



SIGMA

The Newsletter of Parsec June 2017 Issue 375

From the Editors	-2
Nebula Award Report	-3
President's Column	-4
May 2017 Minutes	-5
Game Review: Chrononauts	-6
Parsec Meeting Schedule	-7
New Cosplay/Costume Contest at Confluence 2017!	-8
Brief Bio - Eric Leif Davin	-9
Ou ee ou ah ah	-14
Parsec Meeting May 2017	-15
My Nebula Awards Experience	-16



Let's keep science fiction in the gutter where it belongs.

The phrase is catchy enough. As is "The golden age of science fiction is twelve." Both have the gritty taste of the truth. Most fans want to duck their heads when there is a mention of an SF criticism that proposes some literary exposition. Want to crack open a head when they are coerced into cracking open the leaves of a silly, stiff scholarly diatribe that waves a whiff of Marx, a sniff of Deconstruction (Quelle différence or it is différence) and a wisp of Kristeva.

I think it's curious that a group of folk who are excited by a rush of new ideas pushes back when it comes to considering theories about the way in which we interact with the genre we love. Some of it stems from this "bold new" idea put forth by people, who should know better, who are at the forefront of science, that blithely and blindly states philosophy is dead. Another is the indomitable America spirit that squeezes the soul out of the intellect and just wants to have a drunken revel with a more natural spirit in the back yard while the inexorable universe appears as an interesting backdrop overhead. Some of it is because ideas are just so unsettling. They challenge your worldview. Change the ground you choose to stand on. They are often ethereal. Hard to grasp, easy to gasp.

The gutter is redolent of familiar psychic drippings, memes as comfortable as your old slippers, memories of surprise filled startling moments, archaic images now plastered over and dull. It smells looks, feels, tastes like home wrapped in a soundscape that calms the jitters better than a glass of Pappy Van Winkel's 23-year-old reserve. The gutter, not twelve, is the golden age of science fiction.

I understand the attraction. What is not to love?

My own gutter is a grand place. I find there is a downside to settling in the comfort of my palpated nest. It can quickly become a trap that allows for no expansion. No basis for exploration. It is tempting to never scale the dangerous depth of the psyche. After all, there can lie madness. Or to look on the face of the naked cosmos. If you look deep and outward, you can find the very same dangers, disappointments, and triumphs that accompany our inward plunge. The inner reaches of outer space calls Joseph Campbell. Outward, toward the edges of our reality lies inward our wonder.

There is a price to be paid for travel into the universe of the discourse of science fiction. The ever growing, ever rolling, ever assimilating Blob of life force and intellect. Take in all of it that you can. Read and consider the musings of a scholar you are sure is bloviated. There is crafted wonders in many articles that consider science fiction. Don't stop in the sheets of the commercial mags, or dwell in the backwater of the pulpy origins, fold back the paperback pages of your favorite series, don't hang on the word of magic and fantasy, or disappear into eldritch horror, live through and beyond the precepts of future war or future gloom, see through and beyond the veil of the silver turned to digital screen.

Dare to engage the concept you feel is just beyond your reach. Dare to grapple with arcane philosophies and troubling criticisms. Dare to take on a poem, a fugue, and a mathematical treatise. Journal Converse Sketch Read Compose Write Talk Think Question. Always question. Don't believe what you think.

It's all science fiction. And you have the rest of your life.

Handwritten signature.

PARSEC OFFICERS

President Joe Coluccio

Vice President: Bonnie Funk

Secretary: William Hall

Treasurer: Greg Armstrong

Commentator: Michelle
Gonzalez

Nebula Award Report



For the second time in 18 years, the Science Fiction Writers of America brought the Nebula Awards to Pittsburgh. Over the last few years, it's become a writers' conference in addition to an awards ceremony. As in 1999, the event was held at the Pittsburgh

Marriott City Center, and a number of PARSEC members helped out. Pittsburgh welcomed about 260 writers and editors to the conference from all across North America. Attending writers included: Connie Willis, Seanan McGuire, David D. Levine, Mary Robinette Kowal, Alyssa Wong and Joe Haldeman.

The Nebula Conference opened on Thursday, May 18 and ran until Sunday, May 21, and featured panels, discussions, strolls and receptions. Another feature of the Nebula Conference is the free book bag.

Over 200 boxes of books and magazines were donated to the Nebula Conference from various publishers. Kevin Hayes and Laurie Mann collected leftover books for library donations and for June 11's Carnegie Library Summer Reading Extravaganza.

