

SIGMA

The Newsletter of PARSEC April 2016 Issue 362

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PARSEC MEETING April 9 , 2016





Presidents Column

Amusement Parks and Science Fiction

Friends and Neighbors, brothers and sisters, laities and gentlenuns, geeks and freaks, watch as I stretch an analogy so thin as to warp the very fabric of my universe of discourse.

Amusement parks, until very recently, were crashing whirling smashing mechanical monuments to an industrial revolution. So, too, began science fiction. Clockwork and mechanical driven, just like the internal motion of gears and the Zeitgeist of the turn to the mid 20th Century.

Kennywood Park, here in Pittsburgh, began as a trolley park. Street cars had no riders on the weekends. Folks amused themselves by working at the mill down the street or staring at the walls. Revenues for the newly formed Traction Companies dropped, but the electricity kept a-hummin'. A distant grove, down the Mon River, was purchased and planted as a recreational destination. Made people happy. Made the streetcar companies even happier. The park was there for the picnic. The park was there for the pavilions and groves. The park was there for music and dancing. After a time, the park was there for the thrilling rides.

Around the same era, scientific romance turned to science fiction turned to science fiction in a synapse of lightning sparks pumped from clacking relays. Intergalactic travel exceeding the speed of thought. Buzzing spacecraft sporting gauges, toggles, and chrome steel vizor ports, battling with tractor and presser beams across a forgiving aether. The pulp between the covers was alive and crackling in more ways that Colin Clive could image. What did it matter if Arcot, Morey, and Wade would snuff a whole ocean world because of one dangerous encounter with a single giant inimical to humans monster reptile. Or if Richard Seaton and Marc Duquesne could cause all the suns in a galaxy to go nova. Trillions of deaths had a definite impact on evil nasty Chlorian societal dreams. Through the pages of dime novels and pulp magazines, Progress through Invention. In Flushing Meadow, 1939, the Trylon and Perisphere. A

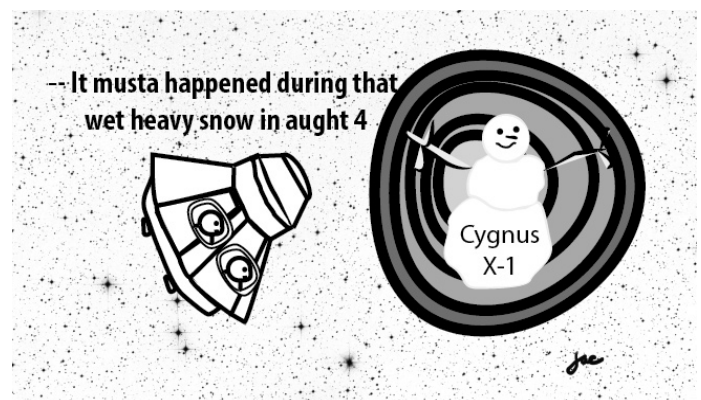
dazzling vision of our future

It is appropriate that a trip to Kennywood at one time involved a voyage deep into the heart of the Monongahela belching valley of steel. Pittsburgh is a smoky old town. Hell with the lid off. A journey to the park was an Odyssean, Aenean, or Orphean descent into the underworld with a return to wonder at the end of the voyage. It is appropriate that the first World Science Fiction Convention was held in the shadow of the 1939 New York World's Fair in the New Deal years directly before the world's plunge into a nightmare of conflagration.

In Flushing Meadow, there are two round granite markers that mark two time capsules buried at the beginning of the 1939 World's Fair not to be opened for 5,000 years, Who of us hasn't made that trip? What did we find? Deterioration? Or a better world of marvelous invention and social justice? In 1926 Science Fiction, with the first copy of Amazing Stories magazine, revealed to us the contents of those capsules five millennia hence. Time travel revealed.

The amusement park gives us a visceral experience that can be perilous without being dangerous. Science Fiction provides an intellectual experience from which there is no return.

Read my blog each Sunday at <http://parsec-sff.org/blog/category/presidents-blog/>



From the Editors



CONFESSIONS OF A FANDOM LATE BLOOMER

Though some of the details are a little fuzzy, I remember pretty well the first Parsec meeting I attended. It was probably around twenty years ago, give or take. I had met Tim Esaias for the first time at a local Pennwriters event. We struck up a conversation, and he told me about Parsec. At the time, I was looking to join a writing/critique group (having recently moved to Crafton with my future wife, Martha) and Tim told me Parsec might be a good place to network for that, among other things.

