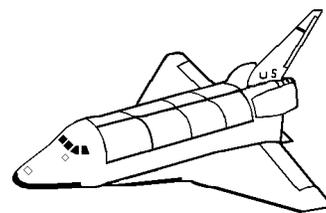


The



SHUTTLE  
January 2000

*The Next NASFA Meeting is 22 January 2000  
at the Regular Time and Location  
— Note that this is delayed 1 week due to Chattacon —*

## Oyez, Oyez

The next **NASFA meeting** has been **delayed 1 week** from the usual 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday date to accommodate Chattacon. It will be **22 January 2000** at the **regular time** (6P) and the **regular location** (room 130 of the Madison City Municipal Building).

At press time, the January after-the-meeting meeting location is to be determined. Any volunteers? The January program will be “Beaded Aliens” presented by Robin Ray. Come be creative!

In the semi-random announcement category, Randy Cleary sent along two web links for info on the Swordplay Alliance classes he talked about at the last meeting (see the minutes). The actual Swordplay Alliance site can be found at < <http://www.swordplayalliance.com> >. There is a news article from *The Decatur Daily* at < <http://www.decaturdaily.com/decaturdaily/diversions/000102/engarde.shtml> > that features Randy’s picture!

## Our 20<sup>th</sup> Year of Publication

by Mike Kennedy

This issue begins the 20<sup>th</sup> year of publication for *The NASFA Shuttle*. To commemorate this milestone, I would like to do something special with the December issue. Consider this as a solicitation both for ideas and for contributions to that issue. Get those grey cells fired up!

### Inside this issue...

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**Deadline for the February 2000 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 4 February 2000.**



reservation(s).

### CONVENTION BUSINESS

The old Con†Stellation home page got 127 hits last month, and the new Con†Stellation home page got 352. It looks like people are finally beginning to use the new web site in favor of the old.

Mike Cothran and Anita Eisenberg announced that the guests for next year's convention will be announced next month. Mike and Anita also asked all of this past year's department heads to stay on; however, we will be needing a new T-Shirt Maven (Anita doesn't want to do that and be a con co-chair).

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Randy Cleary announced that there is a new sword fight-

ing school in Decatur, run by the Swordplay Alliance. They primarily teach fencing, in the Florentine Renaissance dueling style.

Randy also announced that *Angel* is on Fox TV Wednesday mornings at 4:00A, and that *Buffy* is on Fox TV Thursday mornings at 1:30A. Gentlemen, set your VCRs!

Robin Ray announced that the Christmas party would have plenty of chips, turkey, and ham. (See what you missed!)

Further calls for announcements were met with the sound of crickets (literally).

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54P. The program turned out to be Mike Kennedy handing out random Christmas gifts. The After-The-Meeting Meeting was the annual Christmas party, held this year at Robin Ray's house.

## Let Freedom Ring

A Book Review  
by Mike Kennedy

*Forever Free* by Joe Haldeman, an Ace Book from Berkley Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Putnam, December 1999, Hardback, 277 pages, ISBN 0-441-00697-3, \$21.95

I'm not the only person who fell in love with Joe Haldeman's writing upon reading *The Forever War*. (One proof: it won the Hugo for novels published in 1975.) In my case, it was the serialized version in *Analog* that first caught my attention, but as soon as I found it I bought a paperback version of the book. I'm not sure the idea of purchasing a hardback book would have occurred to me 25 years ago, nor am I sure if one was available. I wish I did have one though, the Ballantine paperback is fragile with age now. I was very hesitant to try to read it lest a treasured possession fall apart in my hands. Fortunately it survived when I couldn't resist the impulse.

So, as soon as I read that Haldeman had turned in the final revisions for a sequel to *TFW* (People & Publishing, March 1999 issue of *Locus*) I picked up the phone, called BookMark, and put in a pre-order. Then I had to wait, impatiently, for the December publication of *Forever Free*. I'll admit to a small holiday-induced delay between its arrival and my actual purchase of the book, but once I had it I devoured it quickly.

*Forever Free* takes up the story of William Mandella (plus his wife Marygay Potter-Mandella and others) a number of years after he took up residence on Middle Finger at the end of the war chronicled in the earlier book. He and his family have settled in to life, more or less, in the hinterlands of that planet — one of the few planets where humans, as opposed to Man, still live.

