



ASFACTS 2020

FEBRUARY "MAYBE WARM, MAYBE COLD" VALENTINE ISSUE



ENMU WILLIAMSON LECTURESHIP SCHEDULED FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 3

The 44th annual Jack Williamson Lectureship will be held Friday, April 3, at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales. Special guests are Rebecca Roanhorse and James Patrick Kelly, with Colorado's Connie Willis as Mistress of Ceremonies. Friday events include talks by Roanhorse and Kelly, a luncheon, gaming in Golden Student Success Center and Library, and various afternoon panel discussions.

A campus tradition since 1977, the Lectureship annually draws well-known authors to visit ENMU and discuss the interactions of science and the humanities.

Williamson, long-time SF author and professor of English passed away in 2006. Williamson's novella, "The Ultimate Earth," won a 2001 Hugo Award, and his last novel, *The Stonehenge Gate*, was released in 2005.

Roanhorse of Santa Fe won the Nebula and Hugo Awards for her short story, "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™," and the 2017 John Campbell Award for Best New Writer. Before turning to writing full-time, she was a lawyer. She has had two novels in the *Sixth World* series published – *Trail of Lightning* and *Storm of Locusts* – and a *Star Wars* novel, *Resistance Reborn*, which served as a prequel to 2019's film, *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*. Her YA novel *Race to the Sun* was released in January as part of the "Rick Riordan Presents" line.

Kelly made his first fiction sale in 1975 after graduating magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame in 1972, with a BA in English Literature. He attended the Clarion Workshop twice, and in the 1980s he became involved in the humanist/cyberpunk debate. Despite being a humanist, Kelly also wrote several cyberpunk-like stories – such as "The Prisoner of Chillon" and "Solstice" in 1985 and "Rat" in 1986. He has won Hugo Awards and a Nebula Award. He currently is on the Popular Fiction faculty for the Stonecoast MFA Program in Creative Writing at the University of Southern Maine. Kelly also is a frequent contributor to Asimov's Science

Fiction Magazine, and has turned his hand to editing with John Kessel.

The Lectureship formally opens 5:00 pm Thursday, April 2, with readings and talks by Roanhorse and Kelly at ENMU's University Theatre Center. Cordelia Willis, a forensic scientist in California, also will be talking with students 3:00 pm that Thursday.

On Friday, April 3, Roanhorse and Kelly give Guest of Honor addresses and answer questions 10:00-11:15 am in the Zia Room of the Campus Union Building. The luncheon, hosted by Willis with comments from Roanhorse and Kelly, takes place 11:30 am in the Campus Union Ballroom. The Luncheon cost is \$10.00 (payable at the door), and features "Make Your Own Tacos." Books will be available for purchase and autographing by writers in attendance. Reservations (and any dietary restrictions) are needed by Monday, March 30. Call Patrice Caldwell at (575) 562-2315 or email planning.analysis@enmu.edu.

Gaming takes place 1:00-3:00 pm in the Presentation area of the Golden Library (first floor), along with visits to the Williamson Special Collections area. SF/Fantasy panel discussions happen 3:00-6:15 pm in the Library, and are free of charge. These panels are sure to provide a wide range of topics and free-wheeling discussion and debate between panelists and audience.

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **Tonight:** It's the traditional ASFS Auction with Bob Vardeman & Patricia Rogers at the helm. Mandy Self, Geneva Schult & Jessica Coyle keep track of bids and tabs. Remember: Cash/Check only!
- **March 20:** Local puppeteer Michael McCor-mick talks about his experiences on two Jim Hen-son films and on *Return of the Jedi*.
- **Fri, March 27:** Bubonicon 53 guest nominations meeting. Must be present to vote on 2021 guests...
- **April 17:** Darynda Jones of Portales talks about *A Bad Day for Sunshine*, the first book of her new mystery series, plus finishing her *Charley Davidson* series. Plus the Spring issue of *ASFACTS* (deadline 12 Noon Monday, April 13).
- **May 8:** Devin O'Leary of the *Weekly Alibi* pre-sents his annual SF film trailer preview.

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176-7257. Contact: (505) 266-8905 or via cwcraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuq SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. NEXT DEADLINE: Mon, April 13. **Club Officers:** Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Grant Kuck, Alternator. Cupid, holiday host. **B'con Con Chair:** Craig Chrissinger (505) 559-0931.

So far, we've heard that Steven Gould, Darynda Jones, Emily Mah, Laura J. Mixon, Patricia Rogers, Joan S. Saberhagen, Lauren C. Teffeau, Ian Tregillis, Sarena Ulibarri and Walter Jon Williams plan to participate (as of press time).

Plans for Saturday, April 4, have not been announced yet. In years past, there has been a Writers Workshop for aspiring young writers and/or a film festival on the ENMU campus.

For Lectureship updates, visit my.enmu.edu/web/jack-williamson-lectureship/2019-lectureship or call Patricia at (575) 562-2315.

