



THE F.A.C.T. SHEET

*A monthly publication of the Fandom Association of Central Texas, Inc.
May 2007*

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JOIN US!

All FACT members are invited to all of these events!

- June 4, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *The Last Mimzy* by Henry Kuttner. Details: reading@fact.org
- Jun. 16, 11AM-3 PM: **FACT's Annual Boat Trip**
Pencil this onto your calendar now. Details to follow.
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- August 6, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *The Last Witchfinder* by James Morrow. Details: reading@fact.org

REMEMBERING LISA GREENE

There was a party at Sam and Ed's on Saturday, May 19, remembering the life of Lifetime FACT Member Lisa Greene. Chuck smoked a brisket and Sam and Ed provided gourmet root beer and other snacks. There was a good turnout of FACT members

to exchange stories about Lisa's life and adventures in fandom. She will be missed.

CONTACT THE BOARD

The FACT board has a new e-mail address. If you would like to contact the board and officers, you can send an e-mail message to board2007@fact.org. Any FACT member can e-mail the board at this address, but only the board and officers will receive the message.

NEW READING GROUP OF INTEREST

Submitted by Elze Hamilton

The Center for Inquiry Austin has started a "Science and Religion in Fiction" book club. The book scheduled for discussion at the June meeting is *Towing Jehovah* by James Morrow. Everybody interested is welcome to join us. We currently meet in the cafe area of Barnes & Noble at the Arboretum, but we may consider a change of venue if the group grows too big. There will be a CFI sign on our table. The next meeting should take place on either the 3rd or the 4th Thursday of June (21st or 28th). The exact date and location of the meeting will be posted on the CFI website (tinyurl.com/yvoeyr) closer to the meeting date.

BROAD UNIVERSE

Submitted by Elizabeth Burton

Broad Universe is an international organization with the primary goal of promoting science fiction, fantasy, and horror written by women. Anyone excited about that project is welcome to join us. There are two levels of membership and membership benefits, at \$30 and \$15 per year (June 1 - May 31), and anyone is welcome at either level.

Level One: For \$30/year, you get access to all aspects of the organization, including participation in BU's group readings, listings in the book catalog, space on the information tables and in the advertisements, as well as access to BU's private PR database, *Broadsheet* archives, and any future members-only resources on our website. Also, only members may send messages to our email discussion list. (NOTE: Anyone can become a Level

One member, but because of BU's mission, only women may participate in the BU catalog, group readings, BU book-launch parties and similar marketing efforts. The rest of the Level One benefits are accessible to all Level One members.)

Level Two: For \$15/year, you receive access to all non-marketing offerings from BU, including participation on the email list, access to the Broadsheet archives and any future members-only pages on the website.

Broad Universe is currently holding a membership drive as a way of spreading word it exists and to encourage men and women who support women writers in speculative fiction. To join, visit their website at www.broaduniverse.org. Should you decide to join the cause, please mention you heard about BU in the FACT newsletter.

2007 NEBULA AWARDS

- Novel: *Seeker*, Jack McDevitt (Ace Books)
- Novella: *Burn*, James Patrick Kelly (Tachyon Publications)
- Novelette: "Two Hearts", Peter S. Beagle (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*, Oct/Nov 2005)
- Short story: "Echo", Elizabeth Hand (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*, Oct/Nov 2005)
- Script: *Howl's Moving Castle*, Hayao Miyazaki, Cindy Davis Hewitt, and Donald H. Hewitt
- Andre Norton Award: *Magic or Madness*, Justine Larbalestier (Razorbill)
- Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award: James Gunn
- Author Emeritus: D.G. Compton
- SFWA Service Award: Brook and Julia West

ANALOG & ASIMOV'S READERS' AWARDS

Analog Science Fiction and Fact and *Asimov's Science Fiction* magazines have awarded their readers' awards for the year 2006.

The winners of *Analog's* Analytical Laboratory (AnLab) Awards are:

- Best Novella: "The Good Kill" by Barry B. Longyear (November)
- Best Novelette: "Lady Be Good" by John G. Henry (April)
- Best Short Story: "Kyrie Eleison" by John G. Henry (September)
- Best Fact Article: "The Great Sumatran Earthquakes of 2004-5" by Richard A. Lovett (October)
- Best Cover: September 2006 by Jean-Pierre Normand

The winners of *Asimov's* Readers' Awards are:

- Best Novella: "The Walls of the Universe" by Paul Melko (April/May)
- Best Novelette: "Yellow Card Man" by Paolo Bacigalupi (December)
- Best Short Story: "Impossible Dreams" by Tim Pratt (July)
- Best Poem: "Remembering the Future" by Darrell Schweitzer (October/November)
- Best Cover Artist: J.K. Potter (March)

SATURN AWARDS

The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror films has announced the winners of the 33rd Annual Saturn Awards, which honor achievements in film and television:

