



## July 2011 Newsletter

**Fish Out Of Water: Tales of Strangers In Strange Lands:** Fish out of water: Every now and then we meet a character totally out of their depth. Either they have been pushed by circumstances beyond their control to do the unthinkable, or they have been placed in a setting totally outside their ability to cope. How does one cope? What does one do? Join us this month and find out!

### Face the Fiction

Saturday July 9, 2011

Well Read Books – Hawthorne, NJ or

Wawayanda State Park/BBCon

\*Full details on p. 2 & 3

### Suspense Central

Monday July 11, 2011, 2010 – 8p

Panera Bread Restaurant

165 Rt. 64 West

Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752

**Pat Kelleher's No Man's World: Black Hand Gang**

**That's Science Fiction** \*note date change for July only

Tuesday July 12, 2011 – 7p

Hillsdale Public Library

**The Thirteenth Warrior (1999)**

\*Dining follows this event

### Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday July 13, 2011 – 7p

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

9 Miller Rd - Mahwah

**Strangers in Strange Lands in comics**

[www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com](http://www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com)

### Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

Wednesday July 20, 2011 – 7p

Borders Books & Music

235 Interstate Shopping Center Shopping/Rt. 17

Ramsey, NJ 07446

This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it.

\*Dining follows this event.

### Modern Masters

Tuesday July 22, 2011 – 8p

Borders Books & Music

235 Interstate Shopping Center/Rt. 17 South

Ramsey, NJ 07446

**Fallen Dragon by Peter F. Hamilton**

### Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold

Saturday July 23, 2011 – time TBA

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

9 Miller Road, Mahwah, NJ

Rogue Trader is a game of space adventure, set in the grim darkness of Games Workshop's Warhammer 40000 universe. Are we the wolves in the fold, or merely the sheep?

### Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday July 26, 2011 – 8p

Wayne Public Library

**Fish out of water – strangers in strange lands**

[www.waynepubliclibrary.org](http://www.waynepubliclibrary.org)

please visit [www.sfsnj.com](http://www.sfsnj.com) for full details

# SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents:

**When: Saturday, July 9, 2011**

**Where: Well Read Bookstore - [www.thewellreadbookstore.com](http://www.thewellreadbookstore.com)**

425 Lafayette Avenue

Hawthorne, NJ 07506

973.949.3440

**Time: 7:00pm \*note start time will be 7p promptly to accommodate both documentary screening and panel.**

**\* or \***

**Bar-be-Con at Wawayanda State Park**

**Address:**

885 Warwick Turnpike

Hewitt, NJ 07421

(973) 853-4462

**GPS Coordinates**

DMS 41° 11' 33.96" N 74° 25' 44.23" W

**Directions:**

Take Route 23 north to Union Valley Road. Follow Union Valley Road about 6 miles to stop sign. From Stop sign, go to second traffic light. Turn left, travel to fork in road (about 2 miles) go left about 1/2 mile to Warwick Turnpike. Turn left. The park entrance is four miles on the left.

This month you have more than one choice – you can visit Paul D. and company at Wawayanda State Park for Bar-Be-Con, you can join the gang at Well Read Books, or you can be adventurous and try to fit both into your schedule!

Some people will be traveling up to Wawayanda State Park to visit with Paul D and the gang for an afternoon of fun, food and campfire tales.

If the trip is too far or the outdoors not your thing, then...

Join the gang at Well Read Books for SFSNNJ friend and Face the Fiction guest Rob Hauschild, who will screen the exciting new documentary: ***Unauthorized & Proud of It: Todd Lauren's Rock & Roll Comics.***

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSQQkN-3atY&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSQQkN-3atY&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

Following the documentary screening, we will have a panel on the Laws & Licenses of comics. Ken Gale, Rob Hauschild and Peter Gutierrez will discuss licensing, Fair Use, and copyright considerations.

Ken Gale is the host of *'Nuff Said!*, the premiere radio show devoted to comics.

Rob brings expertise in dealing with all the legalities of promoting, acquiring and distributing for WildEye Releasing.

Peter brings the expertise on licensed property, inter-company cross-overs, custom comics, Fair Use Practices for Media Literacy Educators, and graphic novel publishers.

What's it like working with the BBC? Custom comics, graphics, publishers and more...everything you've always wanted to know and some things you had no idea went on. Join us for this in-depth discussion on laws, licenses and the ins-and-outs of the comic book universe!

Of course, you are always welcome to do both if you have the energy! Visit Paul and Company in the morning and join us at Well Read in the evening.

***Face the Fiction: Where imagination lives!  
Only at the SFSNNJ***

## **June Meeting Recaps**

### **That's Science Fiction! – *Fantastic Voyage* - Tuesday June 7, 2011**

We viewed *Fantastic Voyage* from 1966 at That's Science Fiction! Starring Stephen Boyd and Raquel Welch, I had not seen it for many years. As Todd will point out, some of the science was suspect, but the sets and overall look of the film make up for it. A great way to start our Classic Science Fiction month. **(Chris H)**

### **Drawing A Crowd Golden Age of Comics – Wednesday June 8, 2011**

This month's topic at Drawing A Crowd was the Golden Age of Superheroes. Once again moderators Mike and Haywood did a great job of covering the topic.

The meeting opened with Mike defining what constituted the Golden Age of comic books. This was particularly helpful for those of us who are not necessarily comic book aficionados. He then provided a handout entitled "Oldies but Goodies" with names of the superheroes of the Golden Age.

