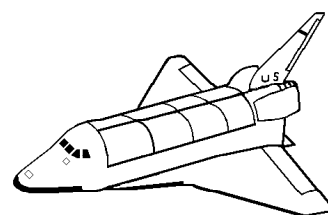


The



SHUTTLE
July 2002

*The Next NASFA Meeting Will be 20 July
2002 at the Regular Time and Location*

*Con†Stellation XXI ConCom: 6:30P Thursday
18 July 2002 at Mike and Marie's Place*

🔔 Oyez, Oyez 🔔

The next NASFA meeting will be **20 July 2002**. The meeting will be at the **regular time** (6P) and the **regular location**. Call BookMark at 256-881-3910 if you need directions.

The **July program** will be Show and Tell. Everyone is encouraged to bring in their favorite sf/fantasy/horror toys, especially Fast Food Tie-Ins. The **after-the-meeting meeting** will be at Russell McNutt's house. Don't forget the pool!

Please note that the early August meeting (one week sooner than normal due to the Jophan Family Reunion) has forced the deadline for the August issue of the *Shuttle* to be considerably earlier than usual.

A few items had to be held over for next issue because this one just got too bloody large. Unfortunately, that means you'll have to wait a while for your next dose of fiction from PieEyedDragon.

July Con†Stellation ConCom Meeting Set

The next Con†Stellation XXI will be Thursday 18 July 2002 at 6:30P at Marie McCormack and Mike Cothran's place — 4107-H5 Newson Road in Huntsville. This is an eating meeting, with the eating starting at 6:30 and the meeting proper following. The food theme is "green."

Call Mike or Marie at 256-880-8210 for directions.

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Deadline for the August 2002 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 26 July 2002.

June Minutes

by Samuel A. Smith, Unhooked

The June meeting of the North Alabama Science Fiction Association was called to order on Saturday, June 22, 2002 in the upstairs meeting room at BookMark at 6:18:13P by President Mary Ortwerth. Gavel and Crickets Present and Accounted For.

OLD BUSINESS

Randy Cleary: The NASFA Picnic is coming in August! The NASFA Auction is coming in November!

We have received a programming suggestion from Andre Norton(!) that we come up some time and visit her library.

There was much digression.

NEW BUSINESS

Randy Cleary has a copy of *Bud Plant's Incredible Catalog*.

Randy Cleary has DSC pictures!

Randy Cleary is the new SFC president!

There was some discussion of Bulk Mail permits. A motion was made to form a committee to investigate getting a bulk mail permit. The motion was seconded, voted, and passed. Mike Cothran is the committee chair. Randy Cleary and Marie McCormack volunteered to be on the committee.

Randy Cleary needs contributions to the *SFC Bulletin*!

Randy Cleary will be going to see *Minority Report* tomorrow at 4:00P at Hollywood 18 (now long since past).

CONVENTION BUSINESS

720 visitors to the Con†Stellation web site, 901 visitors to the DeepSouthCon 40 web site, 119 visitors to the NASFA web site.

It was suggested that we have children's programming at Con†Stellation.

The Art Show load out is tomorrow at Howard Camp's (now long since past).

Randy Cleary gave a DSC Art Show report: DUFF \$451, 9-11 fund \$30, NASFA \$191. 36 artists, 68 panels, 3 tables. \$3286 in sales. The leftover art has been shipped back. There was one snafu, an apology and substitute art piece is on the way. There were no death threats. There was one \$20 piece of art not picked up.

The Art Show awards were as follows:

Professional Fantasy Charles Keegan, "Into the Ruins"

Professional SF Vincent Di Fate, "Going for Infinity"

Professional Horror Debbie Hughes, "Ghost"

Amateur Fantasy Sue Thorn, "Dragon Necklace"

Amateur SF Dale D. Ziemianski, "The Prank"

Amateur Horror Dale D. Ziemianski, "Agatha"

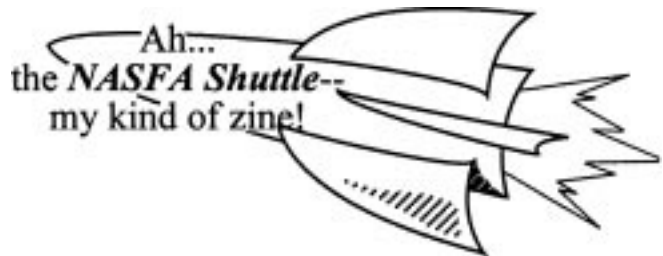
Sam Smith read "Thank You" letters from the Lynchi, Vincent Di Fate, and Frank and Millie Kalisz. Good words from Allen Steele and Adrienne Martine-Barnes were also relayed. Pat McAdams also reported (via e-mail) good words from various attendees, including Sam's favorite: This was the "best d*n DeepSouthCon since DSC 25."

Sam also noted that we managed to get a DSC picture (from the game room) into the Sunday edition of the *Huntsville Times*.

Marie McCormack announced a tentative June 27 date for the next Con†Stellation con committee meeting (said meeting was subsequently moved to July 4th).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02:55P. The program was "How I got into S.F. cons" plus a DSC post-mortem (but we didn't get around to the DSC post-mortem). Randy Cleary

announced that next month's program will be "Show and Tell S.F. Toys." The After-The-Meeting Meeting was held at Russell McNutt's house.



NASFA Calendar

JULY

- 01 Canada Day.
- 02 BD: Deb Stone.
- 04 Independence Day.
- 20* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at BookMark. ATMM at Russell McNutt's house.
- 24 BD: Jay Johns.
- 26–28 LibertyCon 16 — **CANCELLED**. This year's LibertyCon was cancelled due to a hotel fire. They will be back in 2003.
- 28 Parents' Day.
- 29 BD: Mark Paulk.

AUGUST

- 08 BD: Jim Woosley.
- 09–11 Crescent City Con XVII — New Orleans LA.
- 10* NASFA Meeting — Annual Picnic at Russell McNutt's house. **NOTE:** This is one week earlier than the usual meeting date.
- 14 BD: Edward Kenny.
- 16 BD: Zachary Mitchell.
- 16–18 Jophan Family Reunion — Birmingham AL.
- 19 BD: Ariane Mitchell.
- 21 BD: Deborah Denton.
- 29–02 ConJosé/Worldcon 60 — San José CA.
- 30–02 Dragon*Con 2002 — Atlanta GA.

SEPTEMBER

- 02 Labor Day.
- 07 Rosh Hashanah.
- 08 Grandparents' Day.
- 09 BD: Mike Cothran.
- 11 BD: Ray Pietruszka.
- 16 Yom Kippur.
- 17 Citizenship Day.
- 21* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at BookMark. ATMM TBD.
- 23 First day of Autumn.
- 26 BD: Jenna Victoria Stone.
- 29 BD: Nelda Kathleen Kennedy.

OCTOBER

- 12 BD: Columbus Day (Traditional).
- 14 BD: Columbus Day (Observed).
- 15 BD: Robert Buelow.
- 18–20 Con†Stellation XXI: Pavo — Huntsville AL.
- 24 BD: United Nations Day.
- 25 BD: Marie McCormack.

