

FENCON XX

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2025

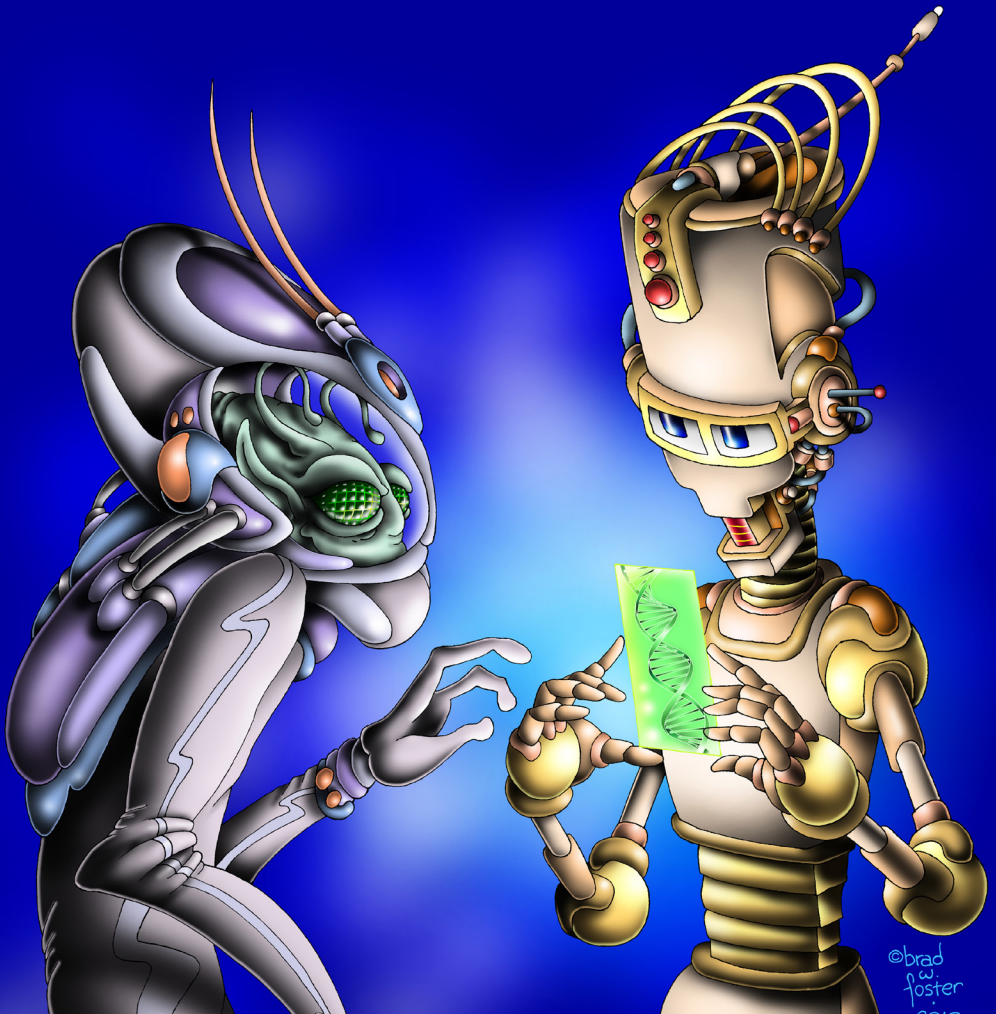
CAMPBELL

GIACOIO • NELSON

FOSTER • ABELL

WEISSKOPF © ULBRICH

IKENBERRY • ROBBINS





FENCON XX

SPY VS SPY

Guests

Jack Campbell	<i>Guest of Honor</i>	<u>10</u>
Joe Giacoio	<i>Music Guest of Honor</i>	<u>12</u>
Michael Nelson	<i>Fen Guest of Honor</i>	<u>14</u>
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FenCon is a production of the Dallas Future Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to the advancement of science, literature and music for the future of all mankind.

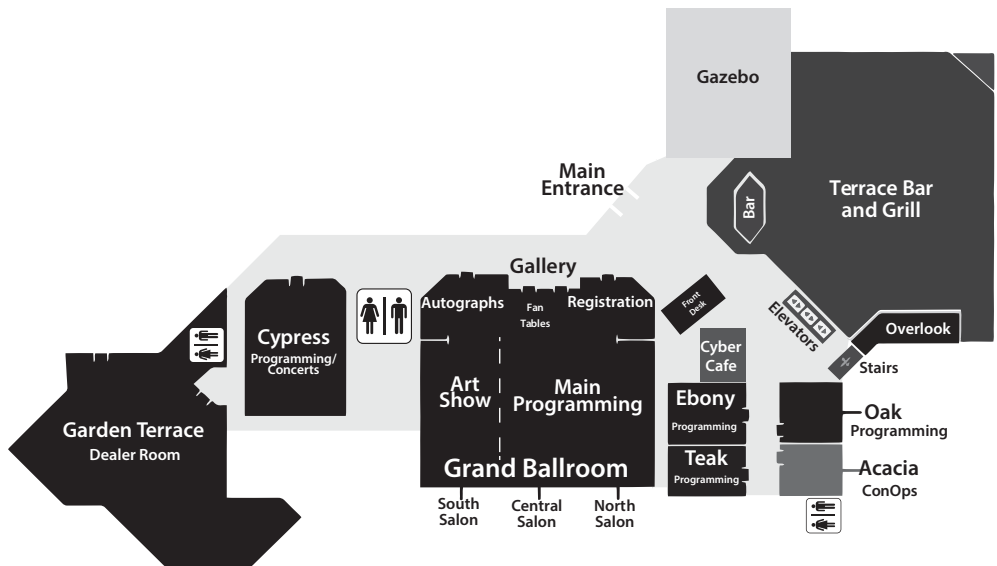
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DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

MAIN LEVEL MAP



Main Programming *Grand Ballroom North and Central*

Art Show *Grand Ballroom South*

Dealers Room *Garden Terrace 1-2*

Programming *Cypress*

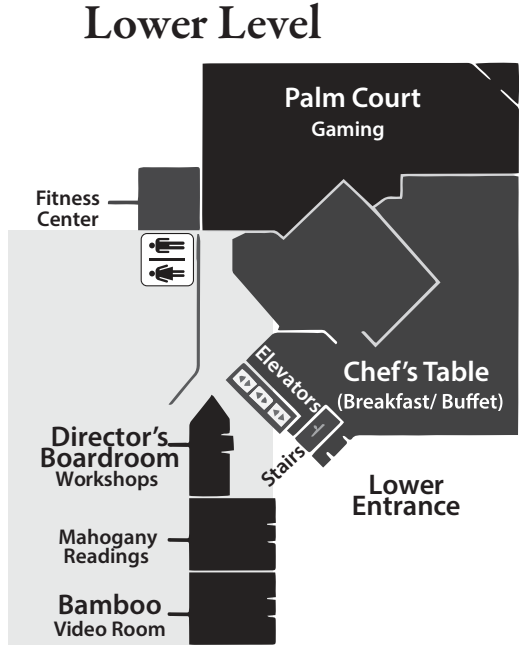
Programming *Oak*

Programming *Ebony*

Programming *Teak*

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

LOWER LEVEL AND 9TH FLOOR MAPS



Matt's Gaming Room *Palm Court*

Makerspace *9th Floor - The View*

Costuming *9th Floor - The View*

Workshops *Director's Boardroom*

Readings *Mahogany*

Video Room *Bamboo*

LETTER FROM THE CONCHAIR

BY TODD CALDWELL

The theme for this year's convention evolved around a campfire back in Spring of 2024. The original idea was not Spy vs Spy, although that was the spirit of the idea.

Instead, the concept was Fen vs Fen. That seems to be what we spend most of our time on these days. Purple team at the throats of the Green team and vice versa. Constantly.

Rabbit Season ! Duck Season ! Fiddler Crab Season !

Fandom needs to find a new hobby. Like dreaming of what humanity might do in the future.

Star Wars – original flavor – was a big turning point for me. Airplanes and spacecraft had always fascinated me, but that was something different. New parts of my young imagination switched on.

Not long after that, I found 'Borderland of Sol' in an anthology about black holes that I picked up at a Scholastic Book Fair event. By high school I found friends that would be right at home at FenCon. They loaned me the rest of Known Space, which I read in about 2 weeks.

That led to similar friends in college and frequent trips to book stores to see what was new in speculative fiction. These friends helped me find lots of wonderful books. I've met the authors of a lot of them, including Sir Terry. That was memorable.

My college friends included one Stephanie Tyler Kolitsch. Now Dr. Kolitsch at the University of Tennessee at Martin. She's the one that sent me an email back in 2003 asking if I'd heard of this FenCon thing. Larry Niven was to be there.

So of course I went. Jeff Barton and I did a panel on amateur astronomy. It was only the third or fourth convention I'd attended.

And now I'm Conchair.

LETTER FROM THE CONCHAIR

All this to me has been about finding my tribe. That first FenCon was a lot like hanging out with my favorite folks from college again. Same energy. Same random rabbit hole conversations.

Some seem to have forgotten that. That's why we get together.

I encourage you all to remember why we get together and have a great convention.

Todd Caldwell
FenCon XX Chair
February 2025.



© Brad W. Foster

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF FENCON

You've waited through the registration line. You handed money to the convention and they gave you a badge, a lanyard, a program schedule sheet, and showed you where to download this book with a pretty cover.

Now what?

First, put your badge on. It is your passport to most of the convention activities, so keep it visible.¹

Second, take a few minutes to review the Program Schedule. Schedules can be found at fencon.org/hours.aspx, on printed sheets at Registration, and on printed signs at each room.

It provides a list of when the events start and stop and detailed descriptions of what the panels will cover, when and where.² Think of this convention as a circus: lots of performances happen simultaneously, so there is something happening wherever you look.

Third, read through the descriptions, choose which ones you want to see, then find them on the grid on the Program Schedule Sheets. The grid format lets you scan across the different activities during an hour, making it easier to find conflicts (or, if a panel isn't quite what you wanted, to find alternatives).

You may not be so interested in the panels, but the convention has other activities, too. Take some time to check out the Art Show and items in the Auction, play some games in Gaming, explore the Dealers Room and shop for books, jewelry, clothing, collectibles, and more, watch movies and video shorts in the Video Room, or just hang out in the Terrace.

¹ By paying for your membership, you help finance the convention. Although a registered non-profit 501(c)3 organization, the convention still needs real money to pay for the hotel and equipment. Showing your badge shows that you've done your part to make this convention happen.

² Wait... what's a panel? Some attendees are happy to meet the Guests of Honor, listen to authors read their own stories, or hear how artists put together that really cool piece of art. The convention schedules these discussions and presentations into panels. The Program Schedule describes what the panel topics are and who is on them (as well as concerts, demonstrations, workshops and guest autograph sessions,) and lists when and where they will happen, in the order they will happen.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF FENCON

On Friday we start with opening ceremonies, a few special videos, and a few important messages.

Most of Friday and early Saturday, you can bid in the silent auction on various types of art from many talented artists.

After the Dealers Room and Art Show close, you can still watch some great selections in the Video Room, learn some new games, and find the cash bar. On Friday and Saturday nights, you have filk bands playing into the wee hours of the morning, where you may hear strains of music with fannish phrases.³

There are many activities to choose from, starting Friday until the convention closes Sunday afternoon, so pace yourself. Schedule time for eating, drinking, sleeping, and being kind to your fellow convention attendees by taking care of personal hygiene (bathing, etc.)

Finally, Programming can change after the schedule sheets are printed. Look for schedule changes posted around the convention.

For the latest and most complete schedule go to <http://www.fencon.org/Hours.aspx> or on mobile at mobile.fencon.org.

³ Some terms you may hear around the con that might be new to you:

- fan \ *noun* \ Merriam-Webster lists: an ardent admirer or enthusiast (as of a celebrity or a pursuit) <science-fiction fans>
- fen \ *noun* \ The plural form of fan, just as “men” is the plural form of “man”
- fanzine \ fan-zeen \ *noun* An amateur-produced magazine written for a subculture, usually for little or no compensation (only to defray costs). Original source: fan + magazine
- filk \ Music or songs associated with science fiction/fantasy culture. Allegedly, this was a typographical error of ‘folk.’
- newbie \ nu-bee \ A person who is new to fandom. We were all new, so don’t hesitate to ask someone when you need to.

DALLAS FUTURE SOCIETY - CONVENTION CODE OF CONDUCT

...OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY THE CON

The Dallas Future Society (DFS) is the parent organization responsible for producing FenCon and other events. As such, DFS is committed to providing a safe and congenial environment for all its members, and any other groups at the facility. We expect all members to demonstrate respect and appropriate behavior to all present: members, convention staff, hotel staff, and anyone else present at the hotel.

To promote a positive convention experience for everyone, we have established the following Code of Conduct for convention members. It applies to all pre-convention, at-convention, and post-convention activities associated with each event.

Above all, we ask all members to exercise common sense rules for public behavior, personal interaction, common courtesy, politeness and respect for private property.

For the complete Code of Conduct, please refer to the [Code of Conduct page](#) on Fencon.org.

1. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

In the event of a medical emergency, please go directly to the hotel staff, not the convention staff – either the front desk or the nearest hotel staff member. The hotel has asked that all attendees work through them directly in these situations.

2. IDENTIFICATION (BADGES):

Each convention member will be provided with a badge. Your badge is your permit into convention functions and spaces. Wear your badge so it is visible at all times. Anyone seen without a badge in any of our function rooms will be asked to leave and retrieve their badge before returning. If you lose your badge, you may be required to pay for a new membership.

If you find someone's badge or lose your own badge, please contact Registration or Convention Operations (Con Ops) immediately. Badge sharing is prohibited. To ensure this, we require that all members give a verifiable real name in addition to any listed badge name when they register. Anyone found to be sharing a badge will be removed from the convention and the membership associated with that badge may be revoked without refund.

3. SAFETY:

We will not tolerate dangerous, illegal, or destructive behavior at the convention. Please

DALLAS FUTURE SOCIETY - CONVENTION CODE OF CONDUCT

...OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY THE CON

report any incidents to Convention Operations immediately. Any members found to have participated in potentially dangerous, illegal, or destructive activity anywhere in or around the convention hotel will be asked to cease immediately and may be subject to the Consequences section listed below (see #17).

4. MANNERS & ETIQUETTE:

We expect all members to treat all people at the event with respect. The best way to do that is by exercising good manners and by being patient and polite. Areas of the convention can be crowded and stressful at times. Please be aware of your tone of voice, body language, and behavior. In short, be polite and be nice.

5. ANTI-HARASSMENT:

We want everyone to have a great time, consequently we will not tolerate harassing or menacing behavior. Please report to Convention Operations any incidents of verbal or physical harassment including but not limited to:

- a. Inappropriate language or gestures such as suggestive, insulting, intimidating, demeaning, discriminatory, or offensive comments
- b. Unwanted physical or sexual attention
- c. Unwanted physical contact or proximity
- d. Threatening language or behavior

5. ANTI-HARASSMENT (continued):

If you feel you or another member are being harassed, please do the following:

- a. Tell the individual that their behavior is inappropriate and ask them to stop
- b. If they don't stop, or you do not feel comfortable addressing them, then immediately contact a convention staff member. Request to be immediately escorted to Convention Operations
- c. Provide Convention Operations with as much information about the incident as possible, including badge name (if available) and description
- d. The Chairperson and convention leadership will work to evaluate and address the incident as quickly as possible

Advice – If someone asks you to leave them alone or tells you “no” or “stop”, immediately acknowledge the request, walk away, and do not approach them again. This will stop most incidents from escalating and allow everyone to enjoy the convention. Always remember your “good fun” might be another person’s harassment.