The residents of MF are a mixture in several senses. Mandella and many of his associates are veterans of the *Forever War* — a war fought against the Taurans for nearly 1000 years — and comprise maybe a tenth of the human population. By virtue of time dilation, Mandella is the "oldest" resident of MF, having been conscripted at the beginning of the war and having been one of the last to muster out well after it was over. Some of the other humans are decedents of veterans who arrived on MF hundreds of years before Mandella. Others have miscellaneous backgrounds that didn't, for various reasons, let them fit in with Man.

Most of the other residents are Man, with a small Tauran admixture. Taurans, as we find out at the end of *TFW* are natural clones and have been a collective consciousness for a

long time. The end of the human-Tauran war came more or less by accident at a time when humans were "evolving" into Man — clones by choice and a collective consciousness by technology.

Middle Finger, and a few other planets, are set aside by Man as a so-called garden planet. They are a genetic insurance policy — a random breeding pool just in case some unknown problem crops up with their cloning process or with their chosen single genetic structure. The patriarchal attitude Man has for humans, both on Middle Finger and elsewhere, naturally leads to tension. The presence of a small number of Taurans on MF exacerbates those tensions, especially for the veterans.

Before the end of the first chapter of *Forever Free* it's evident that something is up. Mandella has an idea, and we soon find out his scheme is aimed at removing at least a small part of humankind from the sphere of Man's influence. Interstellar travel is accomplished by a combination of spaceships capable of constant thrust (thus achieving relativistic velocities fairly quickly) and nearly instantaneous jumps through natural wormholes. Because even high-velocity spaceships take many years to get from star to star, populations are concentrated fairly closely around the colapsars that mark the wormhole endpoints. Given this, I'm sure you can figure out several scenarios for "getting away from it all" as long as the protagonists don't mind investing some time.

Joe Haldeman is a well respected author, by his peers, by critics, and by fans. One of his strengths has always been the clear, straightforward, but engrossing style of his prose. He is not, however, prolific (at least by genre standards) having published only a little over a dozen novels, perhaps half that many collections (short fiction, essays, poetry), and two or three short novels over a career spanning 30 years. This relatively low production may well have kept him from becoming the major "name" writer he could have been.

*Forever Free* covers some of the same thematic grounds as it's predecessor, albeit from a different angle. In particular, Haldeman is concerned about the nature of war/violence/aggression, about it's effects on humanity, about sexual politics (including the question of gender), and about love in its many facets. By having the main characters more mature (well, at least older) than in *TFW*, Haldeman is able to examine parental, filial, and fraternal love as part of the mix this time.

*FF* is even structured somewhat like *TFW*. The earlier book appeared as episodic fiction, each episode basically covering a military campaign and how it affected Mandella (physically, psychologically, and otherwise). *Forever Free* is divided into several “books” of unequal length that each cover and explore a new aspect of the overall unfolding plot.

*Forever Free* also very nicely continues both the flavor of the prose and the characters from *The Forever War*. It would be easy to believe — if one didn’t already know otherwise — that both were produced during the same period of Haldeman’s career. Lest this be taken as a criticism aimed at the later book, let me hasten to add that *TFW* is a masterful work, exceedingly more mature than one would expect from an author’s first full-length novel. (In fact, I suspect that Haldeman has suffered in some respects due to the high standards set by *TFW* — it is a hard standard to live up to.)

The introduction of Man, at the very end of *The Forever War*, may be seen by some readers as *deus ex machina* — an artificial way to resolve the human-Tauran war. In fact, though, there are any number of ways Haldeman could have ended the war. The point was that it was over, Mandella was mustered out (some 200-odd years after the official end of hostilities), and that he and Marygay were reunited (she and some of the other vets used time dilation to effectively slow down their aging while waiting for others to arrive on Middle Finger). In fact, Mandella expresses a good deal of skepticism about some of the details of Man’s story of the end of the war.

But though I don’t view the emergence of Man as *deus ex*

*machina*, I’m afraid that I can’t say the same about not one but two rabbits Haldeman pulls out of the hat at the end of *Forever Free*. I don’t think it would negatively impact *everyone’s* enjoyment of the bulk of the book to discuss my problems, but if it were me reading this review I’d just as well not know any more. Suffice it to say that almost 90% of the book is wonderful, but the last 10–15% should have been reconsidered — no, make that discarded and rewritten from scratch. I think that perhaps Haldeman didn’t want to leave the door open for another sequel and tried to slam it shut by introducing these elements. (Though a sequel is still possible it wouldn’t be at all the same as it would have been if the novel had drawn to a more “natural” conclusion.)

