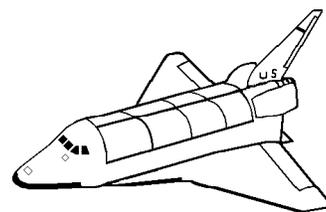


The



SHUTTLE June 2000

Our 20th Year of Publication

The Next NASFA Meeting is 17 June 2000

at the Regular Time and Location

Huntsville to Host DeepSouthCon 40 in 2002!

ConCom Meeting to be Held 15 June 2000

Oyez, Oyez

The June NASFA meeting will be **17 June 2000** at the **regular time** (6P) and the **regular location** (room 130 of the Madison City Municipal Building).

The June program will be readings by Huntsville's Science Fiction Writers Group and Cake Appreciation Society.

The June after-the-meeting-meeting will be at Russell McNutt's house — 902 Drake Avenue SE. (Go east on Drake from the Parkway, past Whitesburg. The house is roughly across from Randolph School and has a circular drive. Call Russell at 650-3195 to get more exact directions.) Russell informs us that **the pool will be open** so come prepared!

June ConCom Meeting Set

The next Con+Stellation XIX: Virgo con committee meeting will be held 15 June 2000 at Robin Ray's house. This will be an eating meeting with the eating starting at 6:30P and the meeting proper afterwards. The food theme will be "Things a Virgin Will Eat."

The current plan is that future monthly concom meetings will be held on the Thursday immediately preceding each month's club meeting. Stay tuned, of course, for changes from that schedule.

Awards News

Nebulas and Stokers and Clarkes, Oh My!

The **2000 Nebula Awards** were announced 20 May 2000 by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) at their Nebula Awards banquet, held this year in New York NY. The winners are:

FICTION AWARDS

- Novel..... *Parable of the Talents*, by Octavia E. Butler
- Novella "Story of Your Life," by Ted Chiang
- Novelette..... "Mars is No Place for Children,"
by Mary A. Turzillo
- Short Story "The Cost of Doing Business,"
by Leslie What
- Script *The Sixth Sense*, by M. Night Shyamalan

SPECIAL AWARDS

- Grand Master..... Brian W. Aldiss
- Author Emeritus Daniel Keyes
- Service to SFWA Pamela Sargent and George Zebrowski

The **1999 Bram Stoker Awards** were announced 13 May 2000 at the annual Stoker banquet, held this year in Denver CO. The winners are:

- Novel *Mr. X*, by Peter Straub
- First Novel *Wither*, by J.G. Passarella
- Long Fiction (tie) "Five Days in April,"
by Brian A. Hopkins and

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Deadline for the July 2000 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 30 June 2000.

Life's a Beach and Then You Fry

A Review of DeepSouthCon 38

by Mike Kennedy

DeepSouthCon 38, Son of BeachCon, was held 19–21 May 2000 at the Jekyll Inn, Jekyll Island GA. Invited guests included Guest of Honor Jack McDevitt, Fan Guests of Honor P. L. Caruthers-Montgomery and Larry Montgomery, Artist Guest of Honor Ron Walotsky, Toastmaster Jack Haldeman, and Special Guest Allen Steele. Total memberships just topped 200, counting some no-shows who were preregistered.

For the few people reading this who are not familiar with DeepSouthCon, it is the south-eastern regional science fiction convention that moves from city to city each year. The members of a given DSC select the site for the convention two years hence.

This is the second time that DeepSouthCon has been held on Jekyll Island, an idyllic island off the south Georgia coast. Currently part of the Georgia State Park system, the island was a privately-held resort from the latter part of the 19th century through about 1940. During that period the island was only sparsely developed by the rich families owning it. Under the current park system, only about a third of the island is developed with a mixture of resort hotels, single-family houses, and a very limited amount of commercial property.