DALLAS FUTURE SOCIETY - CONVENTION CODE OF CONDUCT

...OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY THE CON

6. ATTIRE & COSTUMES:

No nudity. This is a family-friendly convention. Keep your clothing and costumes PG-13. For your safety, no bare feet please. We reserve the right to request you change into more appropriate attire or put away your props if we find them to be inappropriate or disruptive.

When sitting in panel or performance rooms, please remove any large hats, fezzes, or other items that might obstruct another's view.

Advice – Body paint is not a costume. Save it for adult-only conventions.

Remember – Costuming is NOT consent. Please treat all costumers with respect.

7. OTHER HOTEL GUESTS:

Please be considerate to all hotel guests. There may be other events going on at the hotel. Please treat non-convention guests with courtesy. Do not disrupt other events that may be going on at the hotel. Please observe all rules posted by the hotel.

8. CHILDREN:

The convention is an event that is fun for the entire family, and we welcome children as attendees. To ensure your children's safety, please watch them at all times. Parents/guardians are responsible for their minor children and their minor children's behavior at all times. Children with Kid-in-Tow memberships are required to be with their responsible adult at all times and can never be left unattended in **any** convention space or with convention staff.

Advice – If your child cannot sit quietly through a discussion panel or other event, please take them out in the hallway so that they won't disturb other members.

9. SMOKING & E-CIGARETTES:

Smoking of all kinds is prohibited in all areas of the hotel, including function rooms, sleeping rooms, hallways, and the Atrium. Please obey the hotel's posted smoking policies in other areas in and around the hotel. Use of e-cigarettes or similar devices is prohibited in all hotel function rooms and the Atrium. Please follow the hotel's e-cigarette policy in all other hotel areas.

10. ALCOHOL:

The legal drinking age in Texas is 21 years old. Any minors found in possession of alcohol or any adults found to be providing alcohol to minors will have their memberships revoked and be removed from the convention. No exceptions.

Please drink responsibly.

Advice – If you have had too much, please get a room at the hotel, call a cab, or ask a sober friend for a ride.

DALLAS FUTURE SOCIETY - CONVENTION CODE OF CONDUCT

...OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY THE CON

11. FOOD: No outside food or drink is allowed in any convention space. Food and beverages purchased from the hotel restaurant or bar may be carried into the function space.

Advice – The hotel has several dining options including a restaurant, the bar and room service.

12. HEALTH AND WELFARE (5-2-1):

Not only for your own enjoyment of the convention, but also for the enjoyment of your fellow fans, please follow the 5-2-1 rule: at least 5 hours of sleep a night, at least 2 nutritious meals a day, at least 1 shower a day. *Advice – Please minimize the use of colognes and perfumes. Many people are sensitive or allergic. Clean is the best smell of all.*

13. WEAPONS:

Apart from the costume contest, no one is allowed to carry any weapon that would be considered illegal in Texas. A pocketknife is fine, a dagger is not. Please use common sense. Any swords, knives, or other weapons purchased in the Dealers Room must be wrapped before leaving the room and taken immediately to your hotel room, car or other safe place.

14. AUTOGRAPHS:

Most of our guests are willing to give you their autograph, but please follow these simple rules:

When possible, only request autographs during the designated autograph sessions. If there is a line, please limit yourself to 3 items to be autographed per guest. Multiple trips through the line are allowed, time permitting. Please do not ask any guest for an autograph as they are leaving, going to a panel, or while they are at a meal.

15. PHOTOGRAPHS:

The convention will not restrict your right to take photos as long as you respect the wishes of your intended subjects.

Ask permission before you photograph any individual or group. If someone asks that you not take their picture, please respect their wishes. Please do not take photographs in any high traffic areas. Please move to a less populated area instead.

16. RECORDING:

Recording of performances and programming at the convention is allowed only for the private use of the person making the recording. If a panelist or performer requests that there be no video or audio taping, please respect his or her wishes. Recording of any kind within hallways and hotel public spaces is not allowed without prior permission of the subjects or their legal guardians. *Advice — Be polite. Always ask first before recording anyone.*

DALLAS FUTURE SOCIETY - CONVENTION CODE OF CONDUCT

...OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY THE CON

17. CONSEQUENCES:

DFS and the Convention Chair reserve the right to evaluate any and all potential code of conduct violations. Failure to adhere to this Code of Conduct may result in one or more of the following:

- a. Mediation with all parties involved by the Chairperson or designated DFS representative
- b. Verbal warnings
- c. Revocation of membership and/or removal from hotel
- d. Reporting individual to hotel staff/security
- e. Reporting individual to local law enforcement
- f. Any other actions deemed appropriate by the Chairperson

18. EVALUATION OF CONDUCT VIOLATION CLAIMS

In all cases, the convention will strive to quickly and impartially evaluate all available facts in order to make a fair determination. Consequently, DFS and the convention leadership reserve the right to investigate the circumstances of all accusations and apply the above list of consequences to individuals who we determine to be in violation of this Code of Conduct.

DFS and the convention leadership recognize that some Code of Conduct violation accusations may be false due to misunderstandings or malice. In cases of misunderstanding, we will strive to arbitrate an equitable resolution for all parties involved. Anyone we determine to have maliciously brought a false Code of Conduct violation accusation will be subject to one or more of the consequences listed above. DFS and the Convention Chairperson are the sole interpreters and arbiters of the Code of Conduct rules for this convention.

19. ASK US!

No policy can cover every contingency. If you have any questions or concerns about the policies in this document, please let us know.

GUEST OF HONOR

by S

Throughout the more than 35 years that I've known John Hemry, I've always admired his intelligence, generosity, self-reflective nature and very unique sense of humor. John believes his actions show who he truly is, so it's literally taken me nearly our entire 32-1/2 years of marriage to be able to say I know him well.

Before I met him, John grew up as the third of four children in a U.S. Navy family who traveled extensively. His family's favorite duty station was Midway Island. Their memories of Midway were such a huge part of family lore that, during my trip to meet his family, they sat me down to watch several hours of their [soundless] home movies of Midway Island, comprised of a few shots of buildings, many shots of scruffy shrubbery growing in the sand and a LOT of shots of gooney birds (Laysan Albatrosses) making awkward landings. Ironically, it was a lot of fun watching these people whom I'd only just met laughing hard as they recalled some of their most cherished memories.

After his father retired from the Navy, John and his two brothers were tapped by their dad to help build the family's two-story house on their rural Kansas farm. John graduated valedictorian at the local high school and went on to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy, building his



own eclectic career in the Navy. He first served as a surface warfare officer on a destroyer and then transferred into navy intelligence to serve on an amphibious assault ship, at an anti-terrorism center and at one of the navy's operational intelligence centers, the latter of which is where I met him.

John promised me that life would never be boring and he has, indeed, kept it an adventure through this, his second career, and his optimistic approach to living. Together, we've had three children, matured to meet with contentment the challenges of severe autism in the oldest two, and even designed the kind of house we wanted to live in (the creaky stairs, knocking pipes, and kitchen drawers that mysteriously open are a bonus that keep things interesting). John is never the type of person who gets lost in details, yet he always

JACK CAMPBELL

manages to approach the family's annual trip to Disney World as if he's building a strategic battle plan, meticulously laying out each and every tactical maneuver so that everyone ends up having a good time while there.

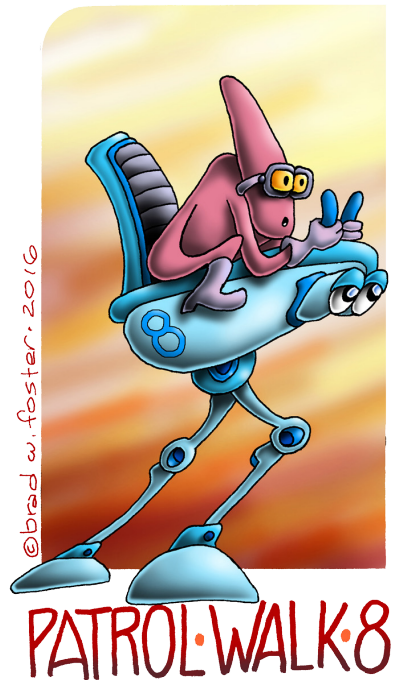
John's not a fact-spouter, but his brain is so steeped in history, especially military history; world myths and legends; and funny little tales that it's always fascinating to see what story idea he'll come up with next. One of my close friends, who doesn't normally like science fiction, loves all of his books "because he has a lot to say about leadership in general, politics, the human condition and his ideas are just cool. He's always showing how people's relationships develop through working a weird and improbable problem together." I couldn't have said it better.

Years before he began writing professionally, John told me that he had a story idea based on Xenophon's *Anabasis*, which he told me was the tale of a man who had to unexpectedly step up to lead thousands of Greek mercenaries safely home from deep within enemy territory. After writing his *Stark's War* trilogy and four books in his *JAG in Space* series, John finally put this long-simmering idea down on paper and produced his best-selling *The Lost Fleet* series. It was thrilling to

watch his long-held dream come to fruition and I've loved being on the sidelines ever since watching his legacy build.

John is an adored husband, an amazing father, and a true friend.

John G. Hemry, author (as Jack Campbell) of the *New York Times* bestselling *Lost Fleet* series, the *Lost Stars*, and *The Pillars of Reality* series



© Brad W. Foster

MUSIC GUEST OF HONOR

As a young child in the Bronx, Joe Giacoio was abandoned in a music store and raised by a pack of acoustical guitars. This explains a lot.

Joe has won awards for his strange guitar playing and even stranger songwriting. Crossroads Magazine writes, “Some people seem to have the ability to create music that is at the same time funny, serious and incredibly clever. Joe Giacoio is one of those people.”

Despite popular demand Joe released a third album entitled “I Love Hamburgers”, featuring players who have performed with Johnny Cash, George Jones, and Bob Dylan. Clearly times are hard for session musicians these days.

The title track contains the most oddball (and unsuccessful) declaration of love ever heard: I love you more than old guitars, Planet of the Apes and baseball cards / I love you more than hamburgers / and I LOVE hamburgers.



Songwriting awards include:

- Great American Song Contest - First Prize: Lyrics Category
- Plowshares Songwriting Finalist, Pennsylvania
- South Florida Songwriting Contest Finalist
- Avalon Emerging Songwriter Contest Finalist, Virginia
- Songwriters Showcase at the New Jersey Folk Festival
- Washington DC MACFUMP (Mid-Atlantic Coalition of Folk Music Presenters) New Talent Showcase
- Just Plain Folks Honorable Mention
- Mid-Atlantic Song Contest Honorable Mention

JOE GIACOIO

Joe performs concerts at venues up and down the East Coast. He also gives lectures on guitar history, bringing with him vintage Martin flattops and Gibson arch-tops, Harp guitars, National steel-bodied guitars, and Dobro and Weissenborn lap steels.

Joe's national TV debut was on the long running "Up All Night

with Rhonda Shear" on the USA Network. The show was cancelled the next week. Joe has also been featured on the nationally syndicated Dr Demento radio show, which so far is still on the air.

Joe's online man cave is www.joegmusic.com



© Brad W. Foster

FEN GUEST OF HONOR

by Angela Nelson

Michael Nelson is thrilled to return to FenCon this year as the Fan Guest of Honor, especially considering his deep connection to the event. Back in 2003, when he was asked to chair the first FenCon, he had no prior experience running a convention. Yet, with his programming expertise, attention to detail, and ability to solve problems on the fly, Michael along with the support of a capable and dedicated team (too many to name in this bio here but our gratitude goes out to them) managed to pull off a successful first year without losing money. It was an ambitious task, but they proved that with the right mindset, passion, and teamwork, anything was possible. His leadership continued into the second FenCon, in which the merry group of FenCon staff once again guided the event to success, despite the challenge of holding the convention amid the aftermath of two hurricanes!

Fandom has been a lifelong love for Michael, dating back to when he was just five years old and received a box of Harvey Comics from his cousins. This early introduction sparked a passion



for the genre. Growing up as a Gen X fan, Michael was shaped by the TV shows and films that defined the era. The Six Million Dollar Man, Super Friends, Star Wars and -- of course -- Star Trek were his gateways into the world of science fiction and fantasy. His love for these worlds only deepened, and he fondly recalls standing in line for what felt like an eternity just to see The Empire Strikes Back in theaters. These early experiences cemented his place in fandom and set him on a path that would lead to a lifetime of geeky adventures.

Beyond his work at FenCon, Michael is a seasoned convention-goer himself. Along with local DFW conventions and other out of state conventions,

MICHAEL NELSON

he's attended San Diego Comic-Con several times, soaking in the massive pop culture spectacle, and even had the opportunity to sit in the Captain's chair from the Star Trek: Strange New Worlds series—a dream come true for any Trek fan!

When he's not engaging in fandom activities or helping to run conventions, Michael can often be found embarking on his next great road trip. He's explored fascinating places like the Odessa Meteor Crater, Tombstone, Memphis, Indianapolis, Virginia, and Southern Arizona's Transportation Museum and Pima Air & Space Museum. His love of travel is fueled by a sense of adventure and curiosity, always seeking out new experiences and interesting locations off the beaten path.

Outside of fandom, Michael has had a long and successful career in the IT field. From his early days working with DOS and spreadsheets to diving into database management and application programming, his experience spans the many facets of IT. He has spent years troubleshooting, optimizing, and adapting to the ever-evolving technology landscape, all while

applying his problem-solving skills to tackle challenges that arise.

And let's not forget his feline companions! Michael is the proud caretaker of two recently adopted kittens (Porthos and Moopsy) who have their very own YouTube channel, Geeky Cats (<https://www.youtube.com/@geekycats>). Combining his love of technology, video creation, and cats, he and his wife Angela share their adventures and quirks with the world, showing that even their pets have a touch of geeky flair.

Whether he's running a convention, sharing his love of fandom, exploring new places, or indulging in a quiet evening with his cats, Michael brings enthusiasm and passion to everything he does. This year's FenCon celebrates not only his journey as one of its key founders but also his lifelong dedication to the geek community. Be sure to say hi and swap a few road trip stories or favorite Star Trek episodes with him—you won't be disappointed!

ARTIST GUEST OF HONOR

Dossier on Brad W Foster

Declassified report by Special Operative 42

After considerable research, cyberespionage, and interviews with secret sources, the following information has been collected on the subject, Brad W. Foster.

Brad “Weirdo” Foster (or, as he is known in the trendy art circles, “Who?”) was born with a pen in his hand, causing no end of discomfort for his mother. It took several decades before he found out what the pointy thing was for. After an embarrassingly short career as a professional darts player, someone stopped laughing long enough to tell him about ink. The rest, as they say, is a tiny footnote to history.