This year's Nebula Conference honored Jane Yolen as the Grand Master, Toni Weisskopf, and the late Peggy Rae Sapienza as Solstice Award winners (for their volunteering efforts on behalf of SFWA), and Jim Fiscus with the Kevin O'Donnell, Jr. Service to SFWA Award. The Nebula winners announced were:

Best Novel: All the Birds in the Sky, Charlie Jane Anders (Tor; Titan)

Best Novella: Every Heart a Doorway, Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)

Best Novelette: "The Long Fall Up", William Ledbetter (F&SF 5-6/16)

Best Short Story: "Seasons of Glass and Iron", Amal El-Mohtar (The Starlit Wood)

Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation: Arrival, Directed by Denis Villeneuve, Screenplay by Eric Heisserer, 21 Laps Entertainment/Film Nation Entertainment/Lava Bear Films/Xenolinguistics

Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy: Arabella of Mars, David D. Levine (Tor)

Astronaut Kjell Lindgren served as Toastmaster for the Nebula Awards Ceremony. PARSEC members who volunteered at the conference included Larisa Van Winkle and Greg Armstrong (Hospitality), Barbara Carlson (At-Con Registration), Laurie Mann (Hotel), Mary Tabasko (Banquet), Diane Turnshek (Mass Autographing), Karen Yun-Lutz (Candid Photography), Jim Mann & James Walton (Beer Tasting), Kevin Hayes (Staff).

-Laurie Mann

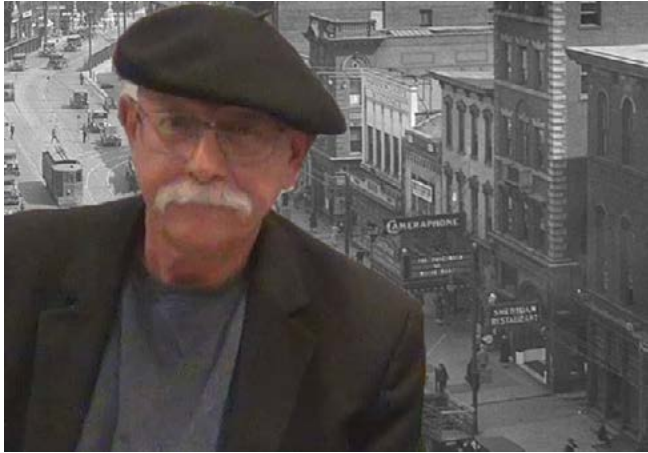


Dr. Lingren's Q&A



Group Shot

President's Column



I love the black and white, limited budget, short on science, bereft of sophistication, small of literary pretension, science fiction films that were created in the 1950's. Which includes for my practical purposes those that penetrate a few years into the following decade. I sit and chew on the random thoughts that ping around my cerebrum. What is it I loved about them? Even to my

primitive childhood consciousness, the shadowy film fest on view at the Liberty or the Enright or the Regent or the Sheridan Square or the Cameraphone Theaters lacked a certain verisimilitude that gave further rise to questioning challenges. I mean, couldn't I see the very Rhedosaurus on the floor of the Carnegie Museum in Oakland? My belief in flying saucers was based on "real" pictures in magazines. Parapsychology? Hadn't one of my fifth-grade chums stolen the idea about Plato's cave right out of my brain? Shouted it out while my arm so fervently waved. And I sure as hell believed in the inevitability of space flight, life on other worlds, parallel universes and travel to the beginning of time which was the end of time. Those movies never required my belief. I lived them.

The warm and fuzzy feeling I get when Zontar is taking over, and giant insects infest the sewers and skyscrapers of Chicago, New York or Copenhagen, and Robbie makes a jeweled encrusted mini skirt, 20 some tons of lead shielding, and Kansas City Bourbon, is the same as when I wander home again.

You can so go home again. You can so step in the same river twice. Yearning becomes memory becomes time swapping. You both step into a film and let it come out into the world to meet you. It is a quick experiential trip to an unfamiliar neighborhood. You inhabit the world through your eyes and your ears which code as touch and feel and smell.

Try as I might, such is the filter of over touted growing up and the palimpsest of healthy skepticism, I cannot ever entirely reclaim the original "in the moment" excitement of climbing into a seat on the aisle, shoes sticking to the soft drink on the concrete floor or worse from the last patron (What must it have been like to share a bunk after shift on a Axis Unterseeboot?), waiting for the running lights

to dim, disciplined, never eating a single kernel pop until the opening credits, not a Milk Dud, not a sugar high sip. That moment of supreme anticipation which contains the depth, breadth, and length of the whole growing universe. That simple instant before the after.

I do, however, find it, briefly in the locus of the pit of my stomach from which all emotion must emanate, a rush of warmth and connection, at unexpected times. It takes my breath away. Leaves me thrilled. Leaves me sure that life is worth living.

I have always believed it does not matter which part of the forest you step into. It is only important that you enter. The trees are stacked deep, the sky is dark, nothing is certain, the path obscured. The trace is yours to make. Dante had Virgil to usher him through hell. I wish my theology was that easy.

Long ago, by chance, I found myself bound in the audience with creatures from another place, another world, another zip code. I followed them to this moment here in a coffee shop with music and people swirling around me, rain beating slowly on the window, cars shush on wet pavement, and a world full of Commerce, wrong thinking, horror and magnificent wonder. Earning a living is not as important as earning your life.

Don't let the jagoffs get you down, not when Body Snatchers beckon.



May 2017 Minutes



President Joe was back, wearing a Science Fiction League T-shirt complete with rocketship. The League was Hugo Gernsback's effort to promote fandom. In pre-meeting chatter, Diane Turnshek and I ID'd various names on a flyer for a Nebula Awards autographing event.

