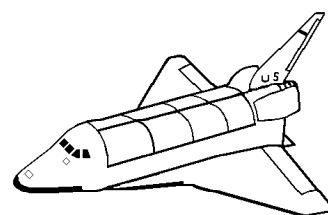


The



SHUTTLE
April 1999

The Next NASFA Meeting Will Be 17 April 1999 at the Regular Time and Location

Oyez, Oyez

The next **NASFA meeting** will be **17 April 1999** at the **regular time** (6P) and the **regular location** (room 130 of the Madison City Municipal Building).

The April program is undetermined at press time (though I've been assured there *will* be a program).

The April after-the-meeting meeting will be at Mike and Robin Ray's house.

April Concom Meeting

The next Con†Stellation XVIII concom meeting will be held at Robin and Mike Ray's house at 6:30P on Thursday 15 April 1999. This *is* an eating meeting and we'll continue our monsters food themes with "mummies" this month.

Speaking of food themes, check out some of the food from March's "cannibalistic homicidal maniacs" theme in the pictures on pages 2 and 4.

1999 Tennessee Renaissance Festival Set

The 14th annual Tennessee Renaissance Festival is scheduled to be held in May 1999. The Festival will be open Saturdays and Sundays 8–30 May plus Monday the 31st (Memorial Day) from 10A to 6P each day.

Daily prices are \$12+tax adult and \$5+tax child (5–12). Season passes are \$35+tax. Discount tickets (\$10+tax adult, \$4+tax child) can be purchased by mail thru 30 April 1999.

There is a small postage and handling fee for advance tickets.

For further information, directions, a list of special events and discounts, etc. contact the TRF at 615-395-9950, or by email at < glmf@knownet.net > or on the web at < www.medievalfaire.com >. Their mailing address is Tennessee Renaissance Festival, 2124 New Castle Road, Arrington-Triune TN 37014.

Inside this issue...

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Deadline for the May 1999 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 30 April 1999.

March Minutes

by Samuel A. Smith, different drummer

The March meeting of the North Alabama Science Fiction Association was called to order on Saturday, March 20, 1999 in Room 130 in the Madison City Municipal Building at 6:16P by President Anita Eisenberg and the Crickets. Barney continues to be the smashee of honor.

OLD BUSINESS

Randy Cleary brought stuff for last month's auction (and raised another \$4.00 to help pay down the deficit).

NEW BUSINESS

Randy Cleary has a fresh set of convention flyers.

Randy also saw "Trailer B" [for the new *Star Wars* movie] at *Wing Commander*.

Randy is looking for a group to go see *The Matrix* (Dinner and a Movie).

Mike Kennedy: A remake of *The Mummy* is coming out in May.

Sam Smith brought the remains of the Baen Books Care Package. The price of a book is a review in the *Shuttle*. There were two additional takers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We have a "Chesley Award Suggestions List," for those of you who are interested.

Fox TV will be showing "The Unreliables" a pilot for a comedy about retired superheroes. It *might* become a series.

Randy Cleary has come into possession of *Excalibur*, the letter opener of kings.

CONVENTION BUSINESS

Randy Cleary donated an illo for publications.

The Con†Stellation home page (website) got 294 hits last month (<<http://www.hsv.tis.net/~constell/constell/>>, for those of you who are interested).

The next Con Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, April 15th at 6:30P at Mike and Robin Ray's home. This will be an eating meeting, and the food theme will be "Mummy."

The meeting was adjourned at 6:36P. The program was supposed to be "World Building," which I assume they finally got around to after I had to leave (beforehand we were having Too Much Fun teasing Naomi as she went through my surplus Magic cards). The After-The-Meeting Meeting was held at Mike Kennedy's home.

NASFA Calendar

APRIL

- 01 Passover.
- 02 Good Friday
- 03 BD: Kevin Ward.
- 04 Easter.
- 14 BD: Gordon Cross.
- 15 BD: "Uncle Timmy" Bolgeo.
- 15 Con†Stellation concom meeting — Mike and Robin Ray's house.
- 16–18 Galacticon 1999 — Chattanooga TN.
- 17* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at the Madison City Municipal Building. ATMM at Robin and Mike Ray's house.
- 21 BD: Randy B. Cleary.
- 23–25 Parthecon 26 — Nashville TN.

- 26 BD: Chloe Airoidi.
- 30 BD: Mark Maxwell.
- 30–02 1999 Nebula Weekend — Pittsburgh PA.

