



PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044 - (301) 445-5650 - Issue #18 - September 1991

### August Meeting Notes

by Loree Cook-Daniels,  
First Speaker

Despite the fact that our otherwise very gracious host Chris had rudely insulted all of us Marylanders, it seemed like most of the regulars trekked over to his Arlington apartment for lovely food (adored that chocolate!) and lovely company.

And lots of business. As one LSFer noted, it looks like we're getting a little more established: we actually make decisions at these meetings now! Here are some of them:

Blade mentions. The Washington Blade has asked us to give them information on our meetings for their *continued on page 4*

### Next Generation To Include Gays (Maybe)

by Peter Knapp

At the last meeting Jim passed around an article from the August 27, 1991 issue of the Advocate (a national Gay news magazine). The article, titled "Star Trek: The Next Generation, Queer Characters Join the Enterprise Crew" by Joe Clark, claimed that after four years of TNG without any Gay characters in it, the fifth season "would finally portray gay and lesbian crew members on the U.S.S. Enterprise, according to the show's producers."

The article then gave a brief background of the show and the Gaylactic Network's efforts to get a Gay character on Star Trek. The former director of the Network, Franklin Hummel is quoted extensively!

According to Ernest Over, Gene Roddenberry's personal assistant, the letter writing campaign got the attention of the Star Trek office. They received "more letters on this than (they) had on anything else."

To quote the article, "On July 1 Roddenberry released *continued on page 6*

### Things To Come

by Noel Welch

This column is an attempt to keep our membership current on the latest movies, collectibles, and other items of interest to the group.

Movie updates - Robert Englund will make his final (supposedly) appearance as the slashing villain Freddie Kruger in Nightmare on Elm Street 6: Freddie's Dead (five movies too late).

The long awaited sequel to the Michael Lambert movie Highlander *continued on page 7*

### Happy Birthday Star Trek

by Peter Knapp

Coincidentally, our next meeting (September 8) lands on the 25th anniversary of the premier of the first episode of Star Trek. To celebrate, I thought it would be fun to see one of the Star Trek movies after the meeting.

So, you are formally invited to come over to my house after the next meeting and watch Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn. As it will be around dinner time, I think we could pick up some food on the way to my house, or order a Pizza when we get hungry. If you have any questions, give me a call at 202/483-6369. By the way, if people would like to see a different episode of Star Trek, I'm up for negotiation (except Star Trek V: The Final Frontier!). ✖

### In This Issue:

August Meeting Notes .....	1
Next Generation To Include Gays (Maybe) .....	1
Things To Come .....	1
Happy Birthday Star Trek .....	1
Two Views of Fandom: A Dual Book Review .....	2
Why Things Are: Traveling From Time To Time .....	2
Book Review: <u>Prime Directive</u> .....	3
Classified Ads .....	3
Movie Review: <u>The Phantom of the Opera</u> .....	4
Con Calendar .....	5
Et Cetera .....	5
Treasurer's Corner .....	5

## Two Views Of Fandom: A Dual Book Review

by Carl Cipra

Did you ever want to "see yourself as others see you?" As much as you might like to do this, it's not often possible. That's why I found the two books in this review so fascinating. Both of them deal with a subject near and dear to my (and hopefully your) heart: science fiction fandom! They give us a chance to see the phenomenon of fandom through someone else's eyes.

### Bimbos of the Death Sun

by Sharyn McCrumb

This book isn't really a work of science fiction--it's actually a murder mystery. In fact, it won the 1988 Edgar Allan Poe Award for the Best Original Paperback Mystery. Nevertheless, it does deal with SF fandom: the murder occurs at a science fiction convention!

The story centers on Dr. James Owens Mega, an engineering professor at "Tech" who has an interesting theory "concerning the effects of sunspot activity in relation to polymer acrylic on capacitive interaction among high-frequency microcomponents in thick film circuits." Well, he wrote it up as a novel, "threw in some brain-damaged females for entertainment value," and sent it off (under the pen-name "Jay Omega") to be published. Alien Books commercialized it into Bimbos of the Death Sun (hence, the title of McCrumb's novel).