Mary Soon Lee reported ten publications, one in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, and five acceptances, one for Science Magazine. Barton Paul Levenson made free copies of his new novel "The Argo Incident" available to those who promised to write a review. Don Firesmith reported progress on his Hellholes trilogy possibly becoming a Hollywood motion picture. He also had general praise for the Girl Genius comics. Greg Armstrong apprised us of books in the Parsec library, in particular, David Kagan's "Sunstroke," Robert J. Sawyer's "Hominids" (first in a set of books dealing with an

alternative Earth ruled by a Neanderthal civilization), and Larry Niven's "The Ringworld Throne." (Chris Ferrier speculated that a cross between "Ringworld" and "Dune" might be "Ringworm.")

Joe is experimenting with online Sigma (which is looking fine to me) and working on including satisfactory animation. Confluence approaches and should probably be booked no later than June, especially to assure the Airport Sheraton that leaving aside a block of rooms is worthwhile. Bonnie Funk called for Confluence volunteers, particularly for the registration table and the con suite, and reminded us that Confluence T-shirts and back issues of Triangulation are always available. Bonnie also related her harrowing Grand Canyon experience which involved her getting flown to safety via helicopter. Mary Soon Lee read us two poems, one of which was essentially a very nicely condensed science fiction story.

The take from the raffle: \$39. The prize: Brian J. Robb's big and lavishly illustrated book "Steampunk," which wisely does not snub TV's "The Wild Wild West." The winner: me.

Our speaker was Chuck Lanigan, a teacher with a master's degree from Pitt, and the topic was "Inventing the Future: Technology in Literature and Popular Culture." It was an overview of history, continually touching back on technology, science fiction, and occasional philosophical trends, and for a presentation that ran over two hours, it was unusually lively and engaging. It began by noting how relatively recent the expectation of technical progress has become, and developments such as "deskilling," the rise of devices which effectively hand skills over to unskilled customers, such as GPS as opposed to map reading. Also noted was how the first inventor is not necessarily the famous one, how we ascribe the steamboat to Robert Fulton but not John Fitch, or the telephone to Bell and not Antonio Meucci. After a nod to Francis Bacon's "New Atlantis" Lanigan already has us in the 19th Century with Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, William Blake ("dark satanic mills" – Jean Martin said this was a reference to schools), and Thoreau, who worried over "improved means to unimproved ends." The very idea of R&D rose, along with a claim to Manifest Destiny.

"History is the nightmare we are trying to awaken from," wrote James Joyce, and Civil War photographer Mathew Brady already glimpsed that nightmare, echoed much later in pictures from the Vietnam War. People were moved to wonder if perhaps war was not so glorious after all. They also sensed a dynamic of man versus machine, as in the folk legend of the steel-driving man John Henry. However, come the Gilded Age (roughly the Late Victorian), some began to speculate that wisdom could be of a technical nature, as with Frank Bunker Gilbreth,

Sr., who applied time and motion study to his family, and the rise of mesmerism and Freud suggested technical means of addressing the human mind.

Yet almost immediately that can-do attitude collided with the War to End All Wars, better known now as World War One, of which there were already some science fiction prophecies such as "War in the Air" by H. G. Wells, or the uncannily modern telephone technology in E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops." (Barton Levenson pointed out that at the poison gas attack at Ypres in 1915 that the only "technical" advice that could be offered the troops was to soak their clothing in urine.) John Singer Sargent's depictions of war echoed Mathew Brady's frankness. Eventually, the silent films RUR (1920) and Metropolis (1927) came out. (Lanigan paused to speculate on a festival of silent SF movies.) Freud published "Civilization and Its Discontents."

Optimism pushed on anyway, reflected in part by our own Pittsburgh borough of Wilkinsburg playing home to the garage of Frank Conrad, where he launched his fledgling civilian radio station 8XK, a few years before the rise of KDKA. Buck Rogers hit the newspaper comic strips and soon Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" came out. The light mocking of mechanization in 1936's Charlie Chaplin classic Modern Times could not repress the adventures of Tom Swift, who gave us the undying American dream of the flying car. Some even imagined flying hotels. Not long after the 1939 World's Fair came America's entry into World War II, leading directly to our post-WWII prosperity. We became fascinated by highways, suburbia, and labor-saving technology. You could have a car phone – but it still is the age of the vacuum tube, the actual machinery would pack your trunk. Lanigan recommended Asimov's "I, Robot" and two Bradbury stories, "There Will Come Soft Rains" (which he read some of) and "The Veldt."

From about 1961 ("Solaris") onward, we tread on increasingly familiar ground – Philip K. Dick, Kurt Vonnegut, "Star Trek," "The Jetsons," the HAL 9000 computer, on towards "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" (originally BBC radio plays) and Tron. Amidst all this were some steady positives themes: "Dr. Who," "MacGyver," Sagan's "Cosmos" series. Towards the end, Lanigan noted The Matrix and a Samsung smartphone's resemblance to the Black Monolith.