As you might guess, the pace of a convention held on a resort island was not hectic. This was enforced by the very light programming schedule (which easily fit on one sheet of paper — in large type — with lots of white space), the heat (it wasn't technically summer but the bright, clear skies and high humidity certainly made it *feel* that way), and the design of the hotel (which spread things out by virtue of twenty-two (22!) separate buildings of sleeping rooms, plus the central building with the lobby, restaurant, and meeting rooms). The fans took it all in stride; I don't think I saw one person rushing to get somewhere the whole time I was there.

Of course, there *were* drawbacks to the location. On Friday night, during the Con†Stellation room party, a small group of us went on a booze run when it began to look like the supply we had brought with us wasn't going to last the evening. When we got to the commercial district (a single strip mall), the island's only grocer was closed (had been closed for hours in fact) so I wasn't able to buy the fake cheese I wanted to get. The liquor store was open, though, so no big loss. The next night I just *barely* snuck in under the wire at the grocery store to pick up a few things Sam Smith wanted for the Huntsville DSC bid party.

Both the art show and the dealers room at DSC were on the small side, but of fairly high quality. I was impressed by the number of book dealers at a con this size — I hope they all did good business. I did buy one item at the dealers room — a gift for a friend — purchased from a dealer in costumes and costuming supplies. The art show was of particular interest to Huntsville fans because the convention used our hardware. Mike Cothran and Marie McCormack did yeoman work, driving overnight Thursday night before the con to get the equipment there in time for the convention to set up that morning. Huntsville fan Sam Smith also made a major contribution to DSC by taking over registration with little notice.

Though I did not make much of the programming, there are some events one simply cannot miss, all of which clustered on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. The first of these was the banquet, a “low-country boil.” Readers who know me

personally are aware how fair my skin is and may be aware of how assiduously I avoid direct sun exposure. But the boil was outside, more-or-less poolside. Hmmm... what to do. Fortunately I had some high-SPF sunscreen so I bought my ticket and made a stop by my hotel room to reapply sunscreen just before the banquet.

A low-country boil consists of seafood, sausage, potatoes, corn, etc. cooked all together in a pot of seasoned water. I don't care much for boiled seafood (though the shrimp made a *lot* of people at the banquet happy) but there was plenty else to satisfy. Side dishes were available, but were ignored by most people in favor of pigging out on the boil itself. Predictably (by Murphy, that is) the one table with good shade was taken by the time I arrived. Sitting in full sunlight for 90 minutes or so made me very happy for modern sun protection. One odd part of the menu was that the only drinks available were sweet iced tea, water, and coffee.

Later Saturday evening I went to the DSC awards ceremony. Various awards were given by the Art Show, etc. but what I went for was the Rebel, Phoenix, and Rubble Awards. The Rebel and Phoenix are awarded annually by DeepSouthCon for the fan and professional who have done the most for Southern fandom. The Rubble is administered by Gary Robe and is awarded to the fan who has done the most *to* Southern fandom.

This year was marked by an odd Rubble campaign, with Naomi Fisher actively seeking to be the first two-time recipient of the award. She was given the Rubble at BeachCon (DSC 34, 1996) for the aggregate inches she has added to the waistlines of Southern fans from the sinfully delicious food she serves at room parties. She was indeed awarded the 2000 Rubble Award, though for a slightly different reason. It seems that the Son of BeachCon banquet did not sell out and more than one person was heard to remark that they chose not to go because they were waiting for Naomi's food later that night. So she was awarded the Rubble based on the financial damage done to the con.

The Phoenix Award was given to convention GoH Jack McDevitt. Unfortunately neither he nor the Rebel winners were present at the ceremony, in his case because he had to leave the convention early. Separate Rebel Awards were given to Lynn Harris and Toni Weisskopf. It should be noted that the latter of these awards makes Toni (aka T. K. F.) Weisskopf the first winner of the hat trick — she is a previous winner of both the Phoenix and Rebel Awards.

Following the awards ceremony, I stayed in the programming room to see the masquerade. It was known that there was only one entrant and I had good intelligence information that she would probably be late. She had gone out to dinner, something almost guaranteed to make one late, as the restaurants all ran on island time. But Pam Stone surprised me by showing up, if not on time, at least not *extremely* late. She wore the same wonderful Cleopatra costume she had worn while running the masquerade at the 1999 Con†Stellation. Interestingly, the 1996 BeachCon masquerade also had only one entrant and in that case, too, the person was from the Huntsville area — Mike Stone.