Brad “Whip It Good” Foster comes from a distinguished line of European royalty. He fled Europe during the war though which war is still up to conjecture, due to liberal use of plastic surgery and body enhancing (or de-hancing) implants. His devotion to disguising his background is most evident in the fact that, while possessing a glorious mane of hair, twice a week he undergoes a three-hour session of having most of those hairs plucked out.

Turning his back on the fabulous



wealth and power that were his by birthright, Brad “Wankel Rotary Engine” Foster opted instead for the life of a struggling artist. He discovered a real talent for laboriously tracing drawings out of old books and magazines that he hoped no one would remember, and fobbing these off as his own original creations. At his first gallery showing in a trendy New York City art salon, he was beaten severely (literally and figuratively) by the critics for what they referred to as “An unforgivable lack of any talent whatsoever.”

Other records reveal that, while Brad “Wobbles” Foster was indeed born, anything normal about his life ceased almost immediately after that event. Kidnapped out of his crib by a wandering band of renegade

BRAD W FOSTER

street surveyors, he was brought up in their strange cult of lines, angles, and digital watches. Eventually striking out on his own, he got a job as a night watchman at a digital watch factory. Unfortunately, one morning his boss got to work early and discovered Brad sprawled in a strange stupor on a huge pile of dismantled watches. Details of what he had been doing have been tastefully censored in police records, but then Foster himself was also removed. Little is known of his whereabouts until years later when he resurfaced in Texas, where men are men and watches are digital. Still haunted by his previous work record, he found employment, of a sort, by doing drawings of dismantled digital watches for the bizarre underground network of magazines devoted to this not-so-great American fetish.

More recent data has revealed that Brad “Wack-a-Mole” Foster sometimes dabbles in pen and ink. This tends to get him dirty, and his friends avoid him at all the “right” clubs. Other times he uses a pen almost correctly, and makes strange little pictures on paper. These have somehow managed to make their way into the hands of various publishers,

resulting in, at the last count, his work having been published in literally over 2,000 diverse publications. Aside from the hundreds of science fiction fanzines showing his art (and the main reason he is walking around the convention this weekend as a guest), magazines as broad-ranging in subjects as “Amazing Stories”, “Highlights for Children”, “Dragon Magazine”, and “Gent” (“Home of The Double-D Cup”) have carried his illustrations. The man is nothing if not diverse in his choice of subject matter. He has illustrated computer instruction books, children’s picture books, an oversized coloring album, advertising posters, role-playing games, and much more.

In comics he had his own series called “The Mechthings”, and he even got to play with the “big boys” of comics for a while as the official “Big Background Artist” of Image Comic’s “Shadowhawk”. He even managed to work a dragon into the official poster for the Tulsa Oklahoma Oktoberfest. Most recently he’s combined his pen work with digital airbrush color to create covers for Zumaya, Yard Dog Press, and other small press publishers.

He’s won the Fan Artist Hugo eight times for stuff he draws

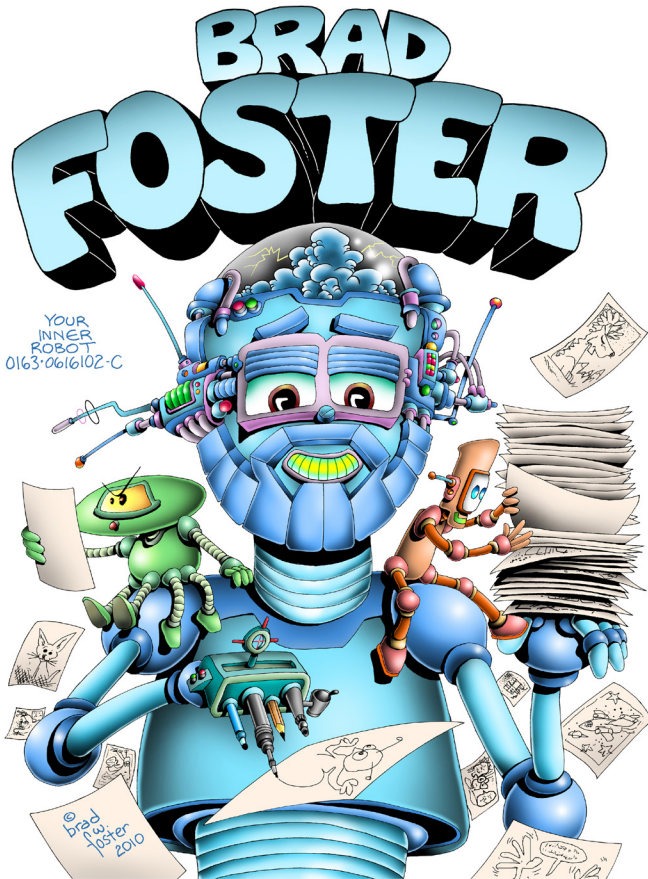
BRAD W FOSTER

just for the fun of it, picked up a Chesley award for the “pro” side of things, and turned a bit of self-publishing started forty years ago as Jabberwocky Graphix into a line of fine-art prints and collections of his own work, and that of other artists.

Over the decades he and his lovely wife Cindy have traveled around the country to various

fine art festivals, science fiction and comic conventions, even cat shows, Irish fests, renaissance fairs... heck, anywhere he can set up a display of his art to show and sell. It's called making a living as an artist, and sometimes it's not a pretty thing to see!

---signed and attested to:
Special Operative 42



© Brad W. Foster

SCIENCE GUEST OF HONOR

Paul Abell is the Chief Scientist for Small Body Exploration in the Astromaterials Research and Exploration Science Division at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

His main areas of interest are physical characterization of near-Earth objects (NEOs) via ground-based and spacecraft observations, examination of NEOs for future robotic and human exploration, mitigation of potentially hazardous asteroids and comets, and identification of potential resources within the NEO population for future in situ utilization.

He was a science team member on the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) Hayabusa near-Earth asteroid sample-return mission and participated in the successful recovery of the spacecraft's sample return capsule, which returned to Woomera, Australia in June 2010. Paul was a team member of JAXA's follow-on Hayabusa2 mission and is continuing his role to support the mission in its extended phase. He also aided the cooperation between Hayabusa2 and



NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft teams during their operational encounters with asteroids Ryugu and Bennu. Paul was also an investigation team member on NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) mission which successfully changed the orbit of asteroid Dimorphos. Currently he is a member of NASA's Near-Earth Object Surveyor Mission (NEOSM) to find potentially hazardous asteroids, and a team member on the European Space Agency (ESA) Hera and RAMSES planetary defense missions.

Asteroid 8139 (1980 UM1) is named Paulabell in recognition of Paul's contributions to NEO research and exploration studies.

TOASTMASTER

by Brandy Bolgeo Hendren

Antonia Katherine Flora Weisskopf was born in Waltham, MS to an astrophysicist and a college librarian. These early influences set her on the path to her love of reading with a particular fondness for science fiction and fantasy. When she was 12, her father got a job at NASA in Huntsville, AL and the family moved to Rocket City USA. Her voyage into Southern Fandom began shortly afterwards.

Toni's first convention was MidSouthCon in 1980. She had already joined the Southern Fandom Confederation and had read about the convention and was familiar with its Guest of Honor, Frederik Pohl. Toni had just finished reading his fannish memoirs, *The Way the Future Was*, telling tales of past conventions, some a bit on the indecent side. Luckily her parents had not read the book and thus began a long tradition of convention attendance. At that same convention there was a sign up sheet posted to start a club in Huntsville and Toni of course signed up, thus becoming a charter member of the fledgling North Alabama Science Fiction Association. As if that wasn't



enough, she also helped to start the Science Fiction Society at Oberlin College.

Toni joined Baen Books as an editorial assistant and worked her way through the organization from there. She was Executive Editor for many years and following the death of founder Jim Baen in 2006, became the Publisher of Baen Books. During that time, Toni created an innovative e-publishing program that the industry has since followed, working with both new and established authors. She has created the Jim Baen Memorial Short Story Award, the Baen Fantasy Adventure Award and, my favorite, was one of the creators of the Tim Bolgeo Memorial Scholarship that the Interstellar

TONI WEISSKOPF

Research Group awards each year. As one of the driving forces in science fiction and fantasy publishing, there's nothing that this lady has not done.

Not only is she a giant in the publishing industry but an avid volunteer with many conventions throughout her fannish career. The conventions that she has worked at and mentored are too numerous to count but a few highlights are her first WorldCon, Confederation in Atlanta in 1986, the now-passed Constellation in Huntsville, LibertyCon in Chattanooga, as well as working on both DeepSouthCons 50 and 60, both held in Huntsville, Alabama. She has edited and authored in the Southern Fandom Press Association and updated the Southern fandom Confederation Handbook & history to ensure that we have accurate information about our history.

Toni has won numerous awards, both professional and for her service to fandom. She was the first person to receive the triple crown of Southern Fandom. In 1994 she received both the Phoenix and Rubble awards, then was awarded the final jewel of the Rebel in 2000. She won the Hank Reinhardt Fandom award

in 2009 and in 2015 she won the Neffy Award for Best Editor. She also won the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award given by SFWA for distinguished contributions to the science fiction and fantasy community.

I could fill every page of this program book with all of Toni's professional triumphs and fannish accolades but that only scratches the surface of who she is. She is the amazing mother of Katie and the widow of legendary Southern Fan Hank Reinhardt, who passed away in 2007. She is a mentor, and one classy lady. If you haven't met her until this weekend you are in for a treat, so sit back and get to know one of the best and entertaining people in fandom.



© Brad W. Foster

SPECIAL GUEST

Carla Ulbrich is no stranger to FenCon. She was our Music Guest of Honor at FenCon VI.

If you were at our first two conventions you no doubt remember her witty musical take on wedgies, Klingons, Waffle House, missing buttocks and girlfriends, and how rich she would be if she had the copyright on the 'F' Word.

The self described "Professional Smart Aleck" has been compared to a musical combination of Seinfeld, Weird Al and a Bologna sandwich.

Originally from Clemson, South Carolina, Carla is currently living in New Jersey (insert your own punchline here) with her husband (also a talented musician and FenCon guest) Joe Giacoio.

She actually does this music thing professionally and is a regular performer at SF conventions, coffeehouses, and, oddly, medical conventions where she is billed as "the Singing Patient." Carla's songs have been aired



on numerous stations, including the BBC, Dr. Demento, SiriusXM Comedy Radio, NPR's Morning Edition and PBS' "Songs at the Center."

She has released 9 albums and is the author of "How Can You Not Laugh at a Time Like This?"

SPECIAL WORKSHOP GUEST

Kevin Ikenberry is a life-long space geek and retired Army officer.

As an adult, he managed the U.S. Space Camp program and served in space operations before Space Force was a thing.

He's an international bestselling science fiction author and renowned writing instructor which is pretty cool because he never imagined being either one of those – he still wants to be an astronaut.

Kevin's debut novel, *Sleeper Protocol*, was hailed by *Publishers Weekly* as “an emotionally powerful debut.”

His over twenty-five novels science fiction novels include *Steel On Target*, *Forged By Fire*, *Sound The Charge*, *The Crossing*, *Vendetta Protocol*, *Eminence Protocol*, *Runs In The Family*, *Peacemaker*, *Honor The Threat*, *Stand or Fall*, *Fields of Fire*, and *Harbinger*.

Kevin is an Active Member of the International Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors, International Thriller Writers, and SIGMA – the science fiction think tank.



Kevin continues to work with space every day and lives in Colorado with his family.

1632 SPECIAL GUEST LUCILLE ROBBINS

After building Peterbilt Trucks, submarines, helicopter transmissions, and making steel, Lucille navigated a career change to Social Work.

For nearly forty years she was the partner and spouse of Eric Flint.

She is excited to join other 1632 writers and fans at FenCon in celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the publication of 1632.

Lucille is pictured with, and joined by, her son-in-law, Donald Davis, at the convention.



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SPECIAL THANKS

FenCon XX would like to thank:

Thank you to TheLab.ms for running our Makerspace and projects. Extra thanks to Ruth Cruise and Julie Barrett for Friend of the Fen goodies. Great appreciation to Minuteman Press in North Richland Hills for the cover prints and badges, deluxe for the tote bags, and Active Impressions for their excellent work printing our Friend of the Fen t-shirts.

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Michael Fair II	Fran Mahaffey		
Cynthia Galbraith	Jim Mahaffey		

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PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Larry Atchley

Larry Atchley Jr writes Fantasy, Science Fiction, Speculative Fiction, Horror, and Poetry. He has had many stories and poems published in anthologies, including two shared-world series, *Heroes in Hell*, and *The Sha'Daa*. He performs with the Seadog Slam, reciting pirate, steampunk, and adventure poetry at various events around North Texas. He enjoys tall ship sailing/spotting, reading and collecting books, drinking hot tea, hiking, history, and watching Brit-Coms with his wife Ali.

Julie Barrett

Julie Barrett is a writer, photographer, and maker of interesting things from Plano, TX. She is also a founding member of The Generic Radio Workshop, member of the Dallas Future Society board, and sells photography, fiber art, and hats through SteamCat.net. Julie writes short stories, radio plays, and whatever else helps pay the bills. She hates the bills. Find her at Stately Barrett Manor or on Facebook.

Jon Black

Jon is an award-winning author, game designer, and musical journalist. His blend of historical fiction with pulp, supernatural, or horror twists has been called "historical fan service." Jon's publications include the series combining 6th-century Arthurian fantasy with 21st-century pulp and the Jazz Age supernatural mystery, *Gabriel's Trumpet*. Look for *Chupacabra vs. Rougarou* and *Hill Country Supernatural* out soon!

Paul Black

Paul Black always wanted to make movies, but a career in advertising sidetracked him. He's the international award-winning author of *The Tels*, *Soulware*, *Nexus Point*, *The Presence*, *The Samsara Effect*, *Cool Brain*, and *Dark Slide*. He has twice won each the Independent Publishers Book Award, London and the New

York Book Festival. He has also been on the Barnes & Noble Regional Best Seller list, has won the *Writer's Digest* Book Award for Genre Fiction, and was optioned for television.

Todd Caldwell

Todd grew up at an airport. Then went on to study physics and math. That led to a job building machines for high energy physics experiments. From there he went on to build missile launchers, and from there to air conditioners.

This is obviously leading to something involving a freeze ray and minions.

But for now, he's taken up conrunning.

David Carrico

David Carrico, like a surprising number of other fans and writers, was a military brat, raised in the Air Force. He writes alternate history, science fiction, and fantasy, and is published by Baen Books and Eric Flint's Ring of Fire Press. His latest publication is *The Blood Is the Life*, released by Baen Books in September 2022, but there are new books from ROFP in 2022 as well.

Jack Carroll

Jack Carroll is a long-time fan and author in the 1632 / Ring of Fire series, with 22 published stories, one published novel, and one freshly completed. His folk songs are in various fan hymnals. Professionally, he is a retired electronics engineer. Jack lives in New Hampshire, accompanied by two ever-inquisitive cats.

Howard Carter

Howard Carter came to SF through watching Star Trek reruns in the 70s but didn't become a Con goer until the 2000s. He's a major classic film fan who is constantly hoping to see

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better SF films. For his day job, he has spent the majority of his career working for various NASA contractors. He has worked on projects ranging from EVA tools and Shuttle payloads, to the Orion capsule. Currently he supports the Commercial LEO Development Program.