BINTI ADAPTATION IN THE WORKS AT HULU

Media Res is bringing author Nnedi Okorafor's award-winning book *Binti* to the screen. Hulu has handed out a script order for an adaptation of the three-part, African futuristic novella, it was reported mid-January.

The recipient of the prestigious Hugo and Nebula awards for best novella, *Binti* is set in a technologically and socially advanced future. It tells the story of a brilliant and rebellious young woman who is destined to lead her community in Africa. But when she's admitted to the most prestigious academy in the galaxy, she chooses a different path and, rejecting her family's wishes, leaves her community behind in favor of the starry skies.

Stacy Osei-Kuffour (HBO's *Watchmen*, Hulu's *PEN15*, Apple's *The Morning Show*) will pen the script alongside author Okorafor. The studio is Media Res, the banner launched by former HBO drama head Michael Ellenberg. The latter will exec produce alongside Osei-Kuffour and Okorafor. The project reunites Osei-Kuffour with Media Res, which was the studio on Apple's first scripted original, *The Morning Show*.

Media Res' current TV slate also includes Apple's *Pachinko* and the untitled Brie Larson drama for the tech giant. Okorafor, the U.S.-born daughter of two Nigerian immigrants, is best known for stories weaving African culture into evocative settings.

PYTHON'S TERRY JONES DIES

by Neil Genzlinger, *New York Times*, 1-22-2020

Terry Jones, who earned a spot in comedic lore as a member of the British troupe Monty Python and also had success as a director, screenwriter and author, died the evening of January 21 at his home in North London. He was 77 years old.

His ex-wife, Alison Telfer, confirmed the death. Jones announced in 2016 that he had primary progressive aphasia, a neurological disease that impairs the ability to communicate.

Jones, plus four other Britons – Michael Palin, Eric Idle, John Cleese and Graham Chapman – and an American, Terry Gilliam, formed Monty Python in 1969. Their

TV sketch show, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, became a phenomenon, first in Britain and then in the United States when it was rebroadcast here in the mid-1970s.

The show worked a surreal brand of humor that was markedly different from most TV fare. It led to *And Now for Something Completely Different*, a 1971 movie that was essentially a collection of skits from the TV show, and then several other feature films.

Jones and Gilliam jointly directed the first film after *Something Completely Different*, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in 1975, and teamed up again on *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* in 1983. Jones was the sole director of *Monty Python's Life of Brian* in 1979, the most successful financially.

And he was an author, both of scholarly fare like *Chaucer's Knight* (1980), an alternative view of a character from *The Canterbury Tales*, and of books for children. He also wrote *Douglas Adams's Starship Titanic: A Novel*, based on a video game he developed with Adams. *The Boston Globe* once called him “a warped Renaissance man.”

He was a Renaissance man of sorts on *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well. The many characters he played included an organist who tended not to wear clothes, a fellow known as the Amazing Mystico who could build buildings by hypnosis, and an assortment of middle-aged women.

The popularity of the show soon made “pythonesque” an entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

“The one thing we all agreed on, our chief aim, was to be totally unpredictable and never to repeat ourselves,” Jones deadpanned to *The New York Times* in 2009, when the group had a rare reunion at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York. “We wanted to be unquantifiable. That ‘pythonesque’ is now an adjective in the O.E.D. means we failed utterly.”

Terence Graham Parry Jones was born in Colwyn Bay, North Wales, on February 1, 1942, “right bang slap in the middle of World War II,” as he put it in *The Pythons Autobiography*, a 2003 book by the troupe with Bob McCabe. His father, Alick, was a banker by profession but was in the Royal Air Force at the time and stationed in Scotland.

When he was five, the family moved to Claygate, in the London suburbs. A favorite among the radio offerings he listened to was *The Goon Show*, a comedy program that often veered into offbeat territory and had a cast that included Peter Sellers.

“It was the surreality of the imagery and the speed of the comedy that I loved,” he wrote in the *Pythons* book, “the way they broke up the conventions of radio and played with the very nature of the medium.”

That, of course, was what Monty Python did with television, but Jones' aspirations were yet to crystallize. He did think early on that it would be nice to be an actor,

but Royal Grammar School, Guildford, which he attended, was not a place to encourage such things.

He was accepted at Oxford and agreed to attend. He almost changed his mind when Cambridge, which had put him on a waiting list, also accepted him, but he stuck with Oxford. That was a good decision, he later reckoned; otherwise “I wouldn’t have met either Mike Palin or Geoffrey Chaucer – and without those two meetings the rest of my life would have been quite different.”

He joined the university’s Experimental Theater Club, known as E.T.C., spurning the more organized Oxford University Drama Society. In 1963 he performed in and helped write his first revue, *Loitering with Intent* (“because it was done in a tent,” he explained). Palin, a fellow Oxford student, contributed material to that show. Both also worked on *Hang Down Your Head and Die*, an E.T.C. show about capital punishment that, after its premiere at the university in 1963, went on to a six-week run at the Comedy Theater in the West End in 1964.

Monty Python’s Flying Circus, which made its debut in October 1969, consisted of absurdist sketches that often ignored the established rules of comedy – the Pythons eschewed the punch line – yet somehow spoke to the rampant illogic of life and society.