- Best Science Fiction Film: *Children of Men* (Universal)
- Best Fantasy Film: *Superman Returns* (Warner Bros.)
- Best Horror Film: *The Descent* (Lionsgate)
- Best Action/Adventure/Thriller Film: *Casino Royale* (Sony / MGM)
- Best Animated Film: *Cars* (Buena Vista)
- Best International Film: *Pan's Labyrinth* (Picturehouse)
- Best Actor: Brandon Routh (*Superman Returns*)
- Best Actress: Natalie Portman (*V For Vendetta*)
- Best Supporting Actor: Ben Affleck (*Hollywoodland*)
- Best Supporting Actress: Famke Janssen (*X-Men: The Last Stand*)
- Best Performance by a Younger Actor: Ivana Baquero (*Pan's Labyrinth*)
- Best Director: Bryan Singer (*Superman Returns*)
- Best Writing: Michael Dougherty, Dan Harris (*Superman Returns*)
- Best Music: John Ottman (*Superman Returns*)
- Best Costume: Yee Chung-Man (*Curse of the Golden Flower*)
- Best Make-Up: Todd Masters, Dan Rebert (*Slither*)
- Best Special Effects: John Knoll, Hal Hickel, Charles Gibson, Allen Hall (*Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*)
- Best Network Television Series: *Heroes* (NBC)
- Best Syndicated/Cable Television Series: *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci Fi Channel)
- Best Presentation on Television: *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines* (TNT)
- Best Actor on Television: Michael C. Hall (*Dexter*)
- Best Actress on Television: Jennifer Love Hewitt (*Ghost Whisperer*)
- Best Supporting Actor on Television: Masi Oka (*Heroes*)
- Best Supporting Actress on Television: Hayden Panettiere (*Heroes*)

- Best DVD Release: *The Sci Fi Boys* (Universal)
- Best DVD Special Edition Release: *Superman II (The Richard Donner Cut)*
- Best DVD Classic Film Release: *Gojira (Godzilla)* (Classic Media)
- Best DVD Collection: *James Bond Ultimate Edition (Collection 1 - 4)* (MGM)
- Best DVD Television Series: *Masters of Horror* (Anchor Bay / Starz)
- Best Retro Television Series on DVD: *Adventures of Superman (Complete 6 Seasons)* (Warner)
- The Rising Star Award: Matt Dallas (*Kyle XY*)
- The Filmmakers Showcase Award: James Gunn (Director of *Slither*)
- The Service Award: Kerry O'Quinn (former publisher of *Starlog Magazine*)
- The Special Recognition Award: "Alien Xmas" written by Stephen Chiodo & Jim Strain.

FACTOIDS & FRIENDS

This column is for news about FACT members, their friends, Texas writers, and important events in the SF&F community. If you have any such news, please contact the F.A.C.T. Sheet Editor at publications@fact.org.

FACT MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

FACT members with recent or upcoming birthdays include **Sara Felix** (May 17), **Karen Meschke** (May 18), **Angela Price** (May 21), **John Gibbons** (May 27), **Elze Hamilton** (June 10), **John Moore** (June 13), **Carrie Richerson** (June 15), **Clifton Davis** (June 17), **Gus Rodriguez** (June 26) and **Fred Duarte, Jr.** (June 29).

AUTHOR & PUBLISHER NEWS

Towel Day, which honors **Douglas Adams**, was celebrated on May 25. On this day, fans carry a towel with them throughout the day. The towel was defined as "about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitch hiker can have" in *Hitchhiker's Guide*. Mark your calendar now to join the fun next year.

Fantasy writer **Lloyd Alexander** died on May 17 at the age of 83. He was best known for the Chronicles of Prydain, beginning with *The Book of Three* (1964) and including Newbery Medal winner *The High King* (1968). He was awarded a Life Achievement World Fantasy Award in 2003. (Editor's note: *The Book of Three* was one of the first fantasy novels I remember reading. He truly deserved that lifetime achievement award.)

Finalists for this year's Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award for best SF short fiction include **Paolo Bacigalupi**, **Jeffrey Ford**, **Ian McDonald**, **M. Rickert**, **Michael Swanwick**, **Robert Charles Wilson**, and others. Winners will be announced at the annual Campbell Conference and Awards

Ceremony in Kansas City, Missouri, July 6-8, as part of the Heinlein Centennial.

Jayme Lynn Blaschke has an interview with **Peter S. Beagle** in *Brutarian* 48/49. Shop for a copy at tinyurl.com/2k7gky.

Donald H. Dailey, 58, passed away Tuesday, May 22, 2007 at home in Georgetown, Indiana after a long battle with cancer. Dailey was very involved with Star Fleet Command, First Fandom, and MUFON and was a member of such other diverse groups as the Ancient Kentucky Historical Association, MENSA, and the Environmental Action Group, which he founded.

Mark Finn continues to work on the movie theater he is running in Vernon, Texas. He also reports that he is basking in the glory of *Blood and Thunder's* having been named a finalist for a Locus Award (Best Nonfiction category), alongside Win and Sam Delaney.

Jay Lake will have a story in the book *Visual Journeys: A Tribute to Space Artists*. *Visual Journeys* is due out June 25, and is currently available for preorder on Amazon. Watch for Mr. Lake at this year's ArmadilloCon.

The May issue of *Locus* focuses on horror and includes an interview with **Joe R. Lansdale**.

Alexis Latner's long-awaited novel *Hurricane Moon* is listed on Amazon as due out July 3.

Sharon Lee and **Steve Miller** continue to publish one new chapter each week of *Fledgling*, their current Liaden project. Chapters are also being published as podcasts. The project is being funded through donations via Paypal.

Jonathan Lyons, formerly of Austin, has a short story, "The Good Life," in *Phoebe*, the literary journal from George Mason University.

Ficlets has published a transcript of John Scalzi interviewing **Elizabeth Moon**. Read it at tinyurl.com/2tyqlj.

Jessica Reisman has sold a story, "The Blue Parallel" to *Hub Magazine*, a British online journal that features fantasy, science fiction and horror. Watch for it at www.hub-mag.co.uk.

San Antonio author **Rick Riordan** is going to see his fantasy novel *The Lightning Thief* made into a film directed and produced by Chris Columbus (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *Home Alone*). *The Lightning Thief* is the first book in Riordan's series "Percy Jackson and the Olympians." See the *Variety* article at tinyurl.com/2batkq. Riordan has been touring to support the book. His tour kicked off with a May 1 signing at BookPeople, and more recently included a signing at the Barnes & Noble Austin Arboretum location.