To publicize the book, Dr. Mega's girlfriend got him invited as a guest author to Rubicon, a science fiction convention somewhere "30 miles away from D.C." Unfortunately, Rubicon turns out to be more than just your everyday, run-of-the-mill SF con---just

before the convention banquet, someone murders Appin Dunganon, the detestable Guest of Honor! And now Jay Omega must take on the role of Dungeonmaster to solve the case during a live role-playing game!

Sharyn McCrumb is primarily a mystery writer; but she definitely seems to know a lot about fandom. Most of this novel serves as an exposition of SF fandom and conventions, as exemplified by the fictional "Rubicon". The murder doesn't even take place until a little more than halfway through the book! And Rubicon exhibits all the stereotypes: wargamers, filk-singing, BNF's (Big Name Fans), D&D gamers, a hucksters' room, fanatical fans, an art show, costumed fans wandering the halls, fanzine publishers, importuning would-be writers, etc., etc., etc. It all sounds familiar, doesn't it?

But McCrumb has been careful to make all fandom's "mysteries" accessible to mundanes (non-fans) as well as to fans. She is careful to explain all fandom's customs and jargon, often in humorous (or, if you prefer, scandalous) terms. As an example, I offer her descriptions of APA's (amateur press associations) as: (1) "soap boxes for people who can't get anyone else to publish them"; or (2) "a chain letter for disturbed children".

As I said earlier, this is part of the attraction of this novel: it allows us (as fans) to view fandom through someone else's eyes. As a murder mystery, I found it so-so; but as a slightly irreverent exploration of fandom, it's an absolute romp!  
*continued on page 6*

## Why Things Are: Traveling, From Time to Time

by Joel Achenbach

[Note: This article is reprinted without permission from the 8/16/91 Washington Post. So don't tell anyone, okay? - ed.]

Why is time travel impossible?

The other day we were watching "Terminator 2," which is about an evil robot who is beamed from the future into the present to try to kill a little boy who is destined to grow up to lead the human resistance against robots when they control the planet in the 21st century, only the evil robot first has to get around a good robot who also is beamed from the future and has the advantage of being Arnold Schwarzenegger, and about an hour into the film we began to say to ourselves, "Hey, wait a minute, is this realistic?"

We later did some checking and discovered something disturbing. It turns out that time travel to the past might be possible after all! And we were so ready to pooh-pooh it!

You probably already know that time travel into the future is theoretically simple, if impractical. You just have to travel in a rocket ship really fast, like 99 percent of the speed of light, and you won't age as rapidly as people stuck down on Earth. This is due to one of those great Einstein discoveries, that things moving at different speed experience time at different rates.

What isn't widely known is that time travel to the past doesn't necessarily violate any of the laws of physics.

The main objection that scientists have to the idea of traveling to the past is  
*continued on page 7*

**Book Review:  
Prime Directive**  
by Judith and Garfield  
Reeves-Stevens  
by James R. Crutchfield

Tired of Captain Kirk riding roughshod over the Prime Directive and warping away with o ramifications from Starfleet? Ever consider that the Prime Directive might merely be a means by which some Federation members can claim an unfair share of natural resources by delaying membership to developing planets? If so, check out the newest Star Trek novel Prime Directive now out in paperback after weeks on the New York Times' best seller list.

It is the final year of the Enterprise's five year mission. A mission that may never be completed as only Mr. Scott remains aboard what remains of the Enterprise that may never fly again. The Enterprise Five (Bridge crew minus Uhura) have been forced from Starfleet. Uhura has been locked up for months, refusing to sign a statement that she claims is false. The crew has been scattered throughout the federation.

Prime Directive is the story of how the Enterprise Five, hated and despised all though out the Federation as World Killers strive to find out they could have erred so bad as to cause the destruction of a world and the death of billions. Were they set up by the Field Office? Was there an alien influence? Is it time for changes in the Prime Directive? Why is Star Fleet avoiding a public trial, are they covering something up?