- 26* NASFA Meeting — 6P Business, 7P Program, at BookMark. ATMM TBD.
 27 BD: Gabrielle Mitchell.
 27 Daylight Saving Time ends.
 31 Halloween.
 31-03 World Fantasy Con — Minneapolis MN.

OoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

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 the upstairs meeting room at BookMark on South Memorial Parkway. The Executive Committee meeting (if scheduled) is at 5P. The business meeting is at 6P. The program is 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.

Nothing to Fear

a movie review by Jim Woosley

The Sum of All Fears, starring Ben Affleck, Morgan Freeman, James Cromwell, and Bridget Moynahan; directed by Phil Alden Robinson, screenplay by Paul Attanasio and Daniel Pyne (from the novel by Tom Clancy); produced by Tom Clancy, Stratton Leopold, and Mauce Neufeld; distributed by Paramount Pictures, 2002

[Please note: Jim sent a “Serious Spoilers Alert” along with this review. -ED]

Let me begin this by saying that Tom Clancy’s novel, *The Sum of All Fears*, is my favorite of his novels featuring (now former) CIA analyst/officer Jack Ryan.

That said, the book and the new movie (starring Ben Affleck in the role initiated by Alex Baldwin in *The Hunt for Red October* and continued by Harrison Ford in *Patriot Games* and *Clear and Present Danger*) can be summarized by the following statement:

Terrorists plot to initiate a nuclear exchange between the US and Russia by ignition of a stolen Israeli nuclear weapon on US soil, with clues pointing to Russia. The plot is foiled when CIA officer Jack Ryan learns the truth and forces the Russian president to listen to him when the American president refuses.

There ends the similarities between the book and the movie. In the movie, Ryan is a newly-minted junior analyst in the Russian section; in the book, he’s a senior case officer with a strong track record in both counterterrorism and Russia. In the movie, he’s not even married, though he is dating seriously. In the movie, the President is still Fowler, who was President at the end of *Clear and Present Danger* in the novel/movie; in the novel series, Fowler failed of reelection between novels in consequence of his illegal use of military force in *Danger*. Casting a bone to the politically incorrect intermediate novel *The Cardinal of the Kremlin*, a senior-level American spy is placed in the Kremlin in the movie; no such spy exists — or is necessary — by that point in the series of novels. And, perhaps most significantly, the conspirators in the movie are neo-Nazis with South African ties, not a small band of Arab terrorists with ties to Tehran.

In consequence of these sweeping changes — *not* of an

objective opinion of the movie — I almost walked out three times in the first half hour.

Objectively, however, I’m glad I stayed until the end. The movie was very well done, and the special effects were exceptional.

One word on the special effects. There has been a lot of Internet “buzz” in the past few days, much stimulated by the well-known pundit Matt Drudge <www.drudgereport.com>, criticizing the release of a movie showing nuclear terrorism on US soil so soon in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Of course, this buzz probably served to pump the opening week-end box office for the movie. Second, the movie probably served a decent portion of the chaos which, prior to 9/11 (the movie was in the can and approaching release in October before it was shelved in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks), would have accompanied an actual nuclear terror attack on the US, and fairly realistic portrayed the consequences of such an attack. People may disagree — but I think the movie will serve as an eye-opener of the consequences of such an event. Which may not be a bad thing at all.

On the whole: not a great movie, but a good movie and well worth a couple of hours. However, I don’t think any objective considerations will ever overcome my subjective distaste at the gross changes in the major characters.



art by Sheryl Birkhead

Mini Movie Review

by David K. Robinson

Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones, starring Hayden Christensen, Natalie Portman, Ewan McGregor, Frank Oz, Samuel L. Jackson, and Christopher Lloyd; directed by George Lucas; screenplay by George Lucas and Jonathan Hales; produced by Rick McCallum; distributed by Twentieth Century Fox

I am sure by now most of you have seen *Star Wars* so I won’t explain the plot because if you have seen it you know the plot and if you have not seen it I don’t want to spoil it for you.

Let’s begin with the plot. The plot was typical for *Star Wars*. I found the plot however to be a bit confusing — I couldn’t tell the good guys with the exception of Obi-Wan (played in a younger version by Ewan McGregor) from the bad guys...

The acting, I thought, was rather wooden. The main actors played their parts real woodenly. The special effects were about average for a *Star Wars* film. Overall it was an average effort for *Star Wars*; my rating a C+.

DeepSouthCon 40

a con review by David K. Robinson

I went to DeepSouthCon 40 on June 14–16th 2002. I really enjoyed it. I thought that Huntsville did a nice job of putting it on. First I will start with the hotel. I have stayed at this hotel before at a Con†Stellation several years ago. I thought that the hotel was really friendly. The elevator broke down during the con but it was quickly fixed. I overheard the repairman say that he elevators were 29 years old and that they had been there ever since he started working there; go figure.

I thought that the general atmosphere was real relaxed. It was a bit slower paced than I am used to and I like, but it was still a fun con. Usually when I go to a sf con the first place I go to is the dealers room. They had several books and stuff to buy. I bought the last Douglas Adams book written before he died last year at age 49. And I also bought some old out-of-print *Doctor Who* novels. I am a big *Doctor Who* fan so I bought several of them.

I thought the fans also behaved themselves. Usually when I go to a con someone acts up and makes a jerk of of themselves but to the best of my knowledge this did not happen. Thank goodness.

The room parties were fun — I went to a couple of them.

Overall I thought it was a good con, not great but good. I do plan to attend (unless something happens) the next Con†Stellation. I give this con a B+.

DeepSouthCon 40 Art Show Report

by R. B. Cleary

The DSC 40 Art Show consisted of about 563 pieces from 36 artists, displayed on 68 panels and 6 tables. The mail-in participation was from 20 artists. There were 177 pieces sold for a total of \$3,958. Thus the average sales price was \$22.36 per piece and the average total sales per artist was about \$109.94. The most sales for a single artist was \$507 and the lowest was, unfortunately, no sales. We had 45 pieces that went to the Saturday voice auction, which was well attended. We raised \$672 for various causes.

