



# Lambda Sci-Fi

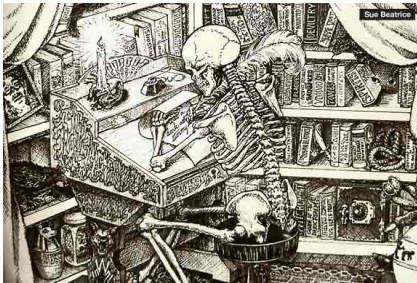
## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 331 – October 2017

E-MAIL: [info@lambdascifi.org](mailto:info@lambdascifi.org)

WEBSITE: [www.lambdascifi.org](http://www.lambdascifi.org)

### The LSF Book Discussion Group



If you're interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LGBT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group usually meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW – for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. The next book discussion will be held on October 26, 2017.

Here are the details for the next couple of book discussions:

**Oct. 26** – *Passing Strange* by Ellen Klages (moderator: Carl).

**Dec. 7** (combined Nov/Dec) – *Ninefox Gambit* by Yoon Ha Lee (moderator: Dave R.)  $\Lambda\Psi\Phi$

### Spooktober Tabletop Gaming Party (Saturday, Oct. 21)

**What:** It's a gaming party. There's plenty of room for tabletop gaming, so please bring your favorite games (cards, board, etc.).

**When:** Saturday, October 21

**Time:** 2:00 PM to ??

**What to Bring:** Bring your favorite tabletop game (or two). Also, please bring munchies and/or soft drinks.

**Dinner:** For those who are interested, we'll order pizza. To get in on the pizza order, please bring \$8 in exact change. If you don't want pizza, you can order take-out or go forage for food. There are a lot of food choices nearby. Also, delivery menus will be available at the party.



**Where:** Home of Peter and Rob, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. Their home is in the Midcity (14th and "U") neighborhood between Dupont Circle and Logan Circle.

**Directions** (with Metro and parking advice) at: <http://lambdascifi.org/club/PeterRob.html>

**Questions:** Contact Peter at: [PeterPKnapp@gmail.com](mailto:PeterPKnapp@gmail.com) or Rob at: [RobGatesDC@gmail.com](mailto:RobGatesDC@gmail.com)  $\Lambda\Psi\Phi$



### Ye Olde Editor's Corner

Before I realized it, this October newsletter ironically seems to have turned into the "Grim Reaper" issue, with three (count 'em, three) obituaries. (I guess I should have seen the pattern: one obituary in the August issue, two obituaries in the September issue, and now...)

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### <<<<< October 2017 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, October 8th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30 and the "group watch" will begin at 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



### What's Inside?

Page 2: Minutes of the Sept. LSF Meeting; Len Wein Appreciation (obituary); Jerry Pournelle (obituary).

Page 3: Cassini-Huygens (obituary).

Page 4: Information About LSF: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar.

## Minutes of the Sept. LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Rob attended this weekend's well-attended WashingCon gaming con. He played *Mystic Vale* and *Pathogenesis*. There were also panels about game design.

Carl described *The Technologists* by Matthew Pearl, author of *The Dante Club*: an historical thriller in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Boston, with MIT students attempting to stave off city-wide destruction by an unknown enemy. Carl also mentioned that he's seen – and enjoyed – a couple of episodes of *Con Man*, which features many *Firefly* actors.

There was discussion on the Voynich Manuscript – a mostly plagiarized medieval treatise about women's health. No code, but just Latin shorthand. (As a side note, Linear A is currently undeciphered.)

Tonight is the premiere of Fox's *The Orville*, a *Star Trek* homage/parody starring Seth McFarlane, which has received unfavorable reviews.

Genre author Jerry Pournelle has passed – excellent author, but a homophobe.

You can now register for the May 2018 Gaylaxicon in Atlanta.

The call for programming for AwesomeCon 2017 has been issued. Note that the next AwesomeCon will be in March and not in the summer.

*The Game of Thrones* season finale has been shown, and the new season won't return until March 2019. The final season will only have six episodes, although the episodes will be longer.

David reports that the new season of *American Horror Story* will be disturbing. (A cult of horrific clowns?)

Upcoming LSF book discussions: *A Taste of Honey* by Kai Ashante Wilson (Sept.), *Passing Strange* by Ellen Klages (Oct.); and *Ninefox Gambit* by Yoon Ha Lee (Nov./Dec.).

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### Len Wein 1948 - 2017

#### Len Wein Appreciation

by Nat Gertler

<http://www.aboutcomics.com/wp/>

For those of my friends who are not in the comics community, you may not realize that just a few names are behind the creation of a large percentage of the characters that become popular beyond comics. You've probably heard of Stan Lee, maybe Jack Kirby, possibly Steve Ditko. But Alan Moore, Marv Wolfman, Frank Miller, Mark Millar, Len Wein you're less likely to have heard of... but if it's on the big screen or the small, odds are good that at least one of the men on that list had a hand in it... and up until today, all but Jack Kirby were still with us, which means that most comics creators have had a chance to know at least some of these guys.