Whether or not you ever read *The Forever War* (and if not, why haven’t you for goodness sake) you will enjoy at least most of *Forever Free*. Despite my reservations about the ending, I do recommend it highly as an engrossing and enjoyable read. Don’t go into it (or *TFW*) expecting what is currently called “military sf” or you will invite disappointment. Instead, start reading with an expectation that you will be challenged to redefine how you think about violence, gender, and much more. You can read *Forever Free* by itself and enjoy it greatly (though I wouldn’t recommend this book to someone with little sf experience) or you can read both books. Though it would not be a *bad* thing to read them out of order, I’d suggest that if you’re going to read both you start with *The Forever War*. And if you’ve never read Haldeman before, by all means pick up both and fall in love.

## Letters of Comment

LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC

Harry Warner, Jr.  
423 Summit Avenue  
Hagerstown MD 21740

19 December 1999

I’m grateful for the fact that you remembered my birthday in the December issue of the *Shuttle*. At the moment I’m about three-quarters of the way through the day and still making efforts to determine if there are things I can’t do at the age of 77 that I was able to accomplish when I was 76.

This issue causes me to look back and reflect on how times have changed in fandom. During my early years of fanac, sticky quarters were the accepted monetary unit. Now I read about a price of \$16.00 for a copy of the latest worldcon’s program book and sales totaling \$2812 at an art show of a comparatively small convention. This all seems to suggest that inflation which has caused everything to rise ten times in price in the past 60 years in mundane matter has been approaching a hundredfold in fandom.

I assume that the glorious death on which fans bid at Con†Stellation is a place in a novel by David Weber where the winner will be identified by his real name. This suddenly reminds me that I’ll apparently cause one of Bill Rotsler’s novels to become obsolete. He put me in Times Square for the New Year’s Eve celebration of either 2000 or 2001, I forget which. There’s as much chance of fulfilling this prophecy as there is for me to run up to Mars and investigate what has caused the disappearance of all those NASA vehicles.

That’s about all the wordage I can conjure up about this issue, but I want to wish you a fine Christmas and the best of

new years. Come to think of it, the world won’t need to produce a particularly good 2000 for it to seem much better than the year now ending.

[I was intrigued by your assertion that prices are an order of magnitude higher now than 60 years ago. It seemed reasonable but I figured I might as well look it up. According to the most widely quoted inflation figure (CPI-U) you are pretty close to correct. From November 1939 to November 1999 prices have gone up by just a bit over a factor of 12. That 25¢ item you mentioned would be expected to cost around \$3 for now if it had tracked inflation. Of course, many items have gone up at higher than that rate, others at less. (Medical costs — perhaps the most notorious exceder of inflation for the last many years — have gone up at a little over twice the general rate over that same 60 years.) It is my belief that entertainment items have gone up significantly faster than general inflation, but I have no figures available to back up that assertion. Your interpretation of the “glorious death” that received such attention at the Con†Stellation charity auction is correct, except that each member of each of the winning consortia will be so mentioned, a total of about 6 or 7 persons. I’m guessing that some sort of shuttle craft will be placed in circumstances where the occupants heroically decide to sacrifice themselves to save some larger group. -ED]

POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC

Sheryl Birkhead  
23629 Woodfield Road  
Gaithersburg MD 20882

20 December 1999

Gads — I hadn't heard about Bradbury.

Nice to know that the Aussiecon packets are "in the mail."

It sounds as if Con†Stellation is closing its books up in a timely manner — always appreciated.

Things fannish have been pretty low key for the past month or so, but I'm *still* way behind on reading and responding to zines — yeah RSN. (You'll notice that the postage rate has gone up since those Horror Film cards were printed!)

[The fannish grapevine has always been pretty good about spreading news and we're happy to be part of that. We've always tried to be prompt about paying our debts for

Con†Stellation. Artists and art agents who attend the convention are offered immediate payment, even to the extent of paying them for items bid on but not actually purchased yet — for example if the artist needs to leave early. To my personal knowledge this has only bitten us once and even then we managed to resell the painting in question the next year. I vaguely remembered last month that the Lon Chaney stamp (and postcard) you used was part of a series and I did notice that you had to supplement the postage by a penny. It didn't occur to me, however, that the extra 1¢ stamp could be a comment on how far behind you were in your loccing. <Insert wry smile here.> -ED]



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