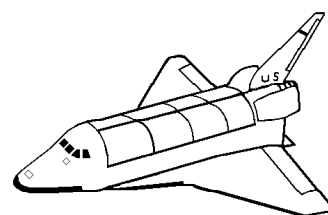


The



SHUTTLE  
April 2006

*The Next NASFA Meeting will be 15 April  
2006 at the Regular Time and Location*

*ConCom Meeting 7:30P 13 April at Sam Smith's Place*

### 🔔 Oyez, Oyez 🔔

The next **Con†Stellation concom meeting** is **7:30P Thursday 13 April** (two days before the club meeting) at Sam Smith's apartment. Call Sam at 883-4493 if you need directions.

The next **NASFA meeting** will be **Saturday 15 April 2006** at the **regular time and location**.

The **April program** will be the latest incarnation of the NASFA Auction. Bring goodies (duplicate or surplus books and movies are always good) to donate to the auction and money to buy other people's stuff.

The **April after-the-meeting meeting** is TBD at press time.

### NASFA Calendar

#### APRIL

- 01 April Fool's Day.
- 02 Daylight Savings Time begins.
- 07 BD: Mary Ortwerth.
- 09 Palm Sunday.
- 13-16 Frolicon — Atlanta GA.
- 13 Passover.
- 13 Con†Stellation ConCom Meeting 7:30P at Sam Smith's place.
- 14 Good Friday.
- 15\* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at  
*(continued on page 2)*

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**Deadline for the May 2006 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 5 May 2006.**



ture variation on ice fishing. (Do I sense a fish theme here?) [There a couple of other things shown, too, including a trailer for the nonexistent film *Grayson*. -ED]

After the cartoons, we screened a short amateur movie that was mailed to Con†Stellation: Cygnus, so we could see if it's worth airing there. The movie introduced a secret society protecting Earth from alien invasion, but all we really saw was one woman in cyberpunk computer-display shades speaking on the phone for most of the roughly ten minute movie. She eventually got beamed up to some sort of spaceship. That scene could have been more interesting if the movie had spent more than a few seconds and some end credits there.

The After-the-Meeting Meeting was held at Nancy Cucci and Ray Pietruszka's house. It was a birthday celebration for several of our members.

## NASFA Receivables

by Randy B. Cleary

NASFA received the following items:

**De Profundis**, Editor: Milt Stevens, 11513 Burbank Boulevard, North Hollywood CA 91601; 818-760-9324; <www.lasfs.org>; \$10/year (PDF versions at <bardgold.home.comcast.net/deprof.html>) — This fanzine is the official newsletter of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. Issue 396, January 2006, contains the club calendar, club minutes, and the usual. It is the last issue edited by Mary Cantor (ending almost 6 years of service). With issue 397, February 2006, Milt Stevens, takes over as editor and seems to be using modern photocopy technology for much improved print quality with black text on white paper. The contents are pretty much the same as before. Issue 398, March 2006, contains more of the same and a LoC correcting the new editor on a few mistakes in his first issue.

**Challenger**, Editor: Guy H. Lillian III, 87000 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport LA 71115; <GHLIII@yahoo.com>; 318-797-1822; <www.challzine.net>; \$6/issue — Issue 23, winter 2005, has a glossy full color computer graphics cover by Alan White. This Hugo-nominated fanzine has 102 pages of essays on a wide range of topics by many big names in fandom and professionals also. There are many illustrations and pictures throughout. Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans are much discussed.

**ConNotations**, Editor: Stephanie Bannon; P. O. Box 62613, Phoenix AZ 85082; <editors@casfs.org>; \$20/six issues — This is the bi-monthly science-fiction, fantasy, and convention newszine of the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society printed on tabloid size newsprint. The December/January issue features media updates and reviews for TV, movies, and books. It also features gamers, convention news and reviews, and a conversation with Forrest J. Ackerman. The February/March issue features media updates for TV, movies, and books. It also features costuming, animation, a conversation with Dianna Gabaldon and more. Both issues have the usual club and convention listings.

**File 770**, Editor: Mike Glycer; 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia CA 91016; 626-305-1004; <Mikeglyer@cs.com>; \$8/five issues — This fanzine is focused on news about and of interest to fandom. Issue 146 has 28 pages of informative tidbits, con reports, and many illustrations and pictures. There are also many LoCs.

**Nice Distinctions**, Arthur D. Hlavaty, 2006 Valentine

Street, Yonkers, NY 10704-1814; 914-965-4861; <hlatvaty@panix.com>; <www.livejournal.com/users/upergee>; \$1/issue — This personal fanzine is issue 12 and contains six pages of Hlavaty's musings on his health, sensawonda, defoliant, what he is thankful for, books and more.

**Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin**, Editor: Randy B. Cleary, 138 Bibb Drive, Madison AL 35758-1064; 256-772-3826; <rbccleary@bellsouth.net>; <www.southernfandom.com>; \$15/year — The December 2005 newsletter of the Southern Fandom Confederation contains a convention report on Oasis 18, book reviews, fanzine listings, news of and about southern fandom, southern convention listings, club roster, and LoCs with illustrations and pictures.

**OASFiS Event Horizon**, Editor Jaun Sanmiguel, 1421 Pon Pon Count, Orlando FL 32825; 407-823-8715; <sanmiguel@earthlink.net>; \$12/year — This is the newsletter for the Orlando Area Science Fiction Society. Issues 221–223, January–March 2006, contain four pages each of club news.