AWARDS

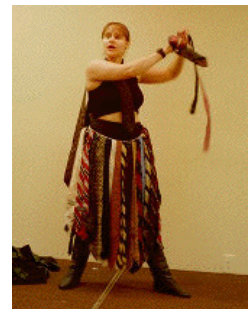
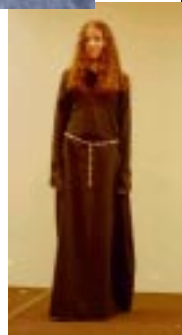
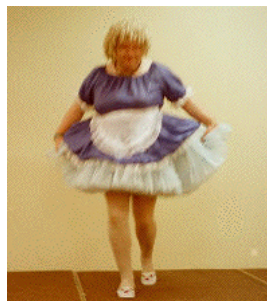
The following awards were determined by People's Choice ballots:

- Best Amateur SF Dale D. Ziemianski, *The Prank*
- Best Amateur Fantasy Sue Thorn, *Dragon Necklace*
- Best Amateur Horror Dale D. Ziemianski, *Agatha*
- Best Professional SF Vincent Di Fate, *Going for Infinity*
- Best Professional Fantasy Charles Keegan, *Into the Ruins*
- Best Professional Horror Debbie Hughes, *Ghost*

DSC 40
Award
photos by
Randy B.
Cleary



DSC 40 Masquerade
photos by Mike Stone



Attack of the Media Blitz

mixed-media reviews by Jim Woosley

Star Wars: Rogue Planet, by Greg Bear, Del Rey, Hardcover, May 2000, \$26.00, ISBN 0-345-43538-9

Star Wars: The Approaching Storm, by Alan Dean Foster, Del Rey, Hardcover, February 2002, \$26.00, ISBN 0-345-44300-4

Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones, by R. A. Salvatore, Del Rey, Hardcover, April 2002, \$26.00, ISBN 0-345-42881-1

Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones, starring Hayden Christensen, Natalie Portman, Ewan McGregor, Frank Oz, Samuel L. Jackson, and Christopher Lloyd; directed by George Lucas; screenplay by George Lucas and Jonathan Hales; produced by Rick McCallum; distributed by Twentieth Century Fox

This article may give you the impression that I'm a *Star Wars* fanatic. OK, I might be a medium-grade one, but I mostly restrict myself to books and the occasional comic. I've tried to read several of the post-*Return of the Jedi* add-ons, but I usually find myself faltering after two or three novels at a turn, even if I'm in the middle of the trilogy (some of the backlog which I might, some day, get around to working down).

However, the novels and comic books that are set in the continuity of the movies continue to draw my attention.

I'll have to warn you; spoilers are inevitably hidden amid this review. Insofar as the movie proper is concerned, I'm not too concerned about pulling punches: I suspect that everyone who wants to see the movie will have seen it by the time this comes out in the *Shuttle*. (Particularly since the early deadline for the June issue forced me to roll this back to the July issue.) If not, well, consider yourself warned.

The first two books outlined above I'll deal with briefly. They both cover aspects of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker's evolving relationship between the events of *Star Wars: Episode I: The Phantom Menace* and the beginning of *Attack of the Clones*. *Rogue Planet* deals with their mission to uncover the technological threat against the planet Zonama Sekot, the source of the fastest starships in the galaxy. The novel is told with Bear's usual craftsmanship, but is remarkable principally because it finds Anakin in a bind to which he responds with violence, leaving a subtle hook within his soul with which the Dark side begins to pull. *The Approaching Storm* is an immediate prequel to *Attack of the Clones*, covering the mission shared by Obi-Wan and Anakin which was mentioned early in the movie/novel. It is also very much worth reading, but the parts which transition most vividly into the movie are the identities of some of the conspirators leading the secessionist movement which is the centerpiece of the movie.

It has become obvious that the events leading up to the climactic battles anticipated in Episode III are relatively mundane, less a matter of "might makes right" than of "all that it takes for evil to triumph is that men of good will do nothing." It is only when the larger implications of what is happening become apparent that the events become significant. It is very clear that the Sith Lords, principally Darth Sidious/Chancellor Palpatine, are working in secret, by the subtle coercion of puppets into doing their bidding, while masking their involvement in the splintering of the Republic from the leaders of the Jedi, Yoda, and Mace Windu, with whom they have almost daily contact. Aware of the ability of the Jedi to foil his plot if they discover it too early, but knowing that he cannot defeat the

Jedi by himself, Darth Sidious is working covertly to manipulate the Senate into forming an Army capable of defeating the Jedi, and leave him as the top dog (or Emperor) when he's succeeded. Indeed, that explanation — never explicitly introduced in the movies — is the only thing that makes sense. This foundation is a measure of the detail and subtlety of Lucas's vision, of the richness of his concept. And it is an element of the critical response to this movie and perhaps a measure of its relatively poor reception that this point seems to have been missed by critics who aren't looking for subtle plot points in an action-adventure-SF flick. Though it also means that the movie doesn't stand completely on its own.

It is also significant that the Jedi serve more as a policeman on a beat, or perhaps National Guard would be a better description, than as a military force or as a detective force. That difference weighs heavily, as it is a chink in the Jedi's abilities and self-image that Darth Sidious can manipulate to his advantage.

Which finally leads us to *Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones*, both in the form of novel adaptation and of the on-screen version. Let me note that I had finished Novelization II in advance of watching *Episode II*. Also, I had read the *Time* and *TV Guide* magazine reviews, several additional on-line reviews (the only URL that stands out is Jerry Pournelle's review at his website, <www.jerrypournelle.com>), and I watched several pre-release TV interviews with the cast and crew, as well as the post-release post-mortem analyses.

So I knew all about Natalie Portman's "wooden" performance as Padme Amidala, and how Yoda saved both the day and the movie. (Jerry Pournelle's comment was the most, er, cuttingly funny: "Yoda is the only Jedi smart enough to bring guns to a gun fight. The other Jedi brought knives to a gun fight." See the comment above about the Jedi's expectations for themselves.) I know that most critics seem to think that Lucas can't direct people, only effects. (Most critics seem to have forgotten *American Graffiti*.) I know that most critics seem to think that Hayden Christensen did a professional job of portraying "bad boy" Jedi Anakin Skywalker.

I know that most critics seem to have forgotten that the *Star Wars* movies are written for the person experiencing what Dr. Asimov called "The Golden Age of Science Fiction" (the age of twelve, in case you've forgotten), and have become much more interested in the number of ingenious ways they can find to attack George Lucas than in providing a review which accurately captures the context of the movie.

As I'm sure you know, the movie deals with three underlying themes: the mostly political aspect dealing with the secessionist movement, lead by the mysterious former Jedi known as Count Dooku and by the purely commercial interests and guilds which apparently have equal voice in the Imperial senate with such state/planetary polities as Naboo and Alderaan; the growing realization by the Jedi that some agency, working in their name but unknown to them, has forced the creation of a massive Army of Clones timed to be ready just as the secessionist movement has gained enough force to represent a threat to the stability of the Republic; and, last (and almost certainly least) the budding relationship between the still-teenaged Anakin and the now only slightly older Padme.

I won't go into any long, drawn out description of the action *cum* action here. I *will* say that these themes point out directly what is wrong with the movie, in my eyes and how that contrasts with other reviewers of the movie.

First, everyone hates government bureaucracy; everyone loves valor and courage, and everyone wants democratic

governments to succeed. So there is tremendous sympathy for Padme Amidala as she fights from within to save the Republic first, then fight the bureaucracy. But I think a lot of people also believe that it takes revolution to overcome bureaucracy — people who are also afraid because revolution is usually followed by a transition period of abject tyranny. Movies about revolutions usually focus on the side that the audience wants to win. *1776*, which is completely about politics, succeeds very well. On the other hand, if this effort were completely parallel to *1776*, we would be cheering for Count Dooku and the secessionists, and the Jedi would hold the place of the Hessian mercenaries.

