

SIGMA

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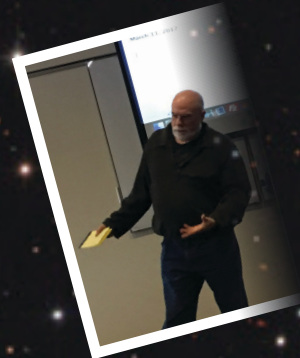
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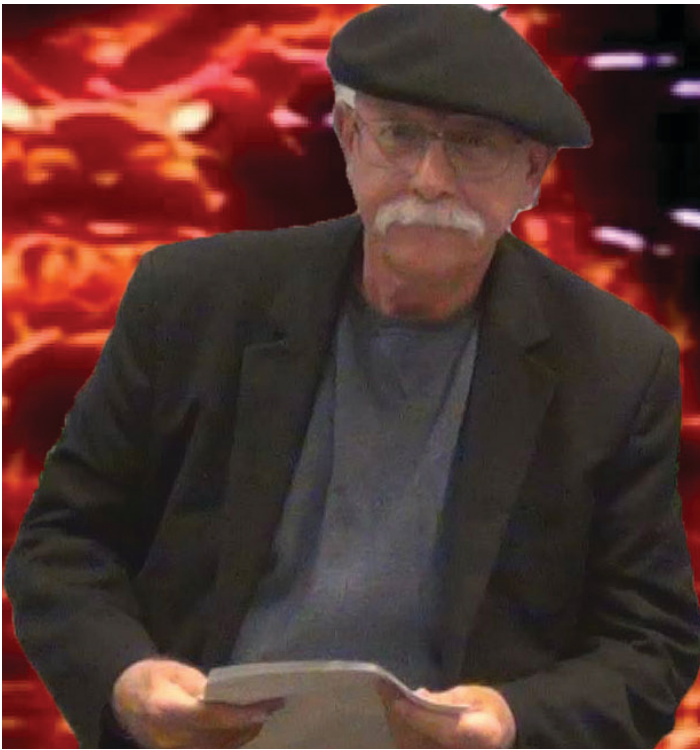
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President's Column

Let's define Science Fiction.

Groan!

What was that from the back of the room?
You in the front, as well?

Can't say I blame you. Not only is it a tedious task, this putting form and boundary to genre, not only is it a boring academic exercise, it is also impossible. So, why move forward with the endeavor?

For me, it's simple. I just can't help myself. Messing around with something I have always loved and has always been a significant part of me. Far as I am concerned not seeking the definition is much like not seeking my own foundation. Which is also an impossible goal, but a process full of discovery. Full of despair. Full of hope.

It is tempting to string out hundreds of the cottage industry of science fiction definitions that have been put forth by writers, pundits, scholars in the next seven hundred or so paragraphs. I look at them all the time, read them. speak the words until they sound like a full-on mantra, or the grim beast laws chanted on the vivisected Island of Dr. Moreau, or a glossolalia in science fiction tongues. They intrigue me. They pith me off. They are, everyone one of them, in almost every way, incomplete. What is not to love?

If you think I am about to give you my deep, brooding, meaning filled, definition of the genre, there will be no gold star for your forehead today. Oh, I could sit

here and craft a pronouncement which would reveal my brilliant assessment, full of critical jargon. Might even get two people to shake their heads in ascent. My mama raised an entirely differing kind of fool. The kind of fool that knows when to duck into the shadow, because shedding light, even meagre as my own is, on a situation merely chases the creepy crawlies away, leaving a squeaking clean residue that is gentle and sweet but has no heart. Is bereft of the substance that bred it.

I will state a couple observations that occur to me as I study and read. First, the definition is not contained in the body of the genre. The body is the canon. It is what has come, by hook and chance, to be included in the light of what has come before. When you fire the beams of your energy into the bulk of the body, what begins to begins to glow hot, much like the Morbius Id Monster, are the disputed edges. Boundaries that snap and stretch with great spirit exposing, say, SF and Horror, or SF & Fantasy in blurred outline and dimensions unraveling. Look at it's poistion and you can't measure the speed of growth, look at the speed and you can't possibly determine the boundaries. Our own personal Heisenberg uncertainty.