The latest book from **Martha Wells**, *Stargate Atlantis: Entanglement*, is now available in the US at Barnes & Noble and on Amazon.com.

Martha Wells posted a very kind acknowledgement of FACT on her blog on May 1: "I'd like to thank everyone at FACT for sending me the condolence card about the death of my father. I really appreciated that. :loves all you guys:"

MEDIA NEWS

NBC has announced that a new version of *Bionic Woman* will air beginning in the fall of 2007. In this new, reimagined version, Jaime Sommers is played by **Michelle Ryan**. Per Wikipedia (citing the British newspaper *The Sun*), Ryan auditioned to replace Billie Piper as the Doctor's companion in *Doctor Who* (though Freema Agyeman was actually chosen).

Katee Sackhoff of *Battlestar Galactica* will have a "recurring guest role" in the new *Bionic Woman* TV series, per TVWeek.com.

The birthday of **Joss Whedon** will be celebrated at the Alamo Drafthouse Downtown on June 23 with screenings of *Serenity*, the finales of *Buffy* and *Angel*, and a Buffy Sing-Along. As a reminder, the last day at the Alamo Drafthouse Downtown's original location will be June 27.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FACT MEETINGS & GATHERINGS

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OTHER READING GROUPS

June 13, 7 PM, Flight Path: The Dark Forces Reading Group will discuss *Lost Echoes* by Joe R. Lansdale

June 18, 7 PM, Bookpeople: The Ludicrous Speed Book Group will discuss *From the Notebooks of Dr. Brain* by Minister Faust

July 11, 7 PM, Flight Path: The Dark Forces Reading Group will discuss *The Vampire Tapestry* by Suzy McKee Charnas

July 16, 7 PM, Bookpeople: The Ludicrous Speed Book Group will discuss *City of Saints and Madmen* by Jeff VanderMeer

MOVIES & TV

Alamo Drafthouse

Note: The AFS summer series will present a wide array of science fiction styles and themes from Czechoslovakia, France, the UK, Italy, Japan, the US, and, most intriguingly, the former Soviet Union (represented by four new 35mm prints of films perhaps never seen in Texas). -- Chale Nafus, Director of Programming, Austin Film Society

- June 5, 7 pm, Downtown: AFS Essentials: *Fantastic Planet*
- June 7, 11:59 pm, Downtown, FREE: Terror Thursdays: *The Hidden*
- June 9, 7 & 9:45 pm, Downtown: *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (with live cast)
- June 10, 9 pm, Downtown: *The Day After Tomorrow*
- June 11, 7 pm, Downtown: *The Princess Bride*
- June 12, 9:45 pm, Downtown: *Austin Air Sex Championships Round 1*
- June 13, 9:45 pm, Downtown: *The Princess Bride*
- June 13, 9 pm, Central Market, FREE: *Ghostbusters*
- June 14, 11:59 pm, Downtown, FREE: Terror Thursdays: *The Stepfather*
- June 17, 9:45 pm, Downtown: *Teen Witch* (with songwriters live in person)
- June 19, 7 pm, Downtown: AFS Essentials: *Planet of the Vampires* (new 35 mm print)
- June 20, 11:59 pm, Downtown: Weird Wednesdays: *Snakes*
- June 21, 11:59 pm, Downtown, FREE: Terror Thursdays: *Invasion of the Blood Farmers*
- June 23, Downtown: Joss Whedon Birthday Screening
 - 7 pm: *Serenity*
 - 9:45 pm: *Buffy* Sing-Along
 - 11:59 pm: *Angel & Buffy* Finales
- June 25, 7 pm, Downtown: *The Princess Bride*
- June 26, 7 pm, Downtown: *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*

June 3, 7 - 10 PM: *Austin Browncoats Get Together*: SpiderHouse Café (2908 Fruth). Episode viewing, food gobbling and beverage quaffing. Possible filk and fanvids. Projector starts running at 8 PM.

June 15: Release date for the new Fantastic Four flick, *Rise of the Silver Surfer*
www.riseofthesilversurfer.com

CONVENTIONS & THE LIKE

Here are details on conventions that FACT members, associates, and Favorite Authors will attend.

- Jun. 1-3: **A-Kon**, Adam's Mark Hotel, Dallas, TX.
Guests include: Vic Mignogna, Spike Spencer, Steve Bennet, Billy Tucci, Jake Tarbox, Scott Ramsomair, Howard Tayler, Wendy Powell, Kyle Herbert, Brian Glass.
www.a-kon.com
- Jun. 8-10: **SoonerCon**, Biltmore Hotel, Oklahoma City, OK. GoH Stephen R. Donaldson, Artist GoH Keith Birdsong, Toastmaster Selena Rosen. FACT member Katharine Eliska Kimbriel will be a guest as well.
www.soonercon.com
- Jun. 22-24: **ApolloCon 2007**, DoubleTree Hotel Houston Intercontinental Airport, Houston, TX.
GoH: C.S. Friedman, Editor GoH David G. Hartwell, Fan GoH A.T. Campbell, III.
www.apollocon.org
- Jul. 28-30: **Conestoga**, Radisson Tulsa, Tulsa, OK. Literary SFF con. GoH Laurell K. Hamilton; Artist GoH John Picacio; Toastmaster Elizabeth Moon; Fan GoHs Richard and Michelle Zellich; Special 1632 GoH Eric Flint.
www.sftulsa.org/conestoga
- Aug. 10-12: **ArmadilloCon 29**. Literary SFF con. GoH Louise Marley; Artists GoH Gary Lippincott; Editor GoH Sharyn November; Fan GoH Patty Wells; Toastmaster Howard Waldrop.
www.armadillocon.org
- Aug. 24-26: **Bubonicon 39**, Wyndham Airport Hotel, Albuquerque, NM. Literary SFF con. GoH Vernor Vinge; Toastmistress Jane Lindskold; Artist GoH William Stout; Auctioneer Robert E. Vardeman. Memberships \$30 through May 4.
www.bubonicon.com
- Sept. 21-23: FenCon IV, Crowne Plaza North Dallas, Addison, TX. SFF & Filk Con. Music GoH Tom Smith; Fen GoH Kathleen Sloan; Artist GoH David Mattingly; Special Guest: Toni Weiskopf.
www.fencon.org

TALES BY A FANTASIST WHO WOULD RATHER BE FISHING.

