSFA has held any convention in the Old Dominion. WSFA is hosting SMOFcon, for the first time in over twenty years.

Wade and I should finish placing the "second series" of WSFA Journals online. The second series began in 1978. By the end of 2004, we should have started work on the "first series", which was edited by the late Don Miller. They tended to be longer, and are valued by collectors. They go back to 1965 or so, and some of them exceed a hundred pages. Placing those online should keep Wade and I busy for several years.

2004 has five Fifth Fridays. They're in January, April, July, October, and December. None of them conflict with large or nearby cons. 17.75% of all years have five Fifth Fridays. The rest have four Fifth Fridays. (34.8125% of all months have five Fridays. The rest have four.)

S.M. Stirling recently did something that's very unusual for a science fiction writer -- he attempted to predict the future. He says that Dean will be nominated, but Bush will win by a landslide. We'll see how accurate that is.

Check Your License

The 12/5 First Friday meeting was called to order by Prez Judy at 9:15 after deciding that we did have a quorum (due to a slight snowstorm, few Marylanders braved the wilds of Virginia). No business had been done at Capclave. No treasurer.

Alexis for the entertainment committee was going to tell about Lee's experience with the DMV, but let her do it. Lee opened with, "To start with, I shouldn't have been going 20 miles over the speed limit." A police officer asked to see her license and told her it had expired two years ago. Alexis had to come back to get her with another car. He parked it and went in, but later when he went out to look at the car he found it had been towed. Lee had to retake the driver's license test and flunked because she didn't know anything about learner's permits. The next day, their computers were down. The next day was Capclave so she couldn't go. After Capclave, she went back again and they said they needed a second form of id. "I went home and got my passport and when I showed it to them they checked their computer and told me that I had renewed my license a year and a half ago. I have yet to receive my official apology for wasting five days of my life. So check your license!"



Keith for the publications committee is still looking for four issues, other than that he has 17 years on line.

Sam Lubell for Capclave past said, "It passed; it happened. The GOH was very pleased and called this one of the best conventions he had ever been to. Unfortunately, not as many people were present as we would have liked. We had about 30 fewer people than in 2002. Bob has the final numbers. It looks like we will break even or be about \$500 in the red.

We had some interesting times. Scott and Erica, who were to run the consuite both became ill. What were the odds of that? Religious filking interrupted things a bit, but we worked around it. The Hilton can't seem to figure out how to lock its own doors. Lee Gilliland said this was a problem at the 1989 Unicon (at this same hotel).

The hotel did not penalize us for the room block. The hotel had kept informing the members that our block was full when it wasn't and was offering a better deal via the web than our members got. Peggy Rae held the hotel's fee to the fire.

Sam concluded by thanking everyone for helping to make Capclave possible. Cathy Green apologized for biting people's heads off. Mike Walsh said that this was okay, "As long as you returned the heads to the proper bodies."

Lee for Capclave present said, "Finally it devolves on me" She's set up email capclave2004@comcast.net. "I'll read anything. I may not act on it. Nicki Lynch and Colleen will help with media. Mike and Beth Zipser will do a restaurant guide."

Mike for 05 said, "GOH is Howard Waldrop. Tentative date is after Columbus Day. Howard doesn't go to many cons. He's swearing them off. I plan on producing a booklet of either a new story or a reprint of 'The Ugly Chickens' with annotations. The story won the Nebula and World Fantasy Award and Capclave 2005 will mark its 20th anniversary. Everyone can have a dodo if the economics work – the plan is to have the booklet in everyone's membership packet. We have another program participant already – Allen Steele, who has family here. He won't be at Worldcon so why not. Disclave lurches along!" "Capclave!" yelled Cathy. "25 cents!" yelled everyone.

Mike for WFC said there was some budget stuff left but assuming there was nothing big, the surplus will be in the low five figures. Eric asked, "Don't you lose points for a surplus?" Mike answered, "This was a WFC. I'm sure the club will make good use of it." <Heh, heh>

Judy said that our missing treasurer is out trying to get us a SMOFcon. Elspeth said that we have a contract with the Hyatt as a backup and will need to know soon. Judy said that we're talking to two hotels and are giving people at this year's con a choice.

Eric for Austerity called on people to donate food, bring money. Due to the financial failure of Capclave we are doing a pledge drive. For \$20, you get a picture of one of Erica's cats. For \$100 you get the cat. For \$366, just a dollar a day since it's leap year, you get Lydia."

