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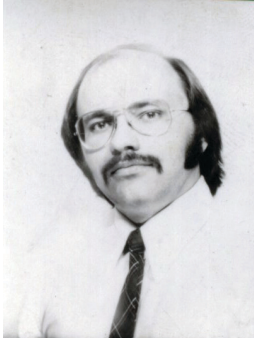
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July 2016 Parsec Meeting



Brief Bio Eric Leif Davin



Craig Rice, Jane Rice, & Louise Rice



“Craig Rice” (Georgiana Ann Randolph), (1908-1957): Rice was a California mystery novelist, short story writer, and screenwriter. Her specialty was humorous crime capers reminiscent of Hollywood’s screwball comedies of the Thirties and Forties, such as the Thin Man series. She began writing mysteries with her first novel, *Eight Faces at Three* (1939). Her last completed novel was *My Kingdom For a Hearse* (1956). The *April Robin Murders* (1958) was left uncompleted at her death and finished by noted mystery and sometime SF writer Evan Hunter (“Ed McBain”). Under the name “Daphne Sanders” she published *To Catch a Thief* (1943), which some consider her best novel. She also published three mysteries as “Michael Venning.”

As a screenwriter she co-wrote two of the well-known series of detective films featuring “The Falcon,” these being *The Falcon’s Brother* (1942) and *The Falcon in Danger* (1943). She also wrote the original story for the 1950 film, *The Underworld Story*, about a small town newspaper reporter fighting powerful business interests to unravel a murder cover-up. She ghosted both of the mysteries attributed to stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, *The G-String Murders* (1941) and *Mother Finds a Body* (1942). The *G-String Murders* was turned into the 1943 movie, *Lady of Burlesque*. For the actor George Sanders (who starred as the Falcon in *The Falcon’s Brother*) she ghosted *Crime on My Hands* (1944). It is possible well-known SF author Cleve Cartmill collaborated with her on the latter novel.

At the peak of her prodigious output she was one of the most famous mystery writers in America. Anthony Boucher arranged to have her *Trial by Fury* (1941) reprinted in a series of classic detective novels and in 1946 her photo graced the cover of *Time* magazine. She died in Los Angeles at age 49. Today her work is mostly forgotten.

Jane Dixon Rice (1913-2003): In addition to fantasy and science fiction, she also published short stories in such glossy magazines as *Charm*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*. She also published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* under the pseudonym, “Mary Austin.” Her 1943 werewolf story, “The Refugee,” which first appeared in John W. Campbell’s *Unknown*, was reprinted in the 1990 collection, *Rivals of Weird Tales*. She collaborated with Ruth Allison under the joint name of “Allison Rice” for “The Loolies Are Here” in Damon Knight’s *Orbit 1* anthology (1966). Her horror novelette, *The Sixth Dog*, was published as a chapbook in 1995 by Necronomicon Press, thus becoming her first book.

<http://storyoftheweek.loa.org/2011/03/refugee.html>

Louise Rice (1880-?): Everett Bleiler believes this author was Louise Guest Rice, “born in Indiana, writer of cookbooks and mystery stories, and an occasional contributor to the pulp magazines, including a graphology column to *Mystery Magazine*. She is possibly the Louise Rice of Navesink, New Jersey, who contributed a letter to the August [1930] issue of *Amazing Detective Tales*.”

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.

Parsec Library

The Parsec Library has been open for business since 2011. With over 3200 science fiction, fantasy and horror books, it is one of the largest private collections of genre fiction in Pittsburgh.

It is currently located Greg Armstrong’s house in Dormont, just minutes from a trolley stop and West Liberty Avenue.

To check out a book, make an appointment to visit or contact Greg Armstrong for delivery. He works at the Robotics Institute, so delivery to CMU students, faculty or staff is easy. Call 412-344-0456 or write to him at roboman@cmu.edu.

June 2016 Minutes



We had a newcomer, Raylene Mathews (note single T), author of “When We Touch the Stars.” In addition to science fiction, she appears to enjoy dogs, food, and Pittsburgh, though she does rather wish that buses to Squirrel Hill were reliably air conditioned. Our raffle prize was a copy of “Why Elephants No Longer Communicate in Greek” by resident poet Timons Esaias, who would also be our speaker that day.