MAY

- 07–09 Marcon 34 — Columbus OH.
- 08–09 Tennessee Renaissance Festival (TRF) opens.
- 09 Mother's Day.
- 14 BD: Debbie Hughes.
- 15* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at the Madison City Municipal Building. ATMM TBD.
- 15–16 TRF second weekend.
- 16 BD: Linda Bolgeo
- 19 BD: David O. Miller.
- 14–16 OASIS 12 — Orlando FL.
- 20 BD: Mike Glicksohn.
- 22–23 TRF third weekend.
- 27 BD: Kathy Paulk.
- 28–30 LibertyCon 13 — Chattanooga TN.
- 29–31 TRF final weekend.
- 31 Memorial Day.

JUNE

- 01 BD: Glenn Valentine.
- 02–06 SFRA 1999 — Mobile AL.
- 11 BD: Rhett Mitchell.
- 14 Flag Day.
- 19* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at the Madison City Municipal Building. ATMM TBD.
- 20 Father's Day.
- 24–27 MidWestCon 50 — Cincinnati OH.

JULY

- 01–04 Dragon*Con 1999 — Atlanta GA.
- 02 BD: Deb Stone.
- 04 Independence Day.
- 10–11 1999 J. W. Campbell Conference — University of Kansas, Lawrence KS.
- 17* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at the Madison City Municipal Building. ATMM TBD.
- 24 BD: Jay Johns.
- 29 BD: Mark Paulk.
- 30–01 Rivercon XXIV — the penultimate Rivercon — Louisville KY.

Oo

The North Alabama Science Fiction Association meets on the third Saturday of each month. (Unless there is a large nearby convention being held that weekend — in which case we usually hold the meeting on the second or fourth weekend.) The regular meeting location is room 130 of the Madison City Municipal Building. The Executive Committee meeting (if scheduled) is held at 5P. The business meeting is held at 6P. The program begins at 7P. Anyone is welcome to attend any of the meetings. There is usually an after-the-meeting meeting with directions available at the program.

At right, sliced leftovers from the long pig served at the March concom meeting. Yum, yum!



They Are the Baen of Our Existence

AW, COME ON JIM AND TONI, CAN'T YOU TAKE A JOKE?

We continue this month with more book reviews from the Baen Books care package sent to NASFA a month or so ago.

Star Child by James P. Hogan, Baen Books, May 1998, Paperback, ISBN 0-671-87878-6, \$5.99, reviewed by Jim Woosley.

Jim Hogan distinguished himself with a series of excellent high-technology novels, beginning with *Inherit the Stars* in 1977. By *The Code of the Lifemaker* in 1983, Jim was firmly on the forefront of the Libertarian SF movement, his novels populated with heroes who quietly and successfully oppose an authority which attempts to overstep its bounds and rule with an iron fist. Jim is also a good friend to Con†Stellation and a regular attendee.

Star Child is the novel-length expansion of Jim's award-winning 1979 novella, "Silver Shoes for a Princess." The novel concerns Taya, a young lady who is being brought up — alone — by a robot who calls himself Kort on an otherwise abandoned generation ship. It deals with Taya's gradual maturation, and the growing realization that, as a human, she is physically and mentally different than the robots and computers who have her care. The robots in the story also are slowly evolving, much as humanity's knowledge has grown and evolved, from some catastrophe which eliminated the human crew and left the robots in mindless control. The robots have recovered or reinvented something of benign intelligence, and actually created Taya — and laid the seeds for fifty other human children — from information of an undisclosed origin within their data banks. Taya is the princess — the sole human — of the title, and the silver shoes come from her childish attempt to disguise the difference between her ten human toes and Kort's seamless and digitless metal feet.

In the latter part of the story, Taya and the forty-six surviving children arrive at the planet Vaxis, which has been the unknown destination of the ship from the beginning. There they meet the inhabitants, encountering violence and death for the first time (at the hands of textbook authoritarians), but ultimately are heralded as saviors and gods from the sky. They become integrated with the inhabitants, sharing the technological boon of the generation ship. Eventually, they come to realize that Vaxis was once home to a large and advanced civilization, one which was apparently destroyed in a massive asteroid impact a few thousand years before. <<SPOILER WARNING>> Their further studies, ending in time with Taya's eventual death, lead them to conclude that they were descended from the pre-cataclysmic inhabitants of Vaxis, and that the evolution of the robot intelligence was an integral part of their plan for rescuing their civilization from the inevitable descent into savagery. <<END SPOILER WARNING>>

For all the rigorous scientific and political underpinnings of this novel, it is a very easy read. However, I could call the characters cute rather than engaging. Perhaps because only one segment (the first landing on Vaxis with its accompanying violence) was a real story with obvious conflict. In the others the conflict deals primarily with the relatively painless extraction of knowledge from its hiding places. Taya, as an obvious consequence of her upbringing and of having her first infatuation die in her arms from the early violence, never comes to partake of life the way the other children eventually do. This isolation makes her — the most completely drawn of the

human characters — woefully incomplete. All in all, the robots are portrayed as the more human, the more completely drawn, of the characters — a not uncommon element of Hogan's stories.