Lee Gilliland for Activities said that AFI in Silver Spring does a lot of, um, films and film festivals. They might be interested in a SF film festival. I need a group of people to come up with titles. Wade asked if the films had to be in public domain. Mike said that AFI can figure licenses out. Someone asked how many films? Cat said, it would have to be at least two. Judy said the consensus of club is that we should do it.

Lee said she's not organizing a trip to see *Return of the King*, Emily is thinking of organizing one. Cathy suggested doing a Jewish Chinese and Movie Christmas. Eric said, "Then you don't have to go bowling." Cathy said, "There wasn't a bowling alley in NYC when I was a kid." This prompted a long debate over one that was on the second floor above a restaurant. Keith said, "I think my above-stairs neighbors are running a similar establishment."

No old business. Cathy said this year's so-called secular stamp is a Santa. Announcements: This is Ivy's last meeting AGAIN. Lee Strong had several announcements:

Lee Strong was diagnosed with diabetes 2½ years ago when he weighed 297 pounds. He's still 81% here by weight. His goal is to be only 74% here by weight (220 pounds) for Capclave 2004. But Lee might not be here for Capclave 2005 since his agency head is trying to move the entire agency south to Newport News, Virginia. This is all very tentative at present, but Lee is looking for a new job to stay in the area and thereby make his commuting to WSFA meetings easier. Eric suggested Lee host the Virginia meetings. Lee G said, "He'll chat with you on-line" Lee has also accelerated his decennial apartment cleanup and has discarded 862 books since 1 November, mostly science fiction and fantasy but also general and military history. Elspeth suggested a book plundering party and Lee was surprisingly receptive to being plundered... at least by the right people. <Look of wide-eyed innocence from Elspeth>



Eric warned people not to watch SciFi channel this Monday lest their eyes encounter the *Battlestar Galactica* remake which he said was worse than the original. Rebecca Prather has a Christmas party December 21 featuring directions to a very decorated house. Cat is going home for Christmas, flying on the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' flight. <Did they lose their luggage on the first flight?>

Lee Gilliland said that Alexis and she will be spending their 10th anniversary in Egypt. They'll miss First Friday so we need to find a place. Erica is doing toys for tots. She's out of the hospital, back on her feet. Keith said that Cryonics may be cancelled due to icy weather. George asked if we have sponsors for the site in January. Keith said yes and suggested that WSFA fund it ourselves. Alexis checked and it is funded through February. Meeting unanimously adjourned at ten o'clock.

Attendance: Pres Judy Kindell, VP Cathy Green, Sec and 2003 Chair Samuel Lubell, Trust. Keith Lynch, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, 2005 Chair Mike Walsh, Alexis Gilliland, Scott Hofmann, Eric Jablow, Jim Kling, Elspeth Kovar, Wade Lynch, Walter Miles, Rebecca Prather, George Shaner, Lee Strong, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap, Howard the Duck.

Notes on the Capclave Bulletin Board.

Rebecca Prather left a note on the Capclave Bulletin Board. "Found ring. See Rebecca Prather". Attached to it were three post-its, reproduced here in their entirety.

"I didn't want it anyway, keep it." - Frodo

"My minions will be with you shortly." - Sauron

"You stole it. My Precious. And we want it back" - Gollum

Review of Charles Stross' *Singularity Sky* Reviewed by Samuel Lubell

Charles Stross is frequently cited on "hot new writer" panels at sf cons. And his short story "Lobsters" made quite an impression. So it was with considerable interest that I picked up (at the library, sorry, Charlie) his first novel, *Singularity Sky*. This is an interesting novel for sf fans consisting of a culture clash between an old style galactic empire with the new post-Vingean singularity model. However, those who have not been reading in the field recently will be hopelessly confused as Stross does not really explain much about the Singularity. He also is weak on character development and a twist meant to add levels to one character seems to come out of left field.

The book opens when telephones rain down on the planet Rochard's World, a colony of the New Republic. The voices on the phone offer the colonists whatever they want in exchange for being entertained. This, of course, is tantamount to an economic declaration of war and by midafternoon the planet is in rebellion, especially since the radical revolutionaries have received a Cornucopia machine in exchange for "a post-Marxist theory of post-technological political economy, and a proof that the dictatorship of the hereditary peerage can only be maintained by the systematic oppression and exploitation of the workers and engineers, and cannot survive once the people acquire the self-replicating means of production."