Because of a scheduling conflict at the Squirrel Hill Library, that month's meeting had been moved to a classroom at Pitt. It was one of those big, auditorium-style rooms, with stadium seating. Feeling a little shy, I sat near the back and watched as members filed in and greeted each other. It was evident a community existed here, one that, though it took me a long while to fully commit to because of my own insecurities, was full of interesting, intelligent, creative, and fun people with like interests.

I don't remember much about the meeting's agenda, etc., but I do recall talking with Tim, Heidi, Eric, and Diane. At the time, Diane was in the process of recruiting people for the first incarnation of the WorD writing/critique group. A subsequent meeting at a Borders book store brought out so many eager writers that two groups were formed – WorD and the Pittsburgh SouthWrites.

I joined the SouthWrites whose members over the years included Barb Carlson, Ann Cecil, Judy Friedl, Randy Hoffman, Lynn Hawker, John Branch, Henry Tjernlund, Chetan Chothani, and other great writers and really interesting people.

The “insecurities” I mentioned above was really the idea I got stuck in my head that I wasn't as intelligent and well-read as other Parsec members and therefore couldn't contribute much to the meetings. Which was pretty dumb. One of the strengths of the group is the accepting nature of its members and eagerness to share. But because I felt the way I did, I ended up not attending regular meetings for years until five years ago. I've always been a kind of non-joiner anyway so I rationalized I didn't need to attend.

I've kicked myself for that many times over and am now, I guess, trying to make up for lost time. I'm trying to get more involved and participate in more events and, of course, getting to know everyone better. Just the idea of being in a group with other people with the same interests, and being introduced to many more different kinds of subjects and pursuits, is really, a no-brainer!

The May meeting's fast approaching. Please attend and bring some friends. Really, there's something for everyone. Even for those late-bloomers out there like me!

Larry

PARSEC Smile at Amazon

Parsec, a non-profit organization is a member of the Amazon Smile Program.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates to your favorite charitable organization.

Go to smile.amazon.com from a web browser. Then select a charitable organization (PARSEC Location: Pittsburgh, PA | Year Founded: 2007) to receive donations.

In the future go to the smile.amazon.com page when you shop and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to Parsec.

We appreciate your help.

April 2016 Minutes



'Twas heartbreaking. If ever there was a raffle prize I would have liked, it was a large book of cover illustrations from American pulp magazines. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

President Joe noted that the OSHER course he's been teaching (to 23 signed-up students) about reading science fiction has, in turn, taught him how little he knows. He is of the view that SF is a conjunction of literature, science, and philosophy. Somewhat in that historical spirit, two raffle prizes were up the pulp art book and a T-shirt (allegedly large) from the very first Confluence.

Larry Ivkovich offered a "s***load" of SF magazines, though the fact they were about twenty years old dampened my enthusiasm. He also said that his well-translated "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" could be borrowed.

Announcements kicked off with Jeff Mierzejewski, who reminded us that the Con Com is meeting every first Wednesday and looking for new members. We can also go to the Confluence webpage – www.confluence-sff.org – to offer topics and check the slate of speakers. (For some reason I jotted down "heroic fantasy" – perhaps that's what we need more of?) Diane reported on Alpha and notes that an exhibit called Doors to the Universe will debut at 127 Brownsville Road at 6 PM on Saturday, May 7 (so with any luck you are reading this with time to spare). Barb Carlson reports that our latest Triangulation is forthcoming and that our new editor may be someone named Pete Williams. Mary Soon Lee had six poems published in the past month. Greg reminded us that the Parsec library has such varied offerings as "Dates From Hell" by urban fantasy authors and a Larry Niven anthology. The raffle was held, raising \$22, and Bonnie Funk won the pulp art book.

Fitting neatly with the raffle prize was Eric Davin's

presentation on cover artists. One Frank R. Paul provided Hugo Gernsback with images we now find classic: the Skylark of Space, the War of the Worlds, Buck Rogers. Eric went on to note that one Margaret Brundage provide 66 covers for Weird Tales, and nine of those covers were for Conan the Barbarian stories. However, while today we are used to Frank Frazetta's Conan, Brundage's model was her own husband who looked dreadfully slim and neat, basically "Conan the Certified Public Accountant."