Len Wein, who just passed on, was one of the ones I knew. He was an amiable chap, lived locally, and I'd run into him from time to time, in line for

the movies or some such. He wasn't hard to recognize, with his scraggly facial hair, usually wearing a jeans jacket with some of his characters. He tended toward the upbeat, at least when I ran into him. We'd talk about pop culture; he was not one of those guys who turned off his love for it when there wasn't money at hand.

While he was writing the Incredible Hulk comic, Len co-created Wolverine - you know, that guy who has now been the sole lead of three major motion pictures. When Len was charged with revitalizing the X-Men, he introduced other new characters like Colossus, Storm, and Nightcrawler. He co-created Swamp Thing, who has had two movies and two TV series so far. Even his Human Target series, relatively obscure even within the comics world, spawned two live-action prime time shows.

Granted, outside media exploitation is not an inherent measure of how good a comics writer is. But Len's writing was solid. He knew how to set up characters, he knew how to pay off on what was special about those characters. It's not at all surprising that his material translated beyond the medium.

Len's influence will not disappear from the culture anytime soon. I just wish he were still here to enjoy it.

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### Jerry Pournelle 1933 - 2017

#### A Remembrance by Ye Olde Editor

Jerry Pournelle was a science fiction writer, essayist, and journalist who contributed for many years to the computer magazine *Byte*. (I've never read any of his technology articles and essays; but I'm sure that doesn't surprise any of you.)

It's difficult for me to write about Pournelle with any degree of objectivity. I didn't know him well; but I had met him a few times over the years



the years. I found him to be a "difficult" person to deal with – and this opinion was certainly not unique to me. He was sometimes quoted as describing his politics as "somewhere to  
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**Jerry Pournelle**

(continued from page 2)

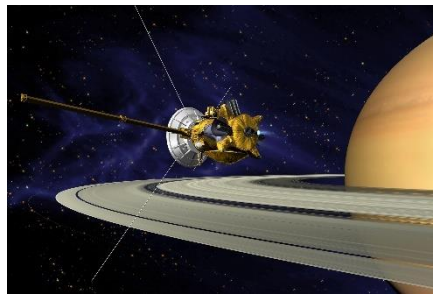
the right of Genghis Khan". (Oddly enough, he was opposed to the Gulf War and the Iraq War, maintaining that the money would be better spent developing U.S. energy technologies.) He certainly wasn't known as a friend of the LGBTQ community.

Pournelle often cited how he'd "swung a sword in the Society for Creative Anachronism". As Jerome Robert of McKenna, he'd certainly been involved with the SCA from its very earliest days and even served as a Knight Marshall for the Kingdom of the West (1972-1976). He was, however, bitter about never having been knighted for his services to Kingdom and Society; and those of us in Southern California have "mixed" memories about Laird Jerome Robert "Couldn't Kill Him with a Battleax" McKenna.

All that aside, however, Jerry Pournelle was one of my favorite SF authors. I've always considered his military SF (such as his "Falkenberg's Legion" stories and his "Kzinti" stories) to be top-notch. *King David's Spaceship* (1981) and *West of Honor* (1976) are a couple of my favorite novels.

In the mid-1970s, Pournelle began a wildly successful series of collaborations with his longtime friend Larry Niven. *The Mote in God's Eye* (1975 – a first contact story) and *Lucifer's Hammer* (1977 – a planetary disaster novel) are simply some of the best SF going. *Footfall* (1985 – an alien invasion novel) even reached the number one spot on the New York Times Best Seller List. Pournelle and Niven also partnered with Steven Barnes to write another of my favorite novels: *Fallen Angels* (1991), a near-future, climate-change novel featuring sci-fi fans as the heroes.

Finally, I've always admired



## Cassini-Huygens Oct. 1997 - Sept. 2017

Last month, the *Cassini* unmanned robotic spacecraft was commanded to fly into Saturn's upper atmosphere and burn up, ending its almost-20-year mission. Its signal was lost on September 15.

The *Cassini-Huygens* mission (commonly called "Cassini") was a collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Italian Space Agency to send a probe to study the planet Saturn and its system. Originally, the mission was planned to last four years, but was extended two additional times.

*Cassini* was launched from Cape Canaveral on October 15, 1997, aboard a Titan IVB/Centaur rocket. The *Cassini* space probe performed two gravitational-assist fly-bys of Venus in April 1998 and June 1999, providing it with enough momentum to travel all the way to the asteroid belt, at which point the Sun's gravity pulled it back into the inner Solar System. In August 1999, *Cassini* made a gravitational-assist fly-by of Earth and headed back out. In January 2000, it performed a fly-by of asteroid 2685 Masursky.

*Cassini* made its closest approach to Jupiter in December 2000. About 26,000 images of Jupiter, its

rings, and its moons were taken during this 6-month fly-by.

On October 10, 2003, the mission's science team announced the results of tests firmly supporting Einstein's general theory of relativity. Radio waves had been transmitted from *Cassini*; and scientists measured a frequency shift in the radio waves to and from the spacecraft as they passed close to the Sun.

