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**E-MAIL:** info@lambdasf.org **WEBSITE:** http://www.lambdasf.org/

#### The LSF Book **Discussion Group**

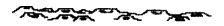


If you're interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LBGT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating roundtable discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM. The next meeting will be October 25th (at Peter & Rob's house, 1425 "S" St., NW -- for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369).

Here's the schedule for the next several months:

- Thurs., Oct. 25 - "The Dunwich Horror", by H.P. Lovecraft; facilitator: Mike M. (Note: This story is available in any one of a number of paperback anthologies of Lovecraft stories. And it's rescheduled closer to Halloween!!!) --- Nov./Dec. (date TBA) - The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, by Michael Chabon; facilitator: Mike P. (Note: This Pulitzer Prize-winning book is now available in trade paperback format.) ΛΨΦ



#### Minutes of the Sept. 9th **LSF Meeting**

taken by Scott, edited by Carl



Carl (acting LSF Speaker) provided a report on the Gaylactic Network's GLBT hospitality suite at Millenium Worldcon (Phila., Labor Day weekend). The raffles held over the course of the weekend raised \$139. The total cost of the suite was approx. \$1800; and about \$1500-\$1600 of that cost could be offset by the pending grant from the Arisia con-comm (which is reported to be going favorably).

The Gaylactic Network Board also met at Worldcon, for approximately 2 hours on both Saturday and Sunday. The minutes of those meeting are still being edited, but Carl provided a short summary. The topics of discussion included ideas for a revised structure for the Network. Some of the ideas given serious consideration were: GN membership being individually-based (rather than group-based, as it has been in the past); a Board consisting of elected 5 members and elected 3 officers (with the possibility of someone being elected as a Board member, as an Officer, or as both); individual memberships costing approx. \$10/year. The Board members will be working through these items in the coming months.

Rob reported that the Spectrum

#### Oct. 14th LSF Meeting

The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St., NW, #413) on Sunday, October 14th. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!

Awards ceremony was held Thursday in conjunction with a GLBT-themed panel at Worldcon. The ceremony (as well as the reception the following night in the GLBT suite) was a success. He also commented that all GLBT-themed/related/"of interest" panels were heavily attended. Jack remarked that at the Dishthe-Con panel he'd raised the question of why there had been more beer-themed and fanzine discussion panels than there had been GLBT-themed panels.

As the final portion of the business meeting, the vote was held to fill the position of LSF Speaker for the remainder of this year (following Nan's resignation). Carl was elected. His first act as Speaker was to ask Mike C. to run the upcoming October meeting, as he (Carl) will be out of the country on assignment at that time -- Mike agreed to. (Note: Peter and Rob will be putting out the October LSF newsletter in Carl's absence.)

Then came the social portion of the meeting. After the name circle, Rob

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

The House in the High Wood (2 book reviews - pg. 2); The Adventures of ConBoy, Naive Conventioneer(a cartoon by Chris Browning - pg. 3); Nifty Stuff to Look For (pg. 3); Wanted!! (pg. 3); More Trickster Tales "for Kids" (book review - pg. 4); The Silent Gondoliers (book review - pg. 5); About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar(pg. 6)

# The House in the High Wood by Jeffrey E. Barlough

(Ace Books, 2001) a review by Colleen R. Cahill

In his last title, *Dark Sleeper*, Jeffrey Barlough created a world inspired by Charles Dickens, Jane Austin, and other Nineteenth Century British writers. The quirky characters set in a universe of proper manners and ancient demons provided a sense of fun. Barlough's latest work, *The House in the High Woods*, is set in the same universe but with a much darker tone. This story salutes the gothic tradition of the mysterious house, tragic death, and threat of supernatural beings.

Stilton Upcot is a flourishing village that is overlooked by the mansion-house Skylingden. The house has new tenants after standing empty for "a host of years," and the close-knit community wonders about the new neighbors. From Mr. Nim Ives, owner of the local inn, to Dr. William Hall, the village physician, all speculate on where Mr. Bede Wintermarch, his wife, and small daughter came from and why they have chosen to settle in this remote town -- all but the squire of Dalroyd, who is more concerned with his horse, dog, and visiting friend, Oliver Langley. But soon all will be concerned with what is going in Skylingden and what mysterious secrets it holds.