Some names were recognizable to even the non-comic book savvy - Popeye, Dick Tracy and Tarzan come to mind. Others presented more of a challenge - Star-Spangled Kid, Liberty Belle and Hourman for example. Todd, of course, who else, had some raunchy jokes at poor Hourman's expense. Luckily, Mike and Haywood acted as Golden Age superheroes and prevailed...lol.

Mike had brought several books, posters and other illustrations while Haywood provided additional visual counterpart on his laptop projected onto a monitor. As people picked out a superhero, Mike would fill-in background information about the superhero and Haywood would highlight them on the screen. This interactive element kept things fresh, lively and allowed for variety. Everyone picked a different type of superhero and everyone got a chance to hear about the superhero of his or her choice.

We had a lot of fun choosing superheroes, finding out their powers/foes and other interesting tidbits. Some characters were familiar to us through Sunday comic strips - Prince Valiant and others through TV/movies - Wonder Woman, Superman, Batman and Flash Gordon.

We had fun learning about superheroes we had never heard of and just as much fun revisiting old favorites. Mike and Haywood worked to bring us an entertaining, informative meeting. We all learned something.

Mike and Haywood are quite knowledgeable and enjoy sharing that knowledge. Join Mike and Haywood next month as they explore the concept of "fish out of water: strangers in strange lands." **(AM)**

### **Face the Fiction Joshua Shifrin – Saturday, June 11, 2011**

Greetings ladies, gentlemen, and creatures of all shapes and sizes. This past Saturday was the most recent in our Face the Fiction series, with Special Guest Joshua Shifrin at our favorite haunt, Well Read Books! The evening started early for some, as we began aggregating in the store around 7p. Chris, Kate, Aurelia, Thom, and Todd entertained themselves and had a great conversation about everything from books to movies to Congressman Weiner's cover-up (or inability to cover crucial bits up as the case may be). Our little circle of silliness was joined by the estimable Amir, and eventually Josephine and Liz chimed in as well. Many laughs were had, and much ado was made.

Joshua arrived about 8pm and we got down to serious business almost immediately: discussing the pros and cons of He-Man and Thundar the Barbarian. Yes, I am serious. Kate pointed out that the dragon from Thundar was really beautifully drawn, and we discussed the merits of bad cartoons from the 1980's. Some folks even shouted, "Ride Ookla, ride!" though I will leave it to you to guess who those disturbed folks might have been (cough/toddandanmarie/cough). Additionally, some weighty conversation was directed at

the importance of being a wealthy waterfowl, and why *Duck Tales* is still fun.

Eventually, we turned the spotlight on Joshua, who, in a fit of personal bravery, admitted that this was his first Book Discussion meeting and signing... ever. The SFSNNJ, long known for all its firsts, helped our guest along, k and made Joshua feel welcome. So welcome, in point of fact, that we ran past closing time for our friends at Well Read Books! Oooops! I am sure Bill and Maryanne will forgive us.

At any rate, Joshua took us on a tour of the background that informed his novel, *Chasing Victory*. The story began with his own frustrations with the learning process and the fact that, while he was in the advanced English class, he still considered himself a poor student among better peers. I wonder how many of said peers have been published, and I would be willing to bet that Joshua is the only one of his peers to have such a contribution. By any road, we wound our way through College and Kibbutz-life in Israel, which led to Joshua's father's writing career.

What has this to do with *Chasing Victory*, you might very well ask? Well, Joshua explained that receiving the chapters of his father's book (*Misconception: The Hamlet Experiment*) helped him realize that he would like to write something, but he was unsure what to do about that urge. It was not until years later, at a Tennis Tournament in Connecticut, that a friend recommended that he write a book about Tennis. This invariably led to Joshua's writing *101 Incredible Moments in Tennis*, which rocketed to the top of the Amazon.co.uk lists very quickly. Success in the UK led Joshua to reach out to some better publishing houses in Britain, which then led to Joshua moving from Self Published author to Published Author status, and even more success with his Tennis book.

Yes, Todd, but what does that have to do with *Chasing Victory*? Joshua further expanded that the Tennis book led to some other writing efforts, including a study guide, and his father's encouragement, in conjunction with his own modest successes, led to him writing *Chasing Victory*. This then led to a discussion of the story itself, with Joshua explaining the setup and characters with animated zest. I won't go into details here, but we learned all the nuances of the setup and its execution.

Moving on to questions and discussion, many of us asked Joshua about his process for writing. Early in the talk, Joshua expressed a love of the process of writing, and Thom was interested if Joshua was more interested in the process or the product. Joshua explained that he does love the finished product as much as the process of creating it, and that it is great to have something to show and share for the work that goes into it. When asked the standard Music or Silence question, Joshua indicated a preference for silence, but did not mind low music with no distracting lyrics. Kate, Aurelia, and several others noted some comparisons to the classic tale *Flowers for Algernon* and the discussion moved into a comparison/contrast of the setup and execution of the two books. Some further discussion was tendered on influences, and the impact of reviews.

Truly, I think that we would have continued on for some time longer had not a certain dashing young line cutter who is so totally not me, mentioned that it was getting late and we needed to get a move on so people could buy books and get them signed before the store closes (technically closing time was about ten minutes before, but hey, what can you do). Some of us ran up and grabbed copies of the book, and those with quick reflexes got themselves to the head of the line by hook or by crook (you snooze, you loose, Hasselkus). We stood around chatting with Joshua for a while before sending him home to his wife and sons while we adjourned to the Land & Sea Diner for comestibles and chatting.

Topics of conversation at the Land and Sea included Bizarre Movie Silliness, SyFy junk films, fun and excitement with *Game of Thrones*, and much more. I would report on what everyone had to eat, but that would just make me hungry.