Certainly, Darth Sidious is a tyrant who would make Adolph Hitler, Genghis Khan, Tammerlane, and Vlad Tepes together look like Mohandas Gandhi,¹ but nobody on the good side even realizes that yet. Oh, Yoda and Windu see the Sith Lords' influence in the secessionist movement, but not even they — like the critics — realize that movement itself is only a diversion for Sidious's true purpose and method of destroying the Jedi. (Yoda, who brought the clones to the battle, is beginning to realize what they've done by the end of the movie.)

Second, the real action here is all in the political arena, and in the introduction of the Clone Army. The major reason for introducing the love story between Anakin and Padme is to set up the birth of Luke and Leia, something that probably will have a minimal effect on the third movie and is of interest principally because of what we already know from the original trilogy.² Sidious is undoubtedly hoping to corrupt Anakin but equally undoubtedly is not risking his whole plan on that possibility. Given that the assassination attempts against Padme failed, the love interest plays directly into the hand of the Sith Lords: it gave Sidious an excuse to get Padme off-planet, leaving the more easily manipulated Associate Senator Jar Jar Binks to cast the vote to form an Army of the Republic, and allowed the creation of another emotional hook on Anakin's tenuous hold on emotional stability. (I am clueless as to whether Sidious hoped for the assassination attempts to succeed or fail, or whether he simply planned to come out on top either way.³) Similarly, setting up Anakin's transition to the Dark side is significant for the third movie (how significant depending in part on whether or not Anakin is converted before or after the bulk of the Jedi have been killed) but *not* to Darth Sidious's current plans, which are obviously bearing fruit from ten years of work that Anakin had nothing to do with. As far as the *current* plot points are concerned, the romance appears to be a diversion from the main story. (The death of Anakin's mother, which is described in more detail in *Novelization II* by the way, is similarly a diversion from the main story here, which is how Darth Sidious

1. Jeanna says that I'm being kind to Sidious in this comparison.

2. Where it was controversial, much maligned, and much parodied ("Luke, I am your father").

3. Pournelle's review made the point that, had the assassins used just a few pounds more TNT during the first scene, the movie would have ended then and there — suggesting perhaps that the assassination attempt was supposed to fail. However, the novel, more than the movie, clearly portrays Chancellor Palpatine as surprised by Padme's survival. Was he planning for her to die and playing by ear when she didn't, hoping to stampede her to Anakin all along, or prepared for either eventuality?

is preparing to subdue the Jedi.) Besides, the critics also failed to recognize that Padme was someone who had been alone for too long, and had become somewhat self-important in being a former queen and current 26-year-old Senator. The "official" Padme is a bit wooden and pompous, and Anakin was teaching her to live life as something other than a near-Mythic force for good.

My third comment: This is the second *Star Wars* movie without a significant defining moment set amid a space battle. (The first, *The Empire Strikes Back*, was intriguingly enough also a middle movie, and still had a lot more in-space action sequences.) That lack probably played a role in the reduced response to the movie as well.

My bottom line: *Attack of the Clones* is two-thirds an excellent Machiavellian political/spy thriller where the bad guys are fated to win. However, the good part is told as an action/adventure story rather than a diplomatic/spy thriller; the remainder of the story is told from the perspective of two characters, minor characters in the overall scheme of things, but promoted to leads and granted romance to justify their importance in past and future sequels. I hope Lucas balances the story better next time. But I still view it as a must-see-at-least-once-event. And the books as must-reads for background on the series and the stories.

John Shirley reports in Locus Online <www.locusmag.com> that the digital version is much better than the celluloid that most of us have gotten to see, enough so that it's almost a different movie. This may also be something to consider, because the digital version is much closer to Lucas's vision.

As an aside, a few predictions about what we'll see in *Star Wars: Episode III: Subversion of the Jedi*.

- Darth Sidious will reveal himself as the Emperor Palpatine to the Jedi at a time when he will be (a) able to protect himself from their likely immediate response, and (b) use that response as public evidence of their untrustworthiness, justifying that the Clone Army be turned against them.

- We already know that all the Jedi except Yoda and Obi-Wan will be killed.

- I want to say that I believe that Padme's death will be instrumental in Anakin finally being lost to the Dark side. However, I find it hard to envision that happening in a fashion that would prevent Anakin from knowing that Luke and Leia are alive. Or rather, I find all of the explanations that I come up with either contrived or implausible in the "real world." While as Jeanna pointed out a "contrived or implausible" solution is not ruled out, particularly on the basis of some of the past plot points, it *is* unsatisfactory.

- And one final note on "bringing balance to the Force," the unexplained function which Anakin as the "Chosen One" is supposed to fulfill. In the broad, I suspect that means, or will be expected to mean, that it makes the Dark side the equal of the Light side. However, I suspect that the meaning is broader; the Jedi have suppressed emotion for generations (Spock would have been a great Jedi) to avoid manipulation by the Dark side. Balance *should* permit the Jedi to love again, as siblings and sons and daughters and lovers, not just as part of the brotherhood of men. Embracing the power of emotions in their life without embracing the seductive lure of the power of the Dark side. That seems to be the end result of all of this on the Force by the end of *Return of the Jedi* and the novelizations that follow. But there is a long, dark period, three years for us, twenty for them, before that happens.

Review Potpourri

book reviews by Jim Woosley

Oceanspace, by Allen Steele, Ace Books, 1 May 2001, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-441-00850-X (Hardcover January 2000)

I have known and respected Allen ever since he was the “bad boy” of Nashville Fandom and I was but an occasionally wayward understudy.

So I was eager for the chance to finally sit down with *Oceanspace*, last year’s novel of near future undersea exploration.

Within the skiffy community, we far too often concentrate on the frontiers of space, and focusing on technologies that are, at best, beyond the ends of known physics, and which may ultimately prove to be in the realm of fantasy (e.g., faster-than-light travel, time travel, other universes). Allen has spun an engaging story of an exploration of a new frontier much closer to home, with its own rules and consequences of failure, but with core technologies derivable from today’s state of the art.

The site of the story is Tethys, a commercial undersea research station moored in 330 feet of water off the Florida coast, near the edge of the continental shelf. Tethys is principally concerned with the demonstration of technologies for the recovery of the manganese nodules known to form on the ocean floor, and for the recovery and examination of marine microorganisms that can be exploited via genetic engineering, with particular emphasis on the industrial applications of organisms recovered from the superheated volcanic vents on the ocean floor.

Against this setting are Peter and Judy Lipscomb; he is a deep submersible test pilot, and she’s a marine biologist involved in the biological aspects of the project; Andie, Peter’s niece, reluctantly sent to Tethys (expecting a Florida beach) to escape her parents final confrontation in divorce court; Charles Toussaint, their former Ph.D. mentor, now working for Tethys and carrying a dark secret which sees a foiled kidnapping attempt early in the novel; and last, and very probably least, Leslie Sun, a magazine reporter who is attempting to seduce her way into an expose of all things wrong about Tethys.