By Michael Dirda, Reprinted by permission of the author

Washington Post, Sunday, March 18, 2007; Page BW10

THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME A Howard Waldrop Reader Selected Short Fiction, 1980-2005 Old Earth. 311 pp. Paperback, \$15

HOWARD WHO? By Howard Waldrop Small Beer. 253 pp. Paperback, \$14

Howard Waldrop is not only admired and loved for his brilliant short stories, he is also deeply envied by a sizable percentage of the male population. Forty or more years ago, Waldrop simply decided to live a life where he could do what he most enjoyed -- write strange and original fiction, watch B-movies, listen to music, spend time with friends and do a whole lot of fishing. While the rest of us were busily sacrificing ourselves and our dreams to the bitch-goddess Success, Waldrop was sipping a beer and enjoying an old Fleischer Brothers Superman cartoon or standing happily in a cold river with a fly rod in his hand. Sometimes, of course, he might toddle over to the University of Texas library to read up on the dodo, Piltdown Man or some other odd byway of learning or popular culture. Then, when the time was right, he'd sit down at somebody's kitchen table and produce -- usually in just a few intense days -- a story like "God's Hooks!" in which Izaak Walton and John Bunyan go angling for the monster Leviathan in the Slough of Despond.

Since the 1960s, Waldrop has written dozens of short stories, appeared multiple times in anthologies of the year's best science fiction or fantasy, won and been nominated time after time for major awards in the field. And yet he's not anyone's conception of a typical sf writer. If Philip K. Dick is our homegrown Borges (as Ursula K. Le Guin once said), then Waldrop is our own very American magic-realist, as imaginative and playful as early García Márquez or, better yet, Italo Calvino. For, like the Italian fabulist, Waldrop never repeats himself and is a pasticheur par excellence. He can sound like a Texas cracker or a graduate student in ornithology, like an aging '60s dropout or a young boy in Africa, like a broken-down robot in the far future or an antique Roman. In one tour de force, "Heart of Whitenesse," he actually channels Christopher Marlowe, Philip Marlowe and Joseph Conrad's Marlow all at once.

Over the course of his career, Waldrop's annual income has broken into five figures exactly twice. (As he notes ruefully, but without self-pity, \$4,000 doesn't go as far today as it once did.) For eight years, he lived in a shack in Washington state without a telephone -- for the first three of those years without a stove or refrigerator. After all, he was there for the fishing. He doesn't use the Internet, though fans maintain a Web site for him. He still types up his stories and mails them to editors in an envelope. To some people, Waldrop has sacrificed too much for his simplified way of life, never marrying or having children or being able to afford health insurance. Yet glance at his photograph in *Things Will Never Be the Same* or meet the easygoing author himself at a science fiction convention, and you can't help but think, "This is one happy guy."

In *Things Will Never Be the Same*, Waldrop has chosen 16 of his best short stories and written a new afterword to each. The book opens with the multiple award-winner "The Ugly Chickens," in which a chance remark on a bus leads a young researcher into backwoods Mississippi to discover the real fate of the dodo. It closes with a tale of alternate realities, "The King of Where-I-Go," somehow combining the polio epidemic of the early 1950s, the famous ESP experiments at Duke, and a man's love for H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. As usual, Waldrop generates a lot of his narrative electricity by conjoining seemingly unlikely thematic material. In "Flying Saucer Rock and Roll," he blends UFO scares, the 1965 New York blackout, and a singing competition between two doo-wop groups, the Kool-Tones and Bobby and the Bombers. "The Sawing Boys" retells the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale "The Bremen Town Musicians" in the style of Damon Runyon, setting the story in the Kentucky backwoods. "The Lions Are Asleep This Night" imagines an alternate Africa in which young Robert Oinenke composes an Elizabethan-style drama about the "tragical death of King Motofuko."

The best Waldrops tend to mix the humorous and wistful. What if robotic versions of Mickey, Donald and Goofy, designed for an amusement park, were the last creatures on Earth? What if the Martians landed in Pachuco County, Tex., back in the late 19th century, and a kind of Slim Pickens character was the sheriff in charge of keeping the peace? What if Chiron the centaur grew old and during the reign of Julian the Apostate needed help to make his way back to his original homeland, the as yet undiscovered America? (In a neat touch, Waldrop's narrator refers to Christians and their idiotic schism as being a danger to "decent gods-fearing folk.") In "French Scenes," he even reveals how young Parisian filmmakers, such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, interpreted American gangster movies. When Neville Brand in "Riot in Cell Block 11" gets shot at with a Thompson submachine gun, he yells: "Look out, Monty! They got a chopper! Back inside!" But what the Cahiers du Cinema people hear is "Steady, mon frère! Let us leave this place of wasted dreams."