The last two programming items that were “musts” for me were the Southern Fandom Confederation business meeting and DSC site selection meeting. The major piece of business

accomplished at the SFC meeting was to (finally!) raise the annual dues from \$10 to \$15. SFC has been running at a significant deficit for the last several years due to the cost of publishing the *SFC Bulletin*. Most of the people who had already paid their annual dues (which run from one DSC to the next) came forward voluntarily with the extra \$5 and several additional donations were received. This change may or may not completely wipe out the deficit, it will be interesting to see next year's financial report. The DSC site selection was particularly interesting to me since Huntsville was running for the 2002 DSC. In the end we were unopposed (not even a hoax bid stepped forward).

The social scene at DSC 38 was bifurcated. The con suite was low-key (though there were always snacks available); daytime socializing tended to take place wherever friends ran

into one another. Friday and Saturday nights were fairly lively and more focused, with numerous parties. Huntsville sponsored parties on both nights, with Friday being devoted to Con+Stellation and Saturday the DSC bid. The Charlotte 2004 Worldcon bid also had parties both nights while the Boston 2004 Worldcon bid had a party Saturday night. The 2001 DSC and several other southern cons had parties one night or the other. Sunday night there was a dead dog party with more delicious food from Naomi plus donations from other parties.

Next year DeepSouthCon 39 will be held in Birmingham AL, 4-6 May 2001. For more information send email to <paulette.baker@mindspring.com>. DSC 40 will be held in Huntsville AL, 14-16 June 2002 at the Huntsville Hilton. For more information surf on over to <<http://www.con-stellation.org/dsc40/>> or email <dsc40@con-stellation.org>.

Bradbury Radiation — An Essay in Two Episodes

by Jack Lundy

Episode 1 The Show: The World of Ray Bradbury, May 18-21, 2000, Ritz Theater, 103 West 3rd Street, Sheffield AL 35660-2712, (256) 381-8370

Somewhere in mid March, both the radio station I listen to (Star 99), and the *Huntsville Times* announced a premiere of seven one-act plays written by Ray Bradbury.

Then, nothing. I wrote the Ritz and included a SASE, tried to call, and announced the show to everyone I could reach. I even tried to call the Ritz. Zilch.

When the show came, I went to Saturday's performance (the 20th). Sheffield is a small town due west of Huntsville, about 70 miles or so. The drive was easy, so, I extended my Bradbury raydiation by listening to two of his audio plays, *The Sound of Thunder* and *Night Call, Collect*.

Sheffield is in a close-grouped set of many other small towns. I went right to it, with only one quickly-fixed wrong turn. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted what looked like the deserted Ritz on a side street. I went up and opened the blank door. Voila! I was with Bradbury fans I had never met before, with the exception of Mr. Forrest "Forry" Ackerman, whom I last saw in the starving arms of Vampirella at Dragon*Con. I also found a few Bradbury books I didn't know existed, and got 'em.

Segue is the theatrical company who brought this outstanding show to life. Their program left off their address, phone number, and other contact information. Does anyone out there have contact information?

They used a fairly large cast. The sets were quite simple and the action was limited. Both were there to underscore each story's brilliant dialogues and conceptions. It was almost a throwback to English Elizabethan Renaissance Theater.

Not counting an intermission pit stop, we were spell-bound for about 3 hours. Although an evening wherein Mr. Bradbury spoke to us at the University of North Alabama will be reviewed in a separate essay, one reason I went all the way back to see him was to find out how *he* liked the show. He said they did such a wonderful job, he actually found himself weeping at some of the passages. Yes, he liked it indeed. Maybe as much as I did.

