



LAMBDA SCI-FI

DC Area Bi/Gay/Lesbian Science Fiction Association

P.O. BOX 10087 * Silver Spring, MD 20914 * (301) 445-5650

NOTE: Next meeting is on Sunday April 22 at 2 PM in Silver Spring -- call for directions.

First Meeting Minutes

by Loree Cook-Daniels

March 14, 1990

Present: Barrett Brick; Carl Cipra; Loree Cook-Daniels; Marcelle Cook-Daniels; Bruce Garrett; Tom Hetzel; Peter Knapp; Al Weiner; James Williams.

After talking about what interested each of us in the field of science fiction and fantasy, we threw out some ideas on what we might like to do at a meeting of like-minded fans:

- o Literary discussion (what you'd read and liked -- or didn't like -- since the last meeting);
- o Yearly book swap;
- o Hold parties at conventions;
- o Have a table at Pride Day;
- o Group expeditions to movies;
- o Play games (board or role-playing);
- o Talk about what's going on in fandom in general;
- o Do a theme party at Halloween; and
- o Encourage Lambda Rising to have more science fiction/fantasy authors in for signings and readings.

We also discussed favorite books, and authors who may or may not be lesbian/gay. Some of the suggested readings: Catherine Nevill's *The Eight*; Ursula LeGuin's *Left Hand of Darkness*; and, of course, Sakers' *Carmen Miranda's Ghost is Haunting Space Station 3*.

As for "business," we decided: to circulate and read the *Gaylactic Network's Principles and By-Laws*, with an eye toward sooner or later deciding if we want to join as a subsidiary group; not to decide now about officers, name, structure, etc.; to pursue more advertising in the *Blade*, *GLASS's* newsletter, Whitman Walker's computer system, and the *Crescent*; investigate getting or sharing a table at Gay Pride Day; try to get out a newsletter; and have our next meeting on Sunday, April 22, 1990, at 2:00 p.m. at Al Weiner's house.

Bookstores To Explore

by Tom Hetzel

Like most suburbanites I buy most of my books at a nearby franchise of one of the "biggies." Convenience is the only reason for that, though. I can walk to two stores in five minutes from my apartment. There are times when I want a book that wasn't printed this year or I want to get all three of a trilogy and the usual stores only have the latest one. Then I'll make the extra effort of getting to one of the stores where I actually prefer to shop.

Bonifant Books
11240 Georgia Ave.
Wheaton, MD
(301) 946-1526

I only found Bonifant Books last year. I don't know how long they've been around or will be around but they have a decent collection of used paperback SF. The condition is not always great but these are books that I, at least, buy more for nostalgia's sake. My first time there I spent a couple of hours checking the shelves and repeating "Oh, this one!" every couple of minutes.

They have a lot of the books I grew up on. I even remember the \$.40 price. They go for \$1 to \$2 now. (*Continued on page 2*)

What's A Convention?

by Carl Cipra

Al Weiner called me the other night to ask me to contribute an article to this, our first newsletter. We discussed a few possibilities; and then Al suggested the topic: "What is a convention?" I agreed and then spent the rest of the evening wondering why I agreed. After all, what the hell makes me any kind of expert on what a convention is all about? Sure, I've been to a bunch of 'em, but . . .

And then I remembered a passage I'd recently read in George Alec Effinger's *Fire in the Sun*. (*Continued on page 2*)

Bookstores - cont'd

Hole in the Wall Books
905 W. Broad St.
Falls Church, VA
(703) 536-2511

Hole in the Wall is just that. You'll never see it unless you're looking for it. It's in a small building on Route 7 with a dingy old sign out front and one on the door. They stock a lot of comics and assorted books out front with a rack of new SF right by the door. A back room is reserved for SF.

New and used books are crammed together on floor-to-ceiling shelves; with the overflow lining the edges of the floor - one wall is filled with used hardcover books. Their used paperbacks are all recent editions. This is not the place to go for some really old out-of-print-book but if you're looking for a complete trilogy or maybe that particular book that you wanted, but not enough to pay full price, this is the place for you.

Moonstone Bookcellars
2145 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C.
(202) 659-2600

Moonstone is on Pennsylvania just off Washington Circle, very convenient to Foggy Bottom Metro. They're not open on Mondays which I always remember just as I get to the door on my Monday lunch hour. They stock mysteries as well as SF and some SF art but don't stock used books. They've had local writers in for signings and will often special order signed editions of many books for which they charge the regular price.

This is the store you can phone and ask, "When is the fourth Gerrold book going to be printed?" and he'll know what you mean.

When the store is slow enough, I've told the guy what I like and he's gone through each shelf making suggestions. Other patrons are very friendly, too. I've had long conversations here with other people giving and getting suggestions of what to read. Moonstone is a great little store.

Convention - cont'd

It was a bit of Sufi philosophy which ran something like this: The religions of the world are like a lantern with many different colored glass panels; but God is the single flame within that lantern. If you'll pardon the analogy, I think a convention (a.k.a "con") is also like that: its central "truth" (if there is one) is filtered through the viewpoints and biases of its various attendees. In that case, I guess my opinion on the nature of a con is as valid as anyone else's! (Not bad, those Sufi mystics!)