In "Heart of Whitenesse," which Waldrop himself seems to view as his most compacted and densely allusive work, Christopher Marlowe is sent up the frozen Thames on a secret mission to kill Dr. Faustus. Following a few preliminaries, it opens:

"I'd come up from the covers and poured myself a cup of malmsey you could have drowned a pygmy in, then dressed as best I could, and made my way out into this cold world.

"Shoreditch was dismal in the best of times, and this wasn't it."

My own favorite story is "Do Ya, Do Ya, Wanna Dance?," which manages to capture what life was

like for a teenager in the 1960s -- and then caps this by depicting members of the high school class of 1969 as they prepare for their 20th reunion. This anthem for a lost generation climaxes with the band Distressed Flag Sale reuniting, for one night only, to play the legendary "Life Is Like That." Years before, a riot broke out at a mammoth concert in Miami and the band members were busted -- just before the song's world premiere. It was never heard by anyone. "We were gonna play it that night, and the world was gonna change," says a now middle-aged and very drunk band member, "but instead they got us, they *got us*, man, and we were the ones that changed, not them." But now on an evening suffused with *mono no aware*-- and Waldrop uses the Japanese term for nostalgia and the sad passage of the years -- the band finally launches into "Life Is Like That" and brings this story to a thrilling, perfect '60s climax.

That recurrent sense of what might have been pervades Waldrop's fiction, though his most famous excursion into alternate history, "Ike at the Mike," isn't included in *Things Will Never Be the Same*. For that -- and for "God's Hooks!" and the amazing post-holocaust Indian tractor-pull story "Mary Margaret Road-Grader" -- you'll need to pick up *Howard Who?*, the author's first collection now reprinted by Small Beer Press. In truth, you really do need both these books. Why? Because in "Ike at the Mike," Sen. E. Aaron Presley, mulling over whether to make a bid for the presidency, attends a White House dinner honoring the great old jazzman Ike Eisenhower. Later that evening, sipping whisky alone in his study, the charismatic young senator wonders about the course of his own life and what might have been.

Italo Calvino once said that he was "known as an author who changes greatly from one book to the next. And in these very changes you recognize him as himself." Much the same could be said of Howard Waldrop. You never know what he'll come up with next, but somehow it's always a Waldrop story. Read the work of this wonderful writer, a man who has devoted his life to his art -- and to fishing. ?

Michael Dirda's e-mail address is mdirda@gmail.com.

READING GROUP REPORT

By A. T. Campbell, III (Apr. 2) & Elze Hamilton (Apr. 17)

APRIL 2: LEARNING THE WORLD BY KEN MACLEOD

Seven people showed up at the North Village library to discuss this recent Hugo-nominated novel, and another submitted comments by email. The far-future story is about a group of humans who

undertake a long space voyage to reach a planet they plan to settle, only to discover that it is already inhabited. The story weaves between the story of the settlers and of the bat-like inhabitants of the planet, who gradually realize something is going on. All of us had read MacLeod before, and all but one had started and finished *Learning the World*.

The human society on the spaceship is well developed. There is a complex culture involving three classes: founders, crews, and the ship generation, and there are viewpoint characters from each class to showcase the classes' differences and interactions. The human settlers had great names: Atomic Discourse, Horrocks Mathematical, Synchronic Narrative Storm, and more. They even wrote and read their own science fiction, which they called "engineering tales."

Most of us found the story of the bat people on the planet more interesting. The technical level of their culture resembles that of 20th Century Earth. We liked the viewpoint characters Darvin and Orro. Their daily lives are portrayed with enough detail that you can see they are alien, yet they are understandable. We appreciate how intelligently they detected the coming of the settlers and the scientific approach they took toward learning more.

We discussed MacLeod's writing style. A couple of people commented that they "love the way he writes." Another person enjoyed this book tremendously and said he felt this book was "MacLeod's first comedy." Yet another person observed that the book had been unusually hard for him to get into, and he never got totally engaged in the story.

We enjoyed reading a First Contact story for the first time in quite a while. We liked the philosophical discussions about the issues of meeting another culture. The story briefly addresses the Fermi Paradox ("if there is life on other planets, why haven't we encountered it?"), but several of us found MacLeod's argument flawed. A couple of people complained that the end was preachy; another person, who'd read most of MacLeod's work, said it was less preachy than most of the author's work.

Overall we liked *Learning the World* for its fresh take on a traditional science fiction situation. After the meeting, several of us had a nice dinner at Houston's.

-- A. T. Campbell, III

APRIL 17: A PRINCESS OF ROUMANIA BY PAUL PARK

Eleven people attended the discussion. Everybody had started the book. Only five or so finished the book, but the rest planned to finish it. Only two people had read Paul Park before. One of them had also read two sequels of *A Princess of Roumania*,

and his comments gave the impression that *A Princess of Roumania* is a lot more enjoyable in retrospective, once you know what happened next, as the events in the sequels explain a lot of things in the first book. Eventually others had to restrain him from revealing plot snippets from the sequels, although he was doing it only to be helpful.

The majority of the group liked this book. Some of the group members derived a lot of their enjoyment of a book from its literary and political references. One of those people found a treasure trove of such references in *A Princess of Roumania*. He thought the magic (which was based, he said, on Gypsy tradition), was interesting, and the political situation in the alternative Europe, where Roumania is a major power, fascinating. He was also intrigued by the Gnostic undercurrents in Paul Park's writing and by the unusual version of Christianity that exists in the parallel world of the novel – it's not the Christianity we know.

In contrast, another reader thought the alternative Roumania was not so fascinating as to intrigue somebody who knew very little about the actual Romania. "I don't know much about Romania," said a reader. "An alternate history of a country I don't know much about doesn't do much for me. [The author] didn't pull it off for me. He didn't make me interested in Romania."