In pre-meeting chatter, ex-President Eric Davin mentioned how a woman, one Dirce Archer, managed to bring the 1960 Worldcon, complete with Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, James Blish, and Daniel Keyes, here to Pittsburgh. He also got to announce that his story “Icarus at Noon” made it into an anthology called “Year’s Best Military and Space Opera,” while his “Twilight on Olympus” made it into an “Adventure SF Volume 2.” “Twilight” was also the first winner of Parsec’s now-retired short story contest. Mary Soon Lee, bundling two months’ worth of updates, said that she got ten poems published and nine accepted, one in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. She read us some of her poems, perhaps the most interesting one tackling the cliché of stepmothers always being wicked. (I also feel compelled to note that Barton Paul Levenson’s novel “Dark Gods of Alter Telluria” is now available on Kindle and in paperback – I lean to the latter for the sake of autographing.)

Eric then talked to us about our Sigma artist of the month, Vincent Di Fate. Evidently John Wyndham, the author who gave us “The Day of the Triffids” and “The Midwich Cuckoos,” got to wondering about H.G. Wells’ invading Martians being octopoids and, retrofitting them as sea-dwellers, reimagined the invasion of Earth as sea-based in “When the Kraken Awakes,” and Di Fate got to illustrate that. Di Fate then went to work for John W. Campbell and provided lots of cover art often portraying gadgetry, in particular giant pristine white spaceships with

curiously aerodynamic curves and fins, as a book of Di Fate’s art attested to as Eric had it passed around. Yet in his heart Di Fate was a fantasy illustrator, only rarely permitted to draw the occasional dragon, yet he became typecast as a gadgets artist. One might well ask if Di Fate, true to his name, was “fated” to his non-fantastical work, and Eric offered Di Fate as a lesson in how we need to assert our true ambitions before they get diverted.

As promised, Timons Esaias talked to us about the canals of Mars.



We know the astronomer Schiaparelli’s term “canali” for “channels” got misinterpreted as “canals,” yet Schiaparelli himself came to support the theorizing of America’s Percival Lowell in his 1906 “Mars and Its Canals.” Tim argued that the 1890s may have been a last good era for optical astronomy due to the rise of air pollution. (In the spirit of Diane Turnshek, I asked about an increase in light pollution, and Tim accepted that too.) Stellar astronomy tended to trump planetary astronomy and thus there was no real progress in Martian studies until the Mariner 4 flyby probe.

Schiaparelli himself noted that his “canali” were not only remarkably straight but tended to form parallel pairs, like the to and fro of railroads. Colors changed with the seasons, a Martian atmosphere was detected, and yet spectrography suggested that Mars was dry. The “canali” were remarkably long and tended to merge at circular nodes. Even back then it was suggested that this was all simply illusion, but Tim asked “Where are the canals on the moon?”

For Lowell it was all quite logical. The canals were clearly artificial, drawing seasonal polar meltwater across the dry planet to great nodes which were probably cities. The global pattern suggested a civilization of planet-wide cooperation, in sharp

contrast to our own. Lowell's model also fit the "dying world" background of the Wells classic.

Tim speculated on trade with Mars, offering them surplus goods such as hot air (a picture of Washington DC appeared) and women. (While there was indeed once a movie Mars Needs Women as well as Frankenstein Versus the Space Monster, I offer the also infamous Devil Girl From Mars in which a Martian matriarchy came here seeking Earthmen.)

Then came the pictures of Mars from Mariner 4's flyby in 1965. Tim noted that the original maps still used Lowell's canals. Yet belief in the canals was instantly dismissed, which Tim claimed was contrary to the scientific method. Could they have been obliterated by volcanoes, or simply driven underground, a proposal by no less than Edgar Rice Burroughs? At this point Tim took up a stubborn argument that the canals may still be there in one form or another, noting that two-thirds of Mars probes fail, which is awfully suspicious, and that the few that land and rove around cover precious little ground. Kevin Hayes offered a conspiracy by the Therns as imagined in the recent movie John Carter. I mentioned the "face at Cydonia," but on that subject Tim noted only that some had claimed to see a face on Mars long before any photographs there. It was all entertaining to the end, though I began to get a bit of a headache from Tim's adroit sophistry clashing with his claim to call for purity of the scientific method.