On the border. In the dispute. Is where the interesting stuff is happening. I love, like the rest of us, to read, spit and curse at lists that claim they are the hundred best science fiction novels, or films, or short stories. They are often prepared by the hundred worst people capable of understanding the scope of science fiction. Of course, that doesn't make them less compelling. In more modern parlance, less click worthy. Diverting as the are, the compilations are a snapshot at one time of one mind's (or one hive's) prejudiced view. Even with interpretation and informed wisdom, these lists just aren't all that helpful.

Second the word of ten thousand science fiction writers isn't enough. The convocation of science fiction loving fans isn't enough. The explication of a hundred and more scholars in journals isn't enough, and the classifications of commercial book marketers can't even begin to come close. It really takes the synthesis of all those to begin to define the growing, moving target that is any genre.

The definition is there. In the genre. What it was. What it is. What it is becoming. The definition is in the whole of us. Fen, Doc, Nerd and Book-wrangler alike. Problem is it makes for a difficult decision to discover what should be included. Makes for it difficult to make a logical and pure definition. Makes a robust description challenging. Also makes the undertaking more interesting and more fun than a barrel of full of Martian bouncers.

Next time you read and then recommend a

work that has the characteristics of creature feature western that describes a romance between an alien pod born homunculus with a hunky shapeshifter who is a private investigator in New Sanfranciso on an outpost satellite orbiting Trappist-1f during Earth's Pleistocene, watch the genre grow.

JK



MARCH EDITORIAL

The Academy Awards have, once again, come and gone. Last year, a boycott of the awards was announced because of the lack of racial diversity in the nominations. This year, another boycott was mentioned briefly because of Hollywood's political views, especially since the presidential election.

Well, what about a boycott by genre fans everywhere for the lack of wins for SF and Fantasy movies? It's true there's been some improvement (at least in being nominated) on that front in recent years but it's still a wasteland. At least that's what I thought.

Arrival was up for some awards this year, including Best Picture, but didn't win in that category. Recently, *Avatar* and *District 9* were both up for Best Picture when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences expanded the category to include 10 nominees in 2009. But neither film won.

However, after researching, there have been more genre films nominated for Best Picture than I thought. Admittedly, the list below contains some movies that skirt the border between genre and not but I erred on the side of genre and possibly posted an incorrect date or two as well as inadvertently omitting some films. But, to coin a phrase (and a pun), you'll get the picture.

And the nominees were:

Lost Horizon – 1937, The Wizard of Oz – 1939, Rebecca – 1940, Heaven Can Wait – 1943, It's a Wonderful Life – 1946, King Solomon's Mines – 1950, Around the World in Eighty Days – 1956, A Clockwork Orange – 1971, The Exorcist – 1973, Jaws – 1975, Star Wars – 1977, Heaven Can Wait

– 1978, Raiders of the Lost Ark – 1981, E.T. the Extraterrestrial – 1982, Field of Dreams – 1989, Ghost – 1990, Beauty and the Beast – 1991, Apollo 13 – 1995, The Sixth Sense – 1999, The Green Mile – 1999, [The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring](#) – 2001, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers – 2002, The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King – 2003, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button – 2008, the aforementioned Avatar and District 9 – 2009, Up – 2009, Inception – 2010, Gravity – 2013, Her – 2013, Birdman – 2015, Mad Max: Fury Road – 2016, The Martian – 2016, Arrival – 2017

Where was 2001: A Space Odyssey in all this? All well. There's reason to hope a real, honest-to-goodness science fiction, fantasy, horror, supernatural, etc., movie will win the Big One in future award shows. Maybe next year.

Larry



March 2017 Minutes



As spring springs up (eventually), so do events. The SFWA's 51st annual Nebula Conference will be giving out Nebula Awards at the Pittsburgh Marriott Center on the weekend of May 18 through 21. There will be a nationwide March for Science on Earth Day, April 22, the main march being held in Washington, DC while Pittsburgh holds its own. On Sunday, June 11 will be an "extravaganza" down at the Carnegie Central Library from noon until 5 PM where we can stand to have volunteers and a Parsec presence, giving away books, perhaps sponsoring some activity. Barton Paul Levenson says the writers' workshop known as the Worldwrights is up to five members but can use more and meets regularly at 7 PM at his Greenfield residence on alternate Wednesdays. As member author Donald Firesmith finishes a first draft of his own, he recommends to us the Red Viper adventures by one Ashley L. Hunt. Mary Soon Lee (of course, inevitably) saw five poems published – and made a sale to Analog.