Back to the show. Here are thumbnail sketches of the seven vignettes:

The Foghorn: The lighthouse keepers muse over the

ocean, cauldron of change for 55+ billion years or more, before most of you were born. Suddenly a dinosaur responds to the forlorn mating call of their foghorn. Grossly disappointed, She trashes the place and returns to the Deeps. She might have died of a broken heart, but Hollywood called, and She returned a few years later to star in *It Came from 20,000 Fathoms*.

To the Chicago Abyss: An old vagabond man, in a hat from Dr. Seuss' Cat, is obsessed with trivia he remembers from before the atomic war. Horror of horrors, he even remembers cigarette wrapper colors! The tale ends with him fleeing on a bus to New Chicago, just outside the radioactive crater where Old Chicago died. One sticky image was the cops he narrowly evades, whose helmets are remarkably like those of the German Nazis and the modern US Army.

The 3rd Landing: On Mars, the crew encounters Martian shape-shifters who pull each astronaut/victim in with their most cherished memories, then kill them. Since a shape-shifter penetrates your psyche for cherished images, what sort of images might ward off attack? Would an artist stand a better chance of survival than a focused military officer?

Kaleidoscope: Bradbury's introduction dedicates this tale to the lost, daring crew of the *Challenger*. In his story, the crew lives, but is strewn in space, bounded only by time, thought, and their oxygen. The ingenious thespians, playing the doomed astronauts, put us in space with them, up to the ending. Make a wish, Child! Make a wish!

The Veldt: When this story was initially published, only Sfans cared. Now, virtual reality is common enough that everyone can understand the scary vision of what happens to ordinary people when their software not only has a virus, but lions and tigers and bears. *Oh my!*

Pillar of Fire: A resurrected vampire encounters his worst nemesis: a society whose imagination has been spayed. A common bond between all these stories is the voice of the story-teller, who often projects a lump in his throat.

The Book People: This is the final chapter of *Fahrenheit 451*. The clean-cut, elite firemen of the world have achieved equality by burning all the books and libraries. In its final chapter, the shred of Hope is with these shaggy, motley outcasts who carry the souls of books in their heads. There, each keeps text memorized: Bradbury, Tolstoy, Hawthorne, Dickens, McCaffrey, Poe, etc. This episode appeared in the third issue of a magazine relentlessly targeted by

censors, *Playboy*, almost fifty years ago. And, like Ray Bradbury's firemen, these censors remain thwarted. *Viva Hef and Ray!*

After three nourishing hours with Ms Dinosaur, vampires, Sfans, Martian shape-shifters, censors, bookworms, thought police, and ordinary people, the show ended, the spells broke, and I quested home. Along the way, the full moon rose, and I turned into a normal human being.

Almost.

Episode 2 Yestermorrow & Beyond: An Evening with Ray Bradbury, May 22, 2000, Norton Hall, University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama

After watching the Segue Theater Company infuse seven Ray Bradbury one-act plays with luminescence, I was tempted to stand pat. But, Bradbury himself was supposed to be there for the Sunday show. How did he like them? How is his post-stroke health? Raw curiosity shoved my car in gear and I went to find out for myself.

I got there right on time and right on the parking lot, thanks to a co-worker's directions. When I entered the auditorium, I sensed a church-like reverence in the place. Like most churches, the empty seats were on the front row. I literally sat at RB's feet, two seats to the right of Forry Ackerman.

Brooke Perry, the show director, introduced Mr. Bradbury and kicked off with clips from several of his TV and movie scripts.

Then, out he came, looking well, but for his splinted right foot and having to travel in a wheelchair. Nothing, though, impeded his grand mind nor his deep speaking voice.

Right off the bat he told us that he did indeed love the show. As Segue did each act, he felt tears in his eyes because they did each Portrait from his scripts right.

Then, he began I am born, an American *David Copperfield*. He has a terrific memory and absorbed more than the average kid in his boyhood home of Waukegan, Illinois, where he became an incurable Science Fiction Fan decades before Forry Ackerman coined the terms.