**Twilight Zine**, MIT Science Fiction Society, Room W20-473, 84 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge MA 02139; 617-258-5126; <mitsfs@mit.edu>; <web.mit.edu/mitsfs> — This is the club fanzine for the MIT Science Fiction Society. Issue 46, Winter 2005/2006 has 21 pages of essays, reviews, and short fiction with illustrations.

**The Zine Dump**, Editor: Guy H. Lillian III, 87000 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport LA 71115; <GHLIII@yahoo.com>; 318-797-1822; <www.challzine.net> — Issue 11 touches on the recent New Orleans Mardi Gras and gives in depth reviews of all the recent fanzines that Guy received.

## 2006 Hugo & Campbell Awards Nominations

The Hugo (and Campbell) Awards are decided each year by the members of the World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon). Members of the current and immediate past Worldcons are eligible to nominate; only members of the current Worldcon can vote in the final selection. Nominees for the 2006 awards (for work done in 2005) have been announced. There were 533 nominating ballots received from L.A.con IV (current) and Interaction (immediate past) members (434 electronically; 99 by mail and fax). The Best Interactive Video Game category, announced previously by the L.A.con IV committee as a special Hugo category, has been dropped because of a lack of sufficient nominations. Several categories have six or even seven nominees due to ties for fifth place.

The Campbell Award (for best new writer) is sponsored by Dell Magazines but administered by the Worldcon committee in the same way as the Hugo Awards. This is the second year of the transition to the new Campbell eligibility rules, where now all professional publications count towards eligibility rather than just those with a print run of over 10,000 copies. During the transition, nominees who were eligible either under both the old or the new rules could be placed on the ballot even if they had small press publications prior to 2004. Next year, only writers eligible under the new rules will be allowed on the ballot.

**BEST NOVEL** (430 ballots cast)  
*Learning the World*, Ken MacLeod (Orbit; Tor)

*A Feast for Crows*, George R. R. Martin (Voyager; Bantam Spectra)

*Old Man's War*, John Scalzi (Tor)

*Accelerando*, Charles Stross (Ace; Orbit)

*Spin*, Robert Charles Wilson (Tor)

**BEST NOVELLA** (243 ballots cast)

*Burn*, James Patrick Kelly (Tachyon)

"Magic for Beginners," Kelly Link (*Magic for Beginners*, Small Beer Press; *F&SF* September 2005)

"The Little Goddess," Ian McDonald (*Asimov's* June 2005)

"Identity Theft," Robert J. Sawyer (*Down These Dark Spaceways*, SFBC)

"Inside Job," Connie Willis (*Asimov's* January 2005)

**BEST NOVELETTE** (207 ballots cast)

"The Calorie Man," Paolo Bacigalupi (*F&SF* October/November 2005)

"Two Hearts," Peter S. Beagle (*F&SF* October/November 2005)

"TelePresence," Michael A. Burstein (*Analog* July/August 2005)

"I, Robot," Cory Doctorow (The Infinite Matrix (website) February 15, 2005)

"The King of Where-I-Go," Howard Waldrop (SCI FICTION (website) December 7, 2005)

**BEST SHORT STORY** (278 ballots cast)

"Seventy-Five Years," Michael A. Burstein (*Analog* January/February 2005)

"The Clockwork Atom Bomb," Dominic Green (*Interzone* May/June 2005)

"Singing My Sister Down," Margo Lanagan (*Black Juice*, Allen & Unwin; Eos)

"Tk'tk'tk," David D. Levine (*Asimov's* March 2005)

"Down Memory Lane," Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* April/May 2005)

**BEST RELATED BOOK** (197 ballots cast)

*Transformations: The Story of the Science Fiction Magazines from 1950 to 1970*, Mike Ashley (Liverpool)

*The SEX Column and Other Misprints*, David Langford (Cosmos)

*Science Fiction Quotations*, Gary Westfahl, ed. (Yale)

*Storyteller: Writing Lessons and More from 27 Years of the Clarion Writers' Workshop*, Kate Wilhelm (Small Beer Press)

*Soundings: Reviews 1992-1996*, Gary K. Wolfe (Becon)

**BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION,**

**LONG FORM** (364 ballots cast)

*Batman Begins*; Story by David S. Goyer; Screenplay by Christopher Nolan and David S. Goyer; Based on the character created by Bob Kane; Directed by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros.)

*The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; Screenplay by Ann Peacock, Andrew Adamson, Christopher Markus, and Stephen McFeely; Based on the novel by C. S. Lewis; Directed by Andrew Adamson (Walt Disney Pictures/Walden Media)

*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*; Screenplay by Steven Kloves; Based on the novel by J. K. Rowling; Directed by Mike Newell (Warner Bros.)

*Serenity*; Written and Directed by Joss Whedon (Universal Pictures/Mutant Enemy, Inc.)