Our Confluence program book can use artwork involving our mascot Scribble.

Mary read us an enjoyable poem on the ages-old topic of arranged marriage, and Eric Leif Davin talked about his interview with Pittsburgh's great Dr. Thomas Starzl, who passed away on March 4. Eric had talked with him about his father R. F. Starzl, a farmer who contributed to early science fiction. Thomas Starzl evidently kicked himself a little for once failing to recognize a proposed invention by his father as a means of oxygenating blood. R. F. Starzl's most noted story is "Out of the Sub-Universe," a tale exploiting the old notion of atoms as extreme miniature planetary systems but taking into account a time differential. R. F. Starzl hailed from La Mars, Iowa and Eric found himself buying the copy stamped by the La Mars library that they evidently didn't feel like hanging onto any longer. We raffled off a compendium called "American Comics" which raised \$26 and was won by Mr. Firesmith.

This was our annual panel topics meeting. Confluence membership continues to be \$45, \$40 for us Parsec members, through the end of April and is \$55 at the door. In addition to panels, Barton asked to give a presentation on habitable zones for Earthlike planets. We came up with:

1. F&SF poetry.
2. Are there too many dystopias?
3. Poetry slam and/or Vagon poetry.
4. Which F&SF classics need to be read for a history of the genre?
5. Writing steampunk: more than adding clockwork.
6. E-publication for beginners.
7. Doing research right.
8. Proper usage of sites like Google Maps.
9. The whole "cultural appropriation" issue.
10. How to have a long-term collaboration without killing your partner.
11. Writing for other genders.
12. Watching out for publishing scams.
13. Is nerd culture waning – or going mainstream?
14. Suggesting non-fiction books to future writers.
15. Differences between gun and medieval battle in fiction.
16. Rock/pop music – Bowie, Rush, etc.
17. (There's a #17 that is somehow illegible, sorry.)
18. Political fiction – are we in the apocalypse?
19. Good YA books for adults.
20. Realistic decomposition of the body. (Kevin Hayes noted "Canticle for Leibowitz")
21. When is sex with aliens bestial?
22. Obsolescence – a future we didn't expect.
23. A post-jobs future.
24. Would meeting aliens end science fiction?
25. Technology and discoveries of the past year (for example, exoplanets).
26. Can robots be legally liable?
27. Psychological impacts of reading and writing horror.
28. Crossing genres.
29. Creating new cliches – how Tolkien and Rowling changed a genre.

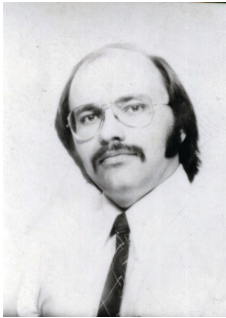
We are of course free to continue to contribute topics to the website.

Our headcount was 20.

Secretary Bill Hall

Brief Bio

Eric Leif Davin



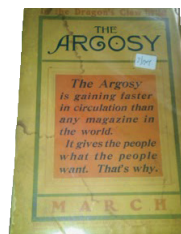
Francis Stevens

"Francis Stevens" (Gertrude Barrows Bennett), (1883-1948?): Sam Moskowitz described Gertrude Bennett as "the greatest woman writer of science fantasy in the period between Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and C. L. Moore." Gary Hoppenstand, an academic who wrote the introduction to a 2004 collection of her fiction, termed her, "The woman who invented dark fantasy." This is a type of horror story in which humanity is threatened by forces beyond human understanding.



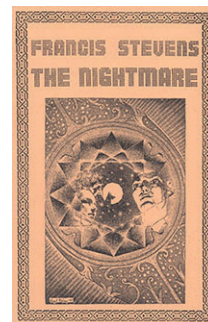
Born in Minneapolis, she obtained only an elementary school education. However, she acquired stenographic and secretarial skills and worked as such before marrying an English newspaper reporter named Stewart Bennett. They moved to Philadelphia and in 1910, eight months after the birth of their daughter, Josephine, her husband drowned in a storm while seeking sunken treasure. She then became a secretary for a University of Pennsylvania professor, while typing student papers at night. Toward the end of World War I her father died and she took in her invalid mother.