For some bizarre reason, two announcements got made at the very end. One concerns Monster Mash, which will be held July 8-10 at the Doubletree Hotel in Mars, Pa. (Doubletree ... Mars ... why does that sound familiar?) This will feature celebrities such as Jimmy Hunt, who played the little boy and central character in 1953's Invaders From Mars, along with Pittsburgh TV legend "Chilly Billy" Cardille. That same weekend will also see a convention of fans of the TV show "Supernatural" at the David Lawrence Convention Center. For our part, the next meeting may be a last chance to discuss Confluence.

Our headcount was 17. See what you missed?

Secretary Bill Hall

Alpha book signing

The Greensburg Barnes & Noble at 5155 Route 30,
Greensburg, PA 15601 ([724-832-0622](tel:724-832-0622)).

This is the Wednesday before Confluence. The Alpha students no longer go to Confluence, so if you want to see them, this is the best time to meet them and hear them read their stories. It's always a wonderful evening. Part of the book sales go into the Alpha scholarship fund -- we have earned hundreds of dollars this way. Even if you can't make it, could you please help spread the word?

Hope to see you and show off the best upcoming talent in the field.

Diane

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.

Confluence July 29-31, 2016

Pittsburgh's annual literary science fiction / fantasy / horror convention, CONFLUENCE, is coming up on July 29-31 at the Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport Hotel, 1160 Thorn Run Road. Coraopolis, PA 15108. We hope to see you there!

PROGRAM

The entire (preliminary) program is now online: <http://parsec-sff.org/konopas>. The PARSEC website also has lists of our [panel participants](#) and [music participants](#).

Principal theme this year: heroic fantasy (our Guest of Honor is fantasy author Saladin Ahmed). But we will also have lots of SF, science, horror, and writing panels, and special guest Lawrence M. Schoen will be talking about both the Klingon language and the sentient elements of his Nebula nominated novel, BARSK. We have an outstanding filk track, and this year many of our filk guests will also be appearing on panels and in workshops.

If you'd like to take part in the CONFLUENCE WRITING WORKSHOP (Saturday morning), send a short story or part of a larger work (up to 3,000 words) to conprogram@parsec-sff.org BY JULY 15 and then come to Confluence to go over it and improve it with the help of a brace of professional writers and editors.

Saturday will also be DAVID HARTWELL TIE DAY: wear your gaudiest tie in honor of a friend, dealer, panelist and editor who was a Confluence regular until his recent untimely death.

On Saturday evening, Steel City Improv Theater will present USS IMPROVISE at 8 PM - it looks like it will be a lot of fun.

And of course, panels, workshops, readings, art show, dealer's room, autographing sessions, kaffeeklatsches AND literary beers, plus a couple of book launches and the camaraderie of our con suite.

REGISTRATION

You can [preregister for the con](#) through July 8 and save \$10 on a full-weekend adult membership.

There is also a [\\$5 discount](#) for paid-up members of PARSEC.

HOTEL

The con hotel is accessible by shuttle from the

airport, and for those coming from Pittsburgh, you can take the Port Authority's Airport Flyer (28X) to get to the airport and back.

If you are staying at the con overnight, PLEASE RESERVE A ROOM at the con hotel by the deadline of July 4. Making our room block helps ensure that we can afford to run Confluence both this year and next!

[Link to reserve a room](#)

COSTUMING

We haven't had a formal masquerade in a good while, but this year we plan to give out ribbons and prizes for hall costumes, including a signed copy of Mary Soon Lee's CROWNED to the "most heroic costume" - and special guest Lawrence M. Schoen will use YOUR NAME as a character name in his next novel for a "really, really" good costume based on the sentient animal characters of BARSK.

T SHIRTS

This year we are also [taking pre-orders](#) for the con T-shirt, so you can have it on hand (in the correct size!) when you arrive at the con.

VOLUNTEERS

We can ALWAYS use volunteers to help run Confluence! Anyone is welcome to attend con committee meetings, and we will also be holding training sessions for volunteers. Write to confluence@parsec-sff.org.