*Wallace & Gromit in the Curse of the Were-Rabbit*; Screenplay by Steve Box, Nick Park, Bob Baker, and Mark Burton; Directed by Nick Park and Steve Box (Dreamworks Animation/Aardman Animation)

**BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION,**

**SHORT FORM** (261 ballots cast)

*Battlestar Galactica* "Pegasus"; Written by Anne Cofell Saunders; Directed by Michael Rymer (NBC Universal/British Sky Broadcasting)

*Doctor Who* "Dalek"; Written by Robert Shearman; Directed by Joe Ahearne (BBC Wales/BBC1)

*Doctor Who* "The Empty Child" & "The Doctor Dances"; Written by Steven Moffat; Directed by James Hawes (BBC Wales/BBC1)

*Doctor Who* "Father's Day"; Written by Paul Cornell; Directed by Joe Ahearne (BBC Wales/BBC1)

*Jack-Jack Attack*; Written and Directed by Brad Bird (Walt Disney Pictures/Pixar Animation)

*Lucas Back in Anger*; Written by Phil Raines and Ian Sorensen; Directed by Phil Raines (Reductio Ad Absurdum Productions)

*Prix Victor Hugo Awards Ceremony* (Opening Speech and Framing Sequences); Written and performed by Paul McAuley and Kim Newman; Directed by Mike and Debby Moir (Interaction Events)

**BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR** (293 ballots cast)

Ellen Datlow David G. Hartwell

Stanley Schmidt Gordon Van Gelder Sheila Williams

**BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST** (230 ballots cast)

Jim Burns Bob Eggleton Donato Giancola

Stephan Martiniere John Picacio Michael Whelan

**BEST SEMIPROZINE** (219 ballots cast)

*Ansible*, Dave Langford, ed.

*Emerald City*, Cheryl Morgan, ed.

*Interzone*, Andy Cox, ed.

*Locus*, Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-Wong, and Liza Groen Trombi, eds.

*The New York Review of Science Fiction*, Kathryn Cramer, David G. Hartwell, and Kevin J. Maroney, eds.

**BEST FANZINE** (176 ballots cast)

*Banana Wings*, Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, eds.

*Challenger*, Guy H. Lillian III, ed.

*Chunga*, Andy Hooper, Randy Byers, and Carl Juarez, eds.

*File 770*, Mike Glycer, ed.

*Plokta*, Alison Scott, Steve Davies, and Mike Scott, eds.

**BEST FAN WRITER** (202 ballots cast)

Claire Brialey John Hertz Dave Langford

Cheryl Morgan Steven H Silver

**BEST FAN ARTIST** (154 ballots cast)

Brad Foster Teddy Harvia

Sue Mason Steve Stiles Frank Wu

**JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW**

**WRITER OF 2004 OR 2005** (186 ballots cast)

K. J. Bishop (2<sup>nd</sup> year of eligibility)

Sarah Monette (2<sup>nd</sup> year of eligibility)

Chris Roberson (2<sup>nd</sup> year of eligibility)

Brandon Sanderson (1<sup>st</sup> year of eligibility)

John Scalzi (1<sup>st</sup> year of eligibility)

Steph Swainston (2<sup>nd</sup> year of eligibility)

## News and Awards Roundup

### LORD OF THE RINGS MUSICAL OPENS

The musical stage production of *Lord of the Rings* opened to mixed reviews Friday 24 March 2005 at Toronto's Princess of Wales Theatre. The 3-hour-plus show features a cast of 55, about 500 costumes, and a massive computer-controlled stage featuring 17 elevators. Audience reaction was reported to be

generally positive but not overwhelming, with one standing ovation.

Critics in the audience came from Canada, the US, the UK, and elsewhere. Positive reviews came from *Time* magazine (“definitive megamusical”) and the *London Times* (“a stirring triumph of theatrical magic”). Negative reviews included those by the *New York Times* (“largely incomprehensible”) and the *Toronto Star* (“why we’re bored of the *Rings*”). Many reviews were more nuanced, noting for instance that with some cutting and changes to the musical score and performances a less-than-stellar production could be significantly improved. Several also noted that it will probably pay off commercially, no matter what their opinion of its merits might be.

Rachel Tolkien (JRRT’s granddaughter) was quoted by the Reuters news agency as saying “I thought it was a beautiful show and I was impressed,” and “everything in the book that to me is important, or really moved me, is on the stage.”

After playing in Toronto — and perhaps receiving a few of those tweaks — the CDN\$28 million (US\$24 million) show is scheduled to go to London in 2007.

#### SF HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

The Science Fiction Hall of Fame (part of Seattle’s Science Fiction Museum) has announced this year’s inductees. George Lucas, Anne McCaffrey, Frank Herbert, and Frank Kelly Freas will be officially enshrined at a ceremony on 17 June 2006 during a weekend that will also see the presentation of this year’s Locus Awards. Hall of Fame nominees are submitted by Science Fiction Museum members and the inductees are chosen by a panel of judges.

#### BOOKSENSE AWARDS

The BookSense Book of the Year Award <booksense.com> winners are selected by independent booksellers across the country who vote for the books “they most enjoyed handselling to their customers in the previous year.” Awards are presented in six categories: Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, Children’s Literature, Illustrated Children’s Book, Rediscovery, and Paperback. Genre winners this year include *The Historian* (Elizabeth Kostova) and *Inkspell* (Cornelia Funke) in the Adult Fiction and Children’s Literature categories respectively.