Basically, I guess, a con is a gathering of fen (that's the plural of "fan" in fannish slang), who have come together to enjoy various aspects of fantasy, science-fiction, science, and each other (or any combination thereof). (And if you think that definition was easily come by, try defining "Poetry" or "Truth" some day!) As you can imagine from that "definition," the sky (and beyond) is the limit! The variety of activities that can actually happen at a con is literally mind-boggling.

Most cons regularly seem to offer the following types of activities:

- Discussion panels on virtually any topic of interest. Panels of authors and/or "experts" have a round-table discussion of a topic (such as "Vampirism and Homoeroticism" or "Imperialist Themes in Science-Fiction" or "Does Anyone Read H.P. Lovecraft Anymore?" or "Where is the U.S. Space Program Headed?", etc., etc.). This is generally followed by (and/or interspersed with) questions and/or comments from the audience.

- Readings of new works (or works-in-progress) by authors. This is your chance to see and hear your favorite author and maybe get that autograph you've always wanted.

- Art shows. Displays of artistic works on fantasy/science-fiction/fandom themes in various media (sculpture, painting, etching, needlework, etc., etc.) by some very talented (and, frankly speaking, some not-so-very-talented) artists. An art show is generally coupled with an art auction of one sort or another, where many of the pieces are sold to the highest bidder.

- The dealers' room (a.k.a. "hucksters' room"). This is crass commercialism at its finest---to steal a title from Fritz Leiber, it's a "Bazaar of the Bizarre!" If there's anything you want, of a science-fiction or fantasy nature, then it's probably on sale there: books, comics, posters, scripts, fan-zines (publications written by/for fans), plastic Vulcan ears, models of the U.S.S. Enterprise, Japanese animation videotapes, artwork, T-shirts, buttons with fannish slogans ("Have you grokked your kid today?"), fannish bumper-stickers ("I brake for unicorns!"), and so on and so on . . .

- Movies and videos. Depending upon the organizing committee's tastes and budget (and any particular theme that's been announced), various fantasy and science-fiction movies are shown in a movie room, often on a 24-hour schedule. There can also be various side-rooms showing videotapes on various topics. Generally, some sort of schedule is posted or publicized somewhere.

- Costume shows. This is often one of the highlights of a con. It's where the costumers show off their talents at either designing original costumes ("leisurewear on the planet Gribble-Fritz" or "a wizard from the 4th Dimension") or re-creating costumes from the movies or TV or the cover-art from books. (Sometimes the shows are inter-spersed with some downright funny skits.) They're often held on a Saturday night in a big hall that can hold a sizeable portion of the attendees. (Some cons have also taped their costume shows for later viewing in the video rooms or have simultaneously shown the event over the hotel's cable-TV system.) On top of this, you'll probably see people in costumes just about anywhere at a con. Dress up for adults--what a concept!

-Parties. Anything from dances or banquets organized and run by the members of the official con committee itself to impromptu "hall parties" and "room parties" throughout the hotel site. At the recent Worldcon/Noreascon 3, the organization known as "Boxboro Fandom" hosted a tremendous blow-out: "Louis Wu's Birthday Party." The Gaylaxians have also thrown some really nice get-togethers at various conventions.

Does anything else happen at a con? You bet. The range of activities can be astonishing. There have been slideshows of Voyager fly-by photography, gaming rooms (Dungeons and Dragons, Traveler, Road Wars, Call of Cthulhu, Diplomacy, etc.), Regency dancing, Intergalactic United Nations sessions, demonstrations of medieval everything by members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and so on. For the more melodically-minded among us, there's probably "filking" going on somewhere at any con. (It's sort of folk-singing, with a fannish accent. But don't ask me to be more specific, I'm not into filking.) There have even been real weddings at cons. (A few years ago, I served as minister for a full-costume wedding at a Star Trek convention in Anaheim, California.) I've probably left something out, but I'm sure you get the general idea: there's a lot going on at a con.

Some cons are more restrictive in their focus than others--they concentrate on various aspects of the fannish spectrum. There are cons that specialize in Star Trek, Dr. Who, "Dark Shadows," or

the Darkover books of Marion Zimmer Bradley. (I tend to prefer more variety at a convention; but, as they say, that's my hang-up.)

But enough of this idle chatter! If you want to really find out "the truth" about cons (or at least your version of "the truth"), then put down that book, turn off that television, put the VCR on "Hold", and go to a con!! Fortunately, there are a couple of nice ones coming up. Here's the details:

Balticon 24: April 13th to 15th, at the Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn, 245 Shawan Rd., Hunt Valley, MD. (The cost of membership was \$25 before 3/15. I haven't got the figures on admission at the door; but I would imagine it'll be around \$30 for the weekend.)

Gaylaxicon '90: July 20th to 22nd, at the Andover/Tewksbury Holiday Inn, Tewksbury, Mass. (Cost: \$20 from 4/1 to 6/30; \$25 at the door.) We'll have plenty more information on this one at the next meeting.

So get out there and enjoy!