Tune in next month when Face the Fiction divides like multiplying cells, to cover two geographically diverse events:

Join Todd, Paul, and many others at NJSFS's annual Bar-be-Con at Waywayonda State Park (contact me through the website "Contact Us" button if you need a ride and I will see what can be arranged). Should be a fun day of enjoying nature and the company of other Fans!

Join Josephine, and many others at Well Read Books for a night of TV and Movie discussions, and some

special fun.

Keep in mind: August brings us King of Games Day, and we have a lot of cool stuff planned this year (then again, when don't we)! **(Todd Ehrenfels)**

**Suspense Central – *The Illustrated Man* by Ray Bradbury - Monday June 13, 2011**

Dateline: Panera Bread

Several of us gathered early for food and conversation at the Panera Bread in Paramus. Aurelia and I had a lovely chat, hoping against hope that we might secure the community room in spite of the mounting number of folks gathering there. When the first group of people swelled to more than 12 and the second group began amassing a large number of tables, we determined that discretion was the better part of valor, and promptly moved to the tables in the main area. Once outside the Community Room, we were joined by Mike Piazza and Chris Hasselkus (and Chris's soup). Within moments, we found ourselves doubling in number, and the discussion began in earnest.

Aurelia began the discussion with a question: How does the book compare now to when you first read it? Some of us had read the book multiple times, and some had read the book only for the discussion, and so the conversation wound around when and in what capacity a lot of us read the book. Aurelia felt it held up well, and she got a lot different feel from the book now than she did during her earlier read. My feeling was that the book really shows its age in some of its structure, but thankfully does not fall into the trap of many pieces of the period in that Bradbury does not really describe or explain the science, thus it does not have that dated and hokey feel that some of the early works of SF are prone to carry with them.

This led to a discussion of SF authors of the period with Asimov, DeCamp, and the rest being in their conservative "Engineering Uniforms" (short sleeves, dark ties, pocket protectors with slide rules, dark pants) compared to 'California Cool' Bradbury with his sunglasses and open collared shirt sans tie. We laughed, but then started discussing what set Bradbury apart from his colleagues, and the fact that Bradbury wrote mostly for high-end publications like the New Yorker. We equated the more 'literary' nature of Bradbury's work with his success with more mainstream outlets mainly due to his role as a 'Fantasist' as opposed to a Science Fiction Writer.

Chris had a good handout that detailed the various stories in the *Illustrated Man*, and Ann-Marie, Josephine, Kathleen, Aurelia, Bill, and I chewed over the meat in the stories for the next two hours. We started, much as the book did, with the framing device of the *Illustrated Man* himself, and then moved quickly on to *The Veldt*. I think that *The Veldt* is probably one of the best stories in the collection (though I still *Kaleidoscope* is a strong second), and many of the folks in attendance agreed with me (possibly because they were afraid I would lock them in the Nursery). Discussing the tone and texture of this story led us back to what sets Bradbury apart from the other SF authors of his generation: Bradbury's books are about feeling, emotion, and philosophy, and are very soft in comparison to the works of brainiacs like Asimov and DeCamp. A few other interesting bits of flotsam and jetsam from the discussion:

*The Other Foot* - Aurelia indicated that as a youth she liked this story, but it has become apparent that the lesson learned in it is contrary to human nature. People are jerks no matter what else may happen, otherwise whitey would not have blown up the Earth in the story.

*The Man* - The pseudo-messiah in the story is a bit of a jerk, testing the faith of the only person who actually gave enough of a darn about him to seek him out. What is up with that?!

*The Last Night of the World* - Yup, sure Ray, keep on thinking that. Even if the majority of people acted like the apocalypse was 'just another ordinary day' there would still be a minority of people running around looting and going berserk. Again: Human Nature.

*The Fox and the Forest* - Chris thought that the couple was beyond stupid in that they had been told that killing the agent was irrelevant. Somebody asked why, and both Chris and I replied that if you go back to a point in history where there are records being kept, eventually you will be entered into some sort of record, and that means that people in the future with time travel devices can always find you no

matter how hard you try to hide. Simple statement: Time travel stories are silly.

The Long Rain: This was a group favorite because of the relentlessness of the rain. It also led to a discussion of the short story One Clear Day, which I loathe.

No Particular Night or Morning: "Yeah, but the guy was an @\$!" shouted Chris, while Kathleen summed it up with, "You are somehow supposed to be surprised when the idiot is floating around outside the ship? Duh!"

There were quite a few other bits and bobs scattered throughout the discussion, but I am at a loss to remember every single thing. Tune in next month as we discuss *The Black Hand Gang!* (**Todd Ehrenfels**)

### **Films to Come – Wednesday June 15, 2011**

As always, Films to Come was entertaining, informative, interesting and this month, our moderator extraordinaire exerted his control...Todd had to raise his hand after his raucous behavior last month. No jaunts or interference this time. We were talking movies...or else. Very amusing to see.

Things opened with a brief discussion of the format of Films for the benefit of our newcomers Alesia and Frank. This led to Barry telling the group he owns an iPod so he could have a \$3 Maltin app - Todd very wisely refrained from comment (for now). Bill opened that floodgate by inquiring about when was the last time Maltin wrote a review. Moderator *not* wearing a happy face...

To Barry's left sat a basketful of tie-in books waiting to be viewed so we forged forward - Todd sitting nicely. Even Bill was fairly quiet so far...OK, it was only 10 or so minutes, but this is Todd and Bill we're talking about. Onward...