When word reaches the New Republic, the emperor sends a spaceship, whose crew includes engineer Martin Springfield, a free citizen of post-government Earth "I'm not owned by any government" and who is secretly a spy for incredibly advanced aliens who do not want anyone breaking the rules of time travel. Also aboard is Rachel Mansour, UN ambassador and another spy. These two are the best developed characters and provide an outsider perspective of the New Republic civilization. The military plan to exploit a loophole in the rules regulating time travel to arrive just as the Festival, the post-singularity aliens, reach the colony. Meanwhile, the revolution turns into anarchy, the governor turns into a kid who wants to have adventures, and the Festival turns out to have a dark side of its own.

This is a very interesting book, as much for what it says about science fiction as for its own content. The book can easily be read as a metaphor for the battle over since fiction with the conflict between the "New Republic" and emperor representing old style science fiction (straight out of Star Wars) and the Festival representing the less traditional post-Singularity future with a battle cry of "Entertain us!". And you have to see what Stross does to the critics. Still, it would have been nice if Stross had developed some personalities in the New Republic (aside from the spychaser) so that it wasn't just a collection of stereotypes. I recommend this book but strongly hope that Stross' next novel is better to live up to his reputation.

The Matrix Revolutions

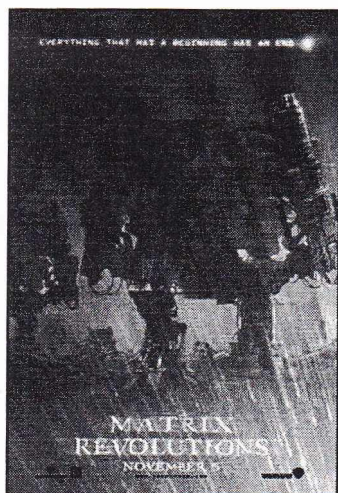
Warner Brothers/Village Roadshow/Silver Pictures, 2003

Reviewed by Lee Strong 3.0

"What did you think of the movie?" -- Theater employee

"Visually stunning but logically incoherent." -- Lee Strong

"I agree." -- Theater employee



And his job depends on the movie selling lots of tickets!

Previously, I have considered the Matrix movies to be reasonably logical once you accept their paranoid postulates. In this, the climax of the series, logic goes right out of the window and with it, the fan's acceptance of the Wachowski Brothers' nightmare.

WARNING! MAJOR PLOT SPOILERS INCLUDED IN THIS REVIEW!

The Matrix Revolutions is divided into 3-4 unequal parts, all brilliantly filmed but weakly plotted. If you haven't seen the first two episodes, you're pretty much lost until the over the top gee whiz factor kicks in. In the first part, we wander around in the illusionary world of the Matrix talking philosophy while the evil Agent Smith program takes over all of the other programs. Then we change gears to an ultra-cyberpunk battle in which the insect like Sentinel machines burrow into the refuge city of Zion and attempt to kill off all of the free humans. The latter fight the former with heavy machine guns mounted on

unarmored combat mecha and occasional bazooka shots. Finally, our leading heroes Neo and Trinity fly their electromagnetic "hovercraft" to the Machine City for a confrontation with the Machine Mind of the entire system. Neo fights Agent Smith in a WAY over the top superpowered martial arts battle inside the Matrix, and the Machine Mind arbitrarily agrees to peace. Anticlimax. Roll the credits.

Not to put too fine a point on it, this story doesn't make sense. The philosophical story doesn't have an obvious purpose, especially a train ride between the real and unreal worlds. Previously transitions were handled by jacking in and out, so why the train? No explanation. The battle of Zion brilliantly illustrates human courage... but also human stupidity as the organics forget to actually armor their "Armor" or equip their heavy lifters with heavy weapons. The Wachowski Brothers need to broaden their viewing of Japanese anime to include some power armor flicks. Fortunately, the supposedly bloodthirsty Sentinels are primarily interested in flying picturesquely around Zion and only kill off the pesky humans as so many afterthoughts. If the machines actually focused on their mission, there wouldn't be time for the human Hail Mary electromagnetic pulse counterattack.