People gave Paul Park credit for attempting an ambitious story. "He's trying to marry a children's adventure story that kind of reminds me of Philip Pullman, with alternate history stuff, and I think it's an interesting idea," said one reader. He was also credited with breaking fantasy stereotypes. "This is not Tolkien," said another reader who praised *A Princess of Roumania* as one of the best fantasy works he has ever read. "Tolkien created the stereotypes we follow, and I wish more people broke out of stereotypes like Paul Park has. The thing that fascinates me about this story is that it is talking about what happens to real life people when they do their best given the information they have. And the world is out there with a response that's based on a different set of information." Indeed, the plans of some of the main characters are continuously stymied, since they act on incomplete information.

Everybody "liked" the Baroness. Not that they found her a likeable character in a conventional sense (she certainly is not), but most people found her interesting to read about. On one hand she is a sociopath who kills casually, almost spontaneously, when her plans are thwarted, and who considers herself to be above the rest of the humanity; on the other hand, she is miserable and full of self-hatred. Readers thought her conflicted psyche made her human.

There were some criticisms voiced by one or more members of the group:

- Readers felt distanced from the characters. Several people mentioned they did not find a character to root for or to become attached to.
- The sudden shifts of viewpoint were confusing. Sometimes it wasn't immediately obvious which character is the viewpoint character in a particular chapter.
- One person did not think the characters' behavior was credible. "One of my issues with either fantasy or SF where someone is taken from our world, and maybe I'm just way too egocentric, but it would take me pages and pages of my own mental dialogues to say, why me? I didn't feel they were incredulous enough in that situation," he said.
- One person thought the beginning of the story, where we meet Miranda's parents, held false promise, as it was shaping up to be a story about kids who live in a college town and whose parents work at the university. He was disappointed to find out it wasn't the case. "I thought their parents were very interesting characters, only they don't appear further in the book."
- Several readers remarked that the story was rather slow. "His pacing is very pedestrian," said one reader. "Very slow. He just doesn't get on with it, even three quarters into the book. His writing style is not bad, and his prose is fairly good, but his storytelling is, for me, pedestrian. It's very hard to keep going because he doesn't progress anything."

It didn't help that the blurbs in the book compare Paul Park to famous contributors to the alternate history genre, such as Roger Zelazny. The comparison was found unwarranted by some people. "As far as alternate history I will admit that there were some really good books I read, [Charles Stross's] *Family Trade* and [Roger Zelazny's] *Nine Princes of Amber*, and the first chapter of *Nine Princes of Amber* had more cool things than this book. Certainly more action than this whole book. Paul Park is a good writer, but he's not at Zelazny's level yet." "He's being compared to Zelazny, but maybe it's because if you write a robot novel, you would be compared to Asimov," said another reader.

Other people, while agreeing that the pace was kind of slow, thought it may have been adequate for the kind of story Paul Park is telling. "Nothing he writes is action adventure. It's intellectual puzzles," said a reader. Despite the slowness, most people found the story good enough to enjoy, and many were planning to read the sequels.

Still, some people felt the novel did not quite live up to the expectations raised by the glowing blurbs. For the second time in the recent history of the reading group, the discussion of a book ended up with a meta-discussion of why that book was so highly praised by famous writers (in this case, Ursula K. Le Guin and John Crowley). Some people also didn't think *A Princess of Roumania* was outstanding enough to deserve the nomination for the World Fantasy Award in 2006. A reader suggested this book might have been considered deserving of a nomination for the following reasons: "It's trying to be literary, it has downtrodden people in Eastern Europe, and it was written by a college professor."

-- Elze Hamilton

FACT BOARD MINUTES

Submitted by Elizabeth Burton

APRIL 2007

The monthly meeting of the board of directors for the Fandom Association of Central Texas was called to order by Board Chair Brian Price at 802 Chiselpoint Cove, Round Rock, Texas, United States of America, at 2:19 p.m. Present in addition to the chair were FACT President William Siros, Directors Elizabeth Burton, J. P. Sugarbrood, Aaron Allston, Dan Tolliver, Charles Siros and Jennifer Juday, FACT member Angela Price and guest Phil Burton. Convention Event Liaison Mona Martinez and Armadillocon 29 Chair Renee Babcock arrived at 2:23 p.m.

The secretary presented the minutes of the March board meetings. Note was made of there being some typographical errors, which were noted, and that the names of all attendees was incomplete. The secretary advised she expects to locate the attendance information shortly, at which time it was moved by Mr. Allston, seconded by Ms Juday the minutes be accepted subject to completion of noted corrections. Four ayes, no nays, one abstention.

OFFICER REPORTS

CHAIR

Mr. Price noted he had organized the board meeting at his house. He attended gaming, where much fun was had. He also attended the ArmadilloCon meeting, and has volunteered to run open gaming.

PRESIDENT

Mr. W. Siros reported he had nothing much to report, other than that he had attended gaming and AggieCon. He noted the attendance at the convention was higher than in the past, but that most of the attendees were students who watch

anime and had no money. He advised it was an interesting convention.

TREASURER

- Mr. Sugarbroad reported that as of 3/31/2007 the account balances were: ArmadilloCon: 3027.40; FACT: 3088.00; World Fantasy: not available.
- Mr. Sugarbroad further reported he had been very busy, having gone to Japan, where he had a wonderful time. He advised he had set up software for the FACT accounts and noted there was no World Fantasy account information because he did not receive the statement. Ms Babcock noted it may have gone to the old post box. Mr. Sugarbroad suggested it may have come on Saturday, and she advised she would check.
- Mr. Sugarbroad stated he would like to request that anyone with access to the financial accounts notify him via email when they do a transaction. Regarding the signature cards he noted the bank only needs verification from those not previously listed on the accounts.
- Finally, he advised he had received notification FACT will receive a United Way donation in the amount of \$201 from the California Capital Region designated by Pallavi Pandit of Sacramento.