Bottom line: Not one of Hogan's best. Worth a look if you're a die-hard Hogan fan or very fond of finding humanity in your robots.

More than Honor by David Weber with David Drake and S. M. Stirling, Baen Books, January 1998, Paperback, ISBN 0-671-87857-3, \$5.99, reviewed by Jim Woosley.

Honor Harrington, the woman Naval officer whose exploits are drawn from the biography of Admiral Lord Nelson, is one of the most engaging characters in fiction today. This book, the first multi-author collection drawn from the Honor universe, provides three stories which supply background about Honor and her friends and companions.

Nimitz, Honor's tree-cat, is a quasi-telepathic native of her home planet of Sphinx. Sphinx legend, explored in creator David Weber's novella "A Beautiful Friendship," is that one of Honor's ancestors, Stephanie, the youngest of the original settlers of Sphinx, first discovered the tree-cats, their telepathy, and the affinity or bonding between select tree-cats and select humans. Easily the best, or at least the most memorable, of the stories.

Drake's "A Grand Tour" deals with the antipathy between the supposedly neutral Solarian League and Harrington's Royal Manticorian Navy, and with the factors which make people give up — then crawl back up from the depths of despair to recover their humanity. Stirling's "A Whiff of Grapeshot" deals with more immediate events, the peasants revolt in the People's Republic of Haven, enemies of the Manticorans, which propels Admiral Eleanor McQueen (re: Napoleon Bonaparte?) to the leadership of the Havenite Navy.

Bottom line: The stories are good in their own right, but a knowledge of the background (supplied in an appendix) is helpful. Definitely recommended for the die-hard Honor fan.

Komarr by Lois McMaster Bujold, Baen Books, June 1998, Hardback, 311 pages, ISBN 0-671-87877-8, \$22.00, reviewed by Jim Woosley.

Bujold has spent most of her career writing about Miles Vorkosigan of the planet Barrayar, the... er... physically challenged hero who manages to get himself in to — and out of — the most convoluted of situations, by exercising the wits which are both his other birthright and the sharpened product of the hazing he received because of his handicaps.

Miles ended the most recent book in the series, *Memory*, assigned as an Imperial Auditor by King Gregor. The eight most highly placed and autonomous officers of the Barrayar government, the Auditors speak by the King's Voice. The Komarr of the title is the planet Komarr, a captured territory being integrated into Barrayar's small but growing planetary empire. *Komarr* opens with Miles on his first assignment, investigating a collision which destroyed a solar mirror important to Komarr's terraforming program. Miles is working along with Auditor Lord Vorthys, the Imperial expert on evaluation of engineering failures.

Miles and Vorthys end up staying with Vorthys' niece, Ekaterin, and her husband Tien and son Nikolai. Immediately

Miles gets thrust into several layers of secrecy and intrigue which are compounded by the discovery that the collision was sabotage. Tien, who is mildly abusive, is trying to hide a family secret. Ekaterin has come to hate him but sees no other options under Barraryan law. And the saboteurs have penetrated into the organization managed by Tien.

While as fast paced as any of the Miles novels, the books finds time for character exploration, particularly the complex character of Ekaterin, who has encountered many of the same emotion challenges Miles has — and overcome them. Meanwhile, Miles has, well, outgrown, his various companions for one reason or another, and feels a need for a lover and, perhaps, a wife who will support him as he expresses his unique approach to bringing Barrayar into galactic culture while preserving the basis of its cultural heritage.

With Tien killed by the saboteurs about mid-novel, the outcome was entirely too obvious, but worth the wait nonetheless.

Bottom Line: Once again, aimed at Miles fans. If you've not read the previous books, go back and pick up *Brothers in Arms* and maybe *Memory* — then you can follow this with no problem.

More Than Honor by David Weber, David Drake, and S. M. Stirling, Baen Books, January 1998, Paperback, 320 pages, ISBN: 0-671-87857-3, \$5.99, reviewed by Randy B. Cleary.