The climactic confrontation between the Machine Mind and Neo is the intellectual low point of this farce since no reason is given for the previously hostile Mind to suddenly accept Neo's plea for peace. Nor is there an obvious reason for the Mind to allow Neo to take time out from his pleading to fight Smith. A real programmer would just erase both nuisances, one physically, the other electronically. However, we don't need to worry about realism in the Wachowski Brothers' nightmare.

After all, it's all just an illusion.

Not science fiction.

I rate *The Matrix Revolutions* as ★★ on the five star scale. -- LS 3.0

Timeline Paramount/Mutual Film, 2003 Reviewed by Lionel L'Estranger

Well, unlike Wade Lynch, I would not call this effort "wretched." But it is awfully mediocre.

Our story starts with a man appearing suddenly in the New Mexico desert and dying of mysterious wounds, and then jumps to France where a Scottish team of archaeologists are excavating a group of medieval sites linked by a battle of the Hundred Years War. Their leader disappears just as they uncover mysteries that suggest that All Is Not Right with the flow of time. Sure enough, their sponsor turns out to have a time tunnel linked to the day of the battle. So, they quickly jump backwards to the brutal days of yore to rescue their leader from the cruel English invaders and to discover true love. And, of course, an accident disables the time tunnel at the critical moment.



Viewed strictly as a very violent costume action adventure, this period piece is not too bad. However, the plotting is very weak, with bad fictional science, multiple unnecessary subplots and violations of the temporal logic that is supposed to be the central theme of *Timeline*. The time tunnel is rationalized by a comparison with fax technology -- an analogy that breaks down immediately since faxes do not actually transmit originals to distant locations as the tunnel is supposed to do. The man dying in the New Mexico desert and the discovery of another time traveler take up time but don't really contribute to the main plot. And mostly importantly for a plot of this nature, the overarching timeline is inconsistent. Supposedly, the archaeologists' actions in the past lead to their discoveries in the present, creating a single worldline. However, a review of the story shows major inconsistencies such as the event that dictated the outcome of the pivotal battle not happening! This continuity violation is bad enough for a mainstream story but crippling for a work flaunting the name *Timeline*.

I rate *Timeline* as ★★ on the 5 star scale because it does have plot and character development, just not very good ones. -- LL

The Haunted Mansion Walt Disney Pictures, 2004 Reviewed by Lee Strange

Many theme park rides are based on films. 2003 must be Walt Disney's year to reverse the process. *The Haunted Mansion* is a nice little story about a family stumbling into a nest of ghosts with mysterious agendas in a (what else?) haunted mansion.

Real estate agent Jim Evers just can't resist the opportunity to sell the eerie Gracie Mansion even tho he promised his family a weekend at the lake. They quickly discover that the Mansion is every bit as spooky as it looks, with secret passages, mysterious appearances and disappearances, and psychic phenomena of all types.

Eerie events escalate and things appear darkest before the dawn of the dead of all types.

This supernaturally themed comedy-adventure is oriented for the younger fan but others may enjoy it as well. The plot and characterization are both rather simple, and the slapstick acting very broad, but well done nonetheless. The special effects and humans both turn in excellent efforts, leading to a lively little film well worth watching.

I rate *The Haunted Mansion* as ★★★ on the 5 star scale. -- LS

Popular Sovereignty and the Compromise of 1850 (Part I) **By Samuel Lubell**

Since this period of history was hotly debated by WSFAns at the Chinese lunch after seeing Return of the King, I thought relevant portions of my Masters dissertation might be of interest.

Historians often see the period before the American civil war in terms of what happened in the war itself, portraying the free soilers and the supporters of slavery as lining up as neatly as the blue and the grey. They view this period as either an "inevitable crisis," or the product of a "blundering generation" culminating in the fatal error of repealing the Missouri Compromise by the Kansas and Nebraska Act. However, this war-influenced interpretation misses some of the complexities of the period. Not knowing of the imminent civil war, Americans did not limit their political positions to the two sides of the battlefield. Popular sovereignty as established in the Compromise of 1850 represented a third choice, just as valid as the pro-slavery and anti-slavery movements. As a result, much of the nation was able to reach a compromise on slavery in the territories that lasted until the election of Lincoln. The Compromise of 1850, largely the work of Stephen A. Douglas, not Henry Clay who merely combined Douglas' measures, used popular sovereignty to eliminate the necessity for Congress to declare slavery in the territories lawful or unlawful. Instead, popular sovereignty allowed each territory to decide the issue for itself. Not only would this remove the conflict between the North and the South by transferring the problem to the West, but it was also more democratic since it allowed the decision to be made by the Western settlers, the people most affected by the choice. As a Westerner himself, Douglas supported popular sovereignty for both of these reasons. He continued to support the democratic idea of allowing local governments in the territories to decide on slavery even after the Supreme Court had ruled that they could not.