Barry reverted back to the three-month list format that we hadn't seen in some time. The list was comprised of May, June and July releases. This time there was much feedback - we did our homework and actually saw movies to report back on!

May:

**The Hangover Part II** - well, it was good while it lasted...lol. Barry had no sooner passed out the film list when Todd took a look and raised his hand. Barry, sensing no good could come from this, pretended not to notice. Todd raised his hand higher. Barry continued to "not see Todd." Hand higher...Barry takes deep breath, "Yes, Todd?" Did Todd have something to say about Hangover II...no. What did he contribute? "I take umbrage to Starsky and Hutch getting 2.5 stars. That's 2 stars more than it should've had! Even Snoop Dog's awesome rendition couldn't save that bomb." Hey, he made it 10 minutes!

**The Beaver** - Bill proudly exclaimed, "I was one of the 90,000 who saw it." He felt it wasn't a bad film and described it as "walking a fine line between comedy and high depression." He did feel that Mel Gibson probably hurt Box Office on this one.

**Thor** - Chris, Mike P, Jo, and Barry had seen this one. Believe it or not the big debate was "helmet - worn enough or not."

**Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides** - Chris said it was fun. Discussion about Keith Richards, his book, bad imitations...general mayhem.

**Kung Fu Panda 2** - Chris said this one was fun too. Then the debate...Panda: cute and cuddly or creepy noisemaker (Todd leaning toward the creepy, Liz toward cute/cuddly). Liz also revealed the little known fact about del Toro being a kung fu master. Had to be there.

**Hesher** - this little known film stars Natalie Portman. Bill made the astute observation that this one was probably never going to see the light of day until Portman won that Oscar.

June:

**Super 8** - Todd and Chris both recommend this film. Todd was particularly impressed with the style and hoped more would follow but not overkill. We then got a history lesson from Bill on super 8.

**Bad Teacher** - fun discussion about the trailers changing for the film (went from highlighting Justin Timberlake to not having him at all) and the Films to Come Battle of the Generations game between Bad Teacher producer Jake Kasdan and his dad Lawrence Kasdan - dad won.

**Cars 2** - **DO NOT** ask Todd about his Pixar bucket list theory. I warned you.

We continued on thru June and moved onto July stopping to discuss films seen, recommend or not, and what people are looking forward to. Everyone chimed in in an orderly fashion - I told you someone...Barry...exerted his control. Lots of fun info was thrown out and discussed.

During the course of the meeting Bill took out a book he had brought for Show & Tell. He had recently acquired an autographed copy of Forest Ackerman's Edgar Rice Burroughs The Man Who Created Tarzan. It had 30 signatures (Barry very thoughtfully offered to make it 31 but Bill wasn't sharing). Can't imagine why.

A brief talk about TV shows being watched, upcoming summer shows, a rousing song session about the Green Hornet and why Barry thinks Thor should have used the song If I Had A Hammer, ended the meeting. It was closing time so we reluctantly allowed the Borders staff to close the store. We continued talking over food where conversation ranged from songs, musical artists, Boy Scout fantasies ;) and everything in between.

Great job Barry. (AM)

#### **Modern Masters – Foundation by Isaac Asimov – Friday June 24, 2011**

It was a night with the building blocks for greatness; one might almost say a Foundation for discussion and a discussion of *Foundation*, as quipped by Larry at the event. Truly it was a night to remember (no, there were no icebergs) as we mobbed the History and Biography section and began accreting members. Though it did not take a psychohistorian to see that there were good times on the horizon, we all managed in our own small ways.

We started the evening off with a quick summing up of the Life and Times of Isaac Asimov, and brushed through the entirety of the Foundation series, both old and new, and discussed the irritation of the crossover between the Foundation and Robots universes. I attempted to lead off the discussion on how I came to own a leather-bound silver leaf copy of *Foundation* and *I, Robot* printed in the style of the old Ace Doubles. Bill Wagner called, and was promptly teased for being old enough to remember Ace Doubles. Larry and his son, Elias, had a number of Ace Doubles that they purchased from the used book section of B [REDACTED BY REQUEST OF BORDERS], which led to a bit of nostalgia on behalf of Chris, who may be older even than Ace Doubles, difficult as that may be to believe.

The discussion wandered off into some reverie of *I, Robot*, and David, Larry, Elias, and I waxed nostalgic about the stories of QT, the robot that decides that there must be a Creator that built Robots in its own perfect image and that the humans in its care are suffering from a delusion that they built robots; SPD, which David thought was a particularly fun story where the poor robot is stuck running in circles because of conflicts with the second and third Laws of Robotics; the story Liar!, which contains the story of the first telepathic Robot; the story Little Lost Robot in which one of the NS-2 Robots was altered to be able to allow a Human to come to harm and must be found from amidst 62 identical units. This absorbed a bit of time, but by no means detracted from the rest of the discussion, since the goal of Modern Masters has always been to discuss the major works of the Author as well as the featured work selected for that discussion (a point which Aurelia reminded us of when somebody pointed out that we had strayed far from Foundation).

Mark and Pam joined in the discussion and helped with highlights of the life and times of Asimov, and we discussed both the genesis and the popularity of the original Foundation stories, while Ann-Marie, Kathleen, Alesia, and the rest made fun of Asimovian Sideburns. The first stories were published through the course of the 1940's, and were notable at the time for being rare examples of conflicts not being solved by violence, but rather cleverness in avoiding military conflict and violence. The stories of the Encyclopedists, the Mayors, the Traders, and the Merchant Princes follow the rise of the Foundation from backwater planet to powerful world. Chris advanced the idea that the concept of Psychohistory is sort of ridiculous in that there would be no way to predict past a certain point with math. This led David, Elias, Larry, and I into a discussion of the later books, when this part of the trope is explained. One of the characters in the later series, Golan Trevize, points out the very issue that Chris did, and as Elias explained: this is further proof that the Second Foundation is active in manipulating the direction of events and the ways in which the Foundation evolves.