The hit show led to Python movies and a directing career for Jones. *Life of Brian* was especially well received. Vincent Canby, reviewing in *The Times*, said it “succeeds in sending up not only movies like *The Greatest Story Ever Told* and *King of Kings*, but also a lot of the false piety attached to the source material.”

Jones’ directing credits outside of the Pythons included *Personal Services* (1987), based on the story of a real-life madam, and *Erik the Viking* (1989), a Norse yarn he also wrote that starred Tim Robbins. That movie was based on Jones’ 1983 children’s book, *The Saga of Erik the Viking*, illustrated by Michael Foreman – one of several children’s books by the two.

After he received a diagnosis of bowel cancer in 2006, Jones applied his skills to humorous educational videos about health issues.

Jones’ survivors include his ex-wife, Telfer, and their daughter, Siri; and two children from his first marriage, Bill and Sally Jones.

Jones’ former Python colleagues all expressed their condolences on Twitter. Eric Idle wrote, “I loved him the moment I saw him on stage at the Edinburgh Festival in 1963. So many laughs, moments of total hilarity onstage and off we have all shared with him. It’s too sad if you knew him, but if you didn’t you will always smile at the many wonderfully funny moments he gave us.”

After noting, “It feels strange that a man of so many talents and such endless enthusiasm should have faded so gently away” and praising his work as director of *Life of Brian*, Cleese, ever the Python, added – in an unspoken reference to Mr. Chapman, who died in 1989 — “Two down, four to go.”

CHABON RECEIVES WRITERS AWARD

Michael Chabon will receive the Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award “for his service on the board of the MacDowell Colony, for donating the proceeds of several books to organizations that support writers, and for helping to raise funds to assist other authors,” to be presented at the Poets & Writers 50th Anniversary Gala in New York City on March 16.

Chabon & Ayelet Waldman’s company Escapist Fare and CBS TV Studios have signed a multi-year overall deal, with various projects in development, notably a miniseries adaptation of *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Klay* at Showtime, executive produced by Akiva Goldsman and Alex Kurtzman, produced by Paramount Television.

BOOK GROUP KEEPS READING

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets at 7:30 pm Monday, March 16, at Jason’s Deli (northwest corner of Louisiana & America’s Parkway NE – across the street from Bubonicon’s Marriott Hotel) to discuss *The Power* by Naomi Alderman. The group then focuses on *Minor Mage* by T. Kingfisher (Ursula Vernon) on Monday, April 20 – probably at Jason’s Deli again.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the third Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on selected novels at Page One Books in the Mountain Run Shopping Center. For more info, contact Leah at msransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

2019 LOCUS RECOMMENDED READING LIST

The annual Locus Recommended Reading List was announced February 1, and appears in *Locus Magazine*’s February 2020 issue. The list is a consensus by *Locus* editors, columnists, outside reviewers, and other professionals and critics of genre fiction and non-fiction – including editor-in-chief Liza Groen Trombi, reviews edi-



tor Jonathan Strahan and many others.

Locus considered more than a thousand titles between short and long fiction. The final list comprises their best recommendations for readers' considerations. You can let *Locus* know what your favorites were by voting in the 2020 Poll & Survey, which decides the winners of the Locus Awards, presented in June 2020 at the Locus Awards Weekend in Seattle, and is open to all to vote on.

Recommended Reading with a connection to New Mexico and/or Bubonicon include:

NOVELS – FANTASY: *Storm of Locusts* by Rebecca Roanhorse, and *Lent* by Jo Walton.

NOVELS – HORROR: *The Twisted Ones* by T. Kingfisher (Ursula Vernon) and *The Toll* by Cherie Priest.

FIRST NOVELS: *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martine (now living in Santa Fe).

ANTHOLOGIES – ORIGINAL: *New Suns: Original Speculative Fiction by People of Color* edited by Nisi Shawl (includes a story by Roanhorse).

ANTHOLOGIES – REPRINTS/BESTS: *The Very Best of the Best: 35 Years of The Year's Best Science Fiction* edited by Gardner Dozois.

ILLUSTRATED AND ART BOOKS: *Starport*, adapted by Raya Golden, from George RR Martin.

NOVELLAS: *To Be Taught, If Fortunate* by Becky Chambers.

SHORT STORIES: "Fisher-Bird" by T. Kingfisher (Ursula Vernon), "Labbatu Takes Command of the Flagship Heaven Dwells Within" by Arkady Martine, and "A Brief Lesson in Native American Astronomy" by Rebecca Roanhorse.

MIKE RESNICK PASSES AWAY

Author Mike Resnick died January 9 of lymphoma. He was 77 years old.

Resnick was a prolific and acclaimed SF, nominated 27 times for Hugo Awards and winning five. His Hugo Award winners include his first nomination "Kirinyaga" in 1988, "The Manamouki," "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge," "The 43 Antarean Dynasties," and "Travels with My Cats" in 2004; and his most recent fiction nomination was for "The Homecoming." His winners and nominees appear in *Win Some, Lose Some: The Hugo Award Winning (and Nominated) Short Science Fiction and Fantasy* (2012). He was a finalist for 11 Nebula Awards, and won for "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge". In all, he produced over 70 novels, more than 25 collections, hundreds of stories and articles, and edited over 40 anthologies. In 1995, he received a Skylark Award.