We quickly learn that Stilton Upcot has a dark past, with a young woman drowning herself in the lake for the unrequited love of the son of Skylingden's previous resident. several people, Mr. Wintermarch bears a striking resemblance to that son, who went insane and was put in an institution years ago. After the new family moves into the mansion, strange events begin: all in the town begin to experience evil dreams, many of which focus on the Wintermarch's large pet owl. Becoming curious about these and other events, the squire and his friend begin to investigate. They learn that the mansion is built on the ruins of an old abbey that



was destroyed by the town folk when the monks turned to dark arts. After discovering a well built in the center of a cave, the pair uncover disturbing evidence of strange powers harbored within the dark pit.

Overall, this is a story of revenge. Barlough threads the plot through a complicated weave of betrayal, dark deeds, and the supernatural. As in *Dark Sleeper*, the characters make this book with their unique qualities and wonderful interactions. But those fond of Barlough's first work should be warned that the temperament and tone of *The House in the High Wood* is very different; and none of the same characters appear in both works.

Fans of Edgar Allen Poe or Horace Walpole will find this book enjoyable. Barlough has captured the essence of the gothic novel, with its dark, brooding plots and feeling of impending doom. This book is one to take to bed on a dark and stormy night.

## The House in the High Wood

an addendum by Carl Cipra

Well, I was so sure I'd beaten Colleen this time. I'd read *The House in the High Wood* and taken all my notes in preparation for writing my review – and *still* no sign of a review from Colleen! Alas, no sooner had I arranged for Peter & Rob to take over my editorial duties for

the October newsletter, when – ha, presto! – here comes Colleen's review!

Once again, I'm left with the unenviable task of saying "ditto" to her analysis and comments. The House in the High Wood is, indeed, a much darker novel than Dark Sleeper. It's not so much a case of "Dickens writes for Weird Tales" as it is "Dickens writes a Ravenloft novel." (If you've read any of those dark fantasy novels, based on the RPG from TSR, you know what I mean. I swear that none of those books has a happy ending. If the protagonist of a Ravenloft novel manages to avoid a grisly and bloody death, it's something of a triumph!) Certain themes, such as the mysterious well, inescapably reminded me of such Lovecraft stories as "Pickman's Model" or "Rats in the Walls" (neither of them noted for happy endings, either).

I would also venture to call *House* a slower-paced novel than *Sleeper*. Granted, neither of Barlough's novels is exactly action-packed (like a novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs or Robert E. Howard), but *House* has an even more "deliberate" (or perhaps "inexorable") pace than its predecessor. It's a novel of revenge – long, slow, deliberate (and thorough) revenge.

I was hoping to find out more details about "the Sundering," the geologic catastrophe (asteroid strike?) that changed "our" Victorian world into "theirs" – but, alas, 'twas not to be. Nary a word on the subject. But the reader is, at least, treated to a more complete showing of the Pleistocene megafauna (mammoths, giant ground sloths, and the like) that inhabit the wilds of their world.

Will there be a *third* "Western Lights" novel? I certainly hope so. Rather different though they be, I definitely enjoyed both *Dark Sleeper* and *The House in the High Wood*. If there's a third one in the works, I'll definitely read it and (no doubt) enjoy that one, too!



### **Sept. 9th Minutes** continued from page 1

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listed the finalists and winners of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Spectrum Awards competition. He also provided a brief history of the Spectrum Awards and how the nominations and judging occur. He also announced that this would be his final term as Administrator for the Spectrum Awards, and that he had found someone to take over the post for the next go-round. Finally, Rob solicited volunteers to submit reviews of GLBT genre works for *WaveLengths Online*.