One of the complaints of the story was the similarity of names. As Liz pointed out, having characters with names like Hari Seldon, Holber Mallow and Salvor Hardin, which names are substantially similar in many respects, made the narrative somewhat difficult to follow. Another issue brought up was the dry nature of the story telling and the fact that the stories were mainly narrative in nature and not told with the sort of verve and panache of a Heinlein or Herbert. I believe that the term 'dispassionate' was tossed about.

Elias, Larry, David, Mark, and I discussed the later books in the Foundation Series for quite some time, popping back and forth from the narrative of the original stories to the later stories, to the end tales which bridge the gap between Robots and Foundation series. Discussion ranged back and forth over a broad variety of topics from books to film and back. Chris pointed out that there have been talks of making *Foundation* into a film, and I acknowledged that this has been rumored since 1960, and is unlikely to ever happen. While I admit that the novel would make a cool mini-series, it would be an utter failure as a film.

One of the attendees asked if I thought that *Foundation* would continue to be considered a classic, thus enduring into the far future, and my response was an unequivocal 'Yes'. As Mark pointed out: Science Fiction is a study of how people act in a set of scenarios formed through the inclusion of something not presently in existence. While many of the scientific concepts may be wonky or old-fashioned, the characters and their situation remain viable and relevant to readers today, and will continue to be relevant well into the future. The point is that cleverness and the ability to resolve an issue in ways that allow for bloodless expansion and conquest through co-option instead of conquest.

The conversation continued well past closing time, into the parking lot for almost forty minutes, and then for an additional 90 minutes at the Stateline Diner, where Mark, Pam, BJ and I discussed Doctor Who, and so much more. Join us next month as we discuss Peter F. Hamilton's *Fallen Dragon*. **(Todd Ehrenfels)**

### **Heroes & Rogues: Rogue Trader Session – June 25, 2011**

#### **Chapter 14: A Confluence of Corruptions**

##### **From the Journals of Wencisia Tremnar, Executive Officer of the *Lady Malbec*, 391.861,M38**

For a backwater system, Yois is singularly impressive in the amount of trouble it seems to be causing us.

After spending several days mapping some manner of anomaly a quadrant out from the Fager system, and determining ways in which we can use it to drastically reduce our transit times, Captain Harmon-Marioc turned her attentions to the Yois system, that we could deliver the last remnants of our luxury wood and furniture cargo to the wealthy landowners stranded on the resort planet. Cautiously, lest our entry to the system disturb the residents of the XYZ Corporation Station deep in the atmosphere of the gas giant Mistula in orbital track 6, Alequintus and Louis piloted the massive bulk of the *Lady Malbec* into a proper orbit around Yois. We were not challenged by the minions of XYZ, nor had any news of the fate of Admiral Spartavalcus reached the system, and so we laboured under the determination not to shake any trees lest unwelcome fruit fall from their branches.

On the surface of Yois, we separated to pursue a number of different tasks, however Liana counseled us to seek out information where possible on the activities of the *Tremnar's Profit*, our renegade cousins' flagship. Chaplain Sarvus and Navigator Lilith Benetek sought answers at the spaceport at Yolanda, while Liana and Lorn pursued possibilities at the First Imperial Bank of Yois. For myself, I contented myself with prying information from foolish merchants and skinning a profit where I could.

Sarvus managed to make some headway with the locals at the port. Although he was a bit perturbed to discover a lack of any chapels or other shrines, or even any members of the Ecclesiarchy, he was able to find some stewards and stevedores who were interested in his expression of the Imperial Creed. These fellows indicated that they had unloaded cargo for the *Profit* some time ago, more than a local year by

their reckoning. Though they did not know what the cargo was, or who it was destined for planet-side, they did indicate that scuttlebutt had it that the *Profit* had actually been in system more recently, but had not made stops at the planet.

Lilith, in a bout of aggression that I had not suspected of the noble Navigator, decided to use her high lineage as a lever to move the upper echelons of the port management. This yielded unexpected results, providing us with some additional information on the working of the port and a contact in the management named Jonah Jackson. Determining that the worthy Jackson was ripe for co-opting, Lilith invited him for a meal aboard the *Lady Malbec*, which would prove to be both profitable and entertaining all around.

For my part, I determined that the luxury goods merchant that I had been dealing with was quite happy with the shipment, and moreover was overflowing with information. While I would not look a gift horse in the mouth, it seems passing suspicious that this simple merchant knows so much about the movements of our cousins. It is possible that he is an agent for one of the other Houses, or possibly XYZ corporation, and will need to be scrutinized with greater care.

At the First Imperial Bank of Yois, Liana tried to find information on the accounts of the *Tremnar's Profit* through the manager. Failing to get past the standard non-disclosure that she expected, Liana sought an exchange of currency for metals, specifically Commonwealth Shillings for gold. The rate quoted was so outlandish that even without my business savvy self to guide her, she told the manager that she would have to think about it. Which she did... along with the possibility of Lance Striking the bank from orbit to clear out the riffraff.