Resnick began publishing with Edgar Rice Burroughs-inspired novella *The Forgotten Sea of Mars* in 1965. He followed that with the Ganymede series: *The Goddess of Ganymede* in 1967 and *Pursuit on Ganymede*. After *Redbeard* in 1969, he stepped away from SF

for some time, instead writing pseudonymous erotica and Gothic novels (likely numbering in the hundreds) before returning to the field and his own byline in 1980 with tie-in *Battlestar Galactica 5: Galactica Discovers Earth* (with Glen A. Larson).

Much of Resnick's work was set in his sprawling future history Birthright Universe, including *The Soul Eater* in 1981, *Birthright: The Book of Man*, the *Dead Enders* series, *Tales of the Galactic Midway*, *Tales of the Velvet Comet*, the *Santiago* sequence, the *Chronicles of Distant Worlds*, the *Oracle* series, the *Widowmaker* series, and the *Starship* series. Many of those works were inspired by African history and culture, notably *Kirinyaga* and fix-up *Kirinyaga: A Fable of Utopia*, Clarke Award finalist *Ivory: A Legend of Past and Future* in 1988, and collection *An Alien Land* in 1997.

Other works include *Stalking the Unicorn: A Fable of Tonight* in 1987 and the other *Fables of Tonight*; the *Chronicles of Lucifer Jones*; the *Dragon America* stories; the *Encounters* series; weird Westerns beginning with *The Buntline Special* in 2010; and standalones including *The Branch*, *Second Contact*, *The Red Tape War* (with Jack L. Chalker & George Alec Effinger), and *The Cassandra Project* (2012, with Jack McDevitt).

His short work was collected in many volumes, among them *Through Darkest Resnick with Gun and Camera* in 1990, *Will the Last Person to Leave the Planet Please Shut off the Sun?*, *New Dreams for Old*; *Dreamwish Beasts and Snarks*, *Blasphemy*, and *Soulmates* (2016, with Lezli Robyn).

Resnick also wrote mysteries, tie-ins novels, and non-fiction, among them *Putting It Together: Turning Sow's Ear Drafts into Silk Purse Stories*, *I Have This Nifty Idea... Now What Do I Do With It?* (2001), and *Resnick at Large*. *The Business of Science Fiction: Two Insiders Discuss Writing and Publishing* (2010) collects a series of dialogues between Resnick and Barry Malzberg published in the SFWA Bulletin over many years.

Resnick began editing anthologies with *Alternate Presidents* (1992), producing many books in collaboration with Martin H. Greenberg, including SF mystery anthologies *Whatdunits* (1992) and *More Whatdunits*. He co-edited two *Future Earths* anthologies with Gardner Dozois (both 1993). Other notable anthologies include *Stars: Original Stories Based on the Songs of Janis Ian* (2003, with Janis Ian), *New Voices in Science Fiction*, *Worldcon Guest of Honor Speeches* (2006, with Joe Siclari), and *Red Tide*.

Michael Diamond Resnick was born March 5, 1942, in Chicago, IL. He attended the University of Chicago 1959-61, where he met wife Carol L. Cain (married 1961). He worked as a file clerk in Chicago until 1965, then began to focus on writing and editing; in the '60s and '70s he edited men's magazines and tabloid newspapers, and wrote about horse racing and dog breeding, in addition to writing fiction. For many years he bred and

exhibited collies and ran a kennel.

Resnick was diagnosed with aggressive lymphoma in November 2019, and his health declined sharply near the end of that year. In early January, doctors discontinued treatment. Resnick is survived by his wife and their daughter, author Laura Resnick.

VINGE WINS 2020 HEINLEIN AWARD

Vernor Vinge is the winner of the 2020 Robert A. Heinlein Award, reported Locus Online in early January, given for “outstanding published works in science fiction and technical writings that inspire the human exploration of space,” recognizing his body of work, including nine novels, more than 24 short stories, and many non-fiction articles. The award is administered by the Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS).

The winner was chosen by a committee of SF authors chaired by Michael F. Flynn, and will receive a plaque, a sterling silver medallion, and two lapel pins, all featuring the likeness of Robert A. Heinlein. The award will be presented May 22 in Baltimore MD during the opening ceremonies of Balticon 54.

2020 SKYLARK & GAUGHAN AWARDS NAMED

Betsy Wollheim is the recipient of the 2020 Edward E. Smith Memorial Award for Imaginative Fiction (AKA the Skylark Award). The award was presented by the New England Science Fiction Association (NESFA) at Boskone 57, held February 14-16.

The Skylark is given to “some person, who, in the opinion of the membership, has contributed significantly to science fiction, both through work in the field and by exemplifying the personal qualities which made the late ‘Doc’ Smith well-loved by those who knew him.”