From these elements, Allen assembles a tight little thriller with a few surprises, but also with most of the elements one finds in a lot of ocean-based SF. The known science is very well done, the unknown science is titillating but never completely resolved, and the action sequences and characterizations are engaging.

Very definitely recommended.

Passage, by Connie Willis, Bantam, 2 January 2002, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-553-58051-5 (Hardcover May 2001)

What are Near Death Experiences (NDEs)?

Could they be, as they often appear, the first manifestations of contact with a supernatural afterlife? The development of nascent psychic powers by the dying brain, which sometimes, somehow survive when the person survives?

Or is the explanation more mechanistic, more prosaic? Could they be the brain, creating images during death to make it easier to accept? Or a poorly understood attempt by the brain to recognize the finality of death?

Or the brain’s last-ditch attempt, using every electrochemical trick in its book, to get the dying body restarted, and the attempts of the consciousness to make sense of the resulting confusion of images?

Or, could they be a combination of two or more of the

above?

Dr. Joanna Landers is a psychologist who wants to know, and who has developed a rigorous method of questioning persons who have experienced NDEs to try to separate mechanistic from supernatural explanations. Dr. Richard Wright is a physician who has, by accident, learned that a new diagnostic and research tool called a RIPT scan, which reports neurotransmitter activity in the brain, captures an identical pattern of activity in persons experiencing NDEs and those on a new therapeutic drug called dithetamine. He hopes to use tests with this drug to prove that NDEs are the brain’s attempt to restart the dying body and to find a way to manipulate them to help people recover after almost dying.

Richard and Joanna come together at a hypothetical and highly dysfunctional Denver hospital called Mercy General to test his hypothesis. Helping them are Vielle, Joanne’s best friend, the head nurse in an ER turned into a war zone because of the violent responses to a new street drug called rogue; Kit, the niece of Joanna’s high school English teacher, called into the fray because her uncle has developed Alzheimers; Mr. Wojakowski, a Navy veteran whose stories of the *Yorktown* have a ring of truth amid the inconsistencies; and last, but not least, Maisie, a nine year old cardiac patient whose fear of her own death has translated into a fascination with disaster stories. Their nemesis is Mr. Mandrake, author of a highly successful book touting NDEs as contacts with the supernatural, who ruins attempts to find the real basis of NDEs by leading every patient who experiences one to believing in a story which will make it into his next book.

Quickly learning that most potential test subjects for the research study have either been contaminated by Mandrake or have their own problems or beliefs making them unsuitable for the study, Joanna volunteers to become a test subject and report her own simulated NDEs. Her first few NDEs resolve into what appears to be an experience on the *Titanic*, after it hit the iceberg. She is convinced that the reason why she sees the *Titanic* is a clue to the origins of NDEs. Richard is afraid that she’s buying into supernatural explanations, which drives her into an obsession to find the clue that will show her where they come from. She knows the clue is somehow tied to something her high school English teacher said in class, which is how Kit becomes involved, and Maisie offers a tremendous amount of help due to her own interest in disasters and her ability to manipulate the hospital staff into being her arms and ears from her sickbed.

Much of the book is a kaleidoscope of images as Joanna undergoes simulated NDEs herself, transcribes real and simulated NDEs for hospital patients, tries to find the origins of her NDEs in studying the *Titanic*, races back and forth across a hospital half of whose corridors and stairwells seem to be closed for maintenance, tries to avoid Mandrake and some of his more outspoken “patients,” and worries that Vielle will be shot by an emergency room patient on rogue.

A kaleidoscope, but not scattered. The reader is drawn along from the first moment until the ultimately inevitable conclusion. I’ll give one hint; the novel is 780 pages long, and you should plan to read the last 220 in one session if at all possible. (I lost a couple of hours of sleep last night to do that.) I do have a couple of very minor quibbles. First, Richard and Joanna always refer to the simulated NDEs as NDEs; I suspect that has something to do with their inability to find interested volunteers for their research. Second, the RIPT scan is defined only in negatives; it works as a plot device, but it doesn’t make sense as a practical medical research tool. More’s the pity.

Otherwise, the science seems to be excellently done, from a professional with a lay interest in and knowledge of medical research.

And if you like that sort of thing, the chapter headings are quotes of the last words of a number of famous and less famous personages. For a trivia buff, they're worth the price of admission by themselves.

The Philosophical Strangler, by Eric Flint, Baen, March 2002, Paperback, \$7.99. ISBN 0-743-43541-9 (Hardcover May 2001)

I knew I was in trouble when I ran into the living room and read selections from one chapter to Jeanna to get to the punchline at the end. And then, adding insult to injury, I laughed so hard I almost fell out of the chair a couple of chapters later.

Greyboar is the greatest professional strangler of the city of New Sfinctr, a combination of his overwhelming size — particularly his hands — and skills honed as an apprentice butcher. Greyboar also has an intense interest in philosophy, which flared when he was hired to strangle a visiting potentate who had studied the philosophy of entropy. Ignace, a red-haired midget and Greyboar's best friend since they and Greyboar's feared sister Gwendolyn were orphans on the street together, acts as his agent. Together, Greyboar and Ignace move along the unlikely inhabitants of New Sfinctr's thief's quarter, including such characters as Schrodinger's Cat, Greyboar's girlfriend, who exhibits a, shall we say, random yet effective fighting style and aversion to boxes; Jenny and Angela, Ignace's girlfriends with all that entails; Bennie the artist who has a delicious sense of vengeance; and the Abbes Hildegarde, who has been excommunicated (not that it bothers her, she only wishes God would send her letters written in ink on regular paper instead of in words of eternal flame on stone).

Trying to make sense of the twisted plot is beyond the scope of this book review. Inviting you to give your funnybone a workout and do it yourself, however, is definitely in scope.

Just let it be said that, despite his profession, Greyboar has a heart of gold. So does Ignace, though his is a bit crusted. However, every religious official in the city is on the take, or on the lookout for a pleasant evening's entertainment by beautiful women, or both. Every secular official, well, pretty much the same. The Merchant Princes are afraid that their heirs are unworthy so they change their wills to leave their estates to the only heirs who had the gumption to hire Greyboar to take him out, instead of the other way around. (When the estate settlement got thrown into court — well, Greyboar's response is what caused me to fall out of my chair laughing, and Jeanna followed suit when I told it to her.)

Eric Flint takes on and ruptures with laughter all the sacred cows: religion, politics, the legal system, business, drinking ale, music composition, painting, and union activism. Not for the easily offended or faint of heart, but definitely for everyone who has a sense of humor.