Mr. Scott is forced to remain aboard the Enterprise against his will though twelve experts disagree with his theory on what is happening to the Enterprise and Mr. Scott has done everything

possible to get the officer temporarily in charge to discharge him. Captain Kirk becomes an astroid miner but has to flee and ends up aboard a small ship with a mysterious woman captain and her cats, Komack, Fitzpatrick, and Nogura. What is her secret, and why is she helping Kirk? (No, not for his body!) Sulu and Chekov reunite and find positions on a ship, but are they crew or prisoners? Dr. McCoy, in a change of pace, explains "I'm a -----, not a Doctor." Why is Mr. Spock unhappy to see McCoy? Why is Spock living with a young radical and tending her baby while he prepares to challenge the Prime Directive before the Federation General Council?

The authors of Prime Directive create a more believable scenario for the eventual reunion of the Enterprise Five and other crew members than J. M. Dillard's The Lost Years - which also found the crew spread throughout the Federation. For this reason the book makes interesting reading as it attempts to answer that age old question "You can take the crew out of the Enterprise but can you take the Enterprise out of the crew?" One of the pleasures of the Star Trek novels is that they often provide the reader with additional insight as to what motivates the various characters. Unfortunately this book does little to provide the reader with new insight.

In the end Kirk will once again come out on top and readers who believe in the Prime Directive must once again grit their teeth as they wonder whether Kirk's actions were justified or whether Kirk has lucked out again. The book does provide additional understanding of the Prime Directive as the reader finds himself also questioning whether a change is needed.

There is much talk of how the role of Kirk was turned into the roles of Riker and Picard in ST:TNG. However,

after reading this book and thinking about the shows and books pertaining to the original Star Trek I found myself in disagreement. Instead, I believe that a more likely comparison would be that of the role of Riker, Picard, and Wesley Crusher. Like Kirk, Wesley Crusher is intelligent but his actions are often immature and both of them too often become the hero by solving the problems they created. Perhaps this explains part of the resentment against Wesley Crusher as Star Trek fans find themselves seeing a part of Kirk they prefer not to see. At least with Crusher there is hope that with his superior intelligence to that of Kirk's, he will mature as he ages. ✖

### Classified Ads

#### Cosmic Book Store

Lambda Sci-Fi member Lee Linton is the proud owner and operator of the Washington area's newest specialty bookstore. Your patronage and encouragement are highly appreciated, so come by and pay him a visit. The store is located right next to I-66 behind the Ramada Inn or call 703/330-8573 for directions.

#### Free Electronic Bulletin Board and Dating Service

Gryphon Microproducts has an electronic bulletin-board. To access it (you need a modem, of course), dial 301/384-7238. You can call in at 1200/2400 baud with settings of N,8,1. To get to the Bi/Gay/Lesbian conference, select J for Join Conferences from the main menu, and enter GLIB for the conference name. To access the dating service, select S, for Survey System, from the main menu. ✖

## Movie Review: The Phantom of the Opera

by Noel Welch

Knowing that tickets for the Kennedy Center's showing of the play Phantom of the Opera were expensive and hard to come by, I was surprised one day when I heard a radio ad announcing Phantom tickets for \$15.00. As it sounded too good to be true, I asked Wayne to get some information.

As it turned out, the Kennedy Center was showing the classic silent film version starring Lon Chaney. The kicker was that the National Symphony Orchestra would accompany the movie and play classical music from the mid 1920s and earlier.

It is difficult to put into words what impact a full love orchestra can have for such an event. My lover Wayne and I were extremely impressed. The effect was so dramatic that the woman seated next to me jumped out of her seat when the Phantom's face was revealed.

Pianist Russell Schmidt was outstanding on the organ, stunning the audience when he stopped playing just as the Phantom did on the screen.

Should the Kennedy Center decide to give a similar performance, Wayne and I would highly recommend it. ✖

## August Meeting Notes

*continued from page 1*

news feature on organizational doings. Chuck volunteered to take care of doing this. Thanks!

OctoberTrek. We have been invited to contribute one panelist and one alternate for a panel on gay characters on ST:TNG for Baltimore's OctoberTrek. We nominated Carl as the definite and Norman as the

alternate. Give 'em hell, guys!

Gaylactic Network. Carl reported on the business part of Gaylaxicon '91. A new governing structure has been set up, with each affiliated club getting one representative and paying \$1/member. There will also be additional officers such as speaker, newsletter editor and newsletter coordinator, etc. We elected Carl our representative, and Noel volunteered to be the group's publicist. We decided not to oppose the cap-less \$1/member fee, and Norman and Peter volunteered to assess our finances to figure out whether this new expense will require us to raise our current \$10/year membership fee. (By the way, our membership is at least \$5/year lower than any other club's.)