This principle of popular sovereignty was established in the Compromise of 1850; while controversial, all the 1854 Kansas and Nebraska Act did was to recognize that the Compromise of 1850's popular sovereignty had already replaced the 36° 30' Missouri Compromise precedent. From 1850 until the civil war, all new territories were created under popular sovereignty and not by an automatic extension of the Missouri Compromise line. In fact, using popular sovereignty was the only possible way to pass bills organizing territorial governments since, in the 1840's, the South voted against territories that forbade slavery while the North voted against territories that established it. Popular sovereignty did not fail because of any defect as a theoretical idea but because it was a middle ground on an issue on which neither the North nor South was willing to compromise. It was a national plan to bold together a nationwide party in an age developing radical differences between the sections. Ultimately, neither the

I PRESENT THIS
MEASURE AS MY
PARTISAN DUTY...
IT'S TRULY AWFUL
BUT NOT BAD ENOUGH
TO RESIGN OVER!



North nor the South could leave the decision to the West since each believed that its own way of life was being threatened by the other's position on slavery. While the principle of popular sovereignty could have avoided conflict by removing the subject of dispute from control of either the North or the South and handing jurisdiction over slavery to the settlers in the West, the two sections both feared that their rival would gain an advantage and refused to acknowledge the implications of the Compromise of 1850.

Douglas' letter to the Editors of the San Francisco National specifically shows that popular sovereignty was established by the Compromise of 1850. He writes:

The question whether the people of the Territories should be permitted to decide the slavery question for themselves, the same as all other rightful subjects of legislation, was thoroughly discussed and definitively settled in the adoption of the compromise measures of 1850... [His original bill gave Territorial Legislatures power over slavery, but] modified by the committee of thirteen, they conferred power on the Territorial Legislature over all rightful subjects of legislation, except African slavery. This distinct question, involving the power of the Territorial Legislature over the subject of African slavery, was debated in the Senate from the 8th of May until the 31st of July 1850, when the limitation was stricken out by a vote of yeas 33; nays 19; and the Territorial Legislature authorized to legislate on all rightful subjects, without excepting African slavery. In this form and upon this principle the compromise measures of 1850 were enacted.¹

So, Congress specifically voted to strike out a provision preventing territorial legislatures from having power over slavery, as the Missouri Compromise would require, and instead specifically gave the legislatures popular sovereignty over the slavery issue. This shows that Congress did not believe that the Missouri Compromise automatically applied to the West since this provision gave the territorial legislatures the right to legislate on slavery even if north of 36°



30'. The same letter cites a speech in 1850 where Douglas stated "These measures are predicated on the great fundamental principle that every people ought to possess the right of forming and regulating their own internal concerns and domestic institutions in their own way."² This principle of popular sovereignty replaced the Missouri Compromise line of 36° 30'; admitting California as a single free state, instead of being divided by the Compromise line into a free and a slave state. Unlike Congress' decision on Texas, where the status of slavery in states created from

Texas was determined by the Missouri Compromise line, states created out of Utah and New Mexico were allowed to decide the slavery question for themselves. While the Kansas and Nebraska act contained a provision explicitly repealing the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850 effectively nullified the earlier compromise as a precedent by disregarding

¹ Douglas, "Letter to the Editors of The San Francisco National, August 16, 1859 in Robert Johannsen. Letters of Stephen A. Douglas (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1961) p. 457

² Johannsen. Letters p 457

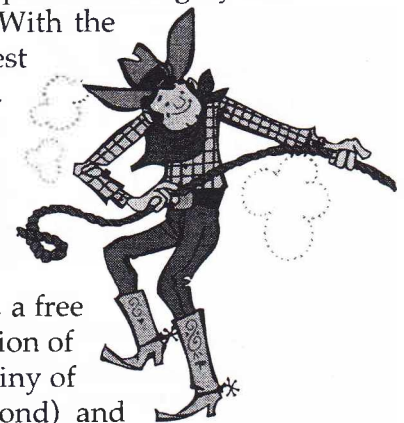
it. While the 1850 measure only called for popular sovereignty in the former Mexican holdings, it was as valid a precedent for later governments as the Missouri Compromise, which originally only affected the land bought in the Louisiana Purchase.