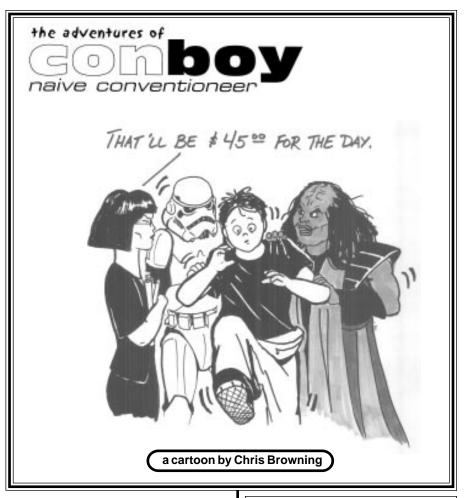
Various "just out" or "coming soon" books were discussed, among them: Keith Hartman's *Gumshoe Gorilla*, Liz Williams' *Ghost Sister*, *Kushiel's Dart, Bone Doll's Twin*, Judith Tarr's latest historical fantasy *Pride of Kings*, and Maureen McHugh's *Nekropolis*.

There didn't seem to be much interest in a trip to the Maryland Renaissance Festival next weekend. Kendall & Jack announced that they would be attending an alternative press/comic book convention next weekend. (For more info, visit: www.spxpo.com.)

Arne volunteered to host a game day at his place (on 17th St., in the DuPont Circle area) on Saturday, Sept. 22, at 2:00 PM. A movie outing to see *From Hell* (the upcoming Johnny Depp/ Jack the Ripper movie) was set for Sunday, Oct. 21; details will be posted to the LSF website and sent out vis e-mail.

Carl passed around a recent *TV Guide*, featuring articles on the upcoming new Star Trek series, *Enterprise*. In related news, it was noted that Avery Brooks (Captain Sisko from *ST:DS9*) is presently in DC performing on stage in *Oedipus Rex*.

Miscellany: The local DC-area F&SF con, CapClave, is coming up in a few weeks (in College Park, MD). A new website for genre works by women is up and running (www.broaduniverse.com). Randy attended a local horror con at BWI recently; and he gave away many free items that he'd picked up there. Don Sakers will probably be publishing his



new novel, *Dance for the Ivory Madonna*, later this year. Boston won (and Charlotte lost) the bid for WorldCon 2005. Rob held the drawing for the prizes in the Spectrum Awards fund-raising raffle and will be getting the prizes out to the winners.

Finally, the group watched a brief cartoon which recently aired on the Cartoon Network's late-night feature, *Adult Swim.* It features former Hanna Barbera superhero Birdman -- now called Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law -- and the courtroom battle between Dr. Quest and Race Bannon for custody of Jonny and Hadji. What a laugh riot!

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#### WANTED!!



Nifty Stuff to Look For by Carl Cipra

Black Seas of Infinity: The Best of H.P. Lovecraft (selected by Andrew Wheeler)

OK, I know there are already tons of Lovecraft anthologies out there (and I've got tons of 'em myself!); but this one looks like a really nice selection, especially for someone looking for a good introduction to Lovecraftiana. Unfortunately, as far as I can tell *Black Seas* is only available at present through the Science Fiction Book Club. I haven't yet been able to discover whether it's an "SFBC exclusive" or not.

This book is being touted as "the largest one-volume collection of H.P. Lovecraft's fiction ever assembled." There are 19 stories in it, including such gems as "The Call of Cthulhu," "The

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## More Trickster Tales "for Kids"

by Carl Cipra

In last month's newsletter, I reviewed two collections of Trickster stories "for children": *Trickster and the Fainting Birds* and *The Jack Tales*. Imagine my surprise – and delight! – when I located another illustrated "kids" book of Trickster tales soon after that newsletter went to print. (I certainly wasn't looking for one – but there it was! I guess I should just chalk it up serendipity – or to the Trickster's whimsical influence!) And the title of this new collection of Trickster stories is *The Adventures of Hershel of Ostropol* (Holiday House, 1995).