Those were the decisions. Now for the reports.

Gaylaxicon IV! Personally, your First Speaker is impressed as hell at how well the organizing is going for this event. It's really obvious we have tremendously talented and dedicated volunteers working on this. We now have 102 paid memberships! In addition, Gaylaxicon '91 has given us \$350 seed money, to be paid back only if we make a profit. Noel showed the artwork for the program book, proudly noting it didn't have the flowery image of the last two years' (two weeks later I still haven't figured out if I'm supposed to be insulted!). It is very nice, though. We are still waiting to see if Mercedes Lackey will accept our invitation to be Guest of Honor. Carl is looking for "obscure" films to show, particularly: Liquid Sky, Vampire Lovers, and Everlasting Secret Family. Chris is in charge of our gaming room and asked for volunteer players and referees, along with more ideas of what to do. He already plans to run a 14-country Diplomacy Game. Norman wants to invite someone from

Paramount to come, but frankly I can't recall the status of this decision.

LSF directory. Peter wants corrections! I want my new directory! So hurry them in!

ST:TNG gay characters campaign. Frank Hummel put much of his own money into the campaign to get Paramount to start showing gay characters, apparently with some success: the Advocate reported that they will show up beginning next season! Frank has asked for donations to help cover his expenses.

Other highlights.

We passed around tons of newsletters, flyers, and advertising circulars for other clubs, upcoming cons, and ST merchandise. Noel noted that he has seen the ST chess set, and it was pretty cheaply made and looks it.

Noel also announced that Fantasia will soon be available on video, and that Touchstone is working on a sequel that should be ready in about 3 years.

Chuck volunteered to arrange for a trek to the Uptown Theater for a big-screen viewing of Alien.

Carl told us that that night and the following were the nights of shooting stars, when viewing of shooting stars is at its yearly peak. See how informative our meetings are?! He also noted that Kindred Spirits of St. Louis is thinking about affiliating with the Network.

Finally, we spent lots of time talking about Gaylaxicon '91, which about 15 LSFers attended. But we've covered all the highlights elsewhere, so I won't repeat all the gossip. Except to note that ONE LSFer, at least, started a hot little long-distance relationship with a hot little number. Way to go, Brian! ✖

## Con Calendar

by Carl, Peter, and Noel

September 1, 1991, **STAR TREK SILVER ANNIVERSARY TOUR**: Hyatt Regency Crystal City, 2799 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA. Guest of Honor: William Shatner. Cost: \$17 in advance, \$20 at the door. Make checks payable to "Creation", and send to Creation, 145 Jericho Turnpike, Mineola, NY 11501. [Note: This is a "professional" con that is a very different breed from "fan" cons like Gaylaxicons and Worldcons. If you go, don't expect much. The last one I went to had two things: a dealer's room and an auditorium. - ed.]

August 29 - September 2, 1991 **CHICON V**, the 49th World Science Fiction Convention: Chicago, IL. Author Guest of Honor: Hal Clement; Artist Guest of Honor: Richard Powers; cost is \$95; Room rate is \$70 sgl/dbl, \$90 triple, \$110 quad. Make checks payable to "Chicon V" and send to: Chicon V Registration, PO Box 218121, Upper Arlington, OH 43221-8121. [NOTE: This is the BIG ONE! It even features 4 hours of gay programming! Don't miss it! - Carl]

October 4 - 6, 1991 **ROVACON 16**: Salem Civic Center, Roanoke, VA; Guests: Don Mathison (Land of the Giants), Roger Zelazny, Hal Clement, Spice Williams (the muscular Klingon woman from Star Trek V). Cost \$20 at the door. Call 703/389-9400 after 5:00 PM (no collect calls) for information.

November 15-17, 1991 **PHILCON '91**, the 55th Annual Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference: Adam's Mark Hotel, Philadelphia, PA. Guest of Honor: David Brin; Artist Guest of Honor: Moebius (Jean Giraud). Cost is \$17 until September 15, more at the door. Send checks to Philcon '91, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303.