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION:

confluence-sff.org

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)!

Jeff Mierzejewski

Program Chair, Confluence



Gene Autry: Seminal Science Fiction Hero

The Phantom Empire, a 1935 Saturday matinee serial starring Gene Autry.

by Larry Ivkovich



Gene Autry, famous singing cowboy star of radio, television, and the movies (and very successful and lucrative recorder of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”) may be the last name one thinks of when imagining adventurers of the pulp sci-fi era. If at all.

But the 1935 Saturday matinee serial, *The Phantom Empire*, one of Autry’s first forays into film, depicts him as exactly that. Starring as himself and singing in almost every one of the serial’s twelve episodes, Autry, and his sidekicks fight the evil of a futuristic, subterranean, and very low-budget kind.

The opening credits for each episode identify Autry as “Radio’s Singing Cowboy.” Young costar Frankie Darro is listed next and would later portray Robbie the Robot in the classic sci-fi movie, *Forbidden Planet* (1956). Even younger fourteen-year-old costar Betsy Ross-King is described as “World Champion Trick Horse Rider,” which, apparently, she once was although you’ll be hard pressed to find any information about her, googling or otherwise.

And finally, in the first few episodes, the “Scientific City of Murania” is also credited as if it, too, was a character in the story. A miniature set construction, Murania hosted futuristic-looking buildings, painted backdrops and flashing lights. Giant elevators ascend and descend to and from the surface accompanied by a funny un-theremin-like whistling sound. Scientific indeed.

Inhabited by citizens dressed in Roman-style togas

and pointy hats, Murania also boasts giant robot servants who swing hammers and open doors a lot. As an interesting sidebar, these ridiculous looking mechanical men were taken out of storage from the set of the 1933 Clark Gable/Joan Crawford musical, *Dancing Lady*. Which begs the question: Could *Dancing Lady* also be an early and influential work of science fiction cinema?

As the serial unfolds (complete with such ominous episode titles as “Jaws of Jeopardy,” “Prisoner of the Ray,” and “A Queen in Chains”), Autry is co-owner of the Radio Ranch. Darro and Ross-King play siblings whose father is Autry’s partner in running the ranch. The two kids have formed a club called “The Junior Thunder Riders” (complete with clubhouse and secret periscope). The members wear capes and what look like buckets on their heads as they ride around on horses giving voice to their motto, “To the Rescue!” Autry and his backup musicians must perform their live radio recordings every day at 2 PM or, according to their contract, will lose the ranch. Sounds like someone needed to negotiate a little harder on that point.

As a result, this insidious line item conveniently sets up several cliff-hangers revolving around whether Autry will make it back in time to perform at the appointed time. Of course, he always does, a lot of the time with the help of the ever resourceful Junior Thunder Riders. And Radio Ranch is always saved.

Or is it?

A couple of crooked scientists and their gang discover there are large deposits of radium buried underneath Radio Ranch. Their nefarious plot is to dig up the valuable mineral and spirit it away so they can get rich. In the meantime, in an absolutely amazing coincidence, Murania (once part of the lost civilization of Mu) and its technologically superior inhabitants also reside 20,000 feet under the surface of Autry’s ranch and is the source of the radium! Imagine that. Danger and non-stop action (and singing) and a lot of running around ensue as both the scientists and Murania’s evil Queen Tika strive to either capture or kill Autry for various reasons, none of which make much sense but do advance the story, such as it is.

It’s pretty obvious *The Phantom Empire*, along with other movie serials of that time, was made strictly for juveniles. If you can get past the cheesy acting, dialogue, costumes, special effects and the very irritating high-pitched voice of Ms. Ross-King, it can be an enjoyable time-waster. Of course, as Gene Autry got more and more successful, he was laughing all the way to the bank, radium or not.

Just ask Rudolph.