#### ICFA HOSTS AWARDS

The 2006 International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts played host to several awards presentations. These included:

- Dell Magazines Award (for best short unpublished fiction by an undergraduate student): **Meghan Sinoff**
- Lord Ruthven Award winner (for best vampire novel): *The Historian*, Elizabeth Kostova
- Lord Ruthven Award runner up: *Fledgling*, Octavia Butler
- Crawford Award (for best fantasy writer whose first book has appeared in the last 18 months): **Joe Hill**

## Elvis Has Left the Con

And is Back Home in Huntsville  
a convention review by Mike Kennedy

MidSouthCon 24 <www.midsouthcon.org> was held 24–26 March 2006 at the airport Holiday Inn Select in Memphis TN. Invited guests included Author GoHs Glen Cook and David Weber, Gaming GoH Rich Burlew, Artist GoH Lubov, Media GoH Regina Pancake, Filk GoH Tom Smith, Costuming GoH Christopher “Tyger” Roth, and Comics GoH John Jackson Miller. There was also a long list of other notables present. Total attendance was reported to be around 1100.

## THURSDAY

Memphis is just a touch outside my normal range for driving to a con. At four hours the drive is still very doable, but long enough that leaving Huntsville Friday morning leaves little time to settle in before preparing for and running a Friday night room party. To compensate, I decided to drive to Memphis after work Thursday — but by the time I settled on that plan the convention hotel had no rooms available for that night at the con rate. (Fortunately I’d made a reservation for the two main con nights some time before, when I first decided I’d probably go to MSC this year.) I wasn’t willing to pay a 50% (or more) premium for the one night, but fortunately I found a hotel right next door (an Econo Lodge) that was quite a bit cheaper. I figured that one night there would be OK. And, if I decided to stay over Sunday night (plotting with some of the other Killer Cutthroat Spades regulars to corner David Weber in a card game that night), the EL would probably have rooms available.

Sigh.

The EL is cheaper for a reason — or actually several reasons. Maintenance was very poor (nonfunctional ice machines, closet doors askew, beat up phone). Housekeeping was shoddy (dirty sock on the desk, missing shower curtain, various mystery stains). Administration was sketchy (front desk unsure of reservation, web site did not list hotel). I strongly suspect — despite the Econo Lodge sign still present — that the hotel is no longer part of that budget chain. They don’t come close to living up to even that chain’s standards. On the plus side, they did bring a shower curtain fairly quickly when asked and I was charged \$5 less than the rate promised when I made the reservation.

More to the point, perhaps, the trip itself was fine. I picked up Sue Thorn at her house and we were on the way by 6-ish. Sue had wanted to go to MSC and, since I was going anyway, I offered her a ride and a place to crash. Even with one quick stop for a fast-food dinner, we made very good time and rolled in to the EL parking lot a bit before 10P. Most of the stuff I’d packed — for the room party — stayed in the car trunk overnight, so moving in (and later out) of the room was no big deal.

## FRIDAY

Friday morning we reloaded the car with our personal effects (and one cooler that wouldn’t fit in the trunk) and headed out in search of breakfast and a grocery store. I needed to pick up a few extra things for the room party, but I’d prepared ahead by finding out the location of a Kroger about 2–3 miles from the hotel. We found the store with no problem, but finding breakfast proved to be more of a challenge. Breakfast ended up being an early lunch at a Wendy’s.

All of this got us back to the Holiday Inn well before noon, which was when convention registration was to open. By the time noon rolled around, a slightly-longish line had built up. Conversation with Kerry Gilley — who I was very happy to see was feeling well enough to travel to cons again — seemed like a better bet than standing in line, so Sue and I did that until 1-ish. Eventually, though, it was time to brave the line.

When I was last at MSC — in 2004 when they hosted DeepSouthCon — their registration was a deeply, deeply broken process. Sadly, it wasn’t that much better this year, though at least they had abandoned the very troublesome computerized system they used in 2004. I wasn’t sure whether or not I’d preregistered but there was no way to check without standing in line. Eventually they did open a second prereg line, but divided the alphabet very oddly so that the large majority still had to stand in the one line. Sue was lucky enough to be in the R–Z (later M–Z) line and got through well before I did. In

all, I waited in line just over 30 minutes to find out that I had indeed not preregged. Fortunately for me, the at-the-door line was *much* shorter and getting registered consumed only a few more minutes. (I'd had the foresight to fill out an at-the-door form.) They really, really need to pay some attention to fixing this process. I am more patient than some people but my con did *not* get off to a good start. I heard more than one person comment that they were sorry they preregistered, it being better to pay the extra few dollars at the door rather than stand in line.

Speaking of lines, when the hotel threw open their check-in around 2-ish (desk clerks had been saying to come back at the official 3P check in time) a pretty big line built up there, too. Being a Priority Club member (that's the HI's frequent-stayer program) saved me a lot of time and I was able to check in pretty quickly. Later I noticed that even the Priority Club line was perhaps a dozen deep. The line for non PC'ers was 2-3 times that.

With Sue's help (and a small hand truck I brought) it took only two slightly-overloaded trips to move stuff in to the room. Room parties mean traveling with *lots* of stuff. Much of the rest of the afternoon was taken up by preparations for the party (and some making notes for this report), though I did get to talk to friends a bit here and there. Sam helped me move an extra table into the room (borrowed from his room) and Sue helped make and put up notices for the party. That all left me with about an hour, starting at 5:30P, to wander the con a bit and schmooze before coming back to the room to finish last-minute prep. I had decided to start the party at a relatively early 7:30P to squeeze in around an Artist Reception (6:30P), the Opening Ceremony (8P), and a Meet-the-Guests gathering (9P).