Lys Childs-Wiley

Melyssa "Lys" Childs-Wiley grew up in Western New York. She began reading at the age of four to escape watching apple trees grow, and hasn't stopped.

Lys brought home as many books as the librarian allowed. When she wandered out of the children's section into the main room, she discovered strands of Thread falling from the sky, to be destroyed by Dragonriders. This was when Lys realized that imagination is limitless. She has been writing, acting, and roleplaying ever since.

R. Cat Conrad

R. Cat Conrad is a jack of all trades...especially if casting calls for someone named Jack. He's an artist of note who doesn't sing, but writes song parodies, an illustrator who paints, but has been known to draw to an inside straight, and an actor who campaigns for silent films where his non-speaking roles stand out. A dark ale lover, vintage comic historian, celebrated auctioneer and more...Cat's leather trousers have been active in the SF community for decades!

J.L. Curtis

JL Curtis has novels out in three different series, *The Grey Man* (urban fiction), *Rimworld* (military science fiction), and a new series, *Showdown on the River* (western). He has written a number of novellas and short stories for a number of anthologies. A retired Naval Flight officer, he spent 20+ years in the Navy, then worked as an engineer with a defense

contractor for another 20+ years. A long-time shooter and NRA instructor, he now lives in North Texas and writes full time.

Virginia DeMarce

Virginia DeMarce began writing in Eric Flint's 1632 alternate history series in 2001. She has co-written three books (1634: *The Ram Rebellion*; 1634: *The Bavarian Crisis*; 1635: *The Dreeson Incident*), one solo (1635: *The Tangled Web*) and numerous stories in the *Ring of Fire* anthologies and *The Grantville Gazette* (paper and online). DeMarce is a retired historian with a specialty in early modern Europe (Ph.D., Stanford, 1967). Now widowed, her other activities include genealogy, gardening, and volunteering.

Chris Donahue

Chris Donahue is an electrical engineer living in the Dallas area with his wife and fellow-author, Linda. A former member of a Joe Bob Briggs' Drive In Review committee, he served the public by counting rolling heads, types of Fu, and exposed breasts in committee films. Outside of that, he has been a Navy Avionics tech, brewer, and writes sci-fi, military fiction, horror, humor, and combinations of those themes. His first novel, *Death's Paladin*, is now available.

Linda L. Donahue

Linda has degrees in computer science, Russian studies, Earth science education, and electrical engineering. Additionally, she teaches tai chi and belly dancing, can borrow moon rock samples, and is a certified commercial instrument pilot, advanced ground instructor, and SCUBA diver. Her latest short stories have appeared in *Heroic Fantasy Quarterly* #25 and *Chicks and Balances*. Her novel, *Jaguar Moon*, is available from Yard Dog Press. She lives with her husband and pet rabbits, sugar gliders, and cats in Garland, Texas.

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Phillip Drayer Duncan

Phillip Drayer Duncan is the author of 15 novels including the Blade Mage, Moonshine Wizard, and Assassins Inc. series.

Along with reading and writing, he enjoys kayakin', canoein', fishin'; and pretty much anything nerdelated. During warm months, his habitat includes the river or a campfire. In the colder season, he may be spotted under a pile of books or videogames. His greatest dream is to become a Jedi, but since that hasn't happened yet, he focuses on writing.

Rhonda Eudaly

Rhonda Eudaly lives in Arlington, Texas where she's ventured into several industries and occupations for a wide variety of experience. She's married with dogs and a rapidly growing Minion© army. Her two passions are writing and music, which is evident in her increasing horde of writing instruments. Rhonda has a well-rounded publication history in fiction, non-fiction, and script writing. Check out [her website](#) for her latest publications and downloads.

Paige E. Ewing

In the *Liliana and the Fae of Fayetteville* series, Paige writes quirky, neurodivergent characters, intense action scenes, and happy found families. She is quirky, neurodivergent, throws axes and spears, and is happily married. ... Hey, wait.

Bill Fawcett

Bill has been a professor, teacher, corporate executive, dean, RPG, board game, and computer game designer. After writing for the early issues of Dragon Magazine in the 1970s Bill became one of the founders of, and lead designer at, Mayfair Games. He has continued his board and electronic game design work. In publishing Bill Fawcett & Associates has packaged over 400 books science fiction,

fantasy, military, non-fiction, and licensed books for major publishers.

As an author Bill has written or co-authored over a dozen fiction books plus near one hundred articles and short stories. Bill collaborated on several mystery novels with Chelsea Quinn Yarbro including the Authorized Mycroft Holmes novels. He has edited two oral histories of the Navy SEALs. As an anthologist Bill has edited or co-edited over 40 anthologies. His most recent novels are the Blood and Armor Science Fiction series.

Bill's historical "Mistakes" series include: It Seemed Like a good Idea, It Looked Good On Paper, and You Did What; How To Lose A Battle, How To Lose a War, How To Lose WWII, How To Lose a War at Sea, and How To Lose the American Civil War. Among his non-fiction books are: Oval Office Oddities, 100 Mistakes that Changed History, 100 Leadership Mistakes that Changed History, and 101 Stumbles in the March of History.

Declan Finn

Declan Finn is the author of over 40 published books a slough of short stories. His writing spans the gamut from history to fantasy, to thrillers and romance. He was a Dragon award finalist for two of his Love at First Bite quartet. He is best known for his Urban fantasy series *Saint Tommy, NYPD*. He is currently publishing *Honeymoon from Hell*. His next project is *On Tiber's Edge*, part of Blaine Lee Pardoe's *Land & Sea* series. He can be easily found on social media.

Mark Finn

Mark Finn is an author, editor, game designer and pop culture critic. His writing can be found in various RPG zines, comics, books, anthologies, and elsewhere online courtesy of his fictitious North Texas Apocalypse Bunker. When he's

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not waxing passionate about popular culture or Robert E. Howard, Finn writes stories, publishes cool stuff, and performs community theater. He lives in North Texas over a historic movie theater with his high school sweetheart and an embarrassing excess of books.

J. H. Fleming

J.H. Fleming is the author of **Jack of Crows**, the *Music the Gathering* series, *The Call of the Fae* series, *Rhythms of Magic*, and *Peter Pixie*, *Mayor of the Multiverse: The Black Wand*. Her work has appeared in anthologies by NewCon Press, Evil Girlfriend Media, Mocha Memoirs Press, Seventh Star Press, and Pro Se Productions, as well as “New Realm Magazine” and “Visionary Tongue Magazine.” She received her Bachelor’s degree in Creative Writing from the University of Central Arkansas and is a full member of SFWA. She is also a founder and co-host of the Future Bestseller Podcast and the lead singer of the folk band Wildwood Minstrels.

In her free time, she enjoys reading, playing video games, and learning other languages. She’d prefer to live in a library in the middle of a forest, and has so far collected fourteen hundred books toward that goal. Until then, she and her boyfriend live just over the Arkansas-Missouri state line, where they keep buying more books than they have room for.

Melanie Fletcher

Melanie Fletcher writes SF as herself and romantasy as Nicola M. Cameron. Her most recent Melanie publication is the alternate history mystery novel *A Most Malicious Murder*, and her most recent Nicola publication is the romantasy novel *Crystal Reflection*. She also likes cheese.

Monalisa Foster

Monalisa is an award-winning science fiction

author whose main genre is space opera. Her first contact story, *The Deviltree*, won the 2023 AnLab for Best Novelette. She’s currently working on several sequels, both to *Threading the Needle* and in her *Ravages of Honor* series.

Bill Frank

Bill Frank is an evildoer at NASA’s Johnson Space Center. He is a Chief Training Officer—he leads the team that creates problems for astronauts and mission controllers during training events. His short story, ‘Moon Unit,’ was published in *Analog Magazine*.

Julie Frost

Julie Frost is an award-winning author of every shade of speculative fiction. She lives in Utah with a herd of guinea pigs, her husband, and a “kitten” who thinks she’s a warrior princess. Her short fiction has appeared in *Weird World War IV*, *Straight Outta Dodge City*, *Monster Hunter Files*, *The Horror at Pooh Corner*, *Cirsova*, *Sidearm and Sorcery*, and many, many other venues. Her books are available on Amazon. Visit her on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/julie.frost.7967/>

Generic Radio Workshop

Generic Radio Workshop has been around longer than the Golden Age of Radio lasted -- a little over thirty years. They started with the Texas Broadcast Museum and have performed at festivals, conventions, and yes, on the radio. They use as much vintage equipment as possible for that “old time radio” feel. Plus, many of their sound effects devices are hand-built, following period designs. While they’ve made a few concessions to modern technology, their core practices follow radio’s Golden Age.

Jan S. Gephardt

Jan S. Gephardt (pronouns: she/her) is a science fiction novelist, fantasy artist, publisher, and s/f/f fan from Kansas City. Co-founder and

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Art Director of Weird Sisters Publishing, her “XK9” books feature a pack of uplifted police dogs in a far-future world. (the dog does not die). She recently finished and published the third novel in her XK9 “Bones” Trilogy. She’s also a former officer and current member of ASFA. Look for her nationally-recognized paper sculpture in the Art Show.

Abby Goldsmith

Abby Goldsmith is the SFWA qualified author of a dark sci-fantasy book series which starts with *Majority* (Torth Book 1). Published by Podium, with audiobooks narrated by George Newbern, this 6 book epic was originally serialized online with over 750,000 views, and has garnered starred reviews from Booklist and Kirkus.

RJ Hanson

R.J. Hanson is the author of the epic fantasy saga *Bloodlines Reforged* as well as the historical fiction play ‘Fatherland’ set in Texas in 1960 which is scheduled to run at the Addison Theater beginning May 15th, 2025. He is a retired detective with 27 years on the force and now owns and operates a small ranch with his wife, Michelle.

C. Stuart Hardwick

C. Stuart Hardwick is an award-winning science fiction author whose work appears regularly in top anthologies and magazines and has been translated into a dozen languages. Most recently, he edited *Tales of the United States Space Force* for Baen Books and has a story coming in an upcoming issue of *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*. A military brat from South Dakota, he’s been known for blending hard science with human drama in compelling, thought-provoking stories. Visit [his website](#) for more info and a free story sampler.

Teddy Harvia

Teddy Harvia is the well-known pen name of

David Thayer. He has drawn scores of wild beasts, strange BEMs, and big-nosed whiz kids from a world far from Earth who use short words to make fun of all kinds of things in scores of toons and fan art for flyers, zines, and con pubs since 1967. He lives with wife, Diana, and five fat cats in Dallas, Texas. To earn his keep, he works with words at a high-tech firm.

Bjorn Hasseler

In the early 2000s, Bjorn stumbled across Eric Flint’s 1632 and discovered fans were not only allowed to write their own stories, but they also got paid for it. His first 1632 story was published in 2010, and he now has 4 novels and 26 shorter stories in the 1632verse. In 2014, he became assistant editor of the Grantville Gazette. He is now the editor-in-chief of Eric Flint’s 1632 & Beyond. His first non-1632 book came out in May 2024.

Sarah Hays

Sarah Hays cannot remember not loving to read. So loving to write followed naturally, from growing up on farms through an Air Force enlistment to college, then several newspapers. She lives in Lubbock, loves her spouse, family, and cats. She likes to cook, reads everything she can, and enjoys Star Trek fan clubs and the local gem and mineral society.

Rob Howell

Rob is the creator of the *Firehall Sagas*, a writer and editor in Luke Gygas’s *World of Okkorim*, and an author in the *Four Horsemen Universe*. He writes epic fantasy, space opera, military science fiction, alternate history, and whatever else seems fun.

He’s a reformed medieval academic, a former IT professional, and a retired soda jerk.

His parents discovered quickly, books were the only way to keep Rob quiet. Without books, it’s unlikely all three would have survived.

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Gorg David Huff

Born in Texas Gorg Huff has been many things in his life; paratrooper, construction worker, cashier, and so on before he became an author.

Gorg writes in several universes including the “1632” universe, the “Queen of the Sea” universe, “WarSpell” multiverse, the “StarWings” universe and others. His bibliography and snippets of upcoming books can be found at the WarSpell facebook group. His books can be bought on Amazon. And some of them at Baen.

Fred Hughes

The International Bestselling Author of ‘The Prince of Britannia’ series, and its follow on series ‘Heroes of Britannia,’ Fred writes military science fiction.

Fred believes characters are the most important part of a story. So important he starts with developing his characters and then writes the story through their eyes.

Walter Hunt

Walter H. Hunt is a science fiction and historical fiction writer. His first four books (the Dark Wing series) are military science fiction, originally published by Tor, presently part of the Baen Books e-library.

He has written two 1632 series books with the late Eric Flint, and a third will appear in March 2025. He has also written historical fiction and alternate history (most recently *City by the Bay*, soon to be republished by *Prince of Cats*). He was formerly the librarian for the Grand Lodge of Freemasons in Boston.

Albert Jackson

Dr. Jackson was member of the original Dallas Futurian Society and one of the organizers of the July 1958 “Southwestercon 6”, the first science fiction convention in Texas. He has spent a fair portion of the intervening years

working for NASA in Houston.

JL. Yarrow

John and Leanne Yarrow just released their international award winning sequel, *Future Unfolds*, the continuation of *Future’s Dark Past*, and their series, the *Time Forward Trilogy*.

Their writing appeals to fans of science fiction and speculative fiction, blending scientific concepts with human emotion to transform their work into a journey through “future” possibilities.

They enjoy travel, hiking in the great outdoors, experiencing new places, and relishing a good meal and bottle of wine with family and friends.

Book three, *Future Impact* comes out in February 2026

Becky Jones

After 20+ years teaching in different parts of the country, Becky realized that faculty politics had lost their allure and fled academia. She decided to try her hand at telling stories like the ones she loved to read. “Academic Magic” was her first work of fiction, quickly followed by a number of short stories, and the next two books in the “Academic Magic” series. She currently lives in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area with her husband and two cats.

Bethanne Kim

Bethanne Kim is the publisher for the alternate history magazine *Eric Flint’s 1632 & Beyond*. She currently writes alternate history (Eric Flint’s 1632 universe) but has also written extensively about emergency preparedness and several cookbooks, as well as a book on the US Constitution.

Dara Kountz

Dara Kountz is a creative with a wide range of interests. In addition to sewing cosplays and

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plushies, she has been a forever DM for over 20 years, written several books, and conducted panels on everything from being a creative to how to LARP to “Violent Women Of History”. Her latest work is an upcoming LARP in March - *The Leprechaun’s Shark Tank*. She can be found on Instagram as *corvus_manor* and facebook at *Corvus Manor*.

Jonathan LaForce

Jonathan LaForce is an entirely normal, perfectly well-adjusted human male who is neither given to sarcasm nor delusions of grandeur. He has never done anything exciting with his life, nor is he literate, or coherent in any meaningful way. He definitely did not write ‘Hell’s Belles’ and you should not buy it today.

Keith Lansdale

Keith Lansdale is a versatile writer of comics, film scripts, novels, and short stories. His notable works include films like *The Pale Door* and *The Projectionist* (in production). Keith has penned comics such as *Red Range* and *Hoot Goes There* (X-Files), and co-wrote the novel *Big Lizard* with Joe R. Lansdale. His short stories include *Elijah’s Elixir*, *Hoppity White Rabbit Done Broke Down*, and many others. Keith also co-edited *About That Snowy Evening*, as well as *Son of Retro Pulp Tales*. He co-wrote *The Companion* (which was picked up for *Creepshow*) and wrote the children’s book *In Waders From Mars*.