Lanigan offered four standing reactions to technological change: utopian, dystopian, retreat into fantasy (he quickly cited vampires), or the transhuman movement anticipating Kurzweil's singularity. He left us with the kinds of questions once posed by cultural critic Neil Postman. Who benefits? Who pays? Who decides? What does technology solve, and what problems does it create? These questions and the tensions they represent have informed the growth of SF

I credit Lanigan with packing a lot into a couple of hours with great drive. Personally, I don't know that his presentation is that organized or clear, let alone persuasive, just yet (I suspect he'll be fine-tuning it), but for that Saturday afternoon it did not matter, because I have rarely seen a more interactive meeting, with various members constantly contributing additional facts and insights. We may not have resolved or decided anything, but a rousing time was had by many.

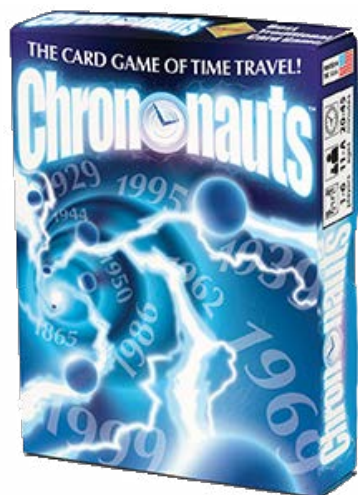
Once back home I cracked open the raffle prize book "Steampunk." I did not appreciate its not having an index, but it is beautiful and comprehensive and good fun to read around in.

Our headcount reached 23.

- Secretary Bill Hall

Game Review: Chrononauts

Designed by Andrew Looney
published by Looney Labs
reviewed by Alan Irvine



I block Oswald from assassinating JFK and patch up the damage done to the space-time continuum. One more fix to go and the future, my present, exists once more. But something is happening. Someone is fiddling with time paradoxes. Further back in the past, Abraham Lincoln falls to an assassin's bullet. Changes ripple through the timeline. American race relations grow worse. Suddenly, in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. does not win the Presidential election. Instead, somebody named Nixon sits in the White House, and with that, my timeline starts to unravel. Quickly I slip back into the time machine to fix this before the damage can spread any further...

Chrononauts is a fun, fast, and sometimes chaotic game of time travel. The game starts with a "board" made up of a set of cards representing major events in history, starting with the assassination of Lincoln(1865) and ending with the Columbine Massacre (1999). At first, the cards show history as we know it, but as the players get to work, they can flip cards over to display alternate events. This flipping causes other events to change as well, creating paradoxes, or holes in time that need to be patched up with new events. And that's where the fun starts. At the start of the game, each player gets a time line to create, involving three specific events. If they can set up those three events on the board to match their timeline, they win. The problem is that each player needs a different combination of events – and if two players need different versions of the same event (if, for example, one player needs Lincoln alive and another player needs Lincoln dead) history can quickly become a battleground.

If rewriting history proves too difficult, however, there are other ways of winning the game. Each player has a specific mission to complete, such as finding all three versions of the Mona Lisa (the real one, the fake one, and the obviously fake one) or procuring the elusive VCR recording of the Big Bang. And if that isn't working out, there is yet a third way to win. When changes in history create a paradox, whoever fixes that paradox gets a reward. Fix ten paradoxes, by patching the timeline with a new event, and you win the game. On the other hand, let too many unpatched

paradoxes pile up, and the space-time continuum collapses in on itself, and no one wins.

Chrononauts is easy to learn and play. Games usually last about 20-30 minutes, though if you end up with several players fighting over the same key events, changing and unchanging history over and over again, the game can stretch out. While knowledge of the history of the 20th century is not required, it certainly helps. (And if your grasp of history is weak, this is a fun way to brush up.) And there's a website where you can find out about some of the less obvious connections, such as why preventing the Hindenburg disaster also ends up preventing the Korean War.

So fire up the time machine – history is waiting for you to set it right.





Parsec Meeting Schedule

Saturday, June 10, 2017

Alison Conte talks about her novel **Beyond Normal**

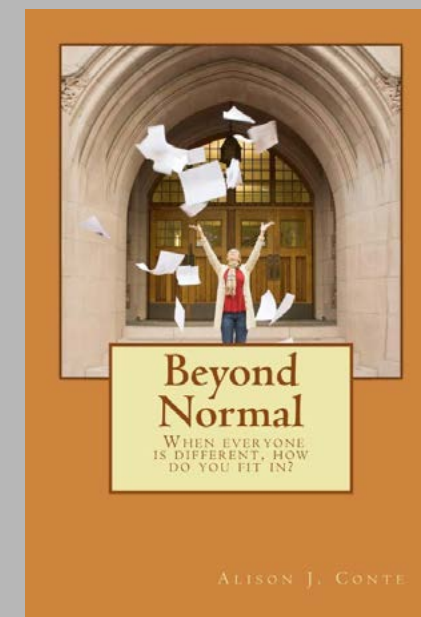


Alison Conte has been telling great stories for 30 years, in newspapers, books and magazines. Because she worked for years at a liberal arts college, *Beyond Normal* is rich in realistic details about the behind the scenes operation of a college campus. She puts you in the middle of this world, along with imaginative ideas about the world of 2045, telepathy, social and spiritual growth.

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.