The party opened on time and, though it was seldom crowded, ran along nicely for the almost five hours we were open. The last one out the door was Huntsville-area sf writer Travis Taylor who, accompanied by Sue, was headed out in search of an "after hours" chocolate martini party that had begun at 12M. Many of the attendees at the party were old friends, of course, but I was pleased to see a good number of faces new to me. Sue gave out stickers most of the night and based on that I estimate about 60 different people were there at various times — many of them more than once.

After I closed the doors just before 12:30A, it took about an hour of cleanup then some few minutes more unpacking stuff I hadn't wanted to get out before the party. (Having a CPAP machine on the nightstand might be a conversation piece, but it takes up valuable space needed for party purposes.) I wound down by spending maybe 15 minutes schmoozing in the main gaming pit with Uncle Timmy, Kerry Gilley, David Weber, et al. before toddling off to bed around 2A.

I say gaming pit because, well, that's what it is. The main building at the HI has rooms around the perimeter of each floor, built around two atriums. On one end of the building, there is a large space on the first floor open all the way to the ceiling. This is used as the main gaming area — with a number of other, smaller, function rooms used for specific types of games. On the other end of the building, the ballroom takes up most of the first floor. The hotel lobby is built on top of the ballroom and is positioned between the second and third floors. The atrium above the lobby is thus a good bit shorter than the one above the gaming area.

## SATURDAY

I slept in as late as I could manage on Saturday, and got up around 10A to face the day. Breakfast consisted of peanut butter on Ritz crackers plus a diet Dr Pepper (all from the con suite) while hanging around in the lobby with a bunch of

reprobate card players. Any con suite that has diet Dr. Pepper gets a very good mark in my book. In fact, the only significant negative about the con suite at MSC was that the suite was too small for this large a con. It's likely the largest suite in the hotel, so there's not a lot they can do about it as long as they are unable to use function space. (The con serves beer and apparently must use a hotel room because of legal restrictions. At least some of the con staff is in favor of dropping the adult beverages so they can move to more spacious quarters for the suite.)

If you ask nicely I'll tell you about Timmy and undercounting spade length. (Four to the Jack and he hesitated about bidding 2 — then made 3 and lost the game because of it.)

Meanwhile, Sue had gotten co-opted into a conspiracy to surprise Toni Weisskopf with a birthday cake at a 4P panel featuring her and a bunch of Baen authors. Sue had ordered the cake and a plan was developed to head out around 2P to pick it up. Later I volunteered to sneak it in to the panel shortly after they started so Toni wouldn't be able to escape.

That plan gave me time to take a moderately-quick tour of the dealers room and art show. The dealers room was of a reasonable size for the con, but it had both insanely-narrow aisles and empty tables. The con really should have rearranged the room when they found out it would not be sold out, though it's possible that there was not enough time if (for instance) they had a couple of no-show dealers or last-minute dropouts. The room featured a wide variety, including books, jewelry, art, gaming supplies, two (!) weapons dealers, collectibles, and some comics. I seldom buy anything in a con dealers room, but this one looked like it had something for most any fannish interest.

The art show also had a fair amount of empty space (panels) but the aisles were much more reasonable. Staffers were filling up one double-width panel with jewelry as I was leaving. If any more than that showed then up my impression of lots of empty space might have been different. Almost all the 2-D art was prints, which is par for the course at cons for the past many years. The large majority was fantasy (vs. science fiction) themed — also on par. There were a couple of nice originals at very reasonable prices but none were quite to my taste. AGoH Lubov had several originals on display alongside her prints, but all the originals were not for sale. I theoretically might have considered a Lubov original but I would probably have choked if I saw the prices she would likely charge. (By the way, Lubov is very personable. I saw her often wandering around the con, speaking shyly to the fans. I suspect many of them didn't know who the cute pixie of a woman was, but were charmed nonetheless.) There was some 3-D art, the nicest pieces of which were being bid up madly and all probably went to auction. In the jewelry category, there was a large display of *very* nice silver knotwork jewelry, all very expensive.

Lunch turned out to be cookies left over from the previous night's room party, after which I went to the 1P panel "In Space Propulsion" featuring Les Johnson talking about possible technologies for getting around the solar system. That turned out to be my one "talking heads" panel for the con, and was probably about the best choice I could have made if I had to choose only one.

Sue and I found each other but were held up slightly on our way out to fulfill cake-pickup duty when we ran into Grant Kruger in the hallway. It was pleasant to talk to him, though I was sorry (for myself and all of Southern fandom) to hear that he's moving to Portland OR. Cherche la femme. He did say that he hopes to get back to the area for DSC some years (though almost certainly not this year) and I'll doubtless run into him at the odd Worldcon or the like.

The cake run, though not without some drama, was successful. We got the cake back to my room and Sue went out to round up plates, forks, etc. (which she had arranged to get from the con suite). I was able to make a call home to check in. The hotel wireless network, which had been extremely flaky, was back up so I was also able to resync my email — no time to read it but at least I could download. The plan sort of fell apart a bit after that, though. I took a deliberately circuitous route from my third-floor room on one end of the hotel to the first-floor ballroom on the opposite side — especially avoiding the elevators and the atrium areas. But, as I was headed down the hallway on the second floor, headed for the stairwell closest to the ballroom, there came Toni. We danced around what was happening, but it was clear that she not only figured out what was happening but who instigated it. Ah well, in the end the cake showed up, a song was sung, and everyone in the room who wanted any got a piece — most as they were filing out of the room. The left over cake was donated to the masquerade prejudging, which was the next thing to be held in that room.