Our headcount was twenty.

Secretary Bill Hall

COPYLEFT GALLERY (copyleft.gallery)
127 Brownsville Road, Pittsburgh, PA, 15210

Opening reception "Doors to the Universe" exhibit will be at 6 pm on Saturday, May 7, 2016

Doors into other universes exist in the tales of novels by ten local, science fiction, fantasy and horror authors. Parsec, the premier speculative fiction organization in Pittsburgh, will host this multi-author book signing and party. Come see our world!

The event is free and open to the public. No registration or RSVP necessary.

Venue is wheelchair accessible.

Authors: Stephanie Keyes; Timons Esaias; Heidi Ruby Miller; Jason Jack Miller (more to be announced)



Confluence 2016 Event/Party Suite

We are setting aside a room (or possibly a suite) in addition to the con suite at this year's Confluence for book launches, parties, and similar events.

If you have something you might like to do in this space at Confluence, please contact Party Room organizer Larry Ivkovich (inkfish1@verizon.net) as soon as possible.

Please be aware event slots are filling up quickly. We already have 3 book launches and an event of the Fort Weyr club tentatively scheduled.

Perceived Links Between Progressive Music and Speculative Fiction

By John A. Frochio

Let me begin by saying I have eclectic tastes. In fiction and music and other stuff. During my formative years in the sixties and seventies, I developed a concurrent interest in all forms of speculative fiction and rock music. As I enjoyed the rich variety of authors and stories in the SF field, I happily discovered underground, experimental and progressive rock music.

In addition to the classic authors, I enjoyed the new works of Samuel R. Delany, Philip K. Dick, Roger Zelazny, Ursula K LeGuin, J. G. Ballard, Gene Wolfe, Thomas M. Disch, Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, Cordwainer Smith, R. A. Lafferty, James Blish, John Brunner, Norman Spinrad, and many others. At the same time, I discovered many bands and musicians rarely heard on mainstream radio. To my delight, I often found links between progressive musicians and speculative fiction. The following paragraphs note some of these musicians with some of their SF inspired works.

Some of these bands grew to some fame in the mainstream: Pink Floyd (A Saucerful of Secrets, Set Your Controls for the Heart of the Sun); Yes (Starship Trooper); Emerson, Lake and Palmer (The Barbarian, Tarkus); David Bowie (Ziggy Stardust, A Space Oddity); Blue Oyster Cult (Flaming Telepaths, Black Blade, Godzilla); Alan Parsons Project (I Robot, Tales of Mystery and Imagination); and Manfred Mann's Earth Band (Solar Fire). The Canadian band Rush had a long history from the seventies (2112) until last year's Clockwork Angels (released simultaneously with a novel by Kevin J. Anderson inspired by Neil Peart's lyrics).

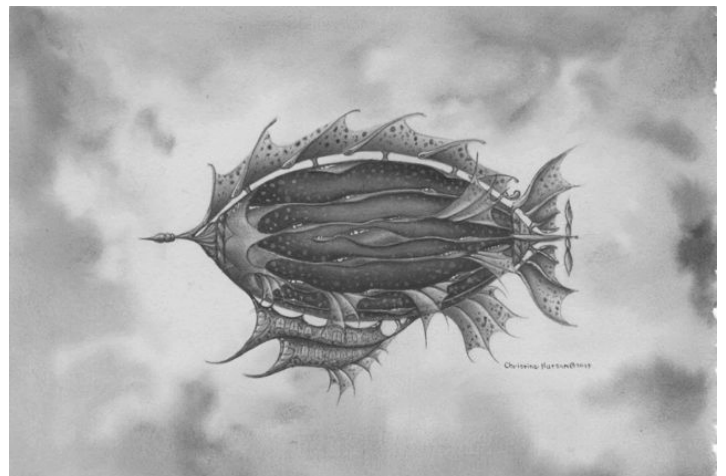
Others were less well known but became cult favorites: King Crimson (21st Century Schizoid Man); Gentle Giant (Pantagruel's Nativity, Cogs in Cogs); Nektar (Astronaut's Nightmare, The Dream Nebula, Astral Man, Recycled); Be Bop Deluxe (Jet Silver and the Dolls of Venus); Hawkwind (Warrior on the Edge of Time, Space Ritual, Quark Strangeness and Charm; Note: British SF writer Michael Moorcock was associated with this band for a time); Camel (Lady Fantasy, Supertwister, Earthrise, Lunar Sea);