November 29 - December 1, 1991 **DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL MEETING XIV**: Holiday Inn, Timonium (Timonium, MD). Special Guests: Marion Zimmer Bradley (health permitting) and Katherine Kurtz. Cost is \$24 until November 1 and \$28 after that. Room rate is \$59/night for up to four people. Make checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907. [Note: This convention typically has very high gay/lesbian participation; and all the straights are friendly. - Carl]

July 17 - 19, 1992 **Gaylaxicon IV**: Guest Quarters Hotel, Philadelphia, PA. Guest of Honor: TBA, Artist Guest of Honor: Tristan Alexander. Cost is \$15 through December 31, 1991, \$20 through April 30, 1992, \$25 through June 30, 1992, \$30 at the door. Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon IV" and send to Gaylaxicon IV, PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044. ✖

---

### Et Cetera

by Peter Knapp

Thanks this month go to our regular contributors: Carl, Loree, me, and Noel. A special thanks goes to Jim who contributed for the first time this month. May he contribute often! By the way, Sylvia sent me the article from the Post. It's all her fault!

Mark did a wonderful job redoing the newsletter masthead electronically. Now if only I could figure out how to get WordPerfect to read the file! (Al?)

I edited and published it. Bruce

normally proofreads it, but was unavailable this month. Let's see if Norman and Grammatik can do as good a job.

Last month's newsletter and assorted inserts were collated by Carl, Chris, Kendall, Michael, me, Noel, Norman, and Wayne. We did a great job. Finally, Chris gallantly mailed the newsletters. Thanks to all! ✖

### Treasurer's Corner

by Peter Knapp

We earned 62¢ of interest in August and spent \$9.83 on postage. We also

had two renewals (\$20), and a new membership (\$10). Finally we had a contribution from Scott toward our Gaylactic Network bill (\$42.50). Thanks Scott! This leaves us with a balance of \$226.52. This sounds like a lot, but remember that the renewal process is almost done, so we will have to live off this until next Spring. With Scott's generous contribution I don't think it will be a problem.

Frank R. showed up to the meeting two months ago. Last month he not only showed up, but joined the club and Gaylaxicon IV! Welcome Frank. ✖

## Two Views Of Fandom

*continued from page 2*

### Fallen Angels

by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle,  
and Michael Flynn

Unlike the other book in this review, this one is a science fiction novel; and it was written primarily with SF fans in mind. The dedication ("For Science Fiction Fandom") makes this quite clear. Fallen Angels is, in fact, an example of "recursive science fiction"--- that is, a work of science fiction that contains references to the SF field, writers, fans, and fandom. But it is indeed more than that: it is virtually a paean in praise of SF fandom!

According to the authors, the action "takes place in an indefinite future"; although, from internal evidence, it seems to be some time early in the next century. A new Ice Age is in the offing. Already, major parts of Canada and the northern United States are buried under tons of glacial ice; and there's no end in sight.

For some time, the U.S. Government has been controlled by the Luddites (anti-industrial) and Greens (pro-ecology). Their goals were laudable--- to bring an end to pollution and to control the runaway Greenhouse Effect---but their policies have created an America that has become selectively anti-technological and intellectually restrictive. After all, "science was a conspiracy to pollute the environment."

As a result, science fiction fandom has become a persecuted (unofficially), underground society in the United States. Since science fiction is about "science," SF fans are suspected of trying to bring back forbidden technology (such as space flight and nuclear energy). Die-hard SF fans face possible charges of "mental illness" and "social dysfunction",

followed by enforced psychological "counselling" and "therapy" (a.k.a. brainwashing) to make them "productive [and docile] members of society" once again. The action of the novel centers around two astronauts (the so-called "Angels") from one of the two independent orbital space habitats. While scoop-diving in the outer atmosphere to secure needed nitrogen, their ship is shot down over the North Dakota Glacier; and now they're the object of a massive manhunt by the forces of the U.S. Government. Who can save them? Where can they turn for help? Yep, you guessed it! It's SF Fandom to the rescue! Heroes and heroines, the "Keepers of the Flame," all pulling together against massive odds to defend the things they believe in--- that's how the fans in this book are portrayed. This is a very different view of SF fandom from the one presented in Bimbos of the Death Sun. To be sure, the authors of Fallen Angels don't fail to portray fandom's idiosyncracies, foibles, and general silliness; but they also don't ignore fandom's spirit, ingenuity, and overall sense of community and fair play. It is, in fact, that sense of "community" that came through most clearly for me. It reminded me very much of the many stories I've heard of what "First Fandom" and "Early Fandom" were like some 30 or 40 years ago---when things really were small and fandom was definitely a misunderstood minority in the world.