The Jack Gaughan Award for Best Emerging Artist, also presented by NESFA, went to Iris Compit. Judges were Stephen Hickman, Maryanne Plumridge, and Patrick Wilshire.

For more information and a list of past recipients, see the NESFA website. [via *File770*]

CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN DIES

Author and editor Christopher Tolkien, 95, son and literary executor of J.R.R. Tolkien, died January 15 in Provence, France. He was 95 years old.

Christopher dedicated his life to his father’s work, editing and shepherding into print more than a score of the elder Tolkien’s books. He organized and edited *The Silmarillion* in 1977, *Unfinished Tales*, and the 12 volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*, along with *The Children of Húrin* in 2007, *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*, *The Fall of Arthur*, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary*, *Beren and Lúthien*, and *The Fall of Gon-*

dolin in 2018. He was chairman of the Tolkien Estate, Ltd. and a trustee of the Tolkien Charitable Trust. He also drew the iconic map of Middle-earth included in the 1954 edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, and the updated 1970s version. He retired as estate director in 2017.

Christopher John Reuel Tolkien was born November 21, 1924, in Leeds, England. He served in the Royal Air Force during World War II. Afterwards, he received a degree in English from Trinity College and later was a lecturer and tutor at New College, Oxford. Tolkien received the 2017 Bodley Medal in part for his work editing the unpublished texts of his father. The medal was given by the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University, where the Tolkien Archive has been housed since 1973.

Christopher was married to Faith Faulconbridge from 1951-1967 and they had one child, Simon. He remarried the same year to Baillie Klass, with whom he had two children, Adam and Rachel. Christopher eventually moved with his family to France and became a citizen there. He is survived by his wife, sister Priscilla, and three children.

OSCAR WINNERS FOR GENRE FILMS

The 2020 Academy Awards are in the books since the show aired February 9 on ABC. And now we all know which nominees took home the Oscars. Among the winners are a few films of genre interest. And, of course, *Parasite*, the South Korean tragicomedy thriller film, stunned everyone by winning four major awards – Best Director (Bong Joon Ho), Best International Film, Best Feature Film, and Best Original Screenplay.

Genre-connected awards included Best Actor: Joaquin Phoenix in *Joker*, Best Animated Film: *Toy Story 4*, Best Original Score: Hildur Guðnadóttir for *Joker*, and Best Animated Short Film: *Hair Love*.

2020 RITA AWARDS CANCELED

The Romance Writers of America (RWA) announced in early January that they will not hold the RITA Awards in 2020, after numerous judges and entrants withdrew their participation, reported Locus Online. The move occurs amid significant controversy within the organization and following the resignation of its president, directors, and many members. RWA plans to use “next year’s contest to celebrate 2019 and 2020 romances,” and any RWA members who have already entered the 2020 contest will be refunded by January 22.

A statement on the RWA’s website reads, “While we understand this will be disappointing news for some, we also understand that other members will support taking this step. Recent RWA Boards have worked hard to make changes to the current contest, striving to make it more diverse and inclusive, relieve judging burdens, and bring in outside voices, but those changes had to be voted on

and implemented in a narrow window of time each year.

"By not holding a contest in 2020, we will be able to move away from making piecemeal changes," the statement continues. "Instead, we will have the opportunity to take a proper amount of time to build an awards program and process – whether it's a revamped RITA contest or something entirely new – that celebrates and elevates the best in our genre. We plan on engaging a consultant who specializes in awards programs and a DEI consultant, as well as soliciting member input."

For more information, go to www.rwa.org.

ARTIST SYD MEAD DIES

Visual futurist and artist Syd Mead died December 30, 2019, in Pasadena, CA. He was 86 years old.

Mead is most famous for his signature work in movies *Blade Runner* and *Tron*, as well as *2010*, *Star Trek*, *Short Circuit*, *Mission: Impossible III*, and *Aliens*, most recently working on *Blade Runner 2049*. His artistic visions of the future were the platform for his career in both industry design and film. His artwork was collected in numerous volumes, including *Sentinel* in 1979, *Studio Image 1*, *Studio Image 2*, *Studio Image 3*, *Oblagon*, *Sentury*, and *The Movie Art of Syd Mead: Visual Futurist* (2017, with Craig Hodgetts). He was made a Spectrum Awards Grandmaster in 2007.

Sydney Jay Mead was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on July 18, 1933, and moved several times while growing up before graduating high school in Colorado Springs, CO. After a three-year stint in the Army, Mead attended the Art Center School in Los Angeles, graduating in 1959. He worked for Ford Motor Company's Advanced Styling Studio for two years, later branching out to illustrate books and catalogs for industrial corporations. In 1970, he founded Syd Mead Inc. and continued his design work, especially for the automotive and architectural industries, before expanding into movie concept art.

"Aside from his prodigious artistic talents, Syd was insightful, clever, generous, witty and classy," long-time spouse and business partner Roger Servick said in a statement quoted by the L.A. Times. "In his personal works, numbering in the hundreds, his vision of the future was always bright, positive and inspiring, a true reflection of him as a man."