Klaatu (Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft); Barclay James Harvest (Galadriel, Child of the Universe); Prism (Starship Superstar); FM (Aldebaran, Slaughter in Robot Village, Phasors on Stun); Kraftwerk (Kometenmelodie, The Man Machine); and Tangerine Dream (Sorcerer, Zeit, Mysterious Semblance at the Strand of Nightmares).

To this day, I continue to enjoy discovering new alternative bands. Some of my recent favorites include: 30 Seconds to Mars (Stranger in a Strange Land); Queens of the Stone Age (The Vampyre of Time and Memory, If I Had a Tail); My Chemical Romance (Vampire Money, The Black Parade); Muse (Supermassive Black Hole, Knights of Cydonia); and Coheed and Cambria (the Amory Wars series of SF-themed concept albums), to name just a few.

Of course, this only scratches the surface of the link (at least in my mind) between progressive/alternate music and speculative fiction. I hope to go into more depth perhaps in a future article.

Parsec Member Art



Jade Airship - by Christine Hutson

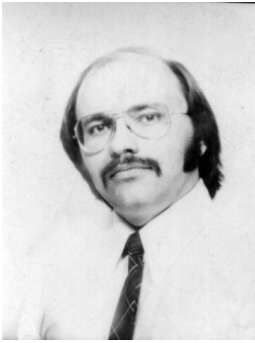
Dragon Sculpture at the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden



Constructed from COB, a natural building material made up of soil, water, straw, and lime.



Metal Dragon sculpture atop the roof of an artist's studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



Brief Bio Eric Leif Davin

Kit Reed

"Kit" (Lillian Craig) Reed (1932-): Catholic writer "Kit" Reed was born in San Diego and earned a B.A. from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Baltimore, in 1954. She worked for many years as a newspaper journalist, beginning with the *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida) from 1954-55. In 1955 she married Joseph Reed, Jr., who became a professor of English at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. They had two sons and a daughter. In Connecticut she worked on the *Hamden Chronicle* (1956) and the *New Haven Register* (1956-59). She was voted New England Newspaperwoman of the Year in 1958 and 1959 and in 1964-65 was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. She was also the first woman to be awarded the Abraham Woursell Foundation's literary grant.

It was in 1958, while working as a reporter, that she began publishing fantasy and science fiction. She has also published mystery stories, such as "The Perfect Portrait," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, July, 1968, and the suspense thriller, *Tiger Rag*, 1973. In addition to her genre fiction she has published at least ten mainstream novels, the first being *Mother Isn't Dead, She's Only Sleeping* (1961). Her second, *At War As Children* (1964), was about the World War II generation. *The Better Part* (1967), dealt with juvenile delinquency. Her non-genre short stories have appeared in both European as well as American magazines, such as *Seventeen*. In 1969 she won the award for Best Catholic Short Story of the Year and in 1976 was awarded an Aspen Institute Rockefeller Fellowship. She has also been a Visiting Professor of English at Wesleyan University, beginning in 1974. In 1982 she published a guide to writing entitled *Story First: The Writer as Insider*.

The focus of much of her work has been the impact of technology on people's lives. The science fiction tropes, however, are not the central concerns. They are mere devices to explore people's relations to each other and society at large. Her first science fiction novel, *Armed Camps* (1969), was very much a reaction to the turbulent Sixties. It featured endemic war as a daily experience, with the female protagonist retreating to a pacifist commune.

In *Magic Time* (1980), America has become a ghoulish theme park run by a Walt Disney-type manager in cryogenic suspension. In *Fort Privilege*

(1985), the residents of a privileged high-rise condo are under siege from New York's homeless hordes. *Blood Fever* (1986) was a horror novel written under the name of "Shelley Hyde." Some of her short stories have been collected in *The Killer Mice* (1978), *Other Stories And...the Attack of the Giant Baby* (1981) and *Revenge of the Senior Citizens* (1986). She continues to write in many genres.