As a full-time care-giver, work outside the home was no longer practical, so she turned to writing as a means to support her family. She had some realistic hopes for this, as she had already written her first story at age 17 while working as a secretary in a Minneapolis department store. This was a science fiction story entitled,



"The Curious Experience of Thomas Dunbar," as by G. M. Barrows. She sent it to one of the top pulps of the day, Argosy, which immediately accepted it and published it in March, 1904. Within a week another magazine, Youth's Companion, had accepted her first poems. She therefore had reason she would be able to sell stories once more.

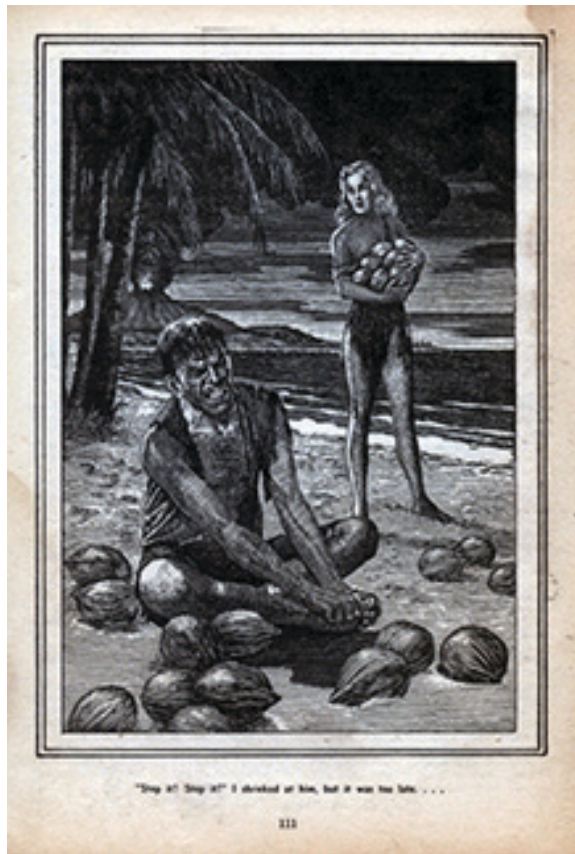
Her first such story, "The Nightmare," appeared in the April 14, 1917 of Frank Munsey's All-Story Weekly. She had sent the story to the editor, Bob Davis, under her own name. However, she requested that it appear under the pen-name of "Jean Vail." But, Davis seems to have decided otherwise, as it appeared under the pseudonym of "Francis Stevens." Reader response was positive and Davis encouraged her to write more. Having been established under the "Francis Stevens" name, she thereafter continued to publish under that name, even though it was not of her choosing.



Readers praised her stories, with noted fantasy authors A. Merritt and H. P. Lovecraft being among of her most ardent fans. Indeed, according to Hoppenstand, both of these authors, credited as the progenitors of dark fantasy, emulated Bennett's earlier style and themes. "The Citadel of Fear", which appeared in the companion Munsey magazine, Argosy Weekly, Sept. 14-Oct. 26, 1918, was a lost race story. In a letter to the magazine of November 15, 1919 (and written under the pseudonym of "Augustus T. Swift"), Lovecraft said of it that, "if written by Sir Walter Scott or Ibanez, that wonderful and tragic allegory would have been praised to the skies," as it offered "masterful evidence of huge mystery, gigantic tragedy, and original and extraordinary situations...Stevens, to my mind, is the highest grade of your writers."

Her story, "Friend Island" (All-Story Weekly, September 7, 1918), is a mature work of feminist alternative history that rejects traditional gender stereotypes. The Heads of Cerberus (Thrill Book, 1919) is an early parallel universe dystopia of a totalitarian future. Long-time Astounding book reviewer P. Schulyer Miller thought it was the first of

this kind. In Claimed (Argosy Weekly, March 6-20, 1920), a dark sea god reclaimed an ancient artifact taken by humans. Her last original story was the 1923 "Sunfire," a lost race novella serialized in Weird Tales.