Historians often have accused popular sovereignty of being only a method for avoiding the question of slavery. While it did evade the antislavery debate then paralyzing Congress allowing territorial governments to be organized without being blocked by Northern opponents or Southern proponents of slavery, it had a democratic ideology of its own. Although Douglas, as head of the Committee on Territories, had submitted bills in the 1840's based on the Missouri Compromise, neither the South nor the North saw the Missouri line of 36° 20' as satisfactory. Therefore, Douglas abandoned the Missouri Compromise when his bills failed to pass and promoted popular sovereignty as a new solution capable of gaining support from both sides. He realized that the only way to pass a territorial bill was to remove the question from the jurisdiction of Congress by handing it over either to the Supreme Court or the people of the territories. And since the Supreme Court was dominated by Southerners whose judgement was not trusted by the North, the people of the territories were the only power which both North and South might conceivably accept. Douglas himself said in Congress:

I do not believe, sir, that the Senate can agree upon any principle by which a bill can pass giving governments to the territories in which the word 'slavery' is mentioned... But the bill that you can pass is one that is open upon these questions, that says nothing upon the subject, but leaves the people to do as they please... according to what they may conceive to be their interests both for the present and the future.³

Popular Sovereignty would break the stalemate between the regions and allow western territorial bills to pass.

However, the importance of popular sovereignty extends beyond its success as a legalistic tactic to dodge the slavery issue in Congress; it formed democratic territorial governments authorized to decide for themselves if they favored slavery or not. The national government admitted that the federal system could not solve the problem and gave the power to resolve the dispute not to the quarreling states but to the people closest to the issue, the territorial settlers themselves. Like free soil and slavery expansion this popular sovereignty was an ideological expression of the views of a region, the growing West. With the North and South checkmating each other on the slavery question, the West held the balance of power. By relying on the decision of the settlers, popular sovereignty let the Westerners resolve the status of slavery by themselves instead of being forced to abide by the decision of an eastern dominated Congress in which none of them could vote. The major figures in the Compromise of 1850, Douglas and Clay both considered themselves Western. "Douglas entered Congress in the Mid-1840's with a western program that included territorial expansion, a Pacific Railroad, a free land policy that would encourage western settlements, and the organization of territorial governments."⁴ Douglas believed that it was the manifest destiny of America to take the Western lands to the Pacific (and possibly beyond) and dreamed of a Coast to Coast railroad going through Illinois. As head of both the House Committee on Territories and later its counterpart in the Senate, he tried to form democratic



³ Douglas in Senate, June 8, 1850. Congressional Globe 31st Congress, 1st session. Vol XXI part II.

⁴ Johanssen. Frontier, the Union, and Stephen A. Douglas (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980) p xi

territorial governments and ultimately wean the territories into states. He sympathized with the Western desire for self government. Independent frontiersmen, not used to being dependent on others, resented being controlled by Congress. Popular sovereignty would not only allow the country to expand, bypassing Congress' preoccupation with the slavery issue which blocked the passage of territorial bills, but would also prepare Westerners for statehood by giving them full democratic control of their local institutions.

A distinction must be made between popular sovereignty and nonintervention. The two were often used synonymously, which caused some confusion in Congressional debates. For the purposes of this paper the term "noninterventionism" will be used for the claims, most frequently advanced by the South, that since the Constitution recognized slavery, neither Congress nor the territorial governments could forbid it; that power was reserved to the states. However some in the North also supported "non-interventionism" out of the belief that Mexican laws against slavery would remain in effect in the former Mexican holdings.⁵ "Popular sovereignty" will be used for the belief that the territorial governments should decide if they will allow slavery or forbid it. It was this later position that was favored by Douglas, the true author of the Compromise of 1850, while Clay seemed to support mere non-intervention.

Papa Smurf is Wearing Blue

The 12/19 Third Friday began with a discussion about when we start the meeting. Lee wanted to start early, but finally Judy said, "It's 9:14, let's start the meeting." There was some old business. The Gillilands will be in Egypt first Friday in February. We need a host. Judy asked, "Would anyone be able to host." Erica said that "Karl wouldn't want us to do both." Cathy said, "I don't have enough furniture." Lee Gilliland said, "If push comes to shove, we may be able to get Charles to be there."