Our dinner with Jackson went exceedingly well, and his services were bought cheaply. It seems that the worthy in question has a daughter old enough for conscription, and a desire not to serve in the local PDF chasing guerrillas in the mountains. Personally, I cannot say as I particularly blame her, or her father, on that score. Jackson's daughter, Linda, was well educated in the Commonwealth fashion, and was an expert on Samura Comm Systems and Artificial Intelligence interfacing. In exchange for providing her with a billet on the *Lady Malbec*, Jackson explained how ships were tracked coming into and out of the system by the Commonwealth.

It seems that the Commonwealth has a device capable of faster than light detection called a Tachyon Positional Relay Projector. These devices are astoundingly accurate and capable of identifying ships and their courses both in Material and Immaterial space! All this without the use of Navigators or Astropaths, using only some manner of Artificial Intelligence Cogitator, seems well beyond the realm of credibility, yet the results are demonstrably real. The station, which houses the device, is allegedly on the innermost planet, Fortnight, and is capable of scanning the entire system. With that manner of technology in our hands there would be nothing to stop us from finding the base of the *Tremnar's Profit* and honoring our bargain with Interrogator Chaplain Iannos.

Though Sarvus felt that we were being too trusting of heathens whose loyalty to the Empire was still somewhat newly minted, Liana and I agreed with our Navigator that this was an opportunity too good to pass up. We interviewed Linda Jackson the very next day, and discovered that not only was she very good with the Samura Comm systems, she actually knew of a University Professor who was vacationing on Yois with the Fairlax family from Tarraco. Said family had been trapped on Yois since the beginning of the war, and Professor Janov, an Ontamological Expert, was likely eager for a way off planet.

Armed with this piece of intelligence, Liana set out to execute another business party, inviting many of the notables of Yois, leaving out our Banker and the Governor and Brigadier. The party itself was a smash, and Lorn and Sarvus managed to capture an agent of the Bank attempting to eavesdrop on the gathering. Janov agreed to paid passage on the *Lady Malbec* in exchange for a primer on what he referred to as ArchaoGothic and some translations of the text that we had seen on Fager and Sparta Hill.

After using the information gained from the spy to strong-arm the Banker and his minions into a more favorable exchange rate, and the details of the *Tremnar's Profit's* accounts at the First Bank, we set off in the direction of the Crystal Field, a large congregation of ice and silicate asteroids where the *Tremnar's Profit* was rumoured to have been sited in the last year. In the Crystal Field we narrowly escaped some manner of Daemon through the quick thinking of Damage Control Officer Samuel Militov, who cycled the Gellar fields, cutting off the Warp Entity from its disruption of the ship. Micro promoted Samuel to the position of Chief DCO, replacing Benito Wachs, who will be moving into a research position more in tune with his specializations.

Determined to get our hands on the Tachyon Positional Relay Projector, Liana set course for Fortnight, and dispatched a crew including Micro, Sarvus, Jacob Dreed, Alequintus, Gaspar, and Lorn. Those worthies crashed on the surface and all contact has been cut off. We are unsure as to whether or not their comm systems have been damaged, or if the facility or planet may be jamming their Vox transmissions. All we can do is hope for the best...

### **Themes of the Fantastic – Golden Age of SF - Tuesday June 28, 2011**

The following disjointed ramble represents a semi-coherent description of events that might or might not have happened on 6/28/2011. I make no claims as to the veracity of any statements that I make here, and the fact that reality may, or may not, have any bearing on the event is not necessarily 100% relevant.

Todd Debiak and I arrived via the Time Portal into the vast fortress of the Wayne Public Library, last bastion of freedom and the Dewey Decimal System in the beleaguered territory of Northern New Jersey. Though we had been holding off the robot hordes for weeks, it was only through meandering book discussions that we could hope to survive as a species and a culture. Thankfully for the continued survival of the human race, nobody maunders like Bill Wagner. That's right, you all owe your very survival against the depredations of the mechanical horrors of an alternate dimension to the fact that Bill cannot keep us on topic.

Chuck, Chris, Barry, Todd, Todd, Spam, Todd, Spam, Ann-Marie, Steve, Spam, Todd, Josephine, Spam, Bill, and I started the discussion at various points, zig-zagging through the timeline of the Golden Age of Science Fiction, with special attention being paid to Hugo Gernsback, John W. Campbell, and the noted philosopher Qurgnax of Ganymede... Actually, I am not sure about that last one, we may have been talking about Alfred Bester, it is easy to confuse the two (one is a four-headed mentalist from the moons of Jupiter and the other is Qurgnax). To simplify matters, Barry attempted to showcase some great graphic novelizations of classic stories like Robin Hood, King Arthur, and Nicholas Nickelby... er...

Given the rapidly fluctuating memes and reality poisoning going on in the room, we were forced to do the only thing we could to stave off the inevitable: read from Bill's copious hand-outs. Todd, Todd, Spam, and Todd tried to make a joke of it, but the giant robots fighting on the lawn were not amused (for the record, I was amused). We attempted to discuss the factors that make the Golden Age distinctive, and mostly just came up with the idea that Hard Science was prevalent, and those concepts like Thinking Machines, Cybernetics, Robots, and Starships are generally prevalent in many of the stories. There was a handy list in Bill's handout and we discussed many of the authors (though I was shouted down by the Diplomatic Representative of the Popular People's Populist Collective of the Populace of Neptune when I tried to discuss A. Bertram Chandler, who is a perennial favorite).