She moved to California in 1936 and her daughter received a last letter from her in 1939. After that they lost contact and nothing is known of her subsequently, although it is believed she may have died in 1948. From 1940-1950 editor Mary Gnaedinger reprinted six of her stories in Famous Fantastic Mysteries and Fantastic Novels, including "The Elf-Trap" (Argosy Weekly, July 5, 1919), a modern fairy tale and one of her best works. These helped keep her reputation alive. Most of her short fiction was published in 2004 by the University of Nebraska Press in The Nightmare and Other Tales of Dark Fantasy.

Expanded Sigma

**Attention Parsec Members And Faithful
Sigma Readers!**

**Access The Online Edition To View More
Informative And Entertaining Content!**

Beginning with this issue, April 2017 Issue 373, Sigma will be expanding to 12 pages. Because of the postal rates, the paper issue will remain 10 pages in length. We will do our best to include only supplemental material in the additional digital pages. For example this month there will be an article on a Heinlein Juvenile and a Parsec member book review on the extra pages. All pertinent Parsec announcements will be included in the paper edition.

We are also moving to another managed email provider this month to allow us to send as much as 10 MB worth of information in the content of the Sigma pages. Presently we are restricted to 4 MB and must consistently lower the quality of photo's etc. Sigma will be served up from Mail Chimp's server and must be downloaded for you to be able to read it. Presently, the download takes place when you receive the email. The location of the download will be provided as a clickable URL in the body of the email. It is our desire in the near future to make the Sigma digital publication more interactive and to include segments that are audio and video, as well.

In addition, the current Sigma will be available for download on the Parsec website, www.parsec-sff.org, sometime after the monthly meeting. The date that the Sigma is ready for download will be posted on Parsec's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=parsec-sff>

Anyone who wishes to receive the digital edition of Sigma, please email a request to sigma@parsec-sff.org.

-Eds

PARSEC OFFICERS

President Joe Coluccio
Vice President: Bonnie Funk
Secretary: William Hall
Treasurer: Greg Armstrong
Commentator: Michelle Gonzalez

Quick Info on the Nebula Conference

Thursday, May 18-Sunday, May 21, 2017
Marriott City Center, Pittsburgh

SFWA members and other individuals who are interested in science fiction and fantasy are welcome to attend SFWA's Nebula Conference. People who purchase memberships for the Nebula Conference may participate in workshops, programming and special events throughout the weekend. You do not need to be a member of SFWA to buy a membership for the Nebula Conference; all are welcome. You can buy Nebula Conference memberships and Nebula Award Banquet tickets at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2017-sfw-nebula-conference-tickets-27153384504>

Focusing on three tracks relevant to professionals in the genre, attendees will be able to choose from career management, professional development, and expert knowledge panels and workshops.

Nebula Conference members will be able to meet with major industry vendors throughout the weekend. 2016 vendors included: Amazon, Patreon, Kickstarter, Draft-2-Digital & Kobo. Our "Ask an Expert" sessions provides an opportunity to talk with industry professionals on a wide range of relevant topics.

The conference will also feature the prestigious Nebula Awards Banquet and Ceremony along with receptions honoring SFWA's newest Grand Master and the Nebula Award nominees.

This conference is fully accessible and we will strive to make this event comfortable, safe, and engaging for all attendees.

The Nebula Conference will open up its Friday night Mass Autographing (May 19, 8pm-10pm, Grand Ballroom of the Marriott City Center Pittsburgh) to the public. We expect between 50 and 90 writers to be autographing that evening. People can bring books to be autographed (some writers may have a three book autograph limit depending on lines) or can buy books at the SFWA Book Store which will be open during the Mass Autographing.

SFWA's newest Grandmaster Jane Yolen and Solstice winner Toni Weiskopf will attend.