Back of the Book Blurb: *In just a few short years, David Weber has shot to the forefront of science fiction with his top-selling novels of Honor Harrington, the finest starship captain in the galaxy. Now some of the top writers in science fiction are guests in Honor's universe, bringing their own celebrated skills to give homage to Honor.*

Okay, I confess. I've never read any of the Honor Harrington novels. However, I read this collection several months ago and really enjoyed it. My take on this book may not represent someone who is already a fan of the novels. I do now plan to read the other novels as a result.

The first story, "A Beautiful Friendship" by David Weber details the first bonding of a treecat with a little girl called Stephanie. I really enjoyed the two central viewpoints. I thought the writing was very good. I was very touched by the events in the story. I liked this story best of all. I rate it as an A-.

The second story, "A Grand Tour" by David Drake, spins a tale of an archaeological site of ancient aliens on an out-of-the-way world. Two military ships and their crews of different factions get involved in researching, stealing from, and protecting the artifacts found there. It was an okay story with some nice pacing and plot but nothing outstanding. I rate it as a B.

The third story, "A Whiff of Grapeshot" by S. M. Stirling, tells the story of a coup attempt among, apparently, Honor's enemies, and shows them with qualities of strength and courage while demonstrating their shortcomings also. I was not able to like the characters much however. I rate it as a B-.

The last section is "The Universe of Honor Harrington" by David Weber, and gives detailed background information for the novels. As I'm not familiar with the universe, I just skimmed this section. I plan to return to it one day after reading some of the novels. I'm sure it will be much more interesting to people already familiar with the novels. I cannot rate this yet.

So all in all, I enjoyed the three stories and they do a fine job of making me want to find out more about the Honor Harrington universe. Overall, I give the book a B+.

NASFA Receivables

by Randy B. Cleary

Here's the latest round up of things NASFA has received. This column covers the last month.

FANZINES

De Profundis, #321, Volume 1 Number 1; Editor Scott Beckstead, 11513 Burbank Boulevard, North Hollywood CA 91601, USA; 818-760-9234; < <http://www.lasfs.org> >. Hey! This LASFS club zine has a new digest style format without staples and focused on the minutes only this time.

Derogatory Reference, #92, Part 1; Arthur D. Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers NY; < hlavaty@panix.com >. This e-mailed version was a detailed report on the 20th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts.

Kronos, March 1999 and add-on, D. A. Hussey, < dah2@hotmail.com >. This e-zine is the Newsletter of the Middle Tennessee Science Fiction Society. These issues contained Parthecon (4/23-25/1999) and MidSouthCon (3/26-28/1999) information, convention listings, club doings, and upcoming event listings.

Lan's Lantern, #47, December 1998; Editor George "Lan" Laskowski, 2466 Valleyview Drive, Troy MI 48098-5317 USA; < george_laskowski@cc.cranbrook.edu >. This 64-page issue is totally focused and dedicated to Poul Anderson except for a few LoCs and an article about Bob Tucker. Mr. Laskowski would like contributions for the September 1999 issue which will focus on Gordon R. Dickson.

Memphen, #253, March 1999; Editor Greg Bridges, 141 Stonehaven Circle, Jackson TN 38305; 901-664-6730; < memphen@aol.com >; < <http://members.aol.com/memphen/mphn1.html> >. The March issue marked the change of editors with six pages of MSFA club doings, and LoCs.

OASFiS Event Horizon, Volume 12, #1, Issue 140, March 1999; Leslie R. Hammes, 4796 East Michigan Street #2, Orlando FL 32812; 407-263-5822; < michaelhammes@worldnet.att.net >. The March 6-page club zine contained club stuff, award listings, and a few illustrations.

Scavenger's Newsletter, #181, March 1998; Editor Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood, Osage City KS 66523-1329; 785-528-3538; < foxscav1@jc.net >; < <http://www.cza.com/scav/index.html> >. This 28-page issue had the latest small press listings and scroungings with a discussion of the merits of having illustrations for stories.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin, Volume 7, Number 2, January 1999; Editor Julie Wall, 470 Ridge Road, Birmingham AL 35206-2816; 205-833-8635; < jlwall@usit.com >. This 36-page issue had con reports, a history of organized fandom in Chapel Hill NC, fanzine reviews, con and club listings, illustrations, and LoCs.