William Ledbetter

William Ledbetter is a Nebula Award winning author with three novels and more than seventy speculative fiction stories and non-fiction articles published in five languages, in publications such as *Asimov’s*, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and *Analog*. He’s been a space and technology geek since childhood and spent most of his non-writing career in the aerospace industry. His *Killday* novel series is

available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Audible and Interstellar Flight Press.

Julia S. Mandala

Julia S. Mandala holds a BA in history from Kansas State University and a JD in law from Tulane. In addition to being editor of *The Fantasy Writers Asylum*, an imprint of Yard Dog Press, she is a scuba diver and belly dancer. She lives in Plano, TX with her husband Larry and two demanding, but adorable cats. She is best known as a co-author of the *Four Redheads of the Apocalypse* series and the *Corimar* series.

Ian McMurtrie

LawDog was born on the island of Malta to an oil engineer and a teacher -- both Americans. He was raised in Africa and the Middle East, before being dragged kicking and screaming to the United States. He has been a soldier, an EMT, a short order cook, the world’s worst rodeo clown, and recently retired from law enforcement in Texas. When not Standing Out Front and Looking Pretty for his publishing house, he can be found in North Texas, usually staring perplexedly at a blinking cursor on a blank screen; in the company of a very patient lady and two fur children.

Margaret Middleton

Describe Margaret in 80 words or less: voracious reader of not just F&SF, Filk Hall of Fame member, quilter, Civil Air Patrol member, model rocket builder, Gooneybird geek, willing to drive amazing distances to indulge any of these interests. Retired from 25 years of “designing piles of dirt and holes in the ground” for the Arkansas Highway Department; now lives in Eupora, MS. Yeah, that’s a 2-day drive from FenCon.

Iain Miller

Conceived around the same time as FenCon

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- by some of the same people - Iain Miller is a local guitarist with folk influences. When not taking photos or playing cricket, Iain is training to be a professional hobo.

Tim Morgan

Tim Morgan is an award-winning professional futurist, past president of the Dallas Future Society, and a former FenCon Convention Chair. He also occasionally writes essays on strategic foresight and the future on his Substack blog, *The Everyday Futurist*.

Tracy S. Morris

Tracy S. Morris's journalism career was inaugurated with the O.J. Simpson Bronco chase and ended the week after 9/11. In between, she photographed presidents and sports legends. Tracy's first novel, *Tranquility*, published 2005 by Yard Dog Press, was runner-up for Darrell Award for Best Midsouth Science Fiction in 2006. *Bride of Tranquility*, published in 2009, was a finalist for the Darrell Award in 2010. Both are in eBook format from Baen Books. Her most recent book, *The Grantville Inquisitor*, co-written with Brad Sinor, was published in 2021 by Ring of Fire Press.

Michelle Muenzler (*she/her*)

Michelle Muenzler is an author of the weird and sometimes poet, also known as "The Cookie Lady" at local conventions. She bakes by day in Haiku Bakery, her in-house bakery, and writes dark and terrible things by night, all while trying not to be devoured by her cats. Visit her websites for links to her work...or for cookies if you are in the Dallas area!

Kathleen O'Brien

Kathleen M. O'Brien began sewing at age 4, learning traditional techniques from her mother and grandmother. She collects and studies vintage clothing to decipher mysteries of drape and fit found in previous eras. Her costumes include both original designs and reproductions,

utilizing many historical techniques. She enjoys sharing both these skills and her collection with others and has published several books including *Victorian Smoking Caps* and her *Writers' Resources* series.

Stephen Patrick

Born in the Kentucky bluegrass, but inspired by the Lone Star state, Stephen Patrick's storytelling ranges between historical, thriller, science fiction, and horror. His most recent offerings include *The Holocaust Engine* trilogy with David Rike, and stories in *Road Kill: Texas Horror by Texas Authors*, Vol 1 and 2 and *Crimson Streets*. Every year, he explores new skills/disciplines to find ideas for his work. This year is yoga/breathing as a discipline and 3D design and printing, which have more in common than he cares to admit.

Teresa Patterson

Teresa Patterson is a writer, artist, musician, and outdoorswoman. Known for the best selling *World of the Wheel of Time*, based on the Robert Jordan series, she has also partnered with authors such as Terry Brooks, Robert Asprin, and Bill Fawcett. As a fan she organized SF conventions, earned a Master rating in costuming, worked as a movie extra in films, and run a jousting and horseback combat show. She is currently working on a book called *Trailer Trash*.

Ted Pennella

Ted is an Oklahoma-based architect, gamer, pithy observer of the human condition, and author of the forthcoming sci-fi novel *Infinity*. As an architect for twenty years, he's keenly aware of layout, design, and spatial relations, which benefits him as a storyteller. With short stories published in various anthologies, Ted writes to not just entertain, but also to show the struggles of finding meaning in life, family, and love amongst those called friends and enemies. When not listening to his characters eager to be fleshed out in his writing, he fills his copious free time with woodworking, gaming, and endeavoring to create the perfect cheesecake.

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Dusty Rainbolt

In decades past, Dusty got her thrills investigating haunted locations with her EMF meters and video cameras. Those experiences later fueled her paranormal mystery, *Death Under the Crescent Moon*, as well as her award-winning books *Ghost Cats* and *Ghost Cats 2* – collections of personal accounts about things that head-bump in the night! Sci-fi fans know Dusty for her hilarious sci-fi adventure, *All the Marbles*, and the *Four Redheads of the Apocalypse* series co-authored with three other redheads

Kim Redford

Kim Redford is the bestselling author of fantasy, horror, romance and history under several pen names. Her first novel sold a half million copies and *Out of the West* was optioned for a television movie. *Fresh Fiction* says “Tightly plotted, impeccably paced, and rich in Texan detail” about her cowboy firefighter series. She divides her time between city and country, frequently escaping to her ranch where she rides horses and plots her next novel.

M. T. Reiten

M. T. Reiten comes to FenCon after relocating to the National Capitol Region after pursuing a new job during the pandemic. He is a Writers of the Future winner, Phobos award winner, and Jim Baen Memorial winner. His stories have appeared in S. M. Stirling’s *Change* anthology and *Robosoldiers: Thank You for Your Servos*. His newest story is due out in June in *Tales of the US Space Force*, edited by C. Stuart Hardwick.

David Rike

David Rike is the author of the *Holocaust Engine* series with Stephen Patrick. Books one and two are out in paperback with book three to release March 24. Book one is also available on audio with the audiobook for book two set to drop later in the spring. The horror novel *Born Dead* is waiting on the publisher and the dark fantasy series *The Strega* is in development.

In personal life David lives in the metroplex. His nearly thirty-year career in law enforcement includes stints as an officer, investigator, and supervisor and provides ample fodder for fictional stories.

Selina Rosen

Some of Selina Rosen’s short fiction has appeared in *The Lorelei Signal*, *Sword and Sorceress*, *Turn the Other Chick*, and *Thieves’ World*. Her most recent novel, *The Territories*, is the 5th in the *Sword Masters* series. Among her 33+ novels are the *Chains* trilogy, *Strange Robby*, *The Holmes & Storm Mysteries*, and *How I Spent the Apocalypse*. She has also written a self-help book, *It’s Not Rocket Science*, and non-genres including *The Pit* and *Vanishing Fame*. Visit her on YouTube.

Ken Ruffin

Ken Ruffin, a former career environmental engineer and the ongoing president of the National Space Society of North Texas (NSS-NT), is transitioning into a space industry career by leveraging his aerospace engineering undergraduate education and his extensive public speaking experience. Ken has spoken to over 200 audiences in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) Metroplex, Texas, USA, and he has been interviewed dozens of times by DFW-area TV news stations, all regarding the present and future of space travel. Ken has been pursuing contracts to conduct public outreach directly with companies in the commercial spaceflight industry, in order to engage and inform audiences of all ages at museums, planetariums, nonprofit organization meetings, libraries, and more, about the importance of those companies’ missions.

Cedar Sanderson

Cedar Sanderson’s long and checkered career started with being paid in plants. Since then, she’s come to prefer money, and has tried many ways to earn it: balloon twister, face painter, children’s librarian, scientist, cosmetic chemist, author,

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artist, and many more. Currently she writes for a living with facts, and on the side she writes fiction for fun. Author of ten novels, countless short stories, and a children's book, she has also edited an anthology, and illustrated five coloring books. A born researcher, Cedar's passion for reading metamorphosed into writing, fueled by her long interest in history, infectious disease, food anthropology, and human behavior. After her four children had reached a suitable age, Cedar returned to higher education and obtained a Bachelor's of Science in Forensic Science and Investigation with minors in Chemistry and Molecular Biology, which enabled her to finally display the credentials to match her passion for scientific research. She currently resides somewhere in the north of Texas with a retired husband (who brings her coffee in the morning), a teenage son and his cat, and the family dog. She creates art daily, and writes fiction as often as she can make time. Her business, Sanderley Studios, offers her an umbrella under which she offers graphic design services, publishes her fiction and art books, and enables her to edit anthologies on occasion.

Adrian Simmons

Adrian Simmons writes and edits from a well-stocked location in central Oklahoma. When not working on his own writing, he hammers out *Heroic Fantasy Quarterly* ezine. There is backpacking in his life, and taekwondo, too. He's helmed 49 issues of *Heroic Fantasy Quarterly* released and three best-of anthologies. His fiction has appeared in *James Gunn's Ad Astra*, *Tales From the Magician's Skull*, and *Giganotosaurus*. His nonfiction has been published at *Strange Horizons*, *Internet Review of Science Fiction*, and *Black Gate*.

Libby A. Smith

Libby A. Smith's short stories have appeared in *Avast*, *Ye Airships* and *Haunted Holidays*, online at *4 Star Stories*, and in small press comics. A member of the filk pirate group *Bad Bards & Beyond*, she has been known to burst into songs at

inappropriate times. Libby lives in Central Arkansas with Oscar Wilde and Dolly Parton, her cats.

Mike Stewart

Mike Stewart is a prolific writer in the tabletop RPG industry for decades, including an award winning Steampunk RPG *Victorious*. He is also working on the Gygax Castle Zagyg dungeon. His fiction has appeared in several anthologies for various publishers.

Mike is a podcaster, and is a founding host of the *Save For Half* podcast, a show about Old School games and current inspirations.

In his secret identity, Mike is a professor of US history, but don't tell anyone!

Marc Tyrrell

Marc Tyrrell is a recovering academic who still reads too much. As an Anthropologist who looks at how people make sense of their world, he has studied everything from cults to military/intelligence operations over the past 5000 years. Outside of his academic writing, which people are still trying to make sense of, he has written stories in the 1632-verse and OP ED pieces for several publications including *War On The Rocks*. When he's not writing, he's usually singing obscure music from the 16th through 18th centuries or trying out new recipes.

TheLab.ms – Everyone's Makerspace

TheLab.ms is an all-volunteer, non-profit makerspace located in Richardson, Texas in the heart of the Innovation Quarter. A makerspace is essentially a "gym for tinkerers". We provide 24/7 access to equipment and facilities to our members for a monthly fee, including many technology-based disciplines: 3D printing, laser cutting, CNC milling. We also have areas and equipment for more traditional endeavors, including painting, ceramics, fiber arts, and then some!

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John Van Stry

John Van Stry is a United States Air Force Veteran with over sixty novels in print. He has worked in robotics, as a flight test engineer, and as a quality and test engineer in the medical devices industry. He is a collector of motorcycles and former big cat trainer. He is an indie author as well as a Baen author writing both SciFi and Urban Fantasy. He is the author of the *Wolfhounds Series*(SciFi), *Portals of Infinity* (Series - Urban Fantasy), *Summer's End* (SciFi - Baen), *Days of Future Past Trilogy* (SciFi/Post Apocalypse), *Valens Legacy Series* (Urban Fant - as Jan Stryvant), *Dan's Inferno Series* (Urban Fant - as Jan Stryvant).

Alex Wakal

Alex got tired of the military after 25 years and decided to get a real job. He is still looking despite experience in intelligence, munitions, and law enforcement but meanwhile he serves as a museum director, runs a shooting range, and shamelessly spoils longhorns. He understands that "military intelligence" makes as much sense as "honest politician" and that "military grade" is both a baseline and a pejorative. He is still perfecting his Far Side homage "cow phone" project.

C.V. Walter

Get ready to blast off into a galaxy of romance with C.V. Walter, the mastermind behind the pulse-pounding alien love story, "The Alien's Accidental Bride"! This interstellar indie sensation is just the beginning – C.V. is currently crafting a whole universe of out-of-this-world adventures where passion knows no bounds.

But C.V. isn't just about cosmic canoodling. As a firm believer that the family you choose is more important than the one you're born into, C.V. infuses her stories with the power of found

family and unbreakable bonds forged in the heart of the universe.

When she's not navigating the stars and penning tales of extraterrestrial amore, you can find C.V. bouncing between the stunning vistas of Colorado and the wide-open skies of Texas, always on the lookout for inspiration (and maybe a close encounter of the third kind).

Mel. White

Known to her kids as "Indiana Mom", Mel. has gone back to school to become "Dr. Indiana Mom." She still works on fossils for the Museum of Nature and Science, and is now a volunteer educator at Trinity River Audubon Center as well as a Texas Master Naturalist. She's also a proud member of the Yard Dog Press gang, with a story in *A Bubba in Time Saves None*.

D.L. Young

D.L. Young is a Pushcart Prize nominee and winner of the Independent Press Award. He's the author of the *Dark Republic* series, set in a failed Texas secession, the Amazon bestselling *Cyberpunk City* series, and the space opera trilogy *Empire and Ashes*.

His intense, fast-paced novels echo his many influences from books and movies, including Star Wars, Dune, Blade Runner, Star Trek, and the novels of William Gibson.

For more on his books, check out his website.

TROUBLE IN GREENLAND

by John Campbell

"The stockade is strong." Thorfinn thumped a calloused fist against the bark of the tree trunk nearest him. "We set the poles deep and close. They are thick and hard. The thieving Skraelings will not enter our camp again."

Arnarson eyed the ranked trunks judiciously, rapping a few of them himself, then nodded. "It is strong. You've built well."

"It is easy here. The trees are so many and so large!" Thorfinn grinned. "Good timber. Hardwood forests which have never seen the axe. The whole land is rich, and the waters as well."

"So I have heard and so it seems. Leif spoke of wineberries."

"Indeed. Not for nothing is this land called Vineland. The wineberries are not such as we know, but good enough."

"And Bjarni had told us of the forests here. Yet this land is not without hardships."

Thorfinn's grin faded. "We contest with the Skraelings. They do not fight as we, now. Not after learning how our axes and swords bite. They strike from ambush against those whose guard is down. The Skraelings test us at their peril, but we have lost more men than I care to reckon."

"Then this is why the settlement is not larger? I had wondered. It is large enough for those remaining, it seems."

Thorfinn frowned now, as if stung by the remark. "We could grow larger if more ships came. Why was there no ship this spring?"