SECRETARY

Ms Burton reported that despite her obsession with the subject she had failed to complete the documentation for the Office Depot tax exemption card, which she will do as soon as possible. She said she had also attended AggieCon, where her experience echoed the president's. Mr. Prince requested she check the balance of the year to determine whether any other major holidays, other than Mother's Day, will fall on our scheduled meeting date.

SOCIAL DIRECTOR

There were no official reports from either officer. Ms Babcock advised she had made the reservation for this year's boat trip for June 16 from 11-3.

REGISTRAR

There was no report from the registrar; Ms Burton advised she would contact Ms Cooper and remind her she needs to submit one by email if she is unable to attend the meeting. Ms Juday advised she needed to be notified of member information updates monthly as well.

HISTORIAN

Mr. Tolliver advised he is searching InstaCon records for Kurt Baty.

INIS

Mrs. Carrillo advised she has changed the forwarders to the new officers. She had difficulty reaching Lynn Ward but that has been fixed. She has Mr. C. Siros provide her with the mass mailing database, is maintaining the ArmadilloCon website and working on the 2006 taxes with Fred Duarte. Ms Babcock noted the editors for *Cross Plains Universe* have requested 1099s, which need to be filed.

PUBLICATIONS

Ms Juday reported she has an issue almost ready to go; she is waiting for the second reading group report for March. She noted there's nothing on the FACT calendar, and wasn't sure who handled that. Mr. Sugarbroad advised he has the information. Ms Burton suggested moving to a Google calendar, which was agreed on, Mr. Sugarbroad reminding the board he had set one up several years ago. He will check to see if it's still available. If not, Ms. Burton will set up a new one and add board members and officers as collaborators. Mr. Price requested Ms Juday include a note in the FACT Sheet regarding members' ability to include FACT on supermarket cards for donations.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The board requested the president contact Ms Chevalier to discuss the general scope of the office. Mr. Price requested Ms Burton send him a reminder prior to the next meeting.

CONVENTION EVENT COORDINATOR

Ms Martinez advised she had been ill and didn't plan a room party for AggieCon, as she was told wasn't one needed. She will attend InstaCon and has expenses to be reimbursed.

QUARTERMASTER

- Mr. C. Siros reported he had done nothing new at the storage locker. The payment on the interior unit comes due this month. Ms Babcock noted the original intent was to eventually consolidate, but Mr. Siros said this couldn't be done at this point because everything won't fit into a single unit. The World Fantasy donated books are still in storage and need to be delivered to the libraries, which will free up some space. There is also a large quantity of Cross Plains Universe, and the organizers of Robert E. Howard Days can only use a few cases.

- The convention equipment has been completely moved, and Mr. Siros advised once the matter of the books is resolved the consolidation could be completed by the end of June. However, Mr. Price suggested waiting until the equipment is moved for ArmadilloCon, as that will guarantee a larger number of volunteer workers.
- Mr. Price stated we need to settle the matter of shipping the books, and requested Mr. W. Siros complete compilation of the list of recipient libraries by 4/22. Most of bags are already packed for shipment so they should be ready to go once the list is complete. Mr. Allston noted he has a library candidate in San Antonio where he is doing a signing.
- Mr. C. Siros advised he has not as yet completed the needed alterations on the carts. The board requested he make every effort to have that accomplished by the June meeting.
- Finally, Mr. Siros noted he oversaw the FACT table at AggieCon, and that he renewed several memberships and sold a number of ArmadilloCon memberships and copies of *Cross Plains Universe*.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ARMADILLOCON 28

Karen Meschke reported via email that she had received payment for a number of the outstanding invoices for program book ads.

ARMADILLOCON 29

- Ms Babcock reported she had held a planning meeting; not everyone could attend but those who did got a lot done. She has filled several committee positions—Ms Martinez will be registrar, Mr. C. Siros has agreed to do the dealer's room—but needs help with live gaming as the previous coordinator not interested. Mr. Allston advised he had someone to suggest and advised he would provide her with the contact information.
- Ms Babcock advised she had contacted other conventions to see if they wanted to participate in the mass mailing and will contact the chairs for AggieCon and Fencon directly in the coming week.
- The next meeting is scheduled for 18 April. Mrs. Carrillo has sent out the programming invitations; the questionnaire is to go out in the coming month. Mr. Sugarbroad asked who he should contact for receivables for ArmadilloCon 28 and was referred to Karen Meschke.

ARMADILLOCON 30

Mr. C. Siros there as not much in the way of progress since the last report. There are two confirmed guests and one in negotiation.

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION

Ms Babcock advised she had nothing new to report, other than the need to get out 1099's to the editors of *Cross Plains Universe* and others involved in the project. She advised she needs to determine if there are outstanding receivables, and send out rebates for the volunteers. She noted several thousand dollars had come in from one of the publishers, but there was some confusion between treasurer and program book editor regarding the payment. She said she would love to have it resolved by the June board meeting, but depends on those two individuals for resolution.

READING GROUP

Mr. W. Siros reported the group had met and voted on the next books for the reading list, which have been posted to the website.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Corflu: We have received emails from Pat Virzi, one advising the convention was a success. In another, she expressed dissatisfaction that a grant request she submitted for funds to bring a UK fan to the convention was not acted on; however, no one can recall having received it. Ms Juday volunteered to contact Ms Virzi regarding this. Her final report: 74 memberships sold, 56 attendees; the published reports have been overwhelmingly positive. Several members advised may come for ArmadilloCon. A convention anthology was published, and a copy was given to Ms Juday for the archives. All bills have been paid; small profit will be passed on to next year's committee.