MISCELLANEOUS

We received convention flyers for **Project A-Kon** (4-6 June 1999; Dallas TX) and **Marcon 34** (7-9 May 1999; Columbus OH) plus a book flyer for **Fear**, by L. Ron Hubbard.



At left, an anthropomorphically-shaped concom dessert.

Letters of Comment

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

Carlo R. DeShouten 16 March 1999
1434 Goehler
Cullman AL 35055

Greetings. I got the *Shuttle* today and I was shocked to hear Buck Coulson passed away. And I'm really sorry to hear about it. I know he's been a great contribution to the *Shuttle*. I always see his name and his comments on the newsletter. And I'm sadly going to miss him.

I remember a few years ago (and I know that it hasn't been that long) [when] I made a comment about rock concerts being banned (along with colorful metaphors on the police and management heehee) and Buck complained back about why concerts should be banned and Mike K. countered on ol' Buck. I was going to go to Birmingham last year (which I think was DeepSouthCon) so I [could] sell some stuff and hope to meet Buck and hope to complain about the issue. Unfortunately personal and transportation problems got in the way so I didn't get a chance.

Well as I said, I guess I'll always miss Buck and I always remember his name on the *Shuttle*. And to Juanita: you have my deepest sympathies and condolences.

[Buck's passing was a shock for all of us, Carlo. It will be a long time until I can put out an issue of the *Shuttle* without thinking of him as I type the LoCs. -ED]

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

Algis Budrys 18 March 1999
the unifont co.
Box 6038
Evanston IL 60204

No, of course not. Stephen Baxter, for one of quite a few, blew right by us and, as far as I know, already knew as much as he needed to know long before he took our workshop. But plenty of other now successful writers *were* transformed, in some cases after years of unsuccess. You can't really quantify it one way or the other; every individual is different. But they all participated in the Contest.

Incidentally, Martha Soukup just had a short story collection published.

[Thanks for the followup on the WOTF discussion. I have noted more than once that I'm dreadfully out of touch with the current crop of sf writers (though I've at least *heard* of many of those mentioned in the last issue). And I'm sure Lan will be interested in the news about Martha Soukup. -ED]

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

Tom Feller 26 March 1999
TomFeller@aol.com

Thanks for sending the zine.

I also received that package of books from Baen. I had the advantage in reading *Alternate Generals* of knowing enough military history to discern where the changes were made. Overall I enjoyed it very much.

I had never heard of Steven Piziks before receiving *In the Company of Mind*. It really impressed me. I will be watching for his books in the future.

Komarr is a good read. It's space opera, but at least it's good space opera.

Anita refused to use the steps at Chattacon. Of course, she has the excuse that she has bad knees as a result of high-impact aerobics years ago. I thought the book dealers had good variety. I bought two books of Samuel R. Delany's literary criticism.

In personal news, I recently learned I have diabetes. At this time, it looks like Type II, which means I will not have to take insulin. I am currently on medication to control blood sugar, have a new diet, and am being more conscientious about exercise. Obviously this will limit the food and drink I can consume at room parties.

[Sorry to hear about your newly-discovered diabetes, Tom. Hopefully it will be well controlled by the medication and diet. You'll find several more reviews from the Baen package in this issue, including another look at *Komarr* and two (count 'em two) reviews of the Honor Harrington-related collection *More than Honor*. -ED]

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

Sheryl Birkhead 27 March 1999
23629 Woodfield Road
Gaithersburg MD 20882

Buck will be greatly missed — that tough exterior he cultivated was only a facade and he was one fan most fan eds could count on for a response.

Sign — in the past I've gotten a goodie package of books pre-Hugo — so far, nothing (those were the only books in my price range!).

The new *Star Wars* movie is getting a lot of hype — if I were on-line it would be fun to see what all is showing up there. The few times I've had access to the web showed me it is a *ghreat* time sink.

[Yes, the web can eat your life. So far I have access only at work, which at least keeps me from wasting my time that way evenings and weekends. I just have to find *other* ways to waste that time. -ED]



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The NASFA Shuttle is the newsletter of the North Alabama Science Fiction Association, Inc. This is the April 1999 edition (Volume 19, Number 4). NASFA Officers for 1999: President Anita Eisenberg; Vice President Mike Kennedy; Secretary Sam Smith; Treasurer Ray Pietruszka; Program Director Mike Ray; Publicity Director Ron Lajoie. *Shuttle* Editor Mike Kennedy.

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NASFA Dues = \$15/year (Family rates available) Subscription only = \$10/year Single copy = \$1.50 each.