Arnarson's face grew hard. He turned and looked east toward the sea, where long, gray swells rolled in endlessly from the North Atlantic. "It is a long voyage west from Greenland to Vineland, and never an easy one. Yet now it is harder. Ships were sent. Two knarrs, well-loaded. Gardar commanded them. You never saw them." The statement wasn't a question.

"No."

"The ice took them. Surely. It lasts longer every year now, coming further south each time. Gardar left too soon, I think. I counseled him to wait a few weeks longer, but he was eager to see Vineland."

"It is a beautiful place." Thorfinn's face sagged. "But Gardar will not see it. I am glad you made it safely to us."

Arnarson shrugged. "I have sailed among the ice more times than Gardar, and I waited longer for the seas to clear."

"When you return to Greenland, tell them we can use yet more people here. Our woodcutters could get more done if we had ample warriors to guard their labors against the Skraelings. More trade goods, cloth in particular, will quiet the Skraelings, who are eager to trade fine furs for such things."

"I will tell those in Greenland."

Arnarson frowned, facing inland now. "But do not expect another knarr this year."

"What? No other ship? The land flows with wealth, so trade will surely enrich any who come. But we also need the hands and backs of more people, and more livestock, more supplies of every kind."

"As do our kin in Greenland." Arnarson shook his head, now morose. "The ice comes not only to the sea. The grassy fields of Greenland turn brown in frosts which do not melt until summer. The snow comes lower on the higher ground each year and does not leave again. You have heard this."

"I have heard this. I did not know it had continued and worsened."

"And the seas grow more hazardous for our traders and fisherfolk. I have seen ice four ells thick, deeper than a tall man's height, choking the waters. Our kin need hands and backs, livestock and supplies, at home. Do not expect them to send more here."

"Iceland? It is far, but..."

"It might as well be Russ. The ice is hard, Thorfinn. Fewer ships come to Iceland, fewer still leave Snaefellsnes there for Eirik the Red's Brattahlid in Greenland. I do not know what the future holds."

Thorfinn thumped the stockade again. "I build the future here. You see. There is much wealth to be found here. And a new home for our people."

"A hostile home," Arnarson noted dryly, scanning the forest again. "If the world freezes, Thorfinn, will Vineland for all its wealth be any warmer than the hearths of our kin?"

"I cannot say."

"Nor I. But I do know our kin need all their strength at home. We have seen Skraelings there as well."

"The Skraelings have small boats, but that is all. They are not seafarers!"

"Not yours. But these Skraelings come from the north, perhaps fleeing the same ice which perils us. I tell you again, do not expect more of our kin this year."

"And next year?"

"Watch the ice and the sea. They will answer you before I can."

#

Jill Grayson settled back in her chair, checking the latest reports on her personal data unit, then grinned. "Good news. The buried ice deposits to the lunar south of us are proving even larger than we'd expected."

"That is good." The image of Frank Juarez, sitting in his own chair back on Earth, responded after the seconds of lag time which even light-speed communications to the moon required.

"We just opened up some new living quarters for the last batch of families, so they can move out of the newcomer dorms."

A few more seconds. "I saw that. It looks like you're doing well."

"We'd be doing better if the last major supply shipment hadn't been cancelled. Are there money problems? This operation wasn't supposed to be turning a profit for some time, but once things get rolling we'll be a money machine. Everybody knows that."

Juarez frowned. "Hoped-for profits aren't the same as cash-in-hand, Jill. But, no, it wasn't money that held up the shipment. The entire launch installation was badly damaged by Hurricane Tomas. You're lucky we were able to get a launch off when we did."

Grayson shifted in her seat, frowning in turn. "I hadn't realized the damage was that severe."

"You received reports, I'm sure."

"I'm certain I did. It's just so hard to keep track of things back home while we're working full-bore up here. Hurricanes have hit Canaveral before. Why did Thomas do so much damage?"

"It was a super hurricane. They used to be rare."

"Used to be?"

Juarez seemed to have developed a pain behind his eyes. "There are a lot of weather-related problems down here right now."

"I know about the climate change problems. All of that was supposed to happen gradually, so we could adjust."

"It's not, not anymore. There turned out to be what they call a 'tipping effect.' When conditions reached a certain level, change started happening very swiftly. Like a bottle tipping over. It doesn't move very fast when you're pushing it, until it reaches the point where it tips over. There was historical evidence such things happened, but people were still debating that evidence when all hell broke loose."

Grayson chewed her lower lip. "That explains all the hurricanes? We've

seen them."

"Of course you have. And they're bigger. Lots of tornadoes, as well. Extreme drought some places, heavy flooding other places. Late freezes and warmer summers. One of the biggest concerns is the ice packs on Greenland and Antarctica. They seem to be melting at an alarming rate. It's a total mess while the weather system readjusts itself."

"Weather." Grayson ran the word around her mouth as if it were something rarely considered. "We don't think about that up here. We worry about air, and food, and water, and power, and excavating more space to live and work in below the surface. We had someone die on the surface last week, you know. His environmental systems malfunctioned and he overheated."

"I did see that. I'm sorry." Juarez attempted a smile but didn't manage it. "No one ever said the moon was the Garden of Eden. At least you don't have little green men taking potshots at you."

"That's true. But I hope you'll forgive me for focusing on our concerns. I guess we're lucky we got that last shipment in, but what about the next group of families?"

"They're still on schedule. Assuming nothing else happens."

"What are the odds of nothing else happening?"

"Don't ask me that."

"And the industrial expansion next year?"

Juarez shook his head, looking as if he'd suddenly aged in the few seconds his reply took to be

received. "Ask me next year."

"Are things that bad at home?"

"Not yet."

"That's not exactly a hopeful answer."

"Look, Jill, I don't know what conditions will be like next year. Theories are all over the place. Some people hope the weather system will substantially stabilize within less than a year. Others say the worst is yet to come. I don't know. I'm a rocket scientist, not a meteorologist."

"You're saying long-term planning isn't written in stone."

"I'm saying the only long-term planning anyone is paying attention to down here is related to coping with the disruptive changes in global weather. That doesn't leave much time or concern for you."

Grayson nodded. "I'm sorry. I must have sounded self-absorbed."

Juarez offered another crooked grin. "People volunteering to live on the moon tend to be independent types who aren't too tied to society. Your attitude is to be expected."

"Thanks. I think. I'll wait to hear from you again."

"Just keep watching Earth. You can see the big storms and you can see Greenland. What you see will tell you all you need to know, whether I call or not."

#

Thorfinn stood on the beach, waving his sword over his head and beaming a smile. "You have come! A new summer and you have returned. And with four knarrs! I greet you, Arnarson!"

Arnarson jumped from his knarr into thigh-deep water, wading ashore without waiting for the knarr's boat to be lowered. "I have come, but you may find little joy in that."

"Why not?" Thorfinn waved at the little fleet of ships. "Last year you said there might be no ships this year, and instead I see four! You have brought us people and supplies, and we will send you home with the finest timber!" He stopped speaking, his happiness fading as he scanned the four knarrs. "Arnarson, your ships ride high in the water, and I see no crowds upon their decks. Only their crews do I see."

"That is so, Thorfinn." Arnarson indicated the knarrs with a tilt of his head. "We brought no new people for this land, and no supplies for this place. We have come to bring you home. These knarrs and the fishing boats you have should suffice."

"Home?" Thorfinn staggered back as if he'd been struck. "Greenland?"

"Aye. As I spoke of last year, the ice worsens, the snow stayed yet later this year, the Skraelings who have appeared in Greenland press down toward the Western Settlement. Food grows hard to find, the weather ever more bitter. Our kin need hands to build, hunters and fishers and tillers of soil, and stout warriors to contest with the Skraelings. You and all others here are needed. To Greenland you must return."

"No! This is foolish! This land is richer by far than Greenland!"

"Vineland is not our home! Greenland is where our kin live. Do you abandon them?"

"I..." Thorfinn grimaced as if in pain.

"Surely, if they look on the land here -."

"This land? With so many Skraelings pressing upon you? I see your stockade still stands. Yet how many did you lose to the Skraelings since last I stood here?"

"Only a few." Thorfinn looked away, unable to face Arnarson. "A few is too many, I know. But no land is free of strife."

"But not every land has such strife as this! It no longer matters. The cold and the Skraelings press our kin in Greenland. Here, the land is rich, but you cannot stay here without help from our kin, and our kin have called you home. I ask again, would you abandon your family and kin?"

Thorfinn glowered at Arnarson, one hand quivering above the hilt of his now-sheathed sword. "We cannot leave! We have everything here! What difference will our return make?" His expression shifted, becoming pleading. "Let them come here! Why leave this place? You say Greenland grows ever colder. Why fight the ice? Come here!"

"You fool! Haven't you noticed the chill here as well? The ice comes further south, the crops wither, the game flees! You would have our kin leave their homes, risk the ice, and come here to find the same cold and your hordes of Skraelings beside?"

"We are to risk the ice to return home, are we not? With our kin from Greenland beside us here the Skraelings would not dare threaten us."

Arnarson shook his head. "No. It has been decided. Greenland is our home. You will return. Come, let us

plan the loading of the knarrs."

#

Grayson stared at the screen as if the individual shown on it were not human. "What did you say?"

Juarez cleared his throat. "I said it's been decided that we must evacuate the lunar installations. The vote was unanimous."

"We didn't get a chance to cast any votes."

"Jill, I know how much the moon means to you. But you people are seriously out of touch with conditions down here. I told you last year things had worsened quickly, and they've kept getting worse. I've kept you apprised all along. Every weather-related delay and setback. Do you know we'll probably lose the Cape Canaveral site soon? Water levels have risen so much that waves are threatening the entire area even at low tide."

"I've seen the reports. I've also been watching Greenland. It used to be almost all white and now there's lots of brown visible. You haven't built flood barriers of any kind?"

"Jill, the entire coast needs flood barriers! We've got cities drowning. You think they want a single bulldozer or a single sandbag diverted to protecting Canaveral?"

Grayson rubbed her forehead with both hands, then looked intently at Juarez. "Listen, there are other launch and landing sites. Vandenberg -."

"Is also on a coast. And flooding from torrential rainfall."

"The National Guard has a lot of resources. I can't believe they can't

spare any to keep a launch facility going.”

Juarez laughed, the sound full of pain. “The National Guard? Jill, any elements of the National Guard that aren’t busy helping evacuate coastal areas and trying to keep essential functions going have been mobilized to maintain order and help the military hold the borders.”

“We’re not under attack. I wouldn’t have missed that.”

“No! It’s displaced persons. Maybe three-quarters of the human race is trying to move to higher ground, Jill, and the other quarter is fighting like hell to keep them out because there’s no way to feed them. Wake up. Everything’s falling apart down here. A classic Four Horsemen scenario. We’ve got cholera popping up here, plague in the southwest. And we’re relatively lucky. Bangladesh is simply gone. The bottom line is the lunar installations are a luxury we can no longer afford. Too many people on Earth are dying or facing misery to convince anyone to put a single penny more into moon facilities.”

“We can be self-sufficient now.” Grayson nodded in emphasis as Juarez raised skeptical eyebrows. “I’m serious. We’ve found enough ice to provide us with water and fuel. We’ve got solar cells for backup. We can raise enough food to keep the population alive.”

“How many large animals have you got? Are you planning to depend on cannibalism for protein?”

“No! You’re aware, or should be, that we’re raising grains like quinoa which are high in protein. We can survive up here in perfect health.”

“I never authorized quinoa crops.”

“I, uh, probably did that myself, come to think of it. It seemed like a good idea to reduce our dependence on Earth.”

“That’s nice. Unauthorized and improper, but nice. Also irrelevant. I told you, a full shut-down and evacuation of the lunar installations has been voted. You can use your lunar transports to get everyone to the space station where shuttles can pick them up. We’ll have to pack some of the shuttles fairly full, but by using them and the lifeboats from the station -.”

“You’re abandoning the space station, too?”

Juarez momentarily let a flash of rage show. “Yes. Of course. Haven’t you been paying any attention to what I’ve said? To what conditions are like down here? The space program is being shut down except for essential satellite launches, and even those are subject to elimination. We need every resource we can muster against the greatest threat human civilization has ever faced. And those resources include you and everyone else up there.”

Grayson stared bleakly down at the polished lunar stone which made up the surface of her desk. “What possible difference could the few hundred of us up here make in the human race’s effort to deal with environmental catastrophe?”

“We can’t be sure of what any or all of you can contribute. We do know you’re no good to us up there. This is critical, Jill. Why can’t you understand that?”

“My sister lived in New Orleans.”

Juarez stared momentarily at the sudden change in topic, then grimaced. "Not any more. If she's still alive."

"I know. We saw those reports, too, Frank, and we watched Hurricane Sandra blanket the Gulf of Mexico."

"Then you know New Orleans's gone. Half the city was already flooded, and when the storm surge from Sandra hit -" Juarez took a deep breath. "Look, once you get down here I'll help you look for her. A lot of the population managed to flee inland. God knows what they'll eat, but they didn't drown."

"I just wanted to show you that I understand what things are like down there. Everyone up here understands. We all have relatives who are suffering." Grayson looked away. "When will we come back?"

"What? Back to the moon? I can't imagine. A long time."

"Not in my lifetime."

"Maybe not in your children's, either."

"Or their children's?"

"I'm sorry. I know it's your dream. But you're needed at home."

"My dream? It's our dream. Do you remember, Frank? All the talks we used to have? We need to get into space. The human race can't afford to have all its eggs in one basket. We both said that."

Juarez snorted. "We didn't have enough time."

"Yes, we did! The people up here are in another basket, Frank! And you're calling us all back to the basket that's chewing up human civilization as we speak!"

Juarez sat silent for a long minute. "Philosophy is the luxury of people who have safe homes and food and water. Which relatively very few of the human race have at the moment."

"We're on the verge of being able to begin manufacturing things that will be invaluable down there. Vaccines, for example."

"If you managed to survive in an incredibly hostile environment without any support from Earth, which seems a long chance from here. I don't have time to argue any further. We need the electrical power I'm wasting on this discussion, and we need to get those shuttles down before we lose any more of the remaining landing fields. I'll expect to receive your evacuation plan within forty-eight hours. Everybody is to be off the moon within one week. Not a day later."

#

The knarrrs brought by Arnarson rested deep in the water now, packed with those who had sought to make a life in Vineland, their meager possessions, and whatever timber, food and furs could be carried back to Greenland as well. A chill wind blew down from the north as if determined to challenge summer's already shrinking dominion. Thorfinn stood at the main gate in the stockade. Behind him, the noise of livestock and families no longer filled the wooden structure. Only the crackle of a fading fire lent life to the soon-to-be abandoned Vineland settlement. Thorfinn turned, glowering toward the dark forest. "Do you see them, Arnarson?"

"Who? I see no one."

“The Skraelings. They watch. They know they have won. Soon they will own all we built here.”

Arnarson’s mouth twisted as if he were tasting bitterness. “Better here than the settlements in Greenland. You could not refuse the call of our kin, Thorfinn.”