Convergence: Book One of The Blending, by Sharon Green, Eos/Avon/Harper Collins, 1996, Paperback, \$6.50, ISBN 0-380-78414-9

Competitions: Book Two of the Blending, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 1997, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-380-78415-7

Challenges: Book Three of the Blending, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 1998, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-380-78809-8

Betrays: Book Four of the Blending, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 1999, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-380-78810-1

Prophecy: Book Five of the Blending, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 1999, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-380-78811-X

Intrigues: Book One of the Blending Enthroned, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 2000, Paperback, \$6.50, ISBN 0-380-81293-2

Deceptions: Book Two of the Blending Enthroned, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 2001, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-380-81294-0

Destiny: Book Three of the Blending Enthroned, by Sharon Green, Harper Collins/Avon/Eos, 2002, Paperback, \$6.99, ISBN 0-380-81295-9

Note that this review was written in segments: first, after reading the first book; then the balance of the series.

I had not had the opportunity to become aware of Sharon Green and her writings until she graced Con+Stellation with her presence a couple of years ago and we made her very charming acquaintance. I've now had the opportunity to peruse *Convergence*, the first novel in a series called THE BLENDING (in all caps), and find that novel captures her charm quite well.

The world (not named) of The Blending is a world ruled by magic and magicians; elemental magic, as represented by the elements of Earth, Water, Air, and Fire. With a difference: for completeness, Spirit (read: empathy) has been added as an element. A Blending is a cooperative team of workers sharing different aspects, and THE BLENDING is the chief blending of the land, combining all five aspects.

This is all comparatively recent history, within the last few hundred years. Not long ago in the history of the world, an evil Blending of Four, lacking spirit, ruled with cruelty, until they were dispelled by the first five-fold Blending. These Five, recognizing the potential for the future resurgence of a Four-fold power (or actual reincarnation of the original Four), established a system for assuring that the strongest five-fold Blending in each generation would come together to stand against the Four or their followers, including a system of trials designed to assure that only the strongest would pass or even survive and would be thrown together. Even if the individuals, in the hubris of their individual powers, had other plans for themselves.

And so come together the five on whom the first novel focuses (presumed, I guess, to become the ruling blending of their generation, though that is far from assured at the end of the first novel). Each comes with a power, a personality (and often background) consistent with that power, and with a great handicap. Lorand, the Earth mage, solid and strong, comes from a farming background and must turn his back on his family and his best friend, a lesser mage who blames his failings on Lorand. Tamrissa, the Fire mage, temperamental but a fierce ally, comes insecure from an abusive marriage and parents who wish to force her into another for their business gain. Clarion, the Air mage, has the flighty hauteur of a self-important minor noble, and the most overprotective mother ever described in fiction. Vallant, the Water mage, wishes nothing more than to return to his beloved sea and continue to serve his merchant family. And last, but far from least, Jovvi the Spirit mage, who had parlayed her youthful poverty into a successful career as a courtesan, and who wishes to use the freedom of her magic to escape her former Madame and establish her own profitable House.

Each is brought to their Empire's capital of Gan Garee to participate in a series of tests of their magical ability, continuing into competitions to determine the strongest individual mages and the strongest Blendings to face the Ruling Blending to become their successor. All are troubled to find that the first test is a life-or-death ordeal, tailored to their powers, and designed to separate the true candidates for High mage from their lesser compatriots, the Middle mages. None know, at first, that the test has a fatality rate of over 80% for High mages, but even if they did, they were prevented by law from either protest or escape. And left with a question: is assuring that the test is this tough a necessity laid down by the first Five-fold Blending or a subterfuge of the nobility to eliminate potential challengers for their positions and power? After all, who believes the old prophecies of the reemergence of the Four?

The first book ends as our heroes have completed their basic tests and are ready to begin the Competition phase, on the morning of the sixth day of their arrival in Gan Garee. Far from a point of resolution, the last sentence is a teasing invite to come along and see what is next. It also finds the beginning of relationships between our Five heroes — relationships of respect, burgeoning love, and at the same time insecurity due to their differences, which may be manipulated to tear their nascent blending apart.

This series, perhaps more than most, has turned out to be a single novel told in five volumes. I have only the first one here, a lack that I shall rush to rectify. (PS: I called BookMark the day after writing the above and ordered them.)

One month later, I've purchased and read the balance of the series (and the follow-up series, the Blending Enthroned). While I don't want to do more to spoil your enjoyment of the series, I did want to add a few notes about the rest of the books.

The second book introduces a second Blending of spoiled young nobles who have been put together as a part of the "noble" challengers to win the throne of the Blending. Two of them are self-important brats, two have had extreme emotional responses to severe parental abuse, and the last one appears to be a decent sort. Led by one who is power-hungry and arguable insane, they scheme to win the throne, although their superiors among the nobility are backing another Blending. Their schemes play an important role in what happens in the balance of the novels. It sometimes get a bit confusing between nobles who are killed "officially" by their Blending, nobles and despised relatives who are killed "unofficially" by one or more members of their Blending, nobles who are conspiring against their "officially seated" Blending, nobles who are conspiring against our heroes "peasant Blending," the "sanctioned" peasant conspiracy against the ruling nobles, and freelance outlaws and conspirators. Not to mention the official but not publicly acknowledged war waged against their neighboring countries, and the response of those countries, which begins to threaten the peace and safety of the entire Empire.

Our heroes and villains don't get to show the formation of Blendings until late in the third novel. The Blending proves to be an integration of minds as well as of magical ability and reminded me quite strongly of the UNIT formed by the mental merging of the Children of the Lens. Knowing my reverence of E. E. "Doc" Smith, that speaks volumes of my feelings for the stories.¹ The cliffhanger at the end of the third novel was half to-be-expected — a natural occurrence given that the fourth book was titled *Betrayal* — and half so surprising that it

1. One can even draw reasonable correspondences: Kit = Jovvi, Kat = Lorand, Kar = Rion, Cam = Vallant, Con = Tamrissa.

dragged me immediately into the fourth novel, so much so that I read 80% or more of it before going to sleep that night. (And had to go to work on five hours sleep, which lead to the interesting early-evening experience of moments of fugue alternating scenes involving our heroes and thoughts of chemical propellant thermochemistry...)

During the first novel, a lady named Naran is introduced who develops a relationship with Rion, the Air Magician. As the novels progress, she develops a stronger role, first as Rion's lover, and later as a friend, confidant, and advisor of all five.

Given that the book jacket copy reveals that our heroes are destined to rule, I can't say that it would be much of a surprise to say that that event occurs by the end of *Prophecy*. However, there *are* surprises galore to be dealt with. Including a scene — you'll probably figure out which one when you get there — which reminded me strongly of *Mentor of Arisia* and the Children of the Lens meeting the Second Foundation. And some fundamental questions about the nature of prophecy that sets the stage for the events of the second series.