Waukegan is RB's *Paradise Lost*, because the specter of the Depression moved his family to Los Angeles, where he now lives. The ghost of John Milton, who never would praise cloistered virtue, must adore Bradbury. He started out selling newspapers at \$9 a week. Each day, as soon as he sold out, he went to the Los Angeles Public Library, where he wrote a story a week. He endured ten years of frustration before he sold a story.

Besides writing, he met his wife. She put up with him and other dreamers, such as Ray Harryhausen, who started out with scale model dinosaurs he filmed one click at a time. (In one of Harryhausen's early films, he fed his father to a T-Rex.) Neither of the Rays dreamed they'd make *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, but they did. This led Harryhausen along a special effects path through flying saucers, sword fighting skeletons, plus other critters like Mighty Joe Young. Meanwhile, Bradbury attracted the attention of John Houston, fresh from making *The African Queen*, who hired him to write the screenplay for *Moby Dick*. Houston felt he heard the faint echo of Melville's ghost in *The Beast* screenplay.

Onward for two hours, Ray Bradbury kept us enthralled with these improbabilities that actually did lead him along. Another thread was his novel *Fahrenheit 451* which had been serialized in the first three issues of *Playboy*. Hefner's actual encounters with book burners and censors seem an all too real

continuation of Ray's story. *Playboy* still fights every day against those who try to maintain equality by enforcing ignorance while shaming intelligence and creativity. I wonder if Mr. Bradbury was a friend of C. M. Kornbluth, who died in the mid-1950's, but not before bequeathing *The Marching Morons* to us.

Bradbury is still uneasy with cyberspace, it fails to bring him the same comfort as seeing his works between Baum's *Oz* and Burroughs' *Tarzan* or *John Carter of Mars* books. Or reading J. R. R. Tolkien or H. G. Wells late at night when sleep won't come. He has decided to postpone any judgment.

He closed us with his ministry for starships. He was in London during the 1969 Apollo moon landing which for the first time put man on another world. He was booked to talk about it with David Frost on English telly, but was bumped by Englebert Humperdink and Sammy Davis Jr. Enraged, Bradbury stomped out, brushing the producer from his clothes, like a roach. He caught a cab to CBS where Walter Cronkite was delighted to put his vision on American TV.

(As I wrote this, I was up late watching the reentry and landing of the Space Shuttle *Atlantis*. It was returning from its trip to the International Space Station (**Babylon 1?**). Who else reading this watched with me, or watched astronauts and cosmonauts working on the Space Station?)

Ray urges us to keep pushing, as a religious cause rather than as a military or commercial job, until men and women return to the Moon, reach Mars, and some day even the stars. If we don't, even our most cherished religions will die, when Earth does, forever lost in the lonely dark.

Time ran out. I was delighted and inspired, despite overhearing on my way to my car, a young man whose small Puritan mind had snapped shut at the mention of *Playboy* as well as at RB's opinion that Genesis and Evolution are both believable because neither is proven. To Puritans, only one is *The Truth*, all else is blasphemy. Life is a pain, and then we die. I sensed that dull, echoing throb of Moron boots and extra inspiration to write this.

Bradbury and Burroughs do indeed share kudos for inspiring real-world scientists such as Carl Sagan and countless others to go for Mars and beyond. In fact, The Mars Global Surveyor *is* orbiting Mars and has sent over 20,000 photos ranging from Olympus Mons to both poles. In addition, millions of laser measurements from the Surveyor's onboard Mars Orbital Laser Altimeter (MOLA) have given us precise, color-coded topographical maps of the whole Martian Globe. *Whoa!* These MOLA images do not seem to match the photographs. Mars still appears to wear a mask. Why? Take a look for yourself, the Global Surveyor has an outstanding web site. Being a good boy, I won't mention the possibility of our Mars probes encountering Marvin the Martian's Space Defenses.

When (definitely not *if*) we do probe deeper into the heavens, beyond Pluto and Charon, I propose naming one of these initial probes the *Bradbury Ray*.

Ray grows old, his body frail, ready to betray him at any time. But, when he looks, he perceives with the vision of Moses, seeing the Promised Land as His People ford the Jordan; and/or like Shakespeare who exclaimed "O Brave new World!" as the *Mayflower* sailed away to America.