“Would that I could! But all men would curse me!” Thorfinn’s hands clenched convulsively as his lips parted in a snarl of frustration. “This I swear. The Skraelings will not have our homes here!” Howling in anger, Thorfinn pivoted, ran to the fire, snatched a burning brand from within it as if oblivious to the heat, and hurled the flame onto the nearest structure. Another burning log followed, then another, Thorfinn sweating with effort, his eyes bulging as he tossed the wood, the other Vikings watching silently as the flames caught, leaping from the roofs and onto the logs of the stockade. Finally, Thorfinn stood gasping for breath, his hands and arms discolored by burns, staring at the fires consuming more and more of the settlement. Then he turned and walked away, past Arnarson and down toward where the ships waited. “We will go,” he whispered hoarsely. “As our kin command. And there will be naught to come of it but defeat and death. The ice and the Skraelings will win. We and our kin will die in the cold waste that is to be all of Greenland. This fate I have been shown. But we will go as our kin command.”

#

Grayson closed her eyes as if summoning strength. “No.”

“Are you saying you can’t have the

evacuation plan ready on time?”

“No, I’m saying we’re not evacuating. I’ve already called a meeting up here. I laid out everything, and everyone up here agreed that we should stay. We can maintain our population, maybe even expand. Yes, I’m sure we can expand if the ice surveys are accurate. We can maintain our scientific research and technology. Our labs have the means to make machines that will let us make other machines to manufacture what we need.”

“Jill, you’ve been ordered to come home. You don’t have the option of saying no.”

“I don’t?” Grayson quirked a humorless smile. “How will you enforce your order, Frank? Will you divert the resources to send a military unit up here to evacuate us by force? Do you even have those resources anymore? And isn’t every single military unit dedicated to maintaining order and trying to hold back refugees fleeing rising waters?”

“Damn you, Jill Grayson. We need your resources to help us deal with the situation down here. You should obey the evacuation order because those in authority over you, people with greater responsibilities and greater knowledge than you, have made the best decision they can.”

“I have some pretty serious responsibilities, too, Frank. Besides, I’m not in the habit of blind obedience to authority. Nobody up here is in that habit. We came to the moon because we’re all a bit independent and cherished the chance to get out from under the thumb of micro-managers back on Earth. We’re also smart enough to know to pay

attention to rules and orders that make sense. That's kept us alive in a very hostile environment. But your order doesn't make sense. Maybe the human race is evolving past blind adherence to authority."

"You're needed down here! Doesn't that matter to you?"

"I don't honestly believe our presence or lack of it will make any difference. I don't think you believe that, either. Why reinforce failure when we have another option?"

"So you'll just sit up there, in luxury and safety, while we back on Earth go through hell?"

"That's not the point, Frank! There's nothing luxurious about life up here! We're going to be fighting to stay alive, too, only we'll be fighting a world that isn't even designed for human existence instead of one that's undergoing traumatic changes to its weather patterns."

A wave of static washed across the screen, momentarily blocking Juarez's expression. "Jill..."

"You have to live with this decision, Frank. And you might thank God we got this installation in place on the moon before conditions on Earth went to hell, and that we've spent the last year working to develop self-sufficiency. No matter what happens down there, we have a very good chance of keeping things going up here. Speaking of which, if you can, transmit us any cultural and scientific data you want protected. Nothing will happen to it up here."

"Jill -." More static broke up the image. "We're on back-up power and that's over-stressed. I literally can't debate with you much longer.

Okay. I'll let people know about your offer to protect data. And you're right. We can't make you come back. But you'll be on your own. If there's a crop failure, or vital equipment failures, or if those ice deposits don't pan out, you won't get any help from Earth. One last chance to change your mind, Jill. That's a real small basket you're in."

"Thanks, but no thanks. I know it's a small basket. But it's also a different basket."

Juarez's image came clear for a moment, showing a sardonic grin. "Some people have claimed the human race is insane, and now human civilization's insurance for the future is literally a bunch of lunatics. Good luck, Jill."

"I was about to wish you the same thing. Regardless of what happens to Greenland, we'll be up here, and as soon as we're able we'll send home whatever help we can."

"I won't hold my breath. It may be quite a few years before you people on the moon can aid us on Earth."

"Better quite a few years than never, Frank."

ATOMS & EVE

Lyrics by Joe Giacoio

Long ago when the stars ignited
Periodic elements formed inside them
They cooled in space where they gave birth
To our shiny rock, the Earth

Oxygen and nitrogen became the air
There was water, water, everywhere
Carbon formed into birds and beetles
The apple trees apple'd, and the earth people'd.

Oh, it's true
Look into the telescope, it's you

Ants formed colonies
Forests grew from redwood seeds
White blood cells, skin and bones
Formed a person and called it home

Oh, it's true
Look into the microscope, it's you

Science and religion aren't out of tune
Just two fingers pointing at the same moon
It really isn't that hard to fathom
God made Adam out of mud, He made mud out of atoms

In the beginning there was only math
No one to love, no one to laugh
So God said "Let there be light"
And the universe looked out through a baby's eyes

Oh, it's true
Look into my eyes, it's you
Look into my eyes, it's you

OPENING THE FEN DOSSIER

by Michael Nelson

Fan Guests of Honor often bring with them a range of talents—from writing, art, music -- or even dominating a gaming table.

My credentials are a little different. I haven't penned a novel or painted a masterpiece, but I can do a David Bowie impression at karaoke.

So, with that spirit, I'm approaching this article in my own way: think of it as a choose-your-own-adventure. You can skip around, explore the sections that catch your eye, or dive in from start to finish. Along the way, I hope to entertain you, share a few useful tips, and maybe spark some new interests.

Here's the lineup:

[Section 1: Spy TV Shows](#)

[Section 2: How to Enjoy a Spy Show or Book](#)

[Section 3: The Joy of Physical Media](#)

[Section 4: Geek Travels](#)

[Section 5: Convention notes](#)

[Section 6: IT Best Practices](#)

The path to your next obsession awaits. Let's get started!

SECTION 1 Spy TV Shows

Since this year's FenCon theme is Spy vs. Spy, and since stories often include a mission for the protagonist to complete, let's embark on our con experience with an overview of Spy Television Shows.

According to Wikipedia, "Espionage, spying, or intelligence gathering is the act of obtaining secret or confidential information (intelligence)." Spying has existed at least since the 4th Century B.C., and Spy TV Shows have entertained us since 1951. The first TV spy show was TV's first spy series was the US's Shadow of the Cloak (DuMont 1951-52) which featured Helmut Dantine as Peter House, an agent working for International Security Intelligence.

Spy TV was huge in the 1960s. Shows like The Avengers, Danger Man/The

Prisoner, The Man from U.N.C.L.E., The Saint, I Spy, and Get Smart piqued viewers' interest. As a child of the 70s, I watched shows such as The Six Million Dollar Man, The Wild, Wild West, and Mission Impossible. I remember being a bit freaked out by the Wild Wild West episode where Jim West is pulled into a painting via sound waves.

Over the years, spy shows have matured and shows such as 24, The Blacklist, Burn Notice, Alias, Blindspot, Airwolf, The Equalizer, Jack Ryan, Secret Squirrel, Kim Possible, and Inspector Gadget have aired. Spy capers are for all ages such as Perry the Platypus and his battles against Dr. Doofenshmirtz in Phineas and Ferb, and can range from serious tones to often humorous, nerdiness and warmhearted elements in the show Chuck.

Spy intrigue has infiltrated into other genre shows such as Star Trek: TOS with its own spy-like episode, Assignment Earth which featured gadgets and international (interstellar as well?) intrigue, Babylon 5, which included sleeper agent Talia Winters who could have destroyed Sheridan and his allies if she had not been exposed, and The Boys and their CIA work. Even fantasy such as Game of Thrones uses spies. Varys, the Master of Whispers has his Little Birds, a network of informants and spies.

If you are craving more spy intrigue from Star Trek, Section 31, which was first seen in Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, is about to be featured in a standalone movie.

So spying in TV Shows is still going strong whether as the main focus or as a component.

SECTION 2

How to Enjoy a Spy Show or Book

While we are on the subject, here's a few tips for maximizing your enjoyment when engaging with a spy or thriller show or book.

Set the Mood: Create an immersive experience by dimming the lights, grabbing your favorite drink or snack, and eliminating distractions.

Block off time. You can enjoy the twists and turns more fully when you're not rushed or distracted. Weekends or quiet evenings work well.

Details: Some spy stories have intricate plots, double-crosses, and hidden clues. Jotting down key details or characters can help you keep track. Writers often plant red herrings to throw off readers or viewers. Enjoy figuring them out.

Embrace the Paranoia: Adopt the mindset of a spy or detective. Question every character's motives and see if you can predict the next move. Thrillers

often contain double entendres, coded language, or hidden messages in the dialogue.

Fan Discussion: A lot of related fan groups, Reddit threads, or dedicated communities/forums exist on the Internet where you can join discussion (although they can be intense) or share theories. Watching or reading with a friend can create fun debates and speculations.

Educate yourself: Learning about espionage and researching the period, politics, or spycraft techniques that inspired the work can help you understand the context.

Enjoy the Ride: Embrace the story and let it take you on its twists and turns. Realistic or not, most spy or thriller narratives are crafted to entertain. It's okay to let yourself be swept up in the suspense, then take a step back afterward to analyze and critique.

Character Backstories: Spy and thriller stories often have characters with complicated backstories and motivations. Understanding these can give deeper meaning to their actions. Characters in these stories often operate in morally gray areas. Accepting this ambiguity can make the experience richer.

Mix up Your Mediums: If you're reading a spy novel, try watching a movie or show in a similar genre to complement the experience, and vice versa. Some visual media can help put a face to espionage concepts, while books can dive deeper into internal motivations.

Rewatch or Reread: Thrillers are notorious for foreshadowing and planting subtle hints throughout. Rewatching or rereading often reveals the clever setups you missed the first time.

With the right mindset, you'll be ready to experience the suspense, twists, and clever intrigue of spy or thriller stories!

SECTION 3

The Joy of Physical Media

Many people have to own a physical copy of their favorite spy show and movies. Collecting Blu-rays or DVDs is not just about having a library of movies; it's an experience in itself. Here's why many people still love to collect physical media and how to enjoy them:

Why Collect Blu-rays or DVDs?

Blu-rays offer high-definition or 4K visuals that are often superior to streaming quality and contain richer colors and contrast. Additionally, physical media usually includes uncompressed sound formats like DTS-HD Master Audio or

Dolby Atmos.

You can own physical media forever, regardless of the whims of streaming platforms, licensing issues, or internet outages. Streaming can fluctuate based on internet speed, but your Blu-ray or DVD will always play at its intended quality and retain the original content of the film or show.

Many titles aren't available on streaming platforms. Having a Blu-ray or DVD allows you to appreciate films or shows that are hard to find elsewhere. You can explore Criterion or boutique labels that offer classic, indie, or foreign films in high-quality restorations.

Physical media can contain features such as Director's Cuts, Deleted Scenes, and Commentaries. These features can contain insight into filmmaking and storytelling as well as behind-the-scenes content you might not find online. Collector's Editions can add to the collector's experience with special packaging, booklets, art cards, or even mini replicas of movie props.

There is something inherently satisfying about seeing your physical collection on a shelf and being able to take a disc out of its case to pop into the player. Watching a specific DVD or Blu-ray can transport you back to when you first experienced a film or show.

Purchasing physical media helps support filmmakers, especially for niche or indie productions. It ensures these creators can continue making new works.

How to Enjoy Your Collection

Create a Movie-Watching Space: Invest in a good TV or projector, sound system, and comfortable seating. Framing cover art can create a cool décor piece for your space. Items such as props and/or toys can add to the ambiance of your movie-watching space.

Planning Movie Nights: Enhance the Physical Media experience by selecting films based on a theme, like a classic horror night or a James Bond marathon. Make it a social occasion and let your collection spark conversations or debates.

Explore special features: Delve into the special features to gain insight into the creative process, learn trivia, and understand the filmmaker's intent. Listening to the director's or cast's commentary can help you appreciate the art of filmmaking and learn about the decisions made behind each scene.

Organize Your Collection Creatively: Set up shelves or cabinets that show off box sets, collector's editions, or your favorite films. This gives your space a personal touch. Maintain a list or use an app to track your collection and plan what to watch next or even trade with friends.

Share your thoughts: You can delve into your collection via a journal or blog or you can create content online with reviews, ranking, and discussions about the media or special features.

So don't be shy about your enjoyment of physical media; collecting Blu-rays or DVDs turns movie-watching into a hobby and ritual. It's about preserving memories, exploring cinema in-depth, and having a hands-on connection to the stories you love.

SECTION 4

Geek Travels

Like many fans, my love of genre has taken me to a number of places for conventions such as Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Austin, and Los Angeles. While I have not gone to exotic locales as seen in the spy novels, I have enjoyed my road trips with my wife, Angela, to San Diego and Comic Con for the past few years. Angela has created the YouTube channel, Geek Travel and Treats (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChaKMdbFSk_uMM-m0q6elkg or <https://www.youtube.com/@geektravelandtreats>) where we share travel advice, videos of things we've seen during our travels, and more.

Some of our travel advice for SDCC, which can be applied to traveling to other conventions, includes:

Get your travel arrangements in order. Confirm hotel reservations, flight details, and car rental, if applicable.

Double check your reservations: Review names, dates, and other important details.

Plan transport to and from the con if needed: Plan and book transport in advance and have apps updated and ready.

Ensure you have an ample supply of your prescriptions: Also have a list of emergency contacts with you.

Explore sightseeing options and restaurants: San Diego has a lot to see, and it helps to take a meal break when attending conventions.

Create a strategy for items you want to buy: Know how you are going to transport them home.

Review the Convention schedule beforehand and decide which panels you would like to attend: Have a physical copy.

Most importantly, Have fun!

SECTION 5

Convention notes

So you want to run a convention?

Here are some tips that were used for the first FenCon as well as other tips.

Start small. In 2004, a three day first convention could be run for a reasonable hotel rate and expenses that could be offset by memberships and payments from dealers.

In today's environment, a one day convention is more achievable because of higher hotel rates. Assuming the convention is successful, then you can build on that.

Know your limitations. I would suggest only conducting events for which you have personnel.

For example, we did not have an Art Show at the first FenCon because we didn't have anyone who could run it.

Treat the convention as a business. If the first FenCon had lost money, we would have stopped right there. I have read horror stories about people who have taken out second mortgages just to run a convention. Know where the money is coming from and where it is going.

Recruit good people. FenCon would not have been the success that it has been if we didn't have great volunteers and staff who want the con to succeed. You need talented and resourceful people to run a convention.

Be Organized. The first FenCon schedule was created in Excel, and now it's a web applications. Many technology options exist to help you plan, communicate, and execute your plans. Take advantage of them.

SECTION 6

IT Best Practices

Spy novels also involve tech so I thought I'd include some things I learned from my less glamorous career in tech. Being a Technology Professional is a huge part of my life so here is a list of some best practice items in the IT field, in no particular order.

Don't be a jerk to the users. Sometimes it can get frustrating dealing with some users, but you are there to help. Be clear about your answers to their questions.

Don't reinvent the wheel. If some code in the application works similarly to

the requirement of your project/request, then borrow that code and make it work for you. You will save time and complete your requirements more quickly.

Keep copies of your code. Over the years, I have been able to search my SQL code for columns or functions that I have used before and apply them to new requirements.