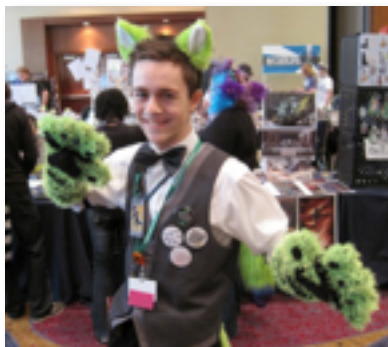


New Cosplay/Costume Contest at Confluence 2017!

From Furry



To not-so furry



To not furry at all



Our contest is open to any and all interested in dressing as your favorite ... whatever. Or coming up with something new. Categories and rules will be announced as finalized. We expect to get a judge or two experienced in Cosplay Costumes as well as those who are official "Costumers".

Prizes will be awarded and photos are encouraged! We intend to have fun. Join us!



Aug 4-6, 2017

SHERATON PITTSBURGH AIRPORT HOTEL

www.confluence-sff.org

CONFLUENCE IS . . .

- ❖ Panels ❖ Readings ❖ Music Concerts ❖ Writing exercises ❖ Dealers Room ❖ Science Presentations
- ❖ Writing Workshops ❖ Filk ❖ Literary Beer Author Discussions ❖ Art Show
- ❖ Beer Tasting ❖ Con Suite ❖ Kaffeeklatsches ❖ Art Demos
- ❖ Cosplay and More!❖

Guests of Honor:
Sharon Lee and Steve Miller

Featured Music Guest:
evil Science Guests:
Consortium of Genius




Award-winning authors of the Liaden Universe®

Confluence is Pittsburgh's longest running literary conference with a focus on science fiction, fantasy and horror. Confluence is host to many award-winning authors, editors, artists and song-writers who gather for three full days and hold panel discussions, concerts and talks. Confluence is a unique opportunity for attendees to meet and personally chat with the writers and artists who create the SF/F/H culture today, and are shaping the movement of science fiction and fantasy in the future.

 **Visit Confluence on Social Media**

Twitter: @confluenceSFF

Our FB page: facebook.com/confluencesff

Our FB group: facebook.com/groups/confluencesff

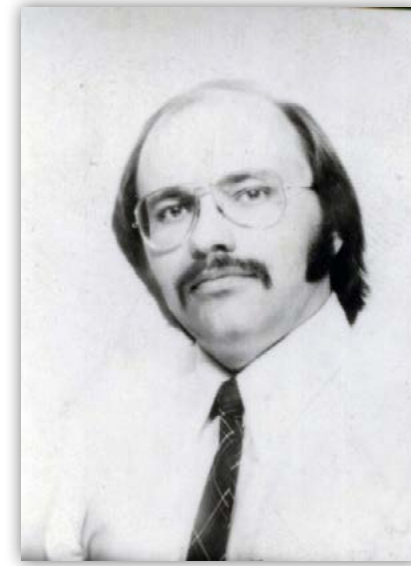
Program Participants include but are not limited to: Danielle Ackley-McPhail, J.D. Barker, Eric Beebe, Ken Chiacchia, Lawrence C. Connolly, Timons Esaias, Susan Hanniford Crowley, Eric Davin, Susan Dexter, Chet Gottfried, J.L. Gribble, Elektra Hammond, Walter Hunt, Alan Irvine, Al Katerinsky, Herb Kauderer, Bill Keith, Brian Koscienski, Jamie Lackey, Mary Soon Lee, Barton Levenson, Tim Liebe, Brea Ludwigson, Mike McPhail, Christie Meierz, Heidi Ruby Miller, Jason Jack Miller, Charles Oberndorf, Andi O'Connor, Christopher Pisano, A.M. Rycroft, Darrell Schweitzer, Lucy Snyder, Bud Sparhawk, John Alfred Taylor, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Christopher Weuve, Jeff Young, The Blibbering Humdingers, Cheshire Moon, Lauren Cox, Egomyth, Harold Feld, Zoe Gray, Marc Grossman, Judi Miller, and Tianna and the Cliffhangers.



CONFLUENCE, PO Box 3681, PGH, PA 15230-3681
Confluence is presented by **PARSEC**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
www.parsec-sff.org



Brief Bio - Eric Leif Davin



To view Eric's articles for this month's Brief Bios click the links below

[Helen M. Urban](#)

[Rena M. \(Marie\) Vale](#)

[Emma Vanne](#)

["Lyn" \(Marilyn\) Venable](#)

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

Sigma Writers Wanted

It's time to tell
us what you
THINK

We are looking for
a few good Fen!

Sure, you're sitting on your pale blue-gray yoga mat meditating about all the great things you like to say about some subject or other. Buzzing with a bee in your bonnet about the dumb way everyone manipulates time travel tales since H.G. Wells. Flaming in aggravation because Nicolas the Grecius, a buddy of Aristotle, who peripatetically wove tales about lower middle earth way before Tolkien, is virtually unknown after 300 BC.

Well, just grab a pencil, Underwood Studio 44, or a Zagg wireless Bluetooth and happily scribble, punch holes with the small o, or click your way to an article that we will happily place from your posterior to our posterity in Sigma.

Submit all articles to sigma@parsec-sff.org.