The Renaissance Quest Baton is handed off to us, *ooof!* It is *our* turn to go for it; or, not, and let the morons drown us out and march us down. If we *do* go for it, I feel tipping wings at the goose-stepping congregation below is optional, right before the pulsing *BOOM!* of your Bradbury Ray knocks 'em flat on their ass.

Book Reviews

by Jim Woosley

Worlds of Honor, by David Weber, with Linda Evans, Roland Green, and Jane Lindskold, Baen Books, Hardcover, February 1999 (paperback March 2000, \$6.95) ISBN 0-671-57955-3

Worlds of Honor is the second collection of stories dealing with the background of David Weber's widely popular Honor Harrington series of novels. The five stories provide more background on the treecats of Sphinx and their society and relationship with humans. They also show a young Honor on a training mission that turns deadly and discuss the background of recent developments in the mainstream of the Honor series.

"The Stray," by Linda Evans, and "What Price Dreams?" by Weber deal primarily with treecats. Respectively, they address the first time that a human adopted by a treecat is murdered and the first treecat to adopt a future monarch of the Manticore Star Kingdom. Evans' story shows that the treecats have a strong intelligence and wit, which had not been expressed in technological development prior to the arrival of humans. The background on the treecats was well done and fascinating. However, the solution of the mystery was too pat — it serves primarily as a vehicle to explore treecats and the human-treecat bond. Weber's story is stronger, reminiscent of the use of Honor's treecat, Nimitz, in several of the more memorable sequences of the mainstream novels.

"The Hard Way Home," by Weber, deals with Honor prior to the first novel, *On Basilisk Station*. Here she fights fleet bureaucracy to aid civilians trapped by an avalanche at a resort. The story is additionally interesting because the most heroic of the victims is 12-year-old Susan Hibson, later a significant character in the mainstream series as a Marine sergeant. It's as well told as Weber's other story and the mainstream novels themselves.

In the most recent novel, *Ashes of Victory*, Honor's Queen Elizabeth reveals that her father had been murdered by his political enemies, some of whom were in the pay of the People's Republic of Haven. "Queen's Gambit," by Jane Lindskold, tells this side story in detail, a tragedy it was.

Last is "Deck Load Strike," by Roland Green, the story of a side skirmish on a minor planet, one mentioned briefly, as I recall, in the main series. There is fast paced and then there is fast paced. This story is so fast paced that I had difficulty keeping up with what was going on. The characters were not explored in enough detail to make me really care. Besides which, they're dead now. Definitely the weakest story in the book.

A must for fans of the series, though persons not already familiar with the universe will undoubtedly be lost.

Cradle of Saturn, by James P. Hogan, Baen Books, hardcover, 1999 (paperback edition, May 2000, \$6.99), ISBN 0-671-57866-9

One of James Hogan's most common themes is the individual searching for unpopular truths in the face of persistent political and military bureaucrats who serve their own interests before that of the people or institutions they ostensibly represent. In his non-fiction, he has also tended to support the premise that certain researchers outside of the mainstream of science are being suppressed by a scientific and technological bureaucracy tied to federal research dollars and politically-correct science.

Cradle of Saturn combines these themes, in a fashion guaranteed to open the eyes of most contemporary physicists and astronomers: the novel hinges on the truth of the theories of Immanuel Velikovsky.

For those of you not familiar with Velikovsky, in three books published in the early 1950's he maintained that the emerging scientific picture of the solar system is wrong. Instead, he claimed that ancient records (passed to us in the form of legends) make it clear that the solar system has changed extensively over the course of recorded human history. In particular, he claimed that widely-based legends from the period from about 3000 to 1500 BC, including the Biblical flood, the plagues of Egypt, and similar occurrences reported by cultures worldwide, were all derived from observation of a series of major changes within the solar system. In his theory, Venus is not a long-established, stable planet. Instead it was emitted like a comet from Jupiter to careen around the solar system. It approached Earth closely on the two occasions noted above and others, before settling into its current orbit.