Be discreet. You may not like a policy or a person, but gossiping about them will only come back to bite you.

Ask questions. Don't be afraid to get items clarified. This will prevent issues as you work on your assignments.

Be proactive. It takes a few minutes to look at unassigned tickets and not get surprised when one is assigned to you. Also, be aware items such as yearly or monthly reports and when they occur so you can prepare for them.

Training. Try to get as much training and keep your skills as updated as you can.

I hope you have a great time at FenCon!



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NOT ON OUR WATCH

by Kevin Ikenberry

The operations officer's startled voice woke the captain from what passed for sleep on a combat cruise in disputed territory. "Captain? Sorry to rouse you. There's an unknown vessel off the port side. Could be our target."

The captain grunted and rolled off the small, but functional bunk. "Maintain course and speed. I'll be right there."

Commanding a ship of the line meant there were tasks and minor emergencies almost every day. Those few quiet days of transit where no urgent communications arrived, no significant navigation challenges were present, and even the environment cooperated were a blessing and allowed thoughts of home to intrude during the duty day.

Since passing into disputed territory, though, every waking minute was filled with inspections, drills, and constant vigilance. As such, there would be no sleeping in the Captain's Quarters for the foreseeable future. The cabin's proximity to the bridge eliminated the most critical element on their side: time.

Vigilance was eternal in time of war. Even the hours meant for rest required a few people to remain ready for action. The captain stood and straightened himself, trying to appear fresh and rested, before walking out of his cabin.

"Captain on the bridge," the officer of the deck called.

"Sensors, report."

"Contact bearing one hundred eighty. Speed steady at thirty-four." The sensor technician replied without looking up from their screen. "Appears to maintaining course and running silent, Captain."

"Very well, maintain passive measures." For a moment, he considered calling the ship to battle stations, but the voices of mentors past said to let the situation develop. Gather more information. With no other vessel in observation, there would be plenty of time to maneuver if the situation called for it.

"Monitor all frequencies for communications," the captain replied and moved to the command chair. The officer of the deck resumed a position to the side of the command chair, ready to assist as per their station. "If they broadcast, jam their transmissions."

"Aye, Captain."

Peering through the bridge windows, the captain squinted into the black for a long moment. He almost asked for a better bearing on the target until a tiny light flashed once against the black sky.

There.

There were no distinguishing characteristics on the enemy vessel from their current distance. He turned to the operations officer. "Is that the target or something else with

spectacularly bad timing? What does intel think?"

"Heavy attack vessel, Captain. Appears to be moving at flank speed." The operations officer consulted the central console. "We have nothing else on our sensors in all directions. Given what we know of the attack profile, the unknown contact matches the intended enemy vessel with total confidence, Captain."

"Time to intercept?" the captain asked.

"Unknown. Target speed is fluctuating as predicted," Operations replied. "Vessel appears to be braking. Possible aspect change to target."

The captain bit back an epithet. If the vessel turned more toward them, any enemy forward passive sensors might pick up their presence. Possible courses of action flooded through the captain's mind. Experience said to explore the possibilities and take quick action. If chosen correctly, they could avoid detection until a time and place of the captain's choosing. If not, putting the ship in the best possible position to defend itself was paramount.

The captain turned the chair back to the left and squinted into the night. "Helm, come left twenty degrees. All ahead full."

"Left twenty degrees, all ahead full," the helmsman repeated.

As the cruiser turned, the captain gave a moment's consideration to the situation before deciding to wake the crew. The enemy vessel,

now identified on a trajectory like its predecessors, had reached their defensive boundary and could not be allowed to reach its intended target.

"Confirm defensive boundary," Operations called.

Action was necessary. "Weapons, I want a shooting solution on that target now. Chief of the Watch, sound general quarters and set hands to action stations."

The Chief of the Watch, the senior enlisted leader aboard, stepped forward. "Aye, Captain."

A moment later, alarms brayed, and the mostly sleeping cruiser sprang to life. As it did, the console buzzed, and the captain picked up the private line. "Captain."

"Intel. Assessment on the suspected target is complete."

"Standby, Intel." The captain squinted into the dark again. "Weapons, prepare to spin up missile launchers three and four. Set autonomous guidance."

"Pre-loading missiles three and four, Captain."

The captain inhaled deeply. "Let me know when you have a solution."

"Aye, Captain. Range to target is one hundred twenty and rapidly decreasing."

For once, they'd anticipated an attack on a potentially prosperous target and managed to move a ship of the line into its way. Any impact on the target site might change the course of history. To stop it, the captain needed information and intelligence.

"Intel? What is it?"

"Estimated target impact point is twenty-two degrees above the planet's equator. There are land masses and a significant ocean in the impact zone. Resulting waves would be catastrophic for most of the surrounding region," Intel replied.

"Captain? There are over six million life-forms in the impact zone, and more than six hundred billion life-forms on the planet itself."

"Evidence of active civilization?" the captain asked. "Technology levels?"

The captain heard Intel take a long breath. "Negative on active civilization. Technology level appears to be zero. Though there are inhabitants who seem to move, communicate, and even hunt together. This barely meets the engagement criteria, Captain." Intel paused. "Not presuming to try to—"

"Time to engagement zone is one hundred and sixty-seven zetas, Captain," Operations called. "Shooting solution identified."

The Captain nodded. "Intel? What's your predictive assessment?"

"The inbound attack vessel is an attempt to stop planetary development, Captain. It fits the standard profile for enemy interdiction missions," Intel replied. "While the planet is uncivilized, the fauna present, and the planet's atmosphere and natural resources, would suggest that it be a potential colonization target."

"Like their last two hundred and six attacks," the captain mused. "At least

we're in time to stop this one."

For a change, he added silently.

"Affirmative, sir," Intel replied.

"Further simulations are inconclusive. Carbon-based life-forms are difficult to predict, but there may be some benefit gained in allowing the attack vessel to strike its target."

"Why?"

"There is no guarantee the current life-forms will progress enough to reach civilization, much less one that is technologically evolved. Amphibian-related life-forms are typically unstable and unable to use tools. And these are quite violent," Intel answered. "Our reconnaissance drone is broadcasting now. On screen, Captain."

Everything pointed to the planet being mostly temperate, unlike most water-based worlds they'd seen in the galaxy. The fortunate combination of a relatively low-energy yellow star at the proper distance to ensure a majority of the water stayed fluid suggested promising things for the planet. As the drone descended quickly over the ocean, streaking toward a narrow ribbon of shoreline, the captain saw creatures flying in the blue and white skies. Lush vegetation appeared to cover the landmass near the ocean's shore. Amongst it, bipedal creatures moved.

Sensing movement, the drone slowed and circled over the land. There were other creatures present now. Four-legged beings of all sizes moved amongst the smaller, similar two-legged ones in apparent

harmony. The creatures seemed of all sizes, large and small. Some moved fast alone and the others in coordinated herds. Bodies of water inland from the sea teemed with life. All of it peaceful and seemed somewhat hopeful to the captain's jaded senses.

An unharmed world with unlimited potential. Water. A clean, nitrogen-rich atmosphere. There could be—

A flurry of movement on the ground below the drone caught the sensor's attention. Smaller creatures darted away from the water's edge. Avian creatures exploded out of the trees, shrieking in trumpeting tones the captain never imagined. A two-legged creature with a long tail darted toward the thicker vegetation and leapt toward the promise of concealment but failed to reach its destination. A larger, bipedal... thing lashed out. The larger head and gaping jaws easily snatched the smaller creature mid-flight and bit down. With its meal safely in its mouth, the bigger creature lashed its head from side-to-side several times, leaving the smaller creature hanging limp. Dead.

The captain breathed for the first time in many zetas. Such power. Such speed. Ferocity. What if they could be our allies and not some smaller, technologically advanced derivative?

I will not repeat the mistake I made at Kyton-four.

The captain consulted the command console. "Intel?"

"Here, Captain," Intel said over the still open line. "The long development

cycle shows a more adept, more technically focused species could emerge in the aftermath of an attack vessel strike. Either mammalian or insectoid-based species could thrive in that event. Though, the damage to the planet and its current ecosystems will be catastrophic. It will be many zarillium before this planet will be viable after a strike."

"Understood." The captain disconnected the line and turned to Operations. "Get us within range to ensure that the attack vessel is destroyed by our fire."

"Aye, Captain." The operations officer picked up a device and pushed another button.

"All hands, this is the captain. We've positively identified the enemy attack vessel and are moving to engage. Prepare for combat operations in case the vessel has a hidden escort. All defensive and offensive weapons are to be loaded. Do not fire unless they fire upon us."

The captain paused and took a breath. "Far too many times we have been unable to even approach an enemy attack vessel. Two hundred planets and countless life-forms have died as they continue to wipe out potential threats. Those threats to our enemy's advance would be our allies in this long fight. As we've done before, we will again. For the Union."

The captain turned to Operations. "Helm, all ahead flank. Ops, prepare defensive countermeasures. Standby to fire missiles three and four."

"Missiles three and four ready to fire

and solutions loaded,” Operations replied.

“Match bearing to the attack vessel and fire tubes three and four,” the captain ordered. “Drop countermeasures.”

“Weapons away,” Operations barked. “Countermeasures fired.”

“Helm, come left ninety degrees.” The captain pushed a button on the console. “All hands, brace for combat maneuvers. Brace, brace, brace!”

“Left ninety degrees!” the helmsman yelled.

Under full thrust, the cruiser’s turn induced a significant amount of gravitational force. Lesser-experienced crews might have succumbed to the force and lost consciousness, but not this crew. The captain strained against the force for a few seconds, and then it was gone.

“Track our weapons!” the captain barked. External cameras swung toward the attack vessel. Heavy ablative coverings adorned the forward end of a large asteroid. From the new vantage point, the captain estimated the asteroid to be twice the size of their last interdiction twelve lights away.

Good thing we fired two missiles.

“Ops? Anything tracking us?” the captain asked.

“Negative, Captain. No escorts with this target,” Operations reported. “Permission to stand down weapons?”

“Keep them active until the target is destroyed.”

“Aye, Captain.”

Time slowed as the weapons raced toward impact. For a moment, the captain wondered if they’d missed or failed to arm. It had happened before. Drawing a breath to ask for a status update, the captian paused as he saw two bright explosions suddenly fill the sky for an instant then fade.

“Direct hit,” Operations reported. “We have neutralized the vessel.”

The captain tapped the console. “Intel? Assessment of remaining debris?”

“Nothing that will damage the planet irreparably, Captain.”

“Very well.” The captain spun the camera to view the planet hanging below. Its day and night terminator line was now visible, the first streaks of debris burning through its atmosphere lit up the sky. Did the creatures below realize what had happened? Would they share the story with their progeny?

The captain didn’t know. What was as clear as the Union’s goals for galactic peace was that this world, the third of nine orbiting the yellow star the Union called Zygra, would soon have its own name bestowed by the creatures who survived and evolved until the time of the Gathering.

The captain would not see them, nor did it matter. What mattered was that these strange creatures could rise against their enemies far better than the meek mammalian creatures that would have been left behind if

he'd failed to destroy the asteroid. Too many times had those situations failed the Union. The meek failed to inherit anything.

Not this time, the captain thought. The fight has just begun.

"Mission accomplished," the captain announced. "Well done. No more great extinctions on our watch."

As the cheers died down, the captain touched the console again and relaxed in the command chair. "Command? This is the Alpha. Requesting coordinates. The class nine planet known as Zygra-Three has been spared. An aggressive, amphibian-based biome that might breed powerful allies has been preserved."

We have enough weak mammalian allies, the captain thought but did not say aloud.

"Confirm, Alpha. Excellent choice.

Set course for reconnaissance at Zygra-Four and then on Callis-Nine at highest possible speed."

"Affirmative, Command. Alpha, out." The captain relaxed. "Helm, set course for Zygra-Four. Ops? What do we know about the target?"

"Low probability of life, Captain. Zygra-Four appears discolored compared to the planet below us. No water. Almost no atmosphere, but there are ice caps with a high probability of carbon dioxide present. Could be a refueling point in future operations," Operations replied. "Recommend high speed pass and on to Callis-Nine. Transit time is six zetarans."

"Stand down from general quarters and prepare for hyperspace," the captain said. "If you need me, I'll be in my quarters. Well done, everyone. Let's go home."



THE ANIME SONG

by Jack Campbell

(To the tune of Chantilly Lace)

Robots in space, and a pretty face,
Got a samurai sword, sharp and long,
Got a wiggle in her walk, and a kick that really rocks,
Nails the bad guys pow, pow, pow!

There ain't nothing in the world like a big-eyed girl,
To make me spend every day with a tsundere,
To make me blow all my pay on anime,
Oh lady that's what I like!

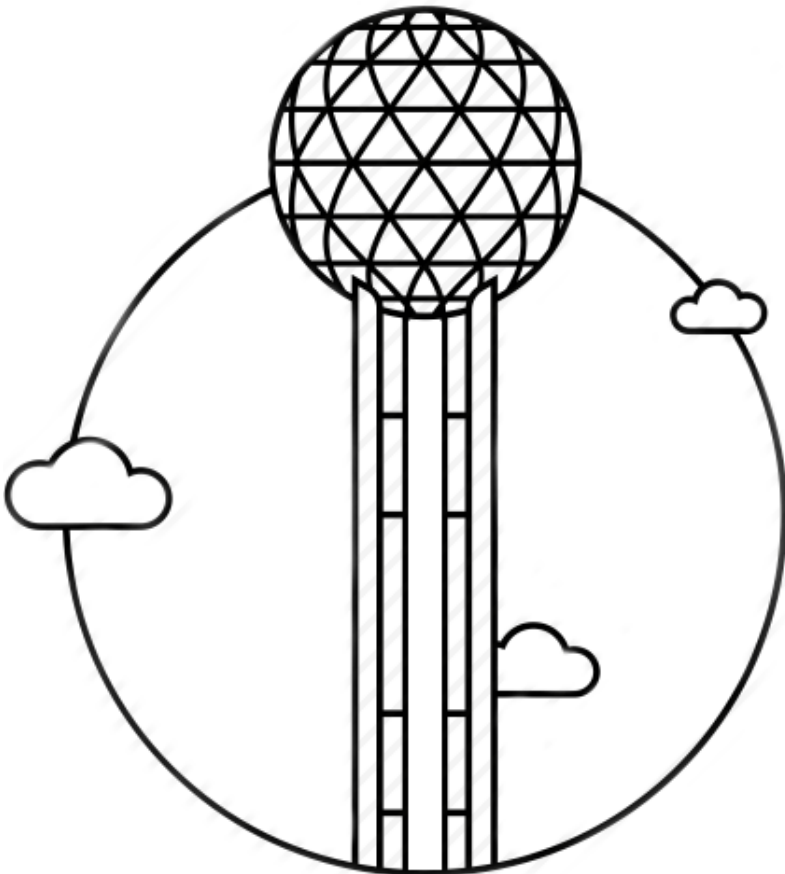
FINAL THOUGHTS

We could not have a FenCon without the tireless work of our dedicated staff and volunteers.

Thank you for all of your efforts!

We also thank our families for their support.

Without you we could not do this.



**We're Putting the
Pieces Together!**

Watch www.fencon.org
for updates