Give your name. Word count if you got it. Almost any grammar is, obviously, accepted. Almost any typeface is acceptable We look forward to hearing from you.

Honest! - Eds

PARSEC Smile at Amazon

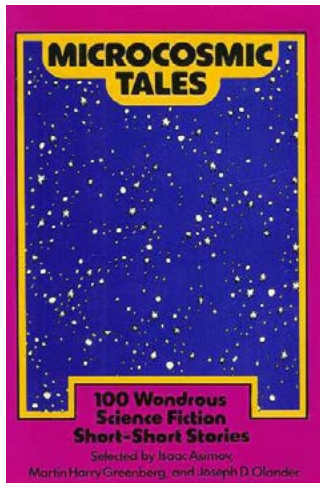
Parsec, a non-profit organization is a member of the Amazon Smile Program.

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.



Helen M. Urban, (1915-2003)

Urban lived in North Hollywood, CA, and was active in the influential Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) during the 1950s. She published only two stories in American SF magazines in the Fifties, and another two in British SF magazines. However, as late as 1980 she published an exquisite little horror story in the original anthology, *Microcosmic Tales: 100 Wondrous Science Fiction Short-Short Stories*, edited by

Isaac Asimov, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph Olander. Entitled “Tag,” it comprised only a single sentence -- 272 words long! In a letter she wrote to the March, 1957 *Imaginative Tales*, she praised “The Cosmic Kings,” by Alexander Blade (a house pseudonym), in the November, 1956 issue, and said it “was a fast-paced, interesting space opera and I loved every minute of it. I’m a sucker for a good space opera.”

[Return to Brief Bio Main Page](#)

[Next Page](#)



Rena M. (Marie) Vale, (1898-1983)

American novelist and short story writer. She began writing SF in 1952 with “The Shining City” in *Science Fiction Quarterly*. Shasta Publishers, the legendary specialty genre press, purchased her 1950s novel, *Beyond the Sealed World*, however Shasta went bankrupt before they could publish it. Paperback Library finally brought it out in 1965. It is the story of a man who is expelled into the liberating wilderness from an encapsulated and stagnant far future society. There he finds several different civilizations at various levels of advancement. “At first he struggled only for his own life amidst conditions for which his test-tube life had ill-equipped him,” the cover blurb on the paperback edition tells us. “But soon he realized that not only his future was at stake, but the future of all the worlds of Earth -- and that he was the one man who could save the Universe!”

Other works included *The Red Court: Last Seat of National Government of the United States of America* (1952), *Beyond These Walls* (1960), *Taurus Four* (1970), and *The Day After Doomsday: A Fantasy of Time Travel* (1970), a polemic on the horrors of nuclear war. *Taurus Four* was a space opera satire, which mixed an alien invasion with hippies lost on another planet. *The House on Rainbow Leap* (1973) was her last novel.

[Return to Brief Bio Main Page](#)

[Next Page](#)



Emma Vanne, (? -?)

Emma Vanne, (? -?): A journalist who, in the mid-Thirties, lived in Westfield, New Jersey. Her fiction indicated a familiarity with gardening. She seems to have been a regular reader of the SF magazines, as she also wrote at least one letter to Wonder Stories in July, 1935. Nothing else is known about her.

A Sixth Sense

Editor, WONDER STORIES:

In your April number, I notice that some reader suggests that the theoretical essays of Mr. Gernsback be two pages in length rather than a half-page. Now I certainly agree with him. After all, science-fiction authors all think along abstract lines before they boil down their theories into a concrete story. In fact, it was an initial essay of Mr. Gernsback that started me on the magazine. I love to read them.

It's odd, but I was going to make the same favorable comment on that story, "The Fatal Glance." The brain of a blind man who *never* saw might well snap if suddenly forced to see. Also a deaf person hearing for the first time would suffer an overpowering mental reaction. I gather that some brand new sense was involved in "Fatal Glance," something even deeper than seeing and hearing.

Do you know, I think that only the "on-the-surface" stories lend themselves best to the screen. The very subtle philosophies which are really the most *original* in story form ("Fatal Glance," for instance) could not be screened at all except by some people's conversation which is not considered pictorially interesting. Your kind of fiction might be therefore underestimated by the movie-public who could never get your really most original stories, those based on thoroughly intangible illusions, those abstract thrills that occur deep in the brain, away from the eye. You might easily screen the alien robots, but how could you ever convey to an audience the important idea that a personality millions of miles away was propelling itself into the detached form of the robot? You would just have to say it with words. I'm afraid that the science-fiction principle on the screen might degenerate into just explosions of phantastic airships and giant machines, and you know that would not adequately illustrate your stories in all their best phases.

I notice that your writers are not yet prone to spelling phonetically, for which fact I am glad. I write a little for the papers so I am enclosing for Mr. Gernsback or yourself a rather dry but tearfully earnest plea for stems, (a *Tribune* article of mine). If the phonetic principle enters in, I think it should be the other way around. Keep the significant stems, but pronounce nation as nay-ti-on according to the real vowel sounds. That could be accomplished in the future generations without making all the wonderful books in today's libraries utterly unintelligible. For what child wants to learn two systems of spelling, and what ambitious persons are going to re-spell all the books?

