



LAMBDA SCI-FI

DC Area BI/Gay/Lesbian Science Fiction Association

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

Minutes from the last meeting - by Loree Cook-Daniels

There were 10 members present at this meeting, along with Jed Shumsky, one of the conveners of the Philadelphia Gaylaxian group.

Loree reported that the request for a table at Gay Pride had been made, with the help of Carl's generous donation of \$20. Carl and Al volunteered to set up the table in the morning and staff it all afternoon, with others coming in as they like to spell them. Carl will also design a flyer and membership form, and Al will make up a display and signs for the table, with David's help. Al suggested having a free book raffle as a way of getting people interested in the table.

The other large business item we tackled was the issue of affiliating with the Gaylaxian Network. Jed graciously answered dozens of questions about how the Philadelphia chapter works and what affiliation with the Network does -- and doesn't -- mean. There are currently six chapters in the Network: Philadelphia, New York City, Albany, Inkster (Michigan), St. Paul, and Boston, with a couple other new possibilities. One of the successful efforts the Network undertook was a campaign to get the publishers of Uranian Worlds to update that book and getting them to agree to put the addresses of Gaylaxian Network chapters in the back of the book. If we affiliate TODAY, Jed grinned, we could also be listed.

Some of the other advantages of affiliation include the publicity that chapters get at conventions, and the increasing interest authors themselves are showing in getting to know their fans through the Network chapters. He clarified the no-booze, no-smoking ban at Gaylaxian parties (essentially, we can still have booze, but we then run the risk of liability issues and of having party-hoppers only interested in booze), and he discussed Philadelphia's structure, which currently consists of just two officers -- a coordinator and a newsletter editor -- and no by-laws. Philadelphia's group now has a regular attendance of about 20. They do have dues: \$15 regular membership and \$10 student membership. (Students also must provide some physical labor to take advantage of the lower rate.)

After further discussion, we agreed to officially affiliate with the Gaylaxian Network and change our name to Lambda Sci-Fi: D.C. Area Gaylaxians. We also agreed to institute a membership/newsletter subscription fee of \$10 per year, with our fiscal year running from July 1. Carl agreed to become our official liaison with the mother group in Boston.

Official business out of the way, we spent the remainder of the meeting in our usual spirited discussion of T.V. shows, movies, and books with an sf or fantasy theme.

Call for Books

If it's time to clean out that overflowing bookcase, consider donating a couple SF or fantasy novels to our Gay Pride Day Book Raffle. This will NOT be a fund-raiser. It's just a way to raise interest in us and have some fun. Another novel idea from Lambda Sci-Fi!

Membership and Subscription Information

Even though we all live some of our happiest moments in the realm of fantasy, we haven't quite figured out how to put out a newsletter and support some of our other modest activities without access to money. Therefore, we are asking those who attend our meetings and/or just wish to receive our newsletter to become members of Lambda Sci-Fi: D.C.-Area Gaylaxians. The cost is minimal: \$10.00 per year. Please make out your check to our Treasurer, Al Weiner, and send it to our P.O. Box. Our mailing list is completely confidential.

Car-less Members

We know you are out there and that our last few meetings haven't been terrifically accessible. But we have now found two additional possibilities for you. David B. reports that the Z-8 bus runs from the Silver Spring Metro station every half hour and passes within a couple blocks of our meeting site. Also, Carl C. is willing to pick up some people at the Brookland/Catholic University Metro station at 1:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting if you call him in advance at (202) 483-1974. Warning: Carl does NOT have an answering machine, so leave plenty of time to try to reach him!

STARFARERS by Vonda N. McIntyre

This book has it all: a sophisticated starship propelled in part by a cosmic string (and in part by an enormous sail...McIntyre seems to like combining new and very old technology); a communication "web" that people connect with by shutting their eyes; genetically engineered humans; orca whales; government spies and reactionaries; a multi-member, mixed gender, interracial family "partnership;" and a loving but somewhat traditional grandmother, just to name a few.

As that list suggests, Starfarers is a dense book. While it is gripping and very interesting both in plot and in character, the number of concepts McIntyre introduces through the book make it a slow read, particularly in the beginning. McIntyre doesn't stop for explanations, and her readers must accept each piece as she gives it, fitting things together and filling in the gaps on their own. But this work is worth it.

For Lambda Sci-Fi readers, one of the most interesting parts of the book will probably be the family partnership, which includes a significant portion of the major characters. Now down to three members after the accidental death of the fourth (gender unspecified) member, the family consists of a Black Canadian female physicist, a Japanese-Hawaiian-American male geographer, and a white American male biologist. Interestingly, their partnership evokes both hostility and condescension for being "old-fashioned." Although it's not mentioned as such, AIDS apparently helped evolve multi-member families as a way of maintaining sexual diversity and controlling exposure to the "plague." Now that the "plague" has been cured (the doctor who found the cure is now a minor character on board the starship), partnerships have fallen out of favor. But this one still exists, reeling precariously from the recent loss of its stabilizing central member.

As the make-up of the partnership indicates, McIntyre is extremely interested in cross-cultural issues and human interactions. Most of her sympathetic characters (there is one clear villain here, and even he turns out to have some redeeming features) implicitly or explicitly link their interest in "aliens" with their respect for and interest in other human cultures. Yet these aren't all simple liberals: the main character is shocked when one of the starship's most important scientists dons her chador to return to seclusion on Earth when the alternative is breaking a military order. Another feature I liked was the partnership's frequent discussions of money. While nearly all marriages struggle around finances, how often do you see this aspect of intimate living built into sf?!

This book is obviously the first of a series, since it ends with a number of loose threads and on the brink of a major adventure. Despite the fact that it will leave you hanging, it is well worth reading because of its intriguing mixture of social and scientific fiction.

-- Review by Loree Cook-Daniels

NOTE: The next Science Fiction Group meeting is on Sunday, June 10th at 2:00. Call 445-5650 for directions.