Eric Leif Davin's Parsec Short Story Award-winning story, "Twilight on Olympus," will appear in "The Year's Best Military and Adventure Science Fiction," forthcoming in 2016 from Baen Books. He is also the author of "The Desperate and the Dead," from Damnation Books, available on Amazon and at Barnes & Noble.

Medical Status of Francis Graham: An Update on a Former Sigma Editor

Francis Graham lives in East Pittsburgh in the oldest residential house in that neighborhood, inherited from his family. With his car's transmission shot and requiring a thousand bucks' worth of repair, he walked down to the intersection of Center Street and Route 30 to catch a bus. It's a tricky intersection, and there have been two fatalities there. He was crossing the street, and the light turned while he was midway. The driver of a Honda saw the green and zoomed on ahead. To his credit, the driver did try to halt at the last second, but he still wound up sending Francis flying through the air. Francis had the presence of mind to try to use his right arm to break his fall. It worked, too: he broke that arm, but his head and his spine are fine. He also broke some ribs and shattered his right leg.

An ambulance got Francis to the intensive care unit at Mercy downtown where I visited him on Sunday the 13th. He was in good spirits. Understandably, they keep him somewhat doped up against pain, but he was lucid and conversant. He was able to wiggle the fingers of both hands, handle his food, and even read a bit from a silly little comedy anthology paperback that I happened to find at the library book sale during our March Parsec meeting. We were soon joined by a CCAC colleague of his and then later his wife.

He is going to require long-term healing and rehabilitation taking months, possibly the remainder of this year. He is if I do say so myself, a tough man, a cancer survivor, but he can still always use our support. As of this writing, he is at Manor Nursing Home in Monroeville.

Bill Hall

Farryn's War by Christie Meierz

Review by Larry Ivkovich

Christie Meierz's follow-up to the final novel of her Tales of Tolari Space series, *The Fall*, and the 1st book in her Exiles of the Drift series, continues the story of Farryn, exiled Molari (Molinar ruler) of the planet Tolar. In contrast to the previous novels, *Farryn's War* is more space opera than romance although the latter does figure prominently in the story, propelling it forward in an exciting fashion.

As with the Tales of Tolari Space series, Christie's skill at world-building and political/social intrigue is extremely well-done. The characters, description of alien customs and culture (especially the psychic/empathic powers of the Tolari), and action, is believable and exciting--especially in one scene where Farryn does something completely unexpected, catching this reader by surprise.

Another strong point of the story is making Farryn, who was an unscrupulous and violent character in *The Fall*, sympathetic. As he reflects on the horrible crime he committed in the previous novel, and changes, as a result, the reader is allowed to root for him as he attempts to save his empathic bond-partner, Sharana, from a truly despicable villain--Adenline Russel, an agent of Earth Central Security, who has appeared in previous works by Christie.

Russel abducts and attempts to gain information from Sharana on the Tolari race in order to advance human genetics. And she'll do that no matter who she has to sleep with, how much pain she has to inflict, or who she has to kill. She's the one you'll love to hate. Most of the latter part of the novel involves Farryn attempting to thwart Russel's plans and save Sharana.

Late in the novel, we're introduced to a race of extraterrestrials called The Den, who are a hive-mind culture. They're well-described and very interesting, covered with scales, possessing insect-type wings, and communicating en masse by touching one another. I hope we'll see more of these very cool alien beings in future stories.

The idea of the Mafia and Chinese Tongs still existing in the 26th Century on a different planet is, at first, a little jarring and surprising, but works well in the story's context as it unfolds. Farryn, living in exile and ruling a crime organization of his own on the world of Far India, enlists the aid of these two criminal groups to try and save his bond-partner. Then there are the Tolari Exiles, a group Farryn now identifies with, and who he also asks for help. Living in wilderness sanctuaries, this group has eschewed the Tolari rule, politics, and culture to live their own lives.