Needless to say, this picture is not accepted by mainstream astronomy, physics, archeology, and other disciplines. That non-acceptance is the key to the first half of the novel, set in a not-too-distant future where near-space has been fully exploited by government and government scientists. They now try to explain, without reference to Velikovsky, a new event: the emission of a planetoid (named Athena) from Jupiter on a sunward course.

The main character in *Cradle of Saturn* is a nuclear scientist/engineer named Landen Keene. He is involved in the private development of a nuclear propulsion system which runs rings (literally, in a cosmic vision of oneupmanship) around the Air Force's latest space vehicle. Keene is also associated with certain of the Kronians, humans from a privately-funded colony among the moons of Saturn. They live there to avoid the bureaucratic restrictions of terrestrial life, and particularly scientific research. In the aftermath of Athena's emission, they send a delegation to Earth to reveal evidence of previous catastrophes in their archaeological studies of other bodies in the solar system. However, they are reviled by a scientific establishment that views Athena as a fluke of no relevance to Velikovsky's theories. That view is challenged when Athena's extensive ionized tail affects the balance of planetary dynamics resulting in Athena being redirected, almost targeted, toward Earth.

From this point, the book is a conventional, very well done (some of Hogan's best work in years) apocalyptic novel. Keene rescues the Kronians, who have the only spaceship capable of escaping Athena and its effects, from kidnapers within the military-political-scientific complex. He sends them back to their ship from Vandenberg on a next-generation space shuttle. Keene then sets out across an increasingly ravaged US toward Houston, to attempt to rescue his business associate *cum* lover, Vicki, and her son Robin. He hopes they all can rejoin the Kronians, using his experimental ship from its Mexican launch pad. Their fate (and that of the Kronians launched from Vandenberg, amid meteor strikes that had eliminated virtually all air/space travel) is in question up to the very end of the novel. And please don't assume from this precis that they escape unscathed. Certainly most of the other characters are dead at the end of the novel, as is most of humanity without access to space travel.

I refuse to be drawn into a debate on the subject of Velikovsky's theories, or some of the other alternate science thrown into the book — mainly because I haven't done the calculations myself, nor have I studied the authorities on either

side of the debate in any detail. I would be forced to the same appeal to authority one way or the other that Hogan sees as the real source of all evil. (In his nonfiction, he never claims that the researchers he champions are correct but that it is unfair to them, and to science, to completely ignore their results and the evidence it's based on, and particularly for the cause of political correctness.) Nor do I have more than guesses (in some cases) about what evidence introduced by Hogan was real speculation and which was purely fictional. (Certainly the exoarcheology was. Are there other instances?) However, I don't believe that the number of secret advocates of such theories among scientists and engineers is as large as Hogan suggests, not by a couple of orders of magnitude.

Some of the questions asked by Hogan include: Did the planet Venus appear as comet, spit out by Jupiter, and not included in the list of known planets by ancient astronomers and astrologers until it stabilized in its current orbit around 1500 BC? Were the larger dinosaurs physically possible under Earth's gravity, or would they have been incapable of land motion? Can perturbations of the carbon cycle by impact of high-carbon meteors result in serious errors in radio carbon dating by changing the C_{14}/C_{12} ratio? Can a large ionized body on a near-sun approach on a hyperbolic (gravitational) orbit (average speed over 50 miles per second) generate sufficient plasma interactions between itself, it's tail, and the solar wind to change it's position by 20 million miles when it crosses Earth's orbit? Has Earth itself changed its orbit significantly in historical times and did the latest Ice Age result from such migration? Have scientists missed or ignored critical evidence because it doesn't fit their preconceptions or their training or their desire for federal research grants?

As to where Hogan stands? Well, he dedicates the book to Velikovsky and Velikovsky advocate Charles Ginenthal. Is this homage for a good idea for a novel, or something more?