All I will say about the second series is that the story involves the continued resolution of the wars initiated by the nobles of the Empire against their two neighboring countries, while our heroes and their associates work to establish a free society on more libertarian principles amid plots by the surviving nobles to attempt to return to rule. The third novel of the Blending Enthroned series is fast paced, dropping several of the subplots initiated in the first two books to bring a resolution and apparent end to the story line. The high, "I can't put this down now" level of the writing continues, and Sharon is definitely moving into the top ten of my list of five favorite all-time authors. (Never mind...) The only problem I see is that it is impossible to read eight novels in one sitting (while eating, sleeping, taking care of the kids and dog, and holding down a job). The only technical "quibble" is that questions of magical backlash (there should be, in a self-consistent magical system, some mechanism which corresponds to the second law of thermodynamics, as exemplified by the *rewah* of Holly Lisle's Maitlan novels, Rick Cooke's *Wiz* novels, Larry Niven's stories of the Warlock, and most amusingly by Harry Turtledove's *Case of the Toxic Spell Dump*) are completely ignored. There is only power, pure and simple, which apparently can be used without consequence and without running out.

Bottom line, in the immortal words of Spider Robinson, if you have your first Sharon Green novel to look forward too, you are one lucky child of a canine. (OK, Spider may have phrased it a little differently... but he did spend time debating the appropriate non-gender specific wording of the equivalent phrase.)² Why are you reading this review when you can order the books from your friendly neighborhood bookstore (shameless plug for BookMark: Hello, Marie and Pat) and read them for yourself? And I hope that there is a new series in the offing.

2. In the introduction to *The Best of All Possible Worlds*, edited by Spider Robinson, Ace Books, 1982, currently out of print and an anthology that, as Spider says in the introduction, lives up to its name. It features what Spider considered the best then-underanthologized stories by Larry Niven ("Inconstant Moon"), William Goldman ("The Duel on the Cliffs of Insanity" from *The Princess Bride*), and Robert A. Heinlein ("The Man Who Traveled in Elephants"), among others, together with similar "favorites" by those and the other selected authors, including Spider's incomparable translation of Heinlein's selected story, "Our Lady's Juggler" by Anatole France.

Letters of Comment

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Lloyd Penney
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9 June 2002

Hello all... I have the June issue, and here's some commentary. Time just won't allow for anything more...

May... the anticipation of the few weeks before the big convention in town is a familiar feeling to me. Yvonne and I were on the Ad Astra committee in Toronto for 20 years, and sure, the anticipation lessens as time goes on, but it's the same thrill to see if your efforts will pay off the same way they did in past years. Yvonne and I are semi-retired from convention management now, and we might dabble here and there to keep our hands in.

I would like to get in touch with Randy Cleary to ask him about some artwork. I'm in charge of producing the badges for this year's Ditto in Toronto in October, and I'd like to get some fillos to actually print on the badges.

Thank you for marking my birthday in the Calendar! That weekend was a great time, and as I usually do, I ate far too much in one of my favorite restaurants.

Are their aliens among us? Of course there are. How else could we explain folks like RuPaul and Dame Edna Everage? Bill Gates and Dan Quayle? Dennis Rodman and the Blue Man Group? One of the scenes of *Men in Black* showed us the identities of many aliens on earth; I considered that a public service announcement! That movie was a documentary, and *MIB2* will be released shortly.

I hope lots of people are looking forward to attending Torcon 3, and so am I. Besides the website listed, I'd recommend that you also check the con's home site of <www.torcon3.on.ca>.

One week to go to DSC 40. I've been in the south for two Worldcons, Atlanta in 1986 and New Orleans in 1988, great times both. I'd like nothing better than to come down again for a visit for a southern con.

We never saw the *TV Guide* special publication you mention. In Canada, *TV Guide* is published, but is owned by a different company. In 1995, *TV Guide Canada* did publish a special book called *Farewell to ST:TNG*, which I contributed to.

PieEyedDragon is in a deadly mood, I see... didn't get your morning coffee, I suspect. Or did someone do something nasty in your corn flakes? Hope you're in a better mood for some more adventures.

Harry Warner asks where John Hertz is on the Hugo ballot... I would definitely agree that John should be there. He is very erudite, and produces both quality and quantity. I gather he usually places well, usually about eighth or ninth places in balloting, but of course, that's off the ballot. Why he's not more popular as a fan writer, I don't know.

And that's about all I can comment on right now. Coming up in about a month is the biggest convention on the local fan calendar in terms of attendance, Toronto Trek 16. It's on the July 4th weekend to try to attract more and more American fans to come up and have more fun with the cheaper Canadian dollar. Last month, the annual animé convention, Animé North, attracted 3000 people; now to see if Toronto Trek can meet and beat that figure.

Take care, all, and see you next month. I hope you all had a great time at the DSC.

[I've been feeling rather long in the tooth lately, at least as regards con running, though I let myself get talked into standing for 2003 con chair for our local con. If I'm a very good boy perhaps I'll be rewarded by having that be my last one. I believe I passed your contact request along to Randy when I received your email, if not I suspect he'll pick up on it when he reads this issue. I believe the Torcon website I mentioned <2003.worldcon.org> is an alias for <www.torcon3.on.ca>, and the former is a more "general" address in the sense that <www.worldcon.org> corrals a lot of info on worldcons (past, sitting, and bids). I personally think you missed a great opportunity to come to a southern con by missing DSC 40. While not perfect (what con is?) I think we pulled off a really fine regional con. Of course, we'd welcome you at our annual Con†Stellation some year, too. -ED]

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Ruth Shields
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12 July 2002

It has been a while since I wrote any locs, I've been gaffiating for months now. I seem to be emerging from the distraction of other activities, however, and looking over my stack of zines (read and unread) I have a lot from you so I wanted to let you know that I'm still here. I read every issue of the *Shuttle*, and appreciate your keeping us on the mailing list.

Do you want some fillos? I've been getting back to drawing and plan to send some out once I get a few collected. Let me know if you are interested.

You've been editing the *Shuttle* for a long time now, and you continue to put together a fine, timely clubzine — you're to be congratulated. Having been a clubzine editor, I know how difficult it can sometimes be to persuade people to contribute material. Your combination of news, reviews, and other features is always interesting. Clubzines are neglected by those who nominate for awards, but many of us appreciate your work.

I'll try to write more often!

[Thanks for the good words on the *Shuttle*. It is a lot of work to put out monthly so it's nice to hear that some people appreciate it. Sure, I'd love to have some of your art. I freely admit to not working as hard as I could to include art in each issue — it's often easier to (electronically) cut and paste a photo or book cover already available in electronic form. If you do send art, I can take it either as paper copies (as long as it will scan and print reasonably well) or most computer file formats. -ED]

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Sheryl Birkhead
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Gaithersburg MD 20882

12 June 2002

By the time you get this, DSC/FH will be a fond memory — hope a good time was had by all!

I wanted to be sure to get at least a few very simple pieces off to you for sure this time! I am staying super simple so you can (I hope!) merely scan. Then, with any luck, I can get things a bit more complicated as I go until you say — whoa — that had to be cut and pasted! I already know to stay away from the gradients that look so cool on the laser printer, but lose integrity...