This book also contains many, many literary and fannish references. A few of them are explained outright in the text, but, in the words of the authors, "others are left for the delight of readers familiar with science fiction and fan publications." This book is, after all, for fans as well as about them!

One scene in particular should be of

interest to the members of Lambda Sci-Fi: The downed astronauts are being moved along a somewhat fannish "underground railroad" at a college campus; and the fans are attempting to blend into the background of an outdoor fraternity celebration. Still, fans being what they are, they can't resist the temptation to secretly flaunt their true identity by proudly bearing a banner emblazoned with the Greek letters "Psi Phi"! (I guess it's as they say, great minds apparently do think alike!)

I'm certain that not everyone will agree with everything that's said in this book. (For instance, the authors make some very controversial comments about the evils of being excessively "pro-ecology.") Nevertheless, I heartily recommend this book. It's exciting; it's fascinating; and it's fun. Besides, how can you fault a book that makes you feel proud to be a fan?! ✖

## Things To Come

*continued from page 1*

will be released in September. Believe it or not, work has begun on a third movie, which should be out sometime next year. Also in the works for the big screen is a movie exposing the antics that went on between the creative people who brought Bugs, Porky, Daffy, and others to life at Warner Brothers Studios. The Working title for the movie is Termite Terrace, which is what the workers at the now famous back lot studio had dubbed it.

For those of you who missed our last meeting, I announced that Disney was releasing the movie Fantasia for a limited time on video cassette and laser disc. A video store near me is offering to take advance orders at the sale price of \$16.99. I am taking  
*continued on next page*

## Things To Come

*continued from previous page*

names of members interested in purchasing a copy. A \$5.00 deposit is all that is required.

Attention all you die hard Trekkers who are into conspicuous consumption! Those wonderful people at The Franklin Mint have just released a pewter replica of the Enterprise from ST:TNG. Priced at \$195, the Enterprise-D will be followed by other ships from the series.

It's time again for Maryland's Renaissance Festival in Crofton, MD. This is the state's 15th annual celebration of 16th century life, replete with entertainers in period costume, merchants of various crafts, and all manner of performances both on and off stage.

The festival runs weekends, now through the middle of October. Adult admission is \$10.50. Peter has suggested a day trip for the group, and since I've attended before (and live closest) I've volunteered (?) to handle the details. For more info, call me at 301/766-8523.

Finally, it's official! Leonard Nimoy will be appearing in the new season of ST:TNG as Spock! ✕

## Next Generation To Include Gays (Maybe)

*continued from page 1*

a prepared statement to The Advocate saying, in part, 'In the fifth season of Star Trek: The Next Generation, viewers will see more of shipboard life in some episodes, which will, among other things, include gay crew members in day-to-day circumstances.'

If this article is accurate, we have something to cheer about. I

emphasize if, because the Advocate article is to date the only evidence that there will be Gay characters on the show next season.

On August 11, 1991, Franklin Hummel sent out a letter to the Gaylactic affiliates, citing the advocate article, but warning that it is the "first -- and only -- report the Gaylactic Network has received that Star Trek has decided to include openly gay characters in the series." He is asking Paramount for confirmation of the news so he can call an end to the letter writing campaign. He reminds them that Worldcon is a few weeks away, and that the Network would like to report accurately "Star Trek's position on the issue there."

He recommends that until further notice, we continue to let Paramount know our feelings about this issue. You might want to write to Roddenberry and encourage him to follow through with what appears to be a promise of adding Gay characters to the show. ✕

## Why Things Are: Traveling, From Time to Time

*continued from page 2*

really a philosophical one: They say it would create "causality" problems. What happens if you build a time machine, go back to the past, find your mother as a young girl and kill her? Then you wouldn't come into existence. Or, more simply, what if you go back in time and kill yourself as a child? Then you couldn't grow up and get into the time machine that lets you go into the past to kill yourself.