I know the last subject is irrelevant to our special business, but I thought you might be interested.

I hope your magazine contains in the future more gems like "The Fatal Glance." It's so easy to thrill with colossal machines spitting blue flames, but not so easy to move a reader with an idea alone. When the latter is terrifying without any pictorial aid, that to me is *the* best thrill of all.

EMMA VANNE,
Westfield, N. J.

“Lyn” (Marilyn) Venable, (? -?)



A resident of Dallas, Texas, Venable was reputed to have been active in Midwestern SF fandom in the Fifties. During that time she published four stories in American SF magazines and a fifth in the British Authentic SF.



Her story, “Time Enough At Last” (If, January, 1953, as by “Lynn” Venable), was chosen by Rod Serling to be aired November 20, 1959 under the same title (and by-line) on his CBS television series, The Twilight Zone. It was the eighth episode of that legendary TV show’s first season and the first time main writer Serling turned to another writer for a story. It starred Burgess Meredith as a beleaguered bookworm who finds “time enough at last” to read all he wants after a nuclear holocaust. The story is one of the most memorable, if not the most famous, of TZ episodes and won the director that season’s Director’s Guild award.

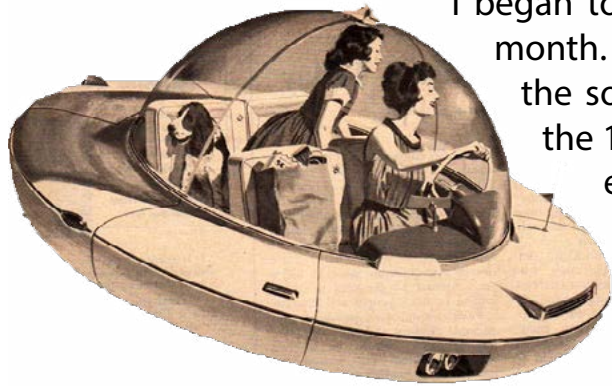


She also published fantasy fiction in Weird Tales (1953). A letter of hers in the January, 1952 Planet Stories praised Ray Bradbury (whose work she seemed familiar with) as “...a great writer, one of the greatest of our generation.”

[Return to Brief Bio Main Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

Ou ee ou ah ah



I began to write something entirely different this month. A biography of Leith Stevens, who wrote the soundtrack for several famous SF films in the 1950's, some scores for the Twilight Zone, even one for Lost in Space. I'll get around to Leith someday, but a quick reconnoiter around the internet stopped me dead "in the tracks" so to speak. Hidden amid the detritus of musical soundtracks from movies so exploitative, acting so marginal and plotting so arcane that it would have scored high in André Breton's Surrealist Manifestos (in particular the third draft which was never released). Secreted in a jungle of "Doggies in the Window," "Short Shorts," and "Mr. Custer" were Buchanan and Goodman. A magnificent pastiche, if anything ever deserved such a fancy French word, it is certainly these jubilant jumbles of jive, that sum up the collective fears of the US of A in the decade following the Second World War.

The following are links to [The Flying Saucer Part 1 & Part 2](#), and not the be undone or forgotten, [Part 3](#). I'll leave the search for "The Flying Saucer Goes West" up to you.

So, who are, you ask, Buchanan and Goodman?



Richard Dorian "Dickie" Goodman (April 19, 1934 – November 6, 1989 - American Music and record producer

Bill Buchanan (April 30, 1930 - August 1, 1996) - American Songwriter

A couple of Long Island childhood schlubs, who in 1956, did a shortened rewrite of Orson Welles War of the Worlds Broadcast, ditched Ramón Raquello and his orchestra at the Meridian Room of the Park Plaza for the jumpin' music of the 1950's, "Too real is this feeling of make-believe," and had a hit record that shot to number three on the Billboard Charts.

True, there is the genius of Sheb Wolley's "Flying Purple People Eater" (1958). "I wanna get a job in a Rock 'n Roll band." Covered by none other than [Judy Garland at the Chicago Orchestra Hall on September 9, 1958](#). Or an even better rendition

on the [Live at the Coconut Grove Album](#)

The marginal SF "My Friend the Witch Doctor" (1958) by David Seville (Ross Bagdasarian Sr.) of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore fame.

Later, the more Universal Horror of Bobby Pickett and the Crypt Kicker Five's "The Monster Mash" (1962). "I was working in the lab late one night, When my eyes beheld an eerie sight, For my monster from his slab, began to rise, And suddenly to my surprise, He did the mash."

Note that the piano player "ticklin' them ivories" is a studio musician named Leon Russell.

All of them more clever, more musical, but none held the zeitgeist for my friends, sitting in the twilight, drinking sophisticated soft drinks around a picnic table, in the warm summer night, a stack of 45's on the soft pink colored turnable, wishing for the world to become that scene in the movie when the boy, necking with the girl in the front seat of a 32' chopped Ford Deuce, is distracted by a strange sound and a streak of light across the sky and we are off to the invasion of gooey glowing aliens.