Hmm — the Lambda awards. I have never really noticed

any overt gay leanings in sf so to speak, I guess one takes the *unusual* a bit more for the usual as long as it fits the story line. The closest I can remember that *almost* fits is the hermaphrodite... uh Bel(?)... in the Vorkosigan series. Um, never mind. I see a bit after this the newest Bujold book is reviewed and (aha, there is the name!) *Bel Thorne* pops up again. But, I see a spoiler alert, so I will stop there. I always will buy the *Miles* books, so I will wait to read what happens.

The PieEyedDragon goes out for another spin!

I hope that many of the *Shuttle* readers voted in the TAFF and DUFF races — always nice to support a fannish cause!

My thanks to Harry for his kind words. I agree that John Hertz is a fine fanwriter, but I have not seen his works in many places. *But*, I also have to agree with Harry that I did not (and still don't for that matter) know who two of those nominated for fan writer actually are! True, I will find out before I vote, but right now...

Sigh, I see the membership for DSC/FH is \$40 this year... guess I wasn't paying attention all these years as the fees rose — natural of course, but I just hadn't noticed!

[There's no doubt the cost of con memberships have gone up, but I think they still represent good value for money. A quick trip to the Ticketmaster web site found concerts in this area ranging in price from \$12.50 to \$55 for the cheapest tickets, and that for a few hours. Of course, at a con you are more responsible for "making your own fun," but I tend to think that's a good thing. I appreciate the illos you sent — I've already scanned them in and will try to work in one or more this issue. -ED]

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Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
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13 June 2002

The June *Shuttle* has a gratifying amount of reading matter, most of it intensely interesting to me.

Every time I see something in a fanzine about Gwyneth Jones, I feel mixed up. That's because I know that name as the possession of a fine operatic soprano from England who frequently appeared in television operas through the 1960s and 1970s. She was Brunnhilde, for instance, in the controversial Bayreuth production of Wagner's Ring operas that were televised in the United States on public television. I don't think I was completely sure that the singer and the writer are different people until I saw this little picture in the *Shuttle*.

I've read several of the Miles books by Lois McMaster Bujold. I've enjoyed most of them immensely, particularly *A Civil Campaign*. So I tell myself I must look closely for the volumes I've missed when I'm at thrift shops but I don't feel too bad when I fail to find them. I want to know everything that has happened but I resent the fact that they're so long and will prevent or delay my reading a lot of other books. I'm not sure that a comparison of this writer with Shakespeare is valid because we have very little prose written by Shakespeare. More to the point might be a comparison with Balzac, whose staggering output of novels Lois seems certain to match if she stays healthy.

Randy's fanzine reviews are useful (after all, I don't receive all the fanzines published so I like to know about all of them). But I do feel that the use of the past tense is a bit jarring, as if the reviewer had cremated each issue before writing about it.

We should honor the Mythopoeic Awards. Their existence seems to prove that Harry Potter books aren't going to win each and every honor in the fantasy field every year. (Did I tell you I found Harry Potter in an Ellery Queen mystery story, now in middle age, having become a rather stupid and unpleasant adult after all those early adventures?)

[Yes, I believe you mentioned the Ellery Queen version of Harry Potter before, Harry. I have so far avoided being sucked in to the whole Potter phenomenon, either in print or celluloid form. I suppose I'll see the movie eventually when someone feels they just have to share their DVD copy with me. You present a specific example of a general tradeoff — is it "better" to read/watch/experience lots of relatively-short items or a lesser number of longer pieces? The answer, it seems to me, depends on both individual taste and the quality of the items in question. -ED]

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Andrew I. Porter
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14 June 2002

Thought I'd drop you a line to note that the listing for *Science Fiction Chronicle* on page 7 of the June *Shuttle* is seriously flawed.

The address, phone, and e-mail are for me, and I'm just the news editor now — I sold the mag over two years ago. Correct listing should be DNA Publications, Inc., P. O. Box 2988, Radford VA 24143-2988, (540) 763-2925; <sfchronicle@dnapublications.com>; <www.dnapublications.com/sfc>. I don't have anything to do with subscriptions, for example; all that is handled by the publisher, Warren Lapine.

Thanks for sending the zine to me; I try to pull news out to use in *SFC*. The worst thing about doing *SFC*'s news is doing obituaries of my friends. The best thing is, uh... hmmm...

Have you noticed how much Post Office box prices are going up the end of June? The *SFC* box will go from \$250 a year to \$410. So I expect I'll close Box 2730 in Brooklyn, sometime next year.

[I passed the address info on to Randy for his zine reviews. I appreciate your comment about pulling the occasional news item out of the *Shuttle*, though we're hardly a "breaking news" type of publication. I know nothing about our Post Office box prices; our Secretary normally picks up the mail and our Treasurer handles the payments. I don't even use that post office branch to mail the *Shuttle* since I go to the one nearest my office to do the monthly mailing. (That was true even when we mailed bulk rate some years ago as the Huntsville Bulk Mail Acceptance Unit is at that same branch.) -ED]

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Carlo R. DeShouten
<strangemage57@hotmail.com>

18 June 2002

My first con loc in about 6 months. I arrived at the hotel by driving my first car for the first time which I got me a Chevy Lumina '95. Registration was way behind schedule due to printer problems. I had to wait for an hour to get my badge.

Mostly the con was a relaxacon. Besides the panel discussions and scientific talks, there was hardly anything exciting going on. Mostly the small room for my music room was there

(continued on back cover)



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The NASFA Shuttle is the newsletter of the North Alabama Science Fiction Association, Inc. This is the July 2002 edition (Volume 22, Number 7). NASFA Officers for 2002: President Mary Ortwerth; Vice President Mike Kennedy; Secretary Sam Smith; Treasurer Ray Pietruszka; Program Director Randy Cleary; Publicity Director Karen Hopkins. *Shuttle* Editor Mike Kennedy.

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(continued from page 11)

even though I got “chased” by card tournaments but it wasn’t the same with the usual crowds.

The dealer’s room was quite small and not as big long ago.

The only thing exciting was the gaming room and the video room which they showed lots of Japanime videos so I hung around there. The art show was interesting which I “threateningly” (joke) bought me a hologram sunglasses worth \$13.00.

And the masquerade. In tribute of *Married...with Children*, my act was DSC:Mortal Combat and my challenger was Big Jim Woosley. And even though we did fought slow motion, the act pretty well sucked. Although we did win for best Andre Norton’s surrealistic fighting (?) next time it will be hardcore. There was also lots of children in costumes as well.

Plus the anime group dressed up. The best costume was the fly warrior which I like the mask. I didn’t stayed at the hotel so I left for home each night close to midnight. In short, the convention has it’s ups and downs and I wish they improved a lot better.

[I have to seriously disagree with your characterization of DSC 40 as a relaxicon, Carlo. I believe it was quite the opposite, in fact. No, we didn’t have eight tracks of programming or 2000 people in attendance (thank ghod for both of those!) but just what feature of a “full” con was it missing? Well, at least you enjoyed yourself somewhat. The DSC crowd does have a somewhat different “vibe” than Con†Stellation’s, averaging somewhat older and having been in fandom for much longer on average, so perhaps that’s what you perceived. -ED]