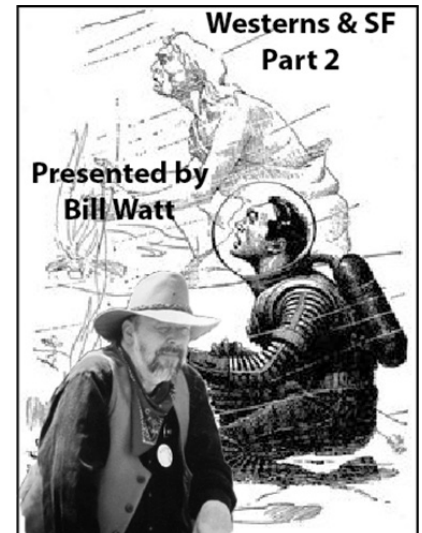
Exciting and well-envisioned, *Farryn's War* is a good start to what looks to be a great new series by Christie.



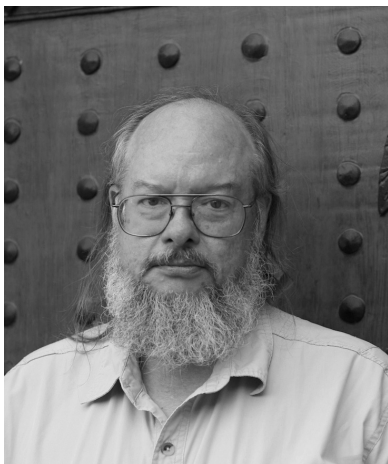


Parsec Meeting Schedule Next Meeting - May 14, 2016

Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library
Room B - Next to the Rear Entrance
1:30 - 4:30 PM
A Discussion of SF and Confluence
The room open at noon,
if you would like to visit early and socialize.



Parsec Meeting - June 11, 2016 Timons Esaias What Happened to the Canals on Mars???



In 1906, Percival Lowell published *Mars and Its Canals*, which laid out the scientific proof that Mars not only sustained life, but was under the control of an advanced civilization. The proof was in their globe-encircling canal system; a canal system that NASA has failed to account for. Timons Esaias will discuss the scientific failures that this case reveals, along with offering a number of theories as to what happened to those canals. There may be some sarcasm.

Fantastic Artist of the Month

Margaret Brundage

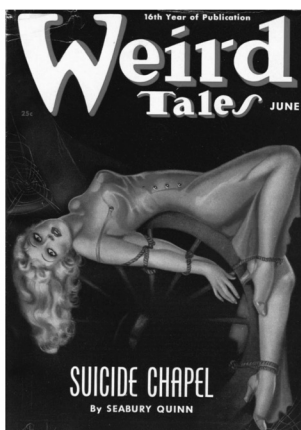
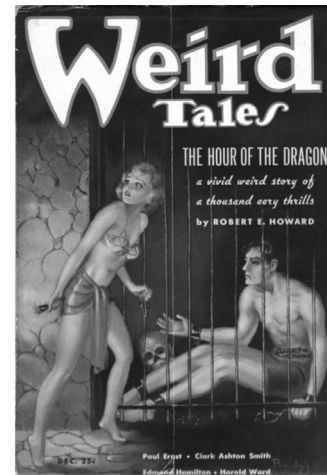
Thanks to Eric Leif Davin for the information on this great, mainly unsung, genre artist.

Margaret Brundage (December 9, 1900 – April 9, 1976) was an American artist and illustrator most appreciated for her artwork in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*.

She created 66 covers for *Weird Tales* during the 1930's and into World War II, 39 of which were done in just over three years. She also illustrated the covers of 9 of Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian stories, including the first visual depiction of Conan. This was for the cover of Howard's *The Queen of the Black Coast* in May 1934, where Conan appears very different-looking than the later images of the barbarian by Frank Frazetta, et al. You can see this difference on the included image for the cover of *The Hour of the Dragon*.

Brundage also created the first image of C.L. Moore's seminal female sword-and-sorcery warrior, Jirel of Joiry, on the cover of *The Black God's Kiss*, in October 1934.

A certain amount of nudity and raciness in Brundage's pioneering fantasy and horror art caused her work to be controversial at the time, even among other SF authors and illustrators. Especially when it was revealed "M. Brundage" was a woman.



PARSEC

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www.parsec-sff.org

Dues: Full Membership \$15

Associate Membership \$3 (with full member in the same household)

PARSEC is Pittsburgh's premiere organization of science fiction, fantasy and horror. We sponsor an annual conference, workshops for young writers, lectures, and other events that promote a love of the written word and a passion for speculative fiction. Our members include writers, teachers and fans. PARSEC is a 501c3 non-profit corporation.