As with the two I reviewed last month, this particular book of Trickster tales takes the reader off on another ethnic journey; but instead of placing the Trickster figure in a Native American or a Back Hills/Southern context, this particular incarnation of the Trickster archetype arises from the culture of the Jews of Eastern Europe, specifically from the Ukraine of the early Nineteenth Century. And, in fact, Hershel of Ostropol (aka, in Yiddish, Hershele Ostropolier) is truly an "incarnation" of the Trickster, in that he was an actual person. As far as we can tell, Hershel was born in the Ukrainian town of Balta and lived for a while in the tiny village of Ostropol. He probably wasn't as uneducated as the stories would have it, however, because he served for a time as te shochet (ritual slaughterer) for Ostropol and would thus have to have been well-versed in all the complex and exacting requirements of that position. By all reports, Hershel was a very witty man, with a penchant for poking fun at pompous, self-important windbags which definitely carries over into some of the stories about him. It was during a period of his life as a wandering beggar, living by his wits and traveling from town to town, that he probably became a well-known figure throughout the Ukrainian countryside; and stories just naturally seemed to develop about and around him. The Hershel depicted in these stories is nothing less than a



Portrait of Hershel by Trina Schart Hyman (from the frontispiece of the book)

classic Trickster figure: a maverick, a cultural hero for the common man, sly and wily, always on the make – and sometimes even being duped himself.

The 10 stories in this book have been collected and "retold" by Eric A. Kimmel, who has been hearing the stories of Hershel of Ostropol ever since he was a boy - and his love for these stories is quite obvious in their retelling in this book. In story after story, the wily Hershel takes on – and gets the best of – a tightfisted innkeeper and his wife ("What Hershel's Father Did"), a bandit ("The Bandit"), his skinflint old Uncle Zalman ("The Candlesticks"), and the local noble Count Potocki ("An Incredible Story"). Upon occasion, Hershel even takes on the kindly old village Rabbi ("The Miracle"), although – as is often the case in Trickster stories - the Rabbi sometimes turns the tables on Hershel ("Potatoes!"). One of the wittiest stories ("The Cow") is a rollicking tale of one-up-manship between Hershel and his friend-and-rival, Ivan. And, finally, even in death, Hershel gives God a good laugh and finagles his way into Heaven ("Hershel Goes to Heaven"). Hershel of Ostropol is, as I said, the consummate Trickster, from beginning to end!

As a special treat, Kimmel has included a final chapter of sayings attributed to Hershel: everything from wry digs at the rich and powerful ("What does God think of money? Look who he gives it to.") to timeless observations on the Way of the World ("It's easy to practice barbering on somebody else's

beard.").

And as an extra-special added treat, each chapter of *The Adventures of Hershel of Ostropol* features a cute black-and-white vignette by Trina Schart Hyman, one of my favorite illustrators of children's books. (She won the Caldecott Medal in 1985, for her illustration of *St. George and the Dragon*, and a Caldecott Honor Medal in 1984, for her illustration of *Little Red Riding Hood*.) In fact, it was Ms. Hyman's very recognizable style on the delightful full-color cover illustration that first caught my eye.

If you decide to give this small book a miss because you think it's "just for kids," then I think you're doing yourself a disservice. A treat for your mind, a treat for your eyes, and a treat for your heart – *The Adventures of Hershel of Ostropol* is truly a nice little package!

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#### Nifty Stuff to Look For

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Shadow Out of Time," and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." There are also four pretty nifty appendices: Lovecraft's own history of the *Necronomicon*; his notes on writing weird fiction; an autobiographical essay; and a chronology of Lovecraft's works. And the cover is a real dream (nightmare?), too. It features a dark and creepy gothic mansion right out of an AIP horror flick, with a number of Deep Ones wandering about out front.

Futureland, by Walter Mosley

This book is due out in hardcover in November. I heard Mosley read an excerpt from it at Millenium Worldcon; and it sounds really great! It was a story about a futuristic private investigator in "lower New York" - sort of "film noir goes high tech." Futureland consists of nine interconnected stories about "a high-tech future world reminiscent of The Matrix." (Dare I say "cyberpunk"?) Two of the stories ("Whispers in the Dark" and "The Greatest") can be downloaded through iPublish.com. "The Greatest" is apparently about "the latest challenger in the long history of the manly art of boxing": Fera Jones, a 6'9",

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#### Nifty Stuff to Look For

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260-pound woman! I've never read *Blue Light*; but from everything I've heard, *Futureland* is very different. (Mosley himself now considers *Blue Light* "speculative fiction," but he says that *Futureland* is "science fiction.") I'm really looking forward to getting a copy.