During much of the Baen panel I was back in my room doing research on where to eat. Before the con I had found a place recommended online and Sam, Judy, her kids, Sue, and I were all planning to go there for an early dinner. Sam had, however, discovered that the Arcade Restaurant is open only for breakfast and lunch — something that none of the online reviews had mentioned. Barbecue was suggested as an alternative (that being one of Memphis' claims to fame) and I located a reasonably easy-to-find place called Central BBQ which had rave reviews online. It was perfectly adequate barbecue, but I thought the hot sauce was too mild while all the others thought the mild sauce was too hot. We stopped at Kroger for ice cream on the way back — they had a deal for \$1 pints so everyone could get their favorite. On the way out from that store I declined the deal offered in the parking lot to buy some "14 karat gold" jewelry.

Sam, Judy, and the kids took their ice cream off to their room, but Sue and I hung around with the card players in the lobby and ate ours. I lost one game when a nil bid made good on the last hand but won a second game — my first win of the weekend. Perhaps that was a good omen since I ended up with a good record of wins (around 50%) the rest of the weekend. Sue, on the other hand, had to wander off to help with the masquerade, which she had been drafted into judging. As I understand it she ended up helping to organize much of the backstage stuff.

I did, as is my wont at cons that have one, go to the masquerade. They didn't open the doors for the audience to enter until about 5 minutes past the nominal start time and were about 30 minutes late starting. Once they got going, the

audience, masquerade MC Cullen Johnson, and contestants conspired to have a good time. The puns were flying thick, both from Cullen and the audience. There were about 26 entries, but two (I think) scratched. I left before the intermission entertainment (their filk GoH was to perform) or judging results, but I understand a novice (a Skeksis from *The Dark Crystal*) won Best in Show. That was the correct choice, by the way — she pretty much blew everyone away.

I didn't really make it to any of the room parties Saturday night unless you count dropping in to the party for the Heinlein Centennial convention (KC in mid-2007) for a few moments to get a piece of chocolate and let them know the masquerade contestants were done. I mostly hung around in the lobby, playing spades, working on notes for this report, and schmoozing. The way the HI is laid out that's one of the best places to "see and be seen." Sue reportedly went off in search of the chocolate martini group once she finally escaped the masquerade judging. Eventually, I headed to bed — around 2A.

### SUNDAY

It was late when I left the hotel room Sunday morning but Sue and I managed to catch what turned out to be the very tail end of the hotel's breakfast buffet. It was almost completely depleted when we got to the restaurant but they replenished it shortly thereafter. Then, while we were working on the first course, most of it was taken back up without us noticing and before we were finished eating. Enough was left to make a full meal, though the mixture was not what either one of us would have chosen.

I didn't do a lot of specifically con stuff that day, though I did hang around in the con suite for a while. Much of the early afternoon was spent in the lobby either playing spades or just chatting. In the mid-to-late afternoon when most people were at dinner or had already left for home, we packed up and loaded the trunk of my car with the room party stuff and some personal effects that wouldn't be needed. On Saturday I had gotten the hotel to extend my reservation at the con rate through Sunday night. I thought that might not be a problem once I had checked in — though they wouldn't agree to do it over the phone before the con.

By 6-ish I was done packing and enough people were back that I could scare up a spades game while waiting on the dead dog party to start at 7P. Once that got underway, I raided them a couple of times. Over the course of the evening I got pizza, roast chicken, brownies, various snacks, and more. The latter part of the evening Weber hung around the lobby, playing cards. He was entertaining, as always. Some of the con staff also hung around, even playing spades. I did drag myself away sometime after midnight and got to bed by 1A — an improvement of sorts over the previous evenings.

Somewhere during the evening a young couple came by asking if anyone knew anything about their car, which had been broken into in the hotel parking lot. From what I could deduce, various electronics and bags of purchases at the con were visible inside and were stolen. After the fact they were told that part of the parking lot doesn't have video surveillance. While I felt sorry for the couple, I was happy I had moved my car around front during the loading process earlier that day.

### MONDAY AND WRAPUP

Monday was pretty straightforward. I was up by 9A and we got out on the road before 11A. The HI desk clerk removed the phone charges — not a big deal financially but a nice gesture. All of the group staying over had been invited to a final breakfast in the hotel restaurant at 10A but we didn't really get an early enough start for that. Instead, we stopped at an IHOP on the way out of town. The trip back was smooth. I dropped



*Partial View of Main Gaming Area at MidSouthCon*



off Sue at her house around 3P, went by a grocery store, and picked up my dog at the vet before getting home. Boy was I ready for that.

MidSouthCon is one of the largest general-interest sf cons near me, and certainly the largest con I'm particularly likely to attend outside of Worldcons or NASFiCs. The mix of people and events is a bit different — possibly wider in some ways — than the smaller cons (like Con†Stellation, LibertyCon, most DSCs, etc.) that I attend on a regular basis. The attendees skew younger, though not as much as at many of the specialized cons. There is a *huge* gaming presence. In addition to the main gaming pit I mentioned, the con dedicated four small-to-medium sized function rooms and a fairly-large slice of the ballroom to various gaming functions. They even had a separate gaming program handout that ran to 8 full-size pages and listed almost 200 events distributed over board games, miniatures, collectable card games, and role playing — and all of that doesn't even count the computer gaming. There was also a significant filk presence, a very visible furry-fandom presence, and a pretty large anime presence (including a separate anime video room in addition to a general-purpose one). Programming was hardly neglected, with almost 20 hours of children's programming in addition to four-plus tracks of general programs. Costuming — especially hall costumes — was also very prominent. Many of the hall costumes were very elaborate, especially the furry and media-oriented one (Star Wars being particularly well represented).