2. Stepp Donation: Mr. Price advised he will set up lots and have photos taken by the next meeting.

3. Signature Cards: Since only new signers need provide info, Mr. Sugarbroad will obtain the necessary information and bring cards to next meeting.

4. Fan Antonio: Mr. Sugarbroad moved to remove this item from the agenda, seconded by Mr. Allston. All in favor.

5. InstaCon: Ms Babcock reported she had purchased her membership, and that Ms Martinez will also attend. Ms Martinez noted she had intended to apply for a scholarship but was late in seeing the call for submission so assumed they had been taken. It was moved by Mr. Tolliver, seconded by Ms Burton to grant two \$150 scholarships, one designated for Ms Martinez, to attend InstaCon, for a total of \$300. Four ayes, 1 nay, 2 abstentions.

6. Eeyore Grants: Ms Babcock noted she could use some assistance in determining a program to propose. Mr. Tolliver inquired whether we know what's required in a proposal, and she advised a former board member told her they just need information. Mr. Allston suggested one possibility is a musical guest for ArmadilloCon, but that there may not be time to implement the grant request this year. Tabled.

7. Boat Trip: Reservation has been made.

8. Utility Cart: Mr. C. Siros is requested to complete the necessary alterations by the June meeting.

9. Board Retreat: Mr. Sugarbroad noted the last one was an excellent opportunity to brainstorm possibilities then decide what we wanted to do. We would again have use of the hotel; the main issue is coming up with a time and date. Mr. Allston inquired if it could hold in conjunction with meeting, but Mr. Sugarbroad explained the meeting adds a formality that's not conducive to the kind of free-flowing exchange that makes the retreat valuable. He moved the retreat be scheduled for 6 May, seconded by Mr. Allston. Four Aye, 1 nay, 2 abstentions. Mr. Price requested Mr. C. Siros set up the meeting pending a calendar check by Ms Juday and Mr. Allston to determine their availability. It was also recommended we invite both new and previous board members, officers and convention chairs.

10. Pat Virzi Present: It was suggested the board express our appreciation for Ms Virzi's work on Corflu with a gift basket with Amazon certificate. Mr. Sugarbroad so moved, seconded by Mr. Allston authorizing Ms Juday to prepare one. There being no objection, the motion was approved by acclamation.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Events Calendar: Mr. Allston suggested we could make better use of the calendar by increasing information about who's doing what in activities, such as attending other conventions. Ms Burton advised she will ensure con coordinators and social directors have access to the calendar.

2. Directory: Pat Virzi advised she was rescinding her offer to volunteer for this project. Ms. Burton advised those members of the board who hadn't been serving at the time this was discussed that there were a number of factors, notably how to ensure no private information on members was published without permission, that made it impossible to meet the short deadline Ms Virzi had set. She advised she had already mentioned the project to Ms Juday and Ms Cooper in an effort to get it moving again.

There being no other business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.

THE FANDOM ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL TEXAS, INC.

The Fandom Association of Central Texas, Inc. (F.A.C.T.) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit literary/ educational corporation. To contact the board and officers as a group, send an e-mail message to board2007@fact.org.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Aaron Allston (512) 388-7873
allston@aaronallston.com

Elizabeth Burton (Secretary) (512) 707-2694
zumayapublishing@sbcglobal.net

Jennifer Juday (Publications)
publications@fact.org (512) 821-3544

Brian Price (Chairman) (512) 733-8376
tbrianp@sbcglobal.net

Charles Siros (Quartermaster, AC 30 Co-Chair)
csiros@austin.rr.com (512) 383-1376

J.P. Sugarbroad (Treasurer) (512) 731-3463
taralx@gmail.com

C. Dan Tolliver (Historian) (512) 944-9948
history@fact.org

OFFICERS

Renee Babcock (AC 29)
rbabcock@alumni.utexas.net (512) 587-4299

Kurt Baty (AC 30 Co-chair)

Kimberly Carrillo (MIS)
kantell13@yahoo.com (512) 989-5585

Sara Cooper (Registrar)
casacooper@satx.rr.com (210) 508-5277

Mona Lisa Martinez (Convention Event Coordinator)
tevilamb@yahoo.com (210) 632-3983

Willie Siros (President)
acs@crimeandspace.com (512) 383-1376

Lynn Ward (Social Director-San Antonio)
(210) 462-9625

ABOUT THE FACT SHEET

Editor Jennifer Juday

Contact Information

Mail: The F.A.C.T. Sheet, PO Box 26442, Austin, TX 78755

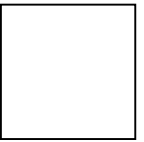
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The F.A.C.T. Sheet
The Fandom Association of Central Texas, Inc.
PO Box 26442
Austin, TX 78755



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JOIN US!

All FACT members are invited to all of these events!

June 4, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *The Last Mimzy* by Henry Kuttner. Details: reading@fact.org

Jun. 16, 11AM-3 PM: **FACT's Annual Boat Trip**
Pencil this onto your calendar now. Details to follow.

June 19, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *Rainbow's End* by Vernor Vinge. Details: reading@fact.org

July 2, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *1632* by Eric Flint. Details: reading@fact.org

July 17, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *When Gravity Fails* by George Alec Effinger. Details: reading@fact.org

August 6, 7 PM: **FACT Reading Group**, *The Last Witchfinder* by James Morrow. Details: reading@fact.org