*The Ripping Friends* (Fox - Saturdays, 11 AM)

John Kricfalusi (the guy who brought you *Ren & Stimpy*) is at it again! This time he's going after the superhero genre. Meet Crag, Rip, Slab, Chunk, and Jimmy - the Ripping Friends - "the buffest and brawniest crime-fighters of all time." I've only seen one of the two episodes that have been shown so far, and I found it an absolute scream: the Ripping Friends had to save the world from a super-intelligent flatworm bent on world conquest (after stealing human spinal columns, of course). If you saw any of the "Powdered Toast Man" features from Ren & Stimpy, then I'm sure you can imagine what's in store for you in this series! Very campy!

Samurai Jack (Cartoon Network - Mondays, 9 PM; Fridays, 7 PM, Sundays, 8 PM)

Samurai Jack comes from the fertile imagination of Genndy Tarta-kovsky, the guy who brought you Dexter's Laboratory.

When a beneficent emperor is overthrown by a powerful and evil entity know as Aku (Japanese for "evil"), his young son is spirited away and trained in all forms of combat with but one goal in mind: when he reaches maturity, he must wield his father's mystical sword to challenge and destroy Aku. But, when this long-anticipated confrontation finally comes about, Aku narrowly manages to escape destruction by opening a rift in time and flinging his heroic enemy into a far-distant future, where Aku and his minions are firmly in control. It is in this wildly kaleidoscopic future that our brave hero acquires the name "Samurai Jack"and begins a campaign to smash Aku's empire of evil while searching for a

## The Silent Gondoliers by William Goldman

(Del Rey/Ballantine, 2001) reviewed by Carl



Now here's a cute little book, a very enjoyable read! The fun starts right at the book's cover. William Goldman is also, of course, the author of The Princess Bride -- but there seems to be some "confusion" about the authorship of both these novels. The cover of Gondoliers cites as its author "William Goldman, as told by S. Morgenstern" and the title page says "The Silent Gondoliers, A Fable by S. Morgenstern, Author of The Princess Bride". There's even an "About the Author" note at the back of the book which relates biographical information about S. Morgenstern -- with no mention of Goldman! Here's what it says:

"Many critics of European literature in general and Florinese prose in particular rate S. Morgenstern as a modern master. He is known in this country primarily for his classic tale of true love and high adventure, The Princess Bride. Mr. Morgenstern lives in Florin City and had, at the time of his writing this book, one wife, two

daughters, and four and a half grand-children."

From the tone of this note, I think you can get some idea of the kind of fun the reader is in for. I even found myself laughing out loud at various passages (a very rare reading experience for me). I also couldn't help, from time to time, hearing the narrative being read by the voice of Peter Falk, who played the kindly old grandfather in the film version of *Princess Bride* (a portrayal of S. Morgenstern himself?).

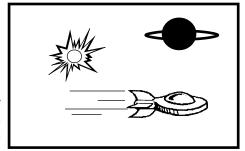
The Silent Gondoliers provides an explanation of why "once upon a time," the gondoliers of Venice reputedly possessed the finest singing voices in the world -- and why they don't sing anymore! It's the story of young Luigi, the erstwhile gondolier with very unfortunate vocal qualities, and his trials and tribulations on the way to realizing his greatest dream: "to sing his lungs out and his heart out and his soul out on the Grand Canal." (And don't try guessing at the happy ending, because it's certainly not anything like what you'd expect!)

The Silent Gondoliers is definitely a work of fantasy -- despite all its real-world trappings, things happen in Luigi's Venice that just don't happen/haven't happened in our Venice. Ever heard of The Four Day Whirlwind or the Killer Storm? Somehow, I don't think so. It's also a very short book and a very quick read -- and I found it an absolute delight! Kudos, Mr. S. Morgenstern! (I think I'll go get myself a copy of The Princess Bride.)

way to return to his own time and defeat Aku once and for all.