MARTIN OPENS BOOKSHOP

George RR Martin opened Beastly Books on November 30, 2019, located next to the Jean Cocteau Cinema in Santa Fe.

On his blog at www.georgerrmartin.com, he announced December 13, "Beastly Books is here. We've been doing amazing author events at the Jean Cocteau Cinema ever since we reopened the theatre in August 2013. Dozens of terrific, award-winning, bestselling writ-

ers have appeared at the JCC to speak, read, and sign their books... SF writers, mystery writers, historical novelists, romance writers, thriller writers, mainstream literary writers, YA authors, non-fiction writer and journalists... the list goes on and on.

"And all of them have signed stock for us," Martin continued. "The only problem was the Jean Cocteau lobby was far too small for us to display all of these wonderful autographed books. With that in mind, we opened our own bookshop right next to the theatre. Beastly Books, we call it, in honor of Cocteau's most famous film... and a certain TV show I worked on in the 80s."

The store carries books by Martin and other authors – including Lee Child, John Scalzi, Joe Lansdale, Mary Robinette Kowal, Marlon James, Jo Walton, Dennis Lehane, Victor Milan, Anne Perry – all autographed, and also features a small café. The café offers coffee, tea, hot chocolate, soft drinks and pastries. And on display is a statue of the *Iron Giant*. Beastly Books is located at 418 Montezuma in Santa Fe, and is open 8:00 am-8:00 pm Tuesday through Sunday.

MUIR WINS CRAWFORD AWARD

Tamsyn Muir's novel *Gideon the Ninth* is the winner of the 2020 Crawford Award, presented annually by the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts (IAFA) for a first book of fantasy fiction, reported Locus Online in early February. The awards committee named *The Ten Thousand Doors of January* by Alix E. Harrow as "a close runner-up."

Other finalists were *The Ruin of Kings* by Jenn Lyons and *Silver in the Wood* by Emily Tesh.

Participating in this year's nomination and selection process were previous Crawford winners Candas Jane Dorsey and Jedediah Berry, as well as Karen Burnham, Mimi Mondal, and Cheryl Morgan. The award is administered by Gary K. Wolfe and will be presented at a banquet March 21 during the 41st International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, FL. The IAFA's Distinguished Scholarship Award will be presented to Stacy Alaimo at the conference as well.

For more information, see the IAFA website - <http://www.fantastic-arts.org>



RUSH DRUMMER NEIL PEART DIES

Author and legendary Rush drummer and lyricist, Neil Peart died on January 7 after a long struggle with brain cancer. He was 67 years old.

Neil Ellwood Peart was born September 15, 1952, in Hamilton, Ontario, and joined the band Rush in 1974. Peart played with lead singer and bassist Geddy Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson for 45 years to sell-out audiences in the largest venues until the band's retirement in 2015. Rush was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2013. Peart received the Order of Canada medal as well as the Governor General's Award, the country's two highest awards.

With his grand, imaginative lyrics, Peart helped usher in an entirely new genre of Progressive Rock music inspired by science fiction and fantasy. He wrote immense and lengthy musical epics such as dystopian science fiction *2112*, sweeping fantasy such as "Xanadu" and "The Necromancer", and hard science fiction such as "Cygnus X-1" and "Hemispheres." The last Rush album *Clockwork Angels* (2012) is a steampunk fantasy adventure with airships, alchemy, pirates, and lost cities.

Peart worked with Kevin J. Anderson on the novel version of *Clockwork Angels*, which was a *New York Times* bestseller and Scribe Award winner, and follow-up novel *Clockwork Lives* (winner of the Colorado Book Award). Anderson and Peart adapted both works into graphic novels. Peart also wrote six non-fiction books, travelogues, and memoirs, most notably *Ghost Rider*, which deals with the tragic loss of his teenage daughter and first wife in rapid succession in 1997-98.

The music of Rush, of course, also appeared as a major clue to a virtual reality game in Ernie Cline's best-selling novel, *Ready Player One*.

Peart is survived by his second wife, Carrie Nuttall, and 10-year-old daughter Olivia.

SKYWALKER SAGA CHARACTERS COMING TO MANDALORIAN SEASON 2

by Zack Sharf, www.indiewire.com, 01-02-20

The long wait for *The Mandalorian* Season 2 has begun, but a new report from *Deadline* should make the hiatus in between seasons a bit easier to handle. Sources close to *The Mandalorian* production have teased that "several established characters from the Skywalker Saga's feature films mythology will make appearances during the show's sophomore season." The Skywalker Saga refers to the nine-film franchise that started with George Lucas' original *Star Wars* and recently ended with the release of J.J. Abrams' *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*. The saga also includes Lucas' polarizing prequel trilogy.

Much of the popularity around *The Mandalorian* has

centered on Baby Yoda, and the show's first season finale suggested the next run of episodes would be exploring the creature's origins. With the story getting closer to providing answers about the Yoda species, it makes sense more characters from the Skywalker Saga are set to appear. The Yoda connection is the strongest tie between *The Mandalorian* and the Skywalker Saga.