Nominees who plan to attend include Charlie Jane Anders, S.B. Divya, Kij Johnson, Barbara Krasnoff, William Ledbetter, David D. Levine, Seanan McGuire, John P. Murphy, A. Merc Rustad, Jason Sanford, Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam, Fran Wilde, Alyssa Wong and Caroline M. Yoachim

Other writers who plan to attend include: Kate Baker, Jennifer Brozek, Michael Capobianco, Curtis Chen, Kenneth Chiacchia, Brenda Clough, Julie Czerneda, Andy Duncan, Scott Edelman, Timons Esaias, Susan Forest, Laura Anne Gilman, Joe Haldeman, Erin M. Hartshorn, Larry Ivkovich, Matthew Johnson, James Kelly, Mary Robinette Kowal, Geoffrey Landis, Mary Soon Lee, Terra LeMay, Michael Martinez, Joseph Newcomer, Jody Lynn Nye, Sara Pinsker, Cat Rambo, Kelly Robson, Stanley Schmidt, Lawrence M. Schoen, Bud Sparhawk, Steven H Silver, Jamie Stefko, Shanna Swendson Lynne Thomas, Mark Tiedemann, Diane Turnshek and Mary Turzillo.

For more information on the Nebula Conference see: <http://nebulas.sfw.org/nebula-conference/> Saturday night's Nebula Award Ceremony will be Webcast, check the Website for more information.



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.

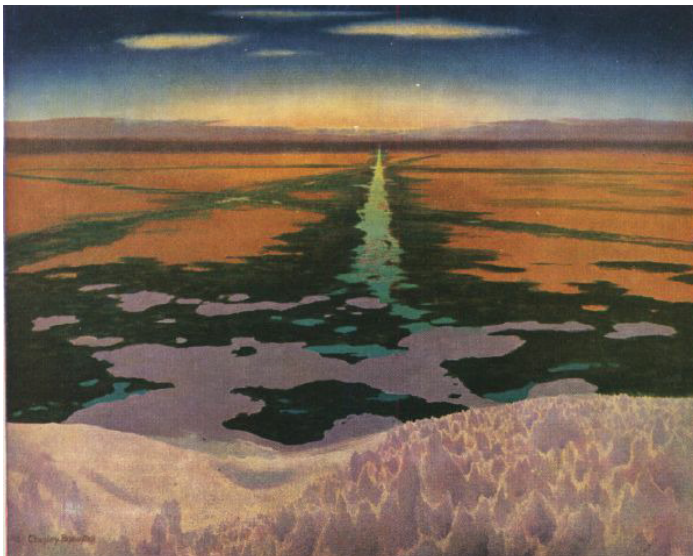
Retro SF Master

Chesley Bonestell

On April 18, 1906, the San Andreas Fault slipped and bucked San Francisco with a 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Chesley Bonestell, 18 years of age, not only lost the house that he lived in on Nob Hill but all of his earliest artwork. He had won so many awards by his twelfth birthday that he was given permission to start serious art instruction.



I can't imagine my earliest days of reading science fiction without the wonderful juvenile novels of Robert Heinlein, the Winston Juvenile Science Fiction Series and the works of Chesley Bonestell.



lacks a certain nostalgia engendered by CL Moore, Leigh Brackett, Ray Bradbury, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Chesley Bonestell.

In 1918, Bonestell moved to New York as an architectural designer and renderer. He worked on such projects as the Chrysler Building and the Golden Gate Bridge. In 1940 he contributed matte paintings to classic films, "Citizen Kane," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." And the science fiction films "Destination Moon," "When Worlds Collide," "War of the Worlds," and "Conquest of Space." He eventually became the highest paid matte artist in Hollywood.

Also in 1940, with a revived childhood interest in astronomy, he published a series of space illustrations for Life Magazine. He illustrated ten books on space science between 1949 and 1972.

The Conquest of Space Text Willy Ley (1949)
 Across the Space Frontier - Text Various (1952)
 Conquest of the Moon - Text von Braun, Whipple & Ley (1953)
 The Exploration of Mars - Text Ley & von Braun (1956)
 Man and the Moon - Text Robert S. Richardson (1961)
 Rocket to the Moon - Text Bonestell (1961)
 The Solar System - Text Bonestell (1961)
 Beyond the Solar System - Text Willy Ley (1964)
 Mars - Text Robert S. Richardson (1964)
 Beyond Jupiter - Text Arthur C. Clarke (1972)



Bonestell was awarded the Special Achievement Hugo in 1974, the Retro Hugo for Best Artist of 1953, and established a peer award named the "Chesley" to recognize individual works and achievements during the year.

He died at the age of 98. His career spanned the first century of aviation and space flight. More than likely he is the most respected and famous space artist of all time.

I owe many of my dreams to Chesley Bonestell.