This series of half-hour episodes is a sci-fi treat (yes, "sci-fi" – a jumbled-up media mixture of science fiction & fantasy): stunning visuals and backgrounds, terrific sound effects, a catchy soundtrack, and delightful storylines that combine the hero's quest, sci-fi tropes, and action sequences straight out of samurai flicks. There are even sly inside jokes and allusions to other animated features (such as Samurai Jack riding on a steed once ridden by Ookla

the Mok in *Thundarr the Barbarian* – remember that one?!). If you're an animation fan and you haven't seen this show yet, then you have my deepest sympathies.  $\Lambda \Psi \Phi$ 



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

**Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians** (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered (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 \$20, for which you will receive this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. 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, Octber 14th**, at James Crutchfield's home: 1414 17th St., NW, #413 (near DuPont Circle) - 1:30 PM for business meeting; 2:00 PM for social meeting. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. 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, Peter, Rob, Mike and Kendall

Oct. 26-28, 2001 **NEKO-CON FLASH**. Holiday Inn Executive Center (Virginia Beach, VA). Guests include: Colleen Doran. Membership: \$30 until 10/6; \$40 at the door (sgl-day rates available). Make checks payable to "Neko-Con" and send to: Neko Con, PO Box 4141, Greensboro, NC 27404-4141. Japanese animation convention. website: www.nekocon.org

Nov. 23-25, 2001**DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL MEETING XXIV**. Holiday Inn, Timonium (Timonium, MD). GoH: Joanne Bertin; Special Guest: Katherine Kurtz; Artist GoH: L.W. Perkins. Membership: \$35 until11/1/2001; \$40 after that. Make checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907. A *very* GLBT-friendly convention!

Feb. 15-17, 2002**KATSUCON8: THE CLASSICS**. Marriott Waterfront Hotel (Baltimore, MD). Guests include: Mark Rogers. Membership: \$35 until 10/31/01; \$45 11/1/01 to 12/31/01; \$50 at the door (sgl-day rates available). Make checks payable to "Katsucon Entertainment, Inc." and send to: Katsucon Entertainment, Inc., Attn: Pre-registration Dept., PO Box 222691, Chantilly, VA 20153-2691. Anime, cosplay, gaming convention. website: www.katsucon.org

April 5-7, 2002**JERSEYDEVILCON 2**. Sheraton Edison Hotel, Raritan Center (Edison, NJ). Fantasy GoH: Terry Pratchett. Membership: \$30 (9/1 - 11/30/01); \$35 (12/1/01 - 3/7/02); \$40 thereafter & at door. Make checks payable to "JerseyDevilCon" and send to: JerseyDevilCon, PO Box 403, Metuchen, NJ 08840. website: http://JerseyDevilCon.hypermart.net/Homepage.html

May 24-27, 2002**BALTICON 36**. Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel (Baltimore, MD). Author GoH: Mark Rogers; Artist GoHs: Phil & Kaja Foglio; Filk GoH: The Boogie Knights. Hotel rooms: \$119/night + tax (sgl/dbl/tpl/quad). Membership: \$35 until 2002 ("more at the door"). Make checks payable to "Balticon 36" and send to: Balticon 36, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686. website: http://www.balticon.org

July 12-14, 2002**SHORE LEAVE 24**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: TBA. Memberships available as of 10/1/2001 and at table at Capclave 2001. website: http://www.shore-leave.com

Aug. 29 - Sept. 2, 2002**CONJOSE** (**The 60th World Science Fiction Convention**). McEnery Convention Center & surrounding hotels (San Jose, CA). Author GoH: Vernor Vinge; Artist GoH: David Cherry; Fan GoH: John & Bjo Trimble. Attending membership: \$160 (7/11 - 12/31/2001; will go UP!). Make checks payable to "ConJose" and send to: ConJose, PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1363 (or: reg@conjose.org). website: www.conjose.org