We spent some time discussing the formats and complexities of the magazines of the Golden Age, with special attention to the magazines *Astounding/Analog* and *Galaxy*. Steve Rubin reminded us of the Star Trek DS:9 episode where the cast are determined to actually be writers from the 1950's dreaming up the concept of a space station (though my memory of the episode is faulty because I thought that they were describing Babylon 5, not DS:9, in the character's short stories). We spent a lot of time on the big three SF Writers of the Golden Age (Asimov, Heinlein, DeCamp) and then discussed the end of the Age and the transition from the Golden Age to the New Wave with writers like Frank Herbert. Amusingly, we spent a huge amount of time discussing *Whipping Star* and *The Lazarus Effect* as well as *The Saratoga Experiment* and other Herbert books that have nothing what-so-ever to do with *Dune*.

At one point somebody, possibly Chuck, mentioned the old quote that "The Golden Age of any literature is whatever was in print when you were 12 years old..." which I kind of disagreed with because the stuff being done when I was 12 was obviously so far superior that I consider it the Platinum Age. Of course, I consider modern stuff even better, so obviously this is the Unobtanium Age!

We wended back and forth in an effort to keep the Robots at bay, and eventually we managed to drive back the walls of unreality and establish a proper continuity. Sadly, several of the extraneous Todds and Spams were destroyed, but it was a small price to pay for everyone's safety. Remember this the next time reality is threatened!

#### **SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV**

##### **Thom Purdy reviews:**

**Bad Teacher** - I saw it. It was fun.

##### **Gene McGrath reviews:**

**Bad Teacher** - I didn't see Green Lantern, but I'm wondering: did anyone in this group see Bad Teacher? I did, and I see it made 31.6 million last weekend. I'm sure those numbers will plummet this weekend - while it had funny moments, I found it quite unmemorable overall. :(

**Mr. Nobody (2009)** - Just watched this movie. Jared Leto is a man recalling three (or more) versions of his life - and really considering the choices he thinks he made that shaped it (them.) I'm kind of confused, too. Don't worry though, there are stunning visuals, time travel (sort of), a cool soundtrack, futuristic and familiar landscapes, and, since recall is involved, an all-important trip to Mars. "Get your ass to Mars!" It even gets metaphysical towards the end, somewhat uncannily prescient of the movie Inception. Recommended. \*Almost forgot - there are some nice snippets in the movie of explanation and narration of quantum theory that are worthwhile, too.

**Flatland** - "Episodes will deal with such puzzlers as: Are there more than three dimensions?" -Speaking of which, I've just started reading Flatland, the 1884 satirical novella by the English schoolmaster Edwin Abbott Abbott (which I picked up on the 'free stuff' table at one of our previous get-togethers - it's actually a double volume that includes the 'sequel' Sphereland by Dionys Burger (1965), and both have cool introductions by Asimov. Asimov describes Flatland as "The best introduction one can find into the manner of perceiving dimensions.") Also, I wonder if Freeman has seen the 2004 film What the #\$\*! Do We Know!? that I screened at TSF a while back...

##### **The Shallows - What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains - by Nicholas Carr (2010)**

Speaking of where our attention spans have gone, I've (literally) just finished a great book - The Shallows - What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains - by Nicholas Carr (2010)

<http://www.theshallowsbook.com>

It's a very interesting look at and overview of the history of intellectual technology (and technology in general), from maps, clocks, and Gutenberg's letterpress to computers and the Internet, and each technology's effect on thinking. A well recommended read if you're interested in the Net's (not just positive) effect on our cognition...

**Super 8**: Saw it yesterday. Good, solid summer popcorn fare. I enjoyed the nostalgic effect of the 1979 setting. Simpler times when kids seemed to have more freedom. I agree that the young actors were superb - kudos to the braces-clad, fireworks-obsessed, explosion-loving kid, played by Ryan Lee!

##### **Chris Hasselkus reviews:**

**Cars 2:** As stated, I went to see Cars 2 this morning. The place was packed. John Lasseter must have a ball putting this together. The reviews I saw were mixed. Stephen Whitty gave it 2 stars out of 4, Entertainment Weekly a B- and Roger Ebert a 3/12 stars out of 4. An awful lot was going on in the film, extremely busy. A few funny Toy Story short preceded the feature. My score B+

**Green Lantern:** Entertainment Weekly only gave it a C+, while Stephen Whitty gave it 3 of 4 stars. Not having read the comics, I thought they did an interesting job setting up the history of the character. Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively looked great and did a nice job. My grade B+ I had no knowledge of Green Lantern before seeing the film, such as his origins, etc. I thought the film did a nice job of describing his background, whether it matches the comic book or not. Definitely a worthwhile viewing.

**Super 8:** E.T., but harsher. The kids are great, especially Joel Courtney as Joe and Elle (sister of Dakota) Fanning as Alice. The two reviews I saw were good: Stephen Whitty gave it 3 1/2 of 4 stars, Lisa Schwarzbaum from Entertainment Weekly an A. My grad: A-

**Transformers (book):** Barry, at Films To Come, pointed out that Peter David had a novelization based on the screenplay for the new film Transformers: Dark Of The Moon, due out July 1st, 2011. I had read the novelizations Peter David did for the three Spider Man movies as well as the first Iron Man film, and enjoyed them all. I had never seen the first two films in the Transformers series, Transformers and Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen, so I checked them out of a library. Steven Spielberg executive produced and Michael Bay produced them. I wasn't expecting much, but I found both of them fun. They zigzagged between being well made and even poignant at times, to being silly and way too long. I'd give them both B-. I had seen previews for the third one, which looked interesting. Now with the book to read beforehand, I'll at least know what to expect.

**Kung Fu Panda 2:** As stated, I went to the Ramsey Cinema Monday night at 7:00 PM to see Kung Fu Panda 2. From what I remember of the original, this was about as good. It was not in 3D, yet the images seemed to have a lot of depth. Fun, poignant. Grade for both films: B+

**Fast and the Furious films:** After seeing Fast Five, I went back and watched the preceding four this week. The acting and plots are not important compared to the incredible stunts. I enjoyed all of them to varying degrees.