If you read the book as straightforward science fiction, you will doubtless be thrown by the real and fictional ties to Velikovsky and other theories from the margins (or dregs) of science. If you read it as science fantasy, taking Velikovsky's theories as a point of departure, I believe you will enjoy it. Certainly, within it's framework, it's much better done than most of the recent meteor movies. And the science of such a near-collision, should it occur, was well presented. (It was very close, as I recall, to a paper on the subject a certain undergraduate mentor did with some older students while I was a freshman, attempting to disparage Velikovsky.) Regardless of your opinion of Velikovsky, this is the best collision catastrophe novel since *Lucifer's Hammer* and, thus, well worth your while.

(P.S. Toni, I would appreciate it if you wouldn't tell your Dad or uncle about this one. And particularly that I gave it a favorable review.)

Letters of Comment

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

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740

12 May 2000

You are fortunate to live in a city where there are meetings and exhibits relating to the space program, although the cost of the NASA "Turning Goals into Reality"

seems a bit stiff. Come to think of it, I imagine that the NASA people feel a bit better now that the nation has diverted its attention to a mistake by the federal land people, not the blunders of the space agency.

The May *Shuttle* contains the first information on Hugo nominees for this year that I've seen. I raised at least one eyebrow over one of the fan writer nominees but I was glad to see that *Challenger* has made the ballot. It will be interesting to see who wins the fanzine Hugo this year, because of the possibility that *Plokta* will cause United Kingdom voters to split their votes between it and *Ansible*.

The extended reviews of the recent Baen books seem eminently fair in their mixture of praise and criticism. I hope *Cradle of Saturn* does cause some if its readers to think more about the need to prepare to the limit of existing science against some major natural disaster that might decimate Earth. And it's true that radical new theories have a hard time in the scientific world today. Someone pointed out recently the the tables have been turned since Galileo: today the churches seem more willing to accept new theories and it's the scientists who fight them.

I don't know if my loc is to blame, but I find absolutely no evidence of any barcode on this issue of the *Shuttle*, except one modest-sized one just below the address label. Maybe that's why it came so promptly, just three days after it was postmarked.

[At \$125, the NASA conference was priced very reasonably for a two-day professional conference — I would not have been surprized to see it cost double or even triple that. My guess is that they held the cost down by having the organizers do it as part of their regular NASA job and treating their work as "free." I'm glad we were able to get the news of the Hugo nominations out in a timely fashion. We attempt to stay on top of awards news this issue with a list of Nebula, Stoker, and Clarke Award winners. The Baen onslaught continues in this issue, with looks at two of the previously-reviewed works from a different perspective. -ED]

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

Sheryl Birkhead
25509 Jonnie Court
Gaithersburg MD 20882

17 May 2000

Hi — been in the house for about two weeks — still have boxes everywhere and the cats are still separated without access to open space in general. I have to have doors put in so I can separate them with more room to run around. I also brought the leukemia-positive cat home — no one at the shelter was interested in adopting him (as an only cat) — had one of his toes amputated; waiting to see if it's malignant — *if* so, then he is no longer asymptomatic.

This house is actually *twice* the size of the farmhouse — agh — I wanted something smaller — the lot is ~.7 acres and took almost 6 hours to mow since the grass was ~12" high and there is an overgrown drainage ditch in front. Every other house has either a mowing service or a riding mower — sigh. Now to try to settle in and start feeling at "home." Still haven't started unpacking all the zines!

[Commiserations on your moving woes and here's hoping you have at least *some* of your boxes unpacked by the time this issue reaches you ;-)-ED]



P. O. Box 4857
Huntsville AL 35815-4857

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Comments, inquiries, and contributions of writing by email to: mike.kennedy@pobox.tbe.com — EDITORIAL ADDRESS (EMAIL)

Comments, inquiries, and contributions of writing by snailmail to: Mike Kennedy, 7907 Charlotte Drive SW,
Huntsville AL 35802-2841 — EDITORIAL ADDRESS (SNAILMAIL)

Dues (\$), subscriptions (\$), and Official Mail to: NASFA, Inc., P. O. Box 4857,
Huntsville AL 35815-4857 — OFFICIAL ADDRESS

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