In 2004, *Cassini* entered the Saturn system. In December 2004, *Cassini* released the *Huygens* probe, which entered Titan's atmosphere in January of that year and deployed its fully-instrumented robotic laboratory by parachute to the surface.

*Cassini* discovered two new Saturnian moons in 2004 (Methone and Polydeuces), another in 2005 (Daphnis), another in 2007 (Anthe), and another in 2009 (Aegaeon). In September 2005, it detected spokes in Saturn's rings. In March 2007, JPL announced that it had found strong evidence of seas of methane and ethane in the northern hemisphere of Titan.

*Cassini's* "Grand Finale" involved a series of close Saturn passes (April – Sept. 2017), ending with an entry into Saturn's atmosphere to destroy the spacecraft (and prevent possible biological contamination to any of the Saturnian moons thought to possibly be habitable).

For all you number-crunchers: the *Cassini-Huygens* mission traveled 4.9 billion million miles since launch, collected 635 GB of science data, and took 453,048 images. It has been described by the JPL as "a mission of firsts".

For more information, visit:

<https://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/>

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Pournelle's advocacy during the Bush years of re-useable single-stage-to-orbit (SSTO) technologies. Many of us had high hopes for the McDonnell Douglas DC-X ("the Delta Clipper") and its kin. < sigh > (By the way, the Delta Clipper makes a "guest appearance" in *Fallen Angels*.) ΛΨΦ



DC-X  
"Delta Clipper"



**\*\* INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS \*\***

**Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians** (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and trans-gendered (GLBT) people, and their friends who are interested in science fiction, fantasy, horror and related genres in all forms (SF/F/H). LSF's primary goals are to have fun, to provide a community, and to:

- promote SF/F/H, with particular attention to materials of interest to GLBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for GLBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of GLBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the GLBT community.

Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed copy of this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. (Hard copies of the newsletter cost an additional \$15 per year.) Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, **October 8th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC.** Hope to see you there!

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians is an affiliate of **the Gaylactic Network**, an international organization for gay people and their friends who are interested in science-fiction and fantasy.



**\*\* Con Calendar \*\*** by Carl



Oct. 6-8, 2017 **CONFABULOUS** (a gay relaxacon). Crowne Plaza Aire MSP Airport (Mall of America), 3 Appletree Square, Bloomington, MN 55425. Membership: \$40 (\$50 at the door).

More information as it becomes available. Facebook page: @MNConFABulous

Registration via EventBrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/confabulous-2017-tickets-35973363298>

Oct. 6-8, 2017 **CAPCLAVE 2017**. Hilton Washington DC North (Gaithersburg, MD). Author GoH: Ken Liu; Editor GoH: Neil Clarke. Membership: \$65 to Sept. 30; \$70 at the door.

Website: [www.capclave.org](http://www.capclave.org) Info: [info@capclave.org](mailto:info@capclave.org)

Nov. 10-12, 2017 **PHILCON 2017**. The Crown Plaza Hotel (Cherry Hill, NJ). Author GoH: Seanan McGuire; Artist GoH: Don Maitz; Special Guest: Janny Wurts. Membership: \$60 from 9/1 thru 10/31; \$65 at the door.

Website: [www.philcon.org](http://www.philcon.org) [www.facebook.com/Philcon.PSFS](http://www.facebook.com/Philcon.PSFS)

Nov. 24-26, 2017 **CHESSIECON 2017**. Radisson North Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Author GoH: Ada Palmer; Music GoH: T. Burnside Clapp; Artist GoH: Megan Willis. Membership: \$55 through Nov. 15; \$60 at the door. Make checks payable to "Thanksgiving Science Fiction Society" and send to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg, MD 20883-3032 (Also registration on-line via PayPal.)

Website: [www.chessiecon.org](http://www.chessiecon.org) Info: [info@chessiecon.org](mailto:info@chessiecon.org)

May 11-13, 2018 **GAYLAXICON/OUTLANTACON 2018**. The Network Board has approved Outlantacon's bid to host Gaylaxicon in 2018. Membership: \$35 until 9/31 (will go up after that).

Website: <http://www.outlantacon.org/> Info: [info@outlantacon.org](mailto:info@outlantacon.org)

Aug. 16-20, 2018 **WORLDCON SAN JOSE**, the 76th World Science Fiction Convention. McEnery Convention Center (San Jose, CA). Guests of Honor: Chelsea Quinn Yarbro & Spider Robinson. Membership: currently \$190 (will go up!). On-line registration thru the convention's website. More information (including hotel information) as it becomes available.

Website: [www.worldcon76.org](http://www.worldcon76.org)

Nov. 1-4, 2018 **WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION**. Baltimore Renaissance Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore, MD). Membership: \$175 (current rate; will go up). On-line registration or print out registration form & send to: WFC2018 c/o Baltimore Science Fiction Society, Inc., PO Box 686, Baltimore MD 21203-0686

Website: <http://www.wfc2018.org/>