"Most of us believe there must be something that prevents us from building such a machine," Alan Guth, the renowned MIT theoretical physicist, told us. "We'd be very hard

pressed to make sense out of the world in any way if time travel was to happen."

But he is quick to admit that modern physics "does not in any obvious way prevent time travel from happening."

In fact, Rich Gott, a Princeton physicist, has figured out how you might theoretically travel to the past. First, you need two adjacent "cosmic strings." These cannot be purchased in K mart. In fact no one is sure they really exist, though theories about the origin of the universe say they ought to be here and there. They are like piano wire on a grand scale: exceedingly thin and dense and stretching far across the cosmos. If two such strings are accelerating at great speed in opposite directions, the gravitational turbulence could twist up "space-time" like one of those sticks of licorice. The geometry is so weird that you could take off in a rocket ship, zoom really fast in a big loop and come back to where you started from, only you'll have rejoined your strand of "spacetime" at a point in time prior to when you started, i.e., the past.

Sure, the Gott time machine is hypothetical--it resembles an old Superman Comics plot--but it's not mere nonsense. The physics are not in question. The idea that space-time can be warped is accepted in modern physics. The main problem is still this dadgum causality issue. Gott, too, seems to be disturbed by the implication of his work.

"You could arrive back at the [starting] place and shake hands with yourself, yes. It's embarrassing," Gott says.

Some theorists try to solve the causality problem by arguing that there might be multiple realities, constantly branching into ever more strands, and

*continued on next page*

## Why Things Are: Traveling, From Time to Time

*continued from previous page*

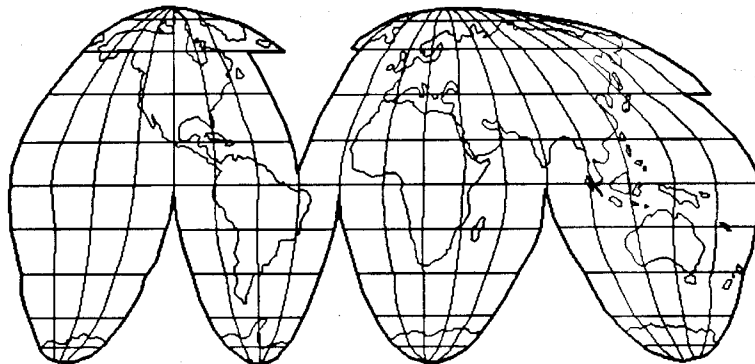
thus no single reality is the right one. Thus you could go back and change time and causality-be-damned.

But maybe the best solution to the causality has been proposed by Kip Thorne, a Cal Tech physicist who, like Gott, has designed theoretical time machines. He says that time travel to the past simply requires a "self-consistent solution" that prevents any causality problems. You can go into the past, find your mother when she's still a girl, but you can't kill her.

Or to be accurate, you *can* kill her, but you *won't*. Why won't you? Because you *didn't*.

Put it another way. You jump in you time machine and go back to Nov. 22, 1963. You catch the morning plane to Dallas. Soon you're on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. You peek in a room. There's Lee Harvey Oswald. He's pointing a rifle out the window. You tell yourself that you're going to charge in there and wrestle him to the floor before he fires. But you don't. You *slink* away silently. Or maybe what happens is you slip on a banana peel and conk out. Whatever. There's nothing obvious that in and of itself prevents you from saving John F. Kennedy's life. You just . . . won't do it. Because that's not how the story goes. *Kennedy dies in the script.*

Okay, one last variation: You rush in, grab Oswald, pin him to the floor. You feel like a hero. Then you hear three, maybe four shots. You slap your forehead. It *was* someone on the grassy knoll. ✕



Lambda Sci-Fi is a Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror fan club for Gay people and their friends. Annual membership fees are \$10.00 for which you will receive this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held at 2:00pm on Sunday, September 8 at Jim's apartment: 1414 17th Street, NW #413. Please bring some munchies if you can. Hope to see everyone there!