Deadline's report forces the question: Which Saga characters will be involved in *The Mandalorian*? Fans have long expected Boba Fett to show up in the series, as he is also a bounty hunter like the show's titular character. Boba Fett debuted in *The Empire Strikes Back* and was seemingly killed off in *Return of the Jedi*, but the *Star Wars* franchise has been known to resurrect plenty of characters that fans think are dead (see: Palpatine in *Rise of Skywalker* or Darth Maul's cameo in *Solo*).

The Mandalorian takes place in between the events of *Return of the Jedi* and the most recent trilogy's first installment, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. The time period means that a gangster like Jabba the Hut would not appear in the show, as Jabba was strangled to death by Princess Leia in *Return of the Jedi*.

The live-action interstellar bounty hunter series, *The Mandalorian*, premiered last November 12 on Disney+, the same day the streaming service launched. It stars Pedro Pascal along with Gina Carano, Giancarlo Esposito, Emily Swallow, Carl Weathers, Omid Abtahi, Werner Herzog, Nick Nolte, Julia Jones and Ming-Na Wen. Pascal stars as the bounty hunter, gunfighter and native of Mandalore, known in the *Star Wars* universe as the home planet of bounty hunter Boba Fett and Jango Fett. Toward the end of the 1st season, it is revealed that the Mandalorian's birth name is Din Djarin. He sometimes is addressed as Mando.

The Mandalorian, the first live-action *Star Wars* television series in the brand's four-decade history, was created by executive producer Jon Favreau, the filmmaker best known for *Iron Man* and *The Jungle Book*. Dave Filoni (*Star Wars: The Clone Wars*) directed the inaugural episode and serves as executive producer alongside Kathleen Kennedy and Colin Wilson.

NETFLIX CANCELS MST3K REVIVAL

by Todd Spangler, *Variety*, 11-27-19

The snarky bots of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and their human companion, Jonah Ray, will not be returning for another season on Netflix, *Variety* has confirmed.

Jonah Ray, host of the new *MST3K*, tweeted November 26 that Netflix had canceled the show, a long-running cult favorite. Netflix confirmed that the series will not return for another season.

"We don't know what the future holds for the show," Jonah Ray wrote in his Twitter thread, adding, "It always seemed to figure out how to survive. From Comedy Cen-

tral to SyFy. Then kept alive by RIFFTRAX & Cinematic Titanic. Whatever happens, I want everybody to know that getting a chance to be on this show was a dream come true.”

Jonah Ray wondered if AMC Networks’ Shudder streaming service might rescue *MST3K*: “Now if only I can convince @shudder to pick us up and to let us share a night with Joe Bob Briggs?” he tweeted.

Netflix had picked up two seasons of the show: the 14-episode *Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Return*, which debuted in 2017; and *MST3K: The Gauntlet*, with six episodes that launched in 2018.

As noted by The Onion’s AV Club, which previously reported the news, the timing of Netflix’s cancellation of the show is “especially tragic” because Thanksgiving has traditionally been the unofficial holiday for *MST3K* premieres and marathons.

Mystery Science Theater 3000 originally aired on Minneapolis UHF station KTMA-TV starting in 1988 before it was picked up by Comedy Central and then the Sci-Fi Channel (now SyFy). The original series ran for 10 seasons and 197 episodes before going off the air in 1999.

In 2015, series creator Joel Hodgson and Shout! Factory launched a Kickstarter campaign to bring the show back. The campaign ended up raising more than \$6.3 million, which allowed them to produce 14 new episodes for the show’s eleventh season, including a Christmas special.

The Netflix revival of *MST3K*, like the original, is set on the Satellite of Love where the host (Jonah Ray) is held captive and is forced to watch an unending stream of bad B movies peppered with snide comments from his robot compadres. In addition to Ray, the series also stars Baron Vaughn as the voice of Tom Servo, Hampton Yount as the voice of Crow, Felicia Day as Kinga Forrester, and Patton Oswalt as Max, aka “TV’s Son of TV’s Frank.”

Hodgson executive produced along with Elliott Kalan, Richard Foos, Bob Emmer, Garson Foos, Jonathan Stern and Harold Buchholz. The series was produced by Satellite of Love, Alternaversal Productions, and Undiscovered North American Ape Pictures.

ARTIST STEVE STILES DIES

Artist Steve Stiles died January 12 shortly after announcing a diagnosis of terminal cancer. He was 76 years old and lived in Maryland.

Stiles was one of fandom’s best-known artists, first nominated for a Best Fan Artist Hugo in 1967, and winning in 2016; he received 17 nominations in all. He won 15 FAAn Awards for his fanzine work (the first in 2001, the last in 2016), and in 1998 won the first ever Rotsler Award for lifetime achievement in fan art. He also did professional artwork, including in comics.

Stiles contributed a Perry Rodent piece to the Bubonicon 44 program book in 2012, and was a participant at Bubonicon 48 in 2016.