I won't be going back to MidSouthCon every year, but I'll certainly make it over there from time to time — especially in years (like this one) when I don't plan to go to Worldcon or NASFiC. (The extra vacation time consumed by that means I have to cut back somewhat on other conventions.) If MSC isn't one of the cons you normally go to, you should give it a try. I think you'll be pleased.

## The Job Interview: “And In The Darkness, Bound Him!”

No Need for a Ring — Chapter 4  
by PieEyedDragon

Eärendil and Elwing return midmorning of the next day. Walking stiffly in light clothing, he exudes various medicinal smells. Another man walks with them; whose features look to be a blend of theirs.

Eärendil: Good morning, Matey! Why still aboard?

Gandalf: Yes, I've been trying to convince your passenger to come with me. He's been very polite but quite firm in his resolve to wait for you. That's why I sent Elrond back to fetch you along.

Thunderbird: Yes, Captain, you left; neither granting me shore leave, nor terminating my service. I therefore had to await your return.

Eärendil: (Laughs) And a sea-lawyer, too! You have been a most trustworthy and faithful crew-m... ah... being. I disallow your contract. You are free to debark.

Thunderbird: Thank you. (slithers over onto the dock) Now, sir, you were saying?

Gandalf: Since the High Ones have replied to a request for help by sending for you; we are gathering to tell you what we need. Also, to learn more about you. It won't be a very long

walk.

Thunderbird: Don't think me a beast of burden, but I will carry the lady if she pleases; and also Captain Eärendil, since he is in some pain.

Gandalf (to the others): Galadriel is preparing a place in Bilbo's garden. He would never forgive me if he didn't get to sit in.

When we arrive at the designated area, we are met by a tall, queenly elf-woman, a smaller warrior-elf, and two ancient-looking dwarves. I learn later that the beardless one is not a dwarf, but Bilbo Baggins: the hobbit of the tale the captain was telling.

Well, I tell somewhat of my origin and reason for being. They tell a little of themselves. Gimli, the dwarf (looking a little embarrassed at my appearance) tells his thought and makes his Request.

I think it over, consulting with the confederation that is *me*. Here is the opportunity to engage in genuine combat mayhem and magic — what my professors suggested.

Thunderbird: It seems to be a just thing. If it lies within my power, I will make the attempt; as long as I can take them on separately. I will, however, need a lot more information on peoples, history, geography, climate, and so forth. This would take a lot of time, except that I am capable of multiple mind-touching to get it all at once.

The Ringwearers, Gandalf, Galadriel, and Elrond, agree; being familiar with the process.

I look toward the lady and open water-channel PIE; then to Elrond, and open air-channel EYED. Lastly to Gandalf, opening fire-channel GON.

DRA of Earth, being strongest, monitors the connections.

They look dazed as I withdraw to consider this world: it's Movers, the Moved, and the innocent Bystanders. All the Creators and their Creations.

I look Galadriel in the eye, sigh, and exclaim “*Men!*” She nods in agreement.

Elrond: But this would benefit all the free peoples, especially dwarves!

Galadriel: Son-in-Law, *she* was making a general comment on the gender.

Gimli: He is a... she?

Thunderbird: Mother was made as a weapon of war for the protection of Man. Females are more deadly. Remember Ungoliant, and Eowyn! We can also reproduce.

(The hobbit is fumbling now with writing materials.)

Thunderbird: (to Eärendil) Captain, please describe your battle with Ancalagon.

Eärendil does so, verbally. This takes a little while.

Thunderbird: Mister Baggins, please tell me about *all* your direct experiences with Smaug.

Bilbo, master storyteller, calls forth imagery of his first sight of the red dragon, the echoes of the roars, and the cunning wordplay. He tells also of the Awe and terror he felt; in such a way that the listeners feel it too. He describes the smoke and fire, and the burns he got.

I am touching his mind, the better to experience fully the imagery. I learn something significant... and *unexpected!*

When Bilbo finished, he sat back down to catch his breath, sighed peacefully, and smiled as his spirit finally departed. His *watch* had gone into overtime. Adventures never end; but someone finally showed up to relieve Bilbo Baggins, Esquire: A Journeyman Warrior-Mage who looked a great deal like a baby dragon. Me.

Gandalf: Farewell, old friend. (To the rest) He's been waiting for so very long.



Gimli: My father, Gloin, traveled with him. I was too young to go to Erebor, he said.

Thunderbird: Master dwarf, I believe that I can do this thing. I swear that I shall try, if you will help.

Gimli: *Me?* What can I do that I have not done? And can I trust you?

Thunderbird: *They* (indicating the Ringwearers) gave me quite a lot of information to work with. It was also six-score years out of date! But *you*, and your elven friend, are recent arrivals. In addition, their flavors are Fire and Air and Water. You are Earth; and would round-out the whole. I should also require the viewpoint of a dwarf; everyone sees the world differently. By touching my spirit, your doubts will be allayed.