#### **Steve Spinoso reviews:**

**Green Lantern:** Jim and I saw the "3D" version of the Green Lantern film at the Clearview theatre in Parsippany. I found it to be a hybrid of big budget action film & psychological drama as Hal Jordan (Ryan Reynolds) a top test pilot for Ferris Aircraft, is chosen to be brought into the Green Lantern core and proves himself worthy by overcoming his fear and using it to defeat the ex-guardian Parallax, thus earning the respect of the Guardians of the Universe, GL Leader Sinestro, and his girlfriend /"boss" Carol Ferris. This is very well done for what it is. The 3D effects, of course are top notch. Grade: A- Here's what Jim has to say: "When I first put on the 3D glasses I thought I saw a checkerboard pattern with 3 girls, 3 boys & 2 parents plus a maid. Then I realized I had them on backwards because I was viewing my own memories. With so many high-heeled women and a slow-moving plot, I felt like I was watching a DALLAS reunion movie". Grade: D for dumb.

#### **Jim and I saw the following films on either DVD or the film channels we get:**

**Fright Night** - Encore Action ran the original version of the film "Fright Night" from 1985 this evening from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The story is about the host of a local TV horror film show (Roddy McDowall) who discovers that one of his college-age next-door neighbors is a vampire. Scary special effects along with decent performances by William Ragsdale (from Herman's Head) and Amanda Bearse (Marcy from "Married With Children"). A fair thriller. Grade: B-

**Fantastic Voyage:** We watched our DVD copy the same night the group did in Hillsdale. Jim thought the characters were too bland and the science was phony. I thought the story was good for its time.

**Gene McGrath adds:** Speaking of the movie "Fantastic Voyage", the actor who played Capt. Bill Owens, William Redfield, is in the movie I'm watching right now on TCM, "For Pete's Sake" (1974). I also remember him from "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" - he was Harding, aka "Hard On."

**Tora! Tora! Tora! -**We watched the first half of this film (and part of the second half) on DVD Friday night. Jim's big realization was that the reason the Japanese lost the war was because they weren't funny (or we don't know enough about the militaristic Japanese culture to get their jokes). What I got out of it is that the U.S. Military Intelligence figured out that the Japanese diplomats were lying thru their teeth and knew when

the attack was coming, but couldn't get their superiors to believe them.

**Apollo 13**-We saw this yesterday afternoon on Encore drama. Jim called it "a costume drama where we understand the costumes".

**2010**-This was on Encore drama last night I thought the message from the aliens at the end should have been shown to the Muslims as well as the Russians & the Americans...

**Sister Wendy Beckett's Complete Collection:** As part of Jim's campaign to enrich ourselves (namely me), We've been watching "Sister Wendy Beckett's Complete Collection" on DVD which includes "Sister Wendy's Story of Painting"(1996),"Sister Wendy's Grand Tour"(1994), which takes you through ten great cities of Europe (and the art museums therein), and "Sister Wendy's Odyssey"(1992), which tours the museums of England & Scotland. "The Story of Painting" is a very good mini-course in Art History & Appreciation & I learned a lot of interesting things from it. I gathered that much of the art produced before the "Three Golden Ages" can be interpreted as religious propaganda (with some expectations). The "Grand Tour" & the "Odyssey" programs are a bit more personal as she shows us through her eyes some of the art world's "greatest hits". These are worthwhile programs to see if you've never had the inclination or the interest to learn about art. Grade: A+ We also watched a DVD on grammar and saw two lectures on Probability from The Great Courses (which Jim got quickly bored with...lol).

**Take on trailers:** Jim and I saw 4 or 5 new movie Trailers before the start of the Green Lantern movie on Friday:

*Conan The Barbarian*: new version with some Italian-looking guy in the lead-might be good.

*Moneyball*: The story of Billy Beane, general manager for the Oakland A's baseball team and how he turned them around (I'll see this one).

*Fright Night*: Another horror film about Teen Vampires (AM will like it).

*Transformers 2*: Jim said that in the scene set on the moon, the mountains were too angular to be realistic.

\*\*Moneyball reminds me of a list I've wanted to post for a while: Top 10 favorite sports movies

#10-8:The Mighty Ducks trilogy: Follows a group of hockey-playing kids from elementary into high school with Gordon Chumway (Emilio Estevez) as their coach. Emilio is excellent here.

#7:A League Of Their Own-Girls' Baseball story from the 40's. Great Fun!!! Lori Petty (as Kit the younger sister)& Rosie O' Donnell are at their best here.

#6:Rudy-Sean Astin's best role as Daniel "Rudy" Ruitegger, a young man who struggles to live out his dream of playing football for Notre Dame. Great Score!!!

#5:The Natural-Classic Baseball movie based on Bernard Malamud's novel (which I've actually read) with Robert Redford, Wilford Brimley as the manager (best line-"I should have been a farmer"), Robert Prosky as the crooked team owner, & Robert Farnsworth as the assistant coach.

#4-2:Rocky I-III-classic boxing films. 'nuff said.

#1: Pride of The Yankees-Lou Gehrig's tragic story well told.

### **New & Forthcoming Books in SF and other Genre**

71 new SF and fantasy books listed for July 2011:

<http://www.scifan.com/titles/forthcoming.asp?sort=&date=072011&covers=>

Titles from Simon R. Green, George R.R.Martin, Harry Turtledove and more!