Bob reported \$1,229.29 not counting the slush fund. The entertainment committee went to great trouble to arrange for the capture of Saddam at Philcon. But the army delayed so we had to have a fire at Philcon to get the news out. Colleen asked, "So Disclave is water and Philcon is fire, do we have to worry about earth and wind?"

Keith for publications is looking for the September 1988, and the February, May, and June 1989 WSFA Journals. Someone has to have a copy somewhere. He has 17 1/2 years on line. He expects that the WSFA Journal will be old enough to vote by Evecon and to drink by Balticon. Eric and Erica told people to bring food, buy money.

Sam gave a thank you to the Capclave committee. We had 234 attending and day members and round up \$500 in the red. We need to deal with how to get more people. Lee for 04 said "People will be organizing publicity as well as flyers. I would like to see ten percent of new people who have never been to the con. I'll be pushing the membership rate to \$40. I forgot my con stuff but it's his fault (pointing to Alexis) so sue me."

Capclave Future was not present. Neither was WFC by a strange coincidence, both being Mike Walsh. Bob for Smofcon said WSFA will be hosting Smofcon 22 in next December so some of you will be recruited to help. Rest of you are invited. Membership will be \$40 until the end of the year (if you're reading this, it is too late). Then it will be \$60. It is downtown at the Wyndham hotel, December 3-5. If enough people go, we can have WSFA there. Peggy Rae is chairing. Mike Nelson doing the web page. Bob is treasurer. There are 58 members already (the WSFA treasury is holding that money, hence the slush fund.)

Lee Strong asked that the record show that Papa Smurf is wearing blue. The record now shows this.

For the activities committee, Lee said that the AFI is interested in having us do a SF film festival. "Science fiction," exclaimed Mike, "We don't know nothing about Science Fiction". Lee asked people to

⁵ Congressional Globe 31st Congress, Volume XXI Part II. Senator Chase, June 3, 1850

volunteer. "It will be at least a weekend. They're interested in us." Bob reminded everyone that WSFA had helped with a session at the Smithsonian. "We should do stuff like this more often." But Judy replied, "They haven't invited us back." There was no old or new business.

Announcements: Erica thanked Lee for taking over the con suite while she had pneumonia. She was in the hospital for five days. Lydia's school had a fire and the Washington Post quoted Lydia's reaction. She has two diabetic cats so will demonstrate the proper procedure for injecting a cat. Lee reported that Chuck Divine will have a party on the 27th. Colleen said that the Library of Congress book festival will have sf and fantasy authors in October. There will be a Jules Verne gather in May with events open to the public. Rebecca has a party on Sunday. Nth Degree is holding a New Year's Party, email Mike. Lawyers are plotting to stop the revolution. Lord of the Rings theater party Sunday 28th at 10 AM. The Planetarium is doing a show, "Skies of Middle Earth". One person was here for a first meeting, one for their third.

Lee Strong said his agency took another step toward moving to Fort Useless, a former prison for bootleggers. He's continuing to clean his apartment, getting rid of 961 books, "the point where you can see it makes a difference." He found the article about author Alexis Gilliland that led Lee to WSFA. He's 80 percent here by weight, having lost 48 pounds, "So one way or another you're seeing less of me." Lydia needs helps.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:43.

Attendance: Pres. Judy Kindell, VP Cathy Green, Sec & 2003 Chair Samuel Lubell, Treas. Bob MacIntosh, Trust Adrienne Ertman, Trust. Keith Lynch, Sheri Bell, Colleen Cahill, Carolyn Frank, Alexis Gilliland, Erica Ginter, Scott Hofmann, Eric Jablow, Bill Lawhorn, Nicki and Richard Lynch, Wade Lynch, Walter Miles, Mike Nelson, Barry and Judy Newton, Lee Strong, Michael Taylor, Jim Toth, Michael Henry, Mike Pederson, Chris Fedeli, Alan Wiziner, and Ariel Landau.



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Presents



"From Folk to Filk: Folksongs and Allied Forms
About Alternative Persons, Places, and Times"
By Joe Hickerson (<http://www.ioehickerson.com>)

Vintage prePlugged PaleoAcoustic Folksinger
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Former Librarian and Director of the Archive of
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Copies of Joe's records will be available for purchase
Contact Colleen Cahill, ccah@loc.gov for more information.