Hi, Secretary Bill Hall here.



While many of us embrace fantasy and horror, Parsec has usually identified with science fiction, or SF. Today there is a widespread feeling that science is under siege, and a March for Science is being planned for Saturday, April 22 (Earth Day). The main event will be in Washington DC, but there is also a group called March for Science Pittsburgh trying to put together a local event starting noon that day. The local effort is saying they want to be "nonpartisan," but I think I prefer the idea of "basic." We want our kids to learn facts, data and research should not be suppressed or eliminated, we need to be sure we can continue to enjoy clean water -- these I think are basic concerns shared by many of us. My feeling is simple: with all the passion we put into SF, perhaps we can spend one afternoon standing up for the S in SF. I have friends who are scientists and I think they could use some love from us laymen who admire, respect, and appreciate them. You can find March for Science Pittsburgh on Facebook -- and, of course, the national march at March for Science. Tell them Bill sent you, and watch them go "Huh?" Thank you.

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.



Parsec Meeting Schedule Saturday, April 8, 2017

"Life in Space"

In January, CMU was one of eight schools invited to participate in a challenge to make life better for astronauts. Students stepped up from Mechanical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering and the School of Architecture to take the "Life in Space" challenge working on new HP ZBook Studio Mobile Workstations the company sent. Their idea? Bone and muscle wasting is a huge problem with long stints in micro-gravity, so why not make a self-sustaining wearable resistance system? Astronauts could use it to replace some of the two hours of exercise they need to do every day.



TEAM MEMBERS

Diane Turnshek – Faculty Advisor
Eugene Yu
Deepshikha Acharya
Vishaal Dhamotharan
Cecilia Ferrando
Kevin Wang



The CMU team's design will help not only astronauts, but people here on Earth with medical issues. The judges announced on March 28 that the CMU team made it to the final round! There will only be one week for public voting to pick the winning team. April 3 will tell if our team gets a chance to keep their laptops and travel to Cape Canaveral and Epcot Center in Florida. Please visit the sites listed below for more information.

<http://www8.hp.com/us/en/campaigns/nasadesginchallenge/overview.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/maximustrength/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEsKZhMeWJo>

Are you ready to vote?

Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library

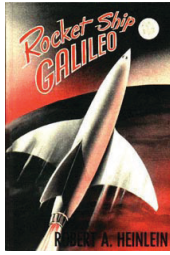
Room B - Next to the Rear Entrance

1:30 - 4:30 PM

Come in and introduce yourself

The room is open at noon.

Rocket Ship Galileo



In 1947, the average cost of a new house was \$6,600.00, average wages per year were \$2,850.00, a new car \$1,300.00 and a gallon of gas 15¢.

An unknown object crashed in Roswell, New Mexico, reverberating down to this day. At least as a late-night radio topic and beloved in the minds of conspiracy wonks everywhere. It was either an unfortunate high-altitude surveillance balloon, or They're Here!

The Polaroid Land Camera was demonstrated, leaving a legacy of strong acrid smelling black-and-white photos developed in camera and fixed with a white sticky tube of stuff in 60 seconds. The ones around my house are small and faded with not one word of comment penned on the back. Who the hell is that, Cousin Jimmy?

Thor Heyerdahl smashed into the reef at Raroia in the Tuamotu Islands.

Bardeen and Brattain invented the transistor. (Shockley the improved junction transistor in 1948)

The Spruce Goose took off, but never took off.

And Robert A Heinlein published his first juvenile science fiction novel, "Rocket Ship Galileo." The novel was published in hardback from Scriveners and remarkable in that it was not a republication of a story from a pulp magazine or a paperback book. "Rocket Ship Galileo" went straight to public and school libraries to sit on the shelf with other juvenile publications. Because of the hard-cover format and the reputation of the publisher, Heinlein's juveniles were not treated with the same disdain as most science fiction.

Heinlein's juveniles differed from science fiction of the era. There were no "bug-eyed" alien terrors, ray guns or flying saucers. Although there were young inventors, the titles were not christened by the nominal invention. Tom Swift and his Flying Motorcycle, and his Invisible Many Colored Cloak and his, you go ahead and imagine the rest. The stories were based on serious extrapolation about science and technology. Unlike other juveniles which tended to be straight adventure stories with an unchanging character in charge, Heinlein's novels fit into his "Future History" an outline that served

as the basis for most of his work, juvenile and not. The characters changed with each subsequent book, and his memorable aliens were, for the most part, depicted as wise and endearing.