The "Flying Saucers" had it all. 50's Science Fiction. The Platters, Little Richard, Elvis, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino. Buchanan and Goodman took their master tape to every record company in New York. Not one was interested. One night in July of 1956 the friends took the tape to WINS and had Allen Freed play it on the air of his very popular rock 'n roll radio program. It caused a sensation. They had no further trouble producing a successful phonograph recording. Then, a very nervous bunch of record companies sued. Eventually, the courts ruled that Flying Saucers was a parody that violated no one's rights. A recording entitled "Buchanan and Goodman On Trial" was the result. Some of the lyrics - "Buchanan and Goodman Have you anything to say, (You ain't nothing but a hound dog)." Yes, this was heady stuff.

Much as I love Jonathan Coulton, revere "Code Monkey" and "Skullcrusher Mountain" and long to "Eat Your Brains," I can't forget the magic of "The Flying Saucers." The music, the feeling is far too entangled with those moments in my life when I found the cosmos, life, love and, yes, the American Way.



Parsec Meeting May 2017



My Nebula Awards Experience

Eighteen years ago, the Nebula Awards were held in Pittsburgh at the downtown Marriot City Center Hotel. At that time, the prestigious event hosted by SFWA lasted roughly a day-and-a-half with no real programming to speak of. That's changed over the years and this year's Nebulas, held in the same venue, ran from Thursday to Sunday, May 18 - 21, and featured a full slate of panels and presentations.

I, like many Parsec members and local SF fans, attended this year's awards weekend. It was pretty dazzling. We all got a bulgingly-full canvas shoulder bag of books at registration donated by TOR Books, one of the con's sponsors. The panels I attended were informative, fun, and inspiring. At Thursday night's Beer Tasting (thanks to JJ, Mary, Laurie, and Jim), I met Locus Magazine's editor, Liza Trombi. Throughout the course of the weekend, I met several of the upcoming new generation of SF writers, including Nebula winners and nominees William Ledbetter, Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam, Amal El-Mohtar, Charlie Jane Anders, and Victor LaValle, among others.

I participated in the author mass autographing session Friday night (great job, Diane!), sharing the Parsec table with Frank Oreto and Ken Chiacchia. Though we didn't sell much, we had a grand time talking with people and immersing ourselves in the experience. During the session, I introduced myself to Neil Clarke, editor of Clarkesworld Magazine, where I've had a few stories rejected. He gave me a business card which read, "This person has officially been rejected by Clarkesworld. Please be nice to him." Ha! You just wait, Neil.

I shook hands with Connie Willis and spoke to Michael Swanwick and Scott Edelman. Those were high points for me as well as Liza Trombi taking a picture of a few of us holding up skewers of meatballs like barbecue-sauced talismans.

Though I didn't attend the awards banquet Saturday night, I did go to the reception beforehand and to the ceremony itself afterward. This year's toastmaster was NASA astronaut Dr. Kjell Lindgren, who spent five months on the International Space Station for one of his missions in 2015. He was part of the first group to grow and eat a vegetable crop in space – red romaine lettuce. He was very approachable, a terrific speaker with a great sense of humor. He gave all credit to his being an astronaut to the speculative fiction he grew up reading and SF writers in general. He displayed photo images he took of Earth and space from the ISS and also ran a video of "Life on the ISS" at his Q&A session on Sunday.

I shook hands with him too and, dare I say it; he seemed very "down to earth." He talked about what he called "foot-pocalypse" during the ceremony, which either cracked everybody up or grossed everyone out. Because you don't walk in zero gravity, the foot muscles relax, and the calluses on the bottoms of your feet loosen up and slough off. The astronauts have to be careful when taking off

their socks because all this withered, dried flesh will just start flying around! One of his colleagues on another mission somehow missed the briefing on this and thought his feet were falling apart!

Got to spend time with friends and fellow writers/Parsec and SFWA members Tim Esaias, Mary Soon Lee, Mark Tiedemann, Jamie Lackey, Frank Oreto, Douglas (Pete) Gwilym, Brandon Ketchum, Ken Chiacchia and Heather Houlihan, Diane Turnshek, Lawrence Connolly, Kevin Hayes and Karen Yun-Lutz, Laine Wooliscroft, Josh Bellin, Heidi Ruby Miller and Jason Jack Miller, Stephanie Keyes, Alexander Edmondson, Patrick Ropp, and others.

SFWA President Cat Rambo thanked all the volunteers (which included our own Barb Carlson, Laurie Mann, Greg Armstrong, Lara Van Winkle, Karen Yun-Lutz, J.J. Walton, Diane Turnshek, Jim Mann, Kevin Hayes and others) during the ceremony and gave a personal shout-out to Mary Tabasko for managing the banquet. Well done, everyone!

Major SF publisher TOR held an after-party in the con suite Saturday night, which became very, very crowded, very, very quickly. Hotel security asked us all to leave around midnight because of the noise as if no other convention parties had ever been held! But it was okay. We all moved to the bar.

I'm still recovering from the weekend, but it's a good "hangover." One of creativity, inspiration, and being part of a community/tribe like no other. Word on the street during the weekend - SFWA will hold next year's awards in Pittsburgh again.

Did I mention I shook Connie Willis' hand?

-Larry Ivkovich