<https://archive.org/details/PhotosbyHaroldThePhantomEmpireAll12Chapters>

Game Review: Star Fluxx

Published by Looney Labs
Reviewed by Alan Irvine



I study my cards and try not to smile. Across the table, Michael just changed the rules of the game again. On my turn, I can now play three cards, not just one. That means I can play the Time Portal and go back in time/go through the discard pile and find The Captain. I'll lay down The Captain for my second play, and use his power to recruit/steal The Scientist from Elizabeth. And since I already have the Expendable Crewman (who wears a red shirt, of course) on the table, that means I have a complete Landing Party, and I just happen to have the card making that the Goal. For my third play, I'll lay down that card and win the game. Victory is mine, as long as my daughter does not do anything nasty on her turn. But she's looking at me. She throws down Brain Transference. I frantically shuffle through my cards, hoping for something will stop her. I've got nothing. I glare at her and set down my cards. We both get up and change places. She picks up the cards that were mine but are now hers. Shuffles through them. Looks at me. Smiles. She's figured it out. Using my strategy, she is going to win the game, and there is nothing I can do to stop her...

Starr Fluxx, one of many variants of the game Fluxx, is a fun, fast-playing, ridiculous game from Looney Labs. The game is deceptively simple. Each player starts with a hand of cards. The only rule is on your turn you draw one card and then play one card. That's it. Except... The cards come in 5 types. Goal cards specify which combination of Keeper cards yield a victory. Until someone lays down a Goal card, no one can win. And when someone plays a new Goal, it replaces the old Goal and how you win changes. Keepers are cards you play that allow you to meet a Goal and win the game. Keepers include cards like The Captain, the Expendable Crewman, the Unseen Force, the Time Traveler, Space Station, Monolith. The Keepers give the game its SF flavor. Creeper cards prevent you from winning. Action cards allow you

to take some action, like trade hands with another player or steal some of their cards or even swap places with them. And New Rule cards put new rules into play, like Draw 2 cards on your turn, or Play 3. As people play New Rules and Goals, the game keeps changing, getting more and more complicated, or suddenly simple again. Just when you think you have the right set of cards to guarantee victory, someone changes the Goal, or plays some nasty Action against you, leaving you stuck.

Every version of Fluxx, and there are many, plays a little bit different from all the others. Usually, the feel of the game comes from the New Rule cards. Monty Python Fluxx, for example, has rules that get players singing songs and reciting dialogue from classic Monty Python skits, avoiding the number 3, talking in silly accents.... But in Starr Fluxx only one New Rule has an SF feel (the Wormhole, which throws random cards into the game.) Instead, the heart of Star Fluxx is those Keeper cards. In this game, many of the Keeper cards come with specific powers. The Starship Captain can recruit crewmembers (that is, allows you to steal other crewmember Keepers from other players.) The Scientist can study various alien Keepers (steal them from other players.) The Time Traveler can redo actions. The Cute Fuzzy Alien Creature never leaves the game. Never. No matter how hard you try to get rid of it. So once a few Keepers are in play, the game can get rather wild, somewhat confusing, and sometimes very complicated.

The game works well with two people but is better with more. Three or four players are ideal. With more players, everything keeps changing so often, especially the Goal, that any planning or strategizing becomes pointless and winning is often just dumb luck. On the other hand, a big game tends to get crazy silly, which is really the best part of Star Fluxx. And if things go just right you could end up with one player with a bunch of Star Trek based Keepers in front of them facing down a player with Star Wars based Keepers for that classic fan battle. Just be careful you don't get hit with Brain Transference right before you win the game...

Alan Irvine is a storyteller, playwright, director, writer, teacher who tries to find time for games whenever he can.

Storyteller Alan Irvine

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412-521-6406/412-508-2077



Parsec Meeting Schedule Next Meeting - July 9, 2016

Parsec Social Meeting

Come In. Introduce Yourself.

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 is open at noon.

The 2017 Nebula Awards Conference

will be held in Pittsburgh.
<http://nebulas.sfw.org/>



Fantastic Artist of the Month

Kinuko Y. Craft



Kinuko Y. Craft (born 1940) is a Japanese-born American contemporary painter, illustrator and fantasy artist.

She has painted book covers for many well-known fantasy authors such as Patricia A McKillip, Juliet Mariller, and Tanith Lee.

Her non-genre work includes cover art for many national magazines such as Time, Newsweek, and National Geographic.

Craft has been nominated five times as Best Artist for the World Fantasy Award and won in 2011.



PARSEC
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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.