Legolas: She *does* need our knowledge, Gimli. Think of all that has changed. You brought craftsmen from Erebor to rebuild Gondor, and established yourself as Lord of the Glittering Caves. I brought Grey Elves back to Ithilien. We've done so many things together. This will be a new adventure.

Gimli: Well, I started this, I may as well go the distance. It won't be like running halfway across Rohan, I trust.

I look toward Legolas, and open water-channel PIE as before. I look to the dwarf and open earth-channel DRA. I copy and add their knowledge and experiences to my database, and release them.

Thunderbird: Thank you. Was that so bad?

Gimli: No. It was... I have no words for it. *You* have certainly seen some amazing things!

Thunderbird: True. Now, I need to eat a load of fish and go sit in a corner for a few days; thinking.

— O — O — O —

I sit. I think. I design plans of action. I listen to the trapped voice of Smaug; endlessly repeating "Smaug's Question." [The online version of the story has an audio link here. -ED]

The sleeping Smaug had been far from helpless. His passive defense rested primarily with his *Awe*. It operated as a charm all by itself. Smaug had been subconsciously aware of something interacting with his power. That was the reason for his dreams of a small warrior. The *charm* tried to do it's job, but Bilbo had been wearing the Ruling Ring.

"And in the darkness, bind them" was at work in that dark lair. Tendrils of Smaug's essence tried to ensnare Bilbo, then and later. The Ruling Ring caught them, bound them, and kept them circling about the Ringwearer. This continued even after Smaug's death. When Bilbo gave up the Ring, the trapped bit of Smaug remained bound in his memory. It stayed there even when the Ring was destroyed. It remained until the moment that Thief Baggins died.

Whether Bilbo's extended life was due to Smaug's bound essence, or the direct Will of Eru Ilúvatar, was immaterial. Smaug was with me, now.

[Some of the above beings and situations have been suggested by the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. (But you already knew that, didn't you?)]

## Letters of Comment

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

Sheryl Birkhead  
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20 March 2006

Well... 80° three days ago, 35° now — but who's counting?

Uh... *King Kong* — don't want to see — just *know* I'd have trouble with the ending. *Wallace & Gromit* I just moved up my Netflix list so I should see that "soon." *Narnia* I saw... *Harry Potter* I saw — so not doing too badly. I *did* nominate... now to see the short listers.

Pie-Eyed — uh... any problems with sea sickness?

I'm cat sitting at the Lynches — they have cable and I have some... um... weird movie on the SF Channel. I need to concentrate on it long enough to figure out what cops and robbers movie is on the Sci-Fi Channel (and why)... naw, I'll figure out that later.

I have yet to read if *Surface* was picked up for season two. Since my TV taping is about 3 weeks behind I don't know what happened on the others (such as *Invasion*...).

(Okay, the movie is *Route 666* — but I'll only see about 1/4 of it.)

[The weather has been a tad odd here, too, highlighted by hailstorms and tornados. Fortunately there was only a trivial amount of damage in the immediate Huntsville area, but some nearby areas were not so lucky. I don't watch much sf on TV these last couple of years so I'm afraid I also have no idea whether any of the current shows have been picked up for another season. As for *King Kong*, I think you should give it a try. Yes, they changed a number of things from the original movie, but the bones were left intact. -ED]

EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC

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25 March 2006

It's a quiet Saturday night, for once, and next weekend is our big local convention in the Toronto area, Ad Astra 2006, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention of the series. With a few exceptions, I am ready (first time that's happened, hm?), so I have a little extra time to get caught up on locs. Here's one for the March *Shuttle*.

It is indeed award season. Never got to see many of the movies that received some of these awards... saw *Chronicles of Narnia*, but that was it. For some reason, *Harry Potter* was in and out of the theatres before we could get to it. I know it did great at the box office in its initial week, but it seemed to fade very quickly. Differing tastes for kids? Will the franchise survive, and movies be made for the last two books?

Hello again, PieEyed... and DraGon, as well. Hope all four of you are doing better. I had no idea that it was so difficult to pilot a ship, but if you are traversing the heavens, I can imagine that it would be. Yvonne's just about got her pilot's licence, and can very much sympathize.

Comments on the Hugos? As always, I'd like to see the final results, and see who got how many nominations, but not enough to get on the ballot. Always a bridesmaid, but never a bride... hope I did well.

Well, the weekend of March 31 to April 2 is Ad Astra. I am in charge of the information desk, and Yvonne is producing space and science programming. We have Gaylaxicon, Corflu, and L.A.con IV to work, and when those are done, we are done,

(continued on back cover)



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too. We have decided to retire after 25 years of being on the committee for so many conventions. We've done our bit, and want to get on with other things.

Take care, all, and see you next issue.

[As I type this the final day of Ad Astra is a week in the past. I hope the two of you — and all the attendees — had a good time. It's a bit out of our "market," but perhaps you could include a short review of the convention in your next LoC (or

as a separate article if you wish). I'm sure all con committees for upcoming Canadian and WSFS cons will want to don black armbands at the thought of losing you and Yvonne as potential ~~suekers~~ workers. I've been working on cons for pretty much the same length of time as you. Even though I've not worked on nearly as *many* cons as you — mostly sticking to Con+Stellation here in Huntsville with the occasional toe dipped in elsewhere — I understand the urge to retire from actively working them. I suppose some day I shall. -ED]