Science Fiction of the Thirties and Forties is often rightfully accused of being a puerile literature with a young man's image of desirable women who are only in the pages to be saved from slimy evil aliens, who for the same inexplicable reason that Kong, goes gaga over Ann Darrow in her less than adequate jungle attire, and prefers her as a mate rather than a yummy morsel. Heinlein's juveniles were written far from that norm. There were female characters of substance. You can blame Scriveners if there are more male characters than women. In "Grumbles from the Grave" Heinlein states there would have been more if he had his way. The matriarchal alien societies he portrays are frequently stronger than any encountered in our earthbound norms.

"Rocket Ship Galileo" is my least favorite of the twelve books in the series. I suspect when I was younger and predisposed to love anything with a rocket ship on the cover, I was just as enthusiastic about the first as I was about the last. I re-read all twelve with some frequency and always find "Rocket Ship Galileo" as a stumbling block to devouring the rest. Much as I must read "Triplanetary," the prequel infodump added after the series to all the Kinnesons and Arisians and Eddorians while attempting a review of The Lensman Books.

The George Pal/ Heinlein movie Destination Moon was supposed to be born out of the pages of "Rocket Ship Galileo," but any resemblance is vestigial. The story is about three young men and a mentoring relative who took the idea of space flight with a great deal of seriousness. There was some government intervention. The story moves forward in scientific and technological development with a pleasing dollop of intrigue. Although I still enjoy the movie, was thrilled as a youngster to be a part of such a marvel as a trip to the moon in the in dark the movie theater, even I have to admit that "Destination Moon" can seem as boring as NASA made the space program that took us to the moon. One Small Step, indeed, and the Beginning of the End, at that. The moon could do with the exciting defeat of the Nazi menace portrayed in 1947's "Rocket Ship Galileo." We can't seem to do it here on Earth.

JK



The Scarlet Queen by Eric Leif Davin

Review by Larry Ivkovich



Avast, me hearties! Eric Leif Davin's follow-up to his pirate/zombie novel, *The Desperate and the Dead*, is here. *The Scarlet Queen* follows the further adventures of pirate captain Anne Bonny, the Scarlet Queen of the title (because of her red hair). She sails in a quest for revenge against King George and his British forces who are out to end piracy once and for all.

Having survived the final battle against the zombies and the demons from Hell in the first book, Anne, now captains the ship of the evil, demon-worshipping Blackbeard, "Queen Anne's Revenge." She returns to her pirating, marauding ways in a very big, bloody way.

Gathering a number of crews and a small armada of ships, Anne burns and pillages her way throughout the Caribbean. With her is Catalina Sierra, or Cat, also back from the first book, who has embraced the pirate life, or "sweet trade." She admires Anne greatly and has become fiercely loyal to the Scarlet Queen.

Though no zombies or demons are present in this book, there is a vampire, who also becomes an important member of Anne's crew on the *Revenge*. Appearing in the first book also, this character's vampire aspect had never been revealed. It was thought by all she had died in the devastating zombie attack. But, she returns from certain death, as vampires do, and sets out to get her revenge. And much more.

As in the first book, there's plenty of action, killing, gore, cursing, and blood, which isn't a bad thing. It's hard to put the book down, being a real page-turner. Pirates are depicted here as unwashed, foul-breathed, foul-mouthed drunkards, and very fierce fighters. Though the characters all seem reckless and unforgiving with no redeeming qualities, Anne is anti-slavery and frees slaves wherever she sails. She urges to them to attack and overthrow their masters to regain their freedom. She also allows many to serve on her ships, which gives her personality a positive aspect.

As before, Davin intersperses the narrative with interesting bits of historical and geographic passages that never slow the story down but only enhance it. The sea battle scenes are well described and exciting. The three main characters, Anne, Cat, and the vampire, are all nicely drawn with their own distinct personalities.

Plus, there are pirate drinks, like "rumbo," which are described and would really put hair on your chests! Consume at your own risk.

A fun read and great follow-up to the first novel.

Sigma Writers Wanted

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