Stephen Stiles was born July 16, 1943, and studied at the High School of Music & Art and the School of Visual Arts in New York. He was active as a fan from childhood, creating his long-running (if intermittent) fanzine *Sam* as a pre-teen. In 1968, he was the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund Winner, attending the 1968 Eastercon; his writings and art about the trip were collected as *Harrison Country* in 2007.

Stiles got his start as a professional artist with a cartoon in *The Realist* in 1961, and his first cartoon for a fanzine was in *Cry of the Nameless* in 1962. He produced cover and interior artwork for *Fantastic*, many Worldcon publications, and magazines and fanzines including *Algol*, *Ansible*, *File 770*, *Locus*, *SF Commentary*, and *Xero*. He regularly published underground comics starting in the late ’60s, and produced his own Hyper Comics in 1979. He did work as a penciler for Marvel Comics. He was an illustrator for the military and in advertising before going freelance in 1975.

His many books covers include Harry Warner, Jr.’s *A Wealth of Fable* (1992) and the 2002 edition of his *All Our Yesterdays*. With Dick Lupoff he created graphic novel *The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer* (serialized 1980 in *Heavy Metal*; as a book in 1991), based on Lupoff’s *Into the Aether* (1974).

Stiles was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2017. Though the tumor was successfully removed, the cancer returned late last year. He is survived by wife Elaine (née Mandel), married 1981.

RAIMI GIVES *EVIL DEAD* UPDATE

by Johnny Brayson, www.cometv.com, 01-13-20

If you’re sick of hearing updates about the future of the *Evil Dead* franchise, there’s some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that Sam Raimi has given yet another update, but the good news is that you’re probably really going to like what he had to say.

In a recent Reddit AMA session, Raimi was asked about his plans for *Evil Dead*, and he had a few interesting ideas about where the franchise might go. Most immediately, he stated that he, Bruce Campbell, and producer Robert Tapert have been working on the next *Evil Dead* movie. “Bruce, Rob and I are working with a young filmmaker who is writing a new *Evil Dead* story that he will direct,” Raimi said, according to *Comic Book Resources*. This echoes what Campbell said back in October when he revealed that a new film was in the works from an unnamed director who was handpicked by Raimi — and who still remains nameless.

So it definitely sounds like a new *Evil Dead* movie is still in the works, but what are the odds that Raimi him-

self will one day return to the director's chair for a future installment? Raimi addressed that question, too, "As for me... I would love to direct a new *Evil Dead* movie," Raimi said. "But I'd really like to do it with Bruce. And he says he's retired the character. I hope not."

Could Raimi convince Campbell to come out of his self-imposed Ash retirement? That would be pretty groovy, but don't hold your breath. Finally, for you fans of Fede Alvarez's 2013 reboot, Raimi also addressed the possibility of a continuation of that, saying, "If Fede would write or direct it, yes, in a split second!"

BROOKS PRODUCING TV MUSICAL OF *YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN LIVE*

by Johnny Brayson, www.comettv.com, 01-09-20

Young Frankenstein is considered by a good number of folks to be one of the funniest movies of all time, and now it's getting remade as a live musical. But before you light your computer on fire in protest, you should know that this new version is being produced by none other than Mel Brooks himself.

The 93-year-old comedy legend is resurrecting one of his most beloved films for the small screen in the form of *Young Frankenstein Live* on ABC. There was already a Broadway musical version of the film back in 2007 for which Brooks wrote all of the songs, and that production will serve as the basis for this new live TV version.

ABC and other networks have had some success in recent years with live musical versions of popular movies, including *Peter Pan*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Grease*, *A Christmas Story*, and a number of others, so it's not all that surprising that a movie as popular as *Young Frankenstein* is getting the treatment now.

What is a bit surprising is how different *Young Frankenstein* is compared to those previously mentioned films and others that have been turned into live TV musical productions. For one, *Young Frankenstein* is more of an outright farce than other TV musicals we've seen, with the jokes coming fast and furious. Some of that humor is also more on the adult end of the spectrum, which

certainly won't appeal some of the audience. It's also worth mentioning that *Young Frankenstein* is comparatively old (the film dates to 1974), and doesn't boast the same kind of following as other films that have been adapted for the medium.

Young Frankenstein Live has no release date as of yet, but it probably will hit ABC later this year.



BUBONICON 52 WANTS INPUT

by Craig Chrissinger, con chair

We're seven weeks into 2020 now, believe it or not, and Bubonicon 52 is slightly more than six months away! Three-Day Passes currently are \$35.00, and they go up March 29 to \$40 each, remaining so through August 7. They can be purchased in person at club meetings – or by mailing payment (with the PDF pre-registration form from the website) to "Bubonicon Inc" at 933 San Mateo Blvd NE, Suite 500-208, Albuquerque, NM 87108; or by paying online with a credit card.

Bubonicon 52 takes place August 28-30 (our traditional weekend) at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown, 2101 Louisiana Blvd NE, just north of I-40 – enter from the America's Parkway loop road. This year, we are 26 days after the New Zealand Worldcon and one weekend after the 2nd New Mexico Comic Expo, which may affect some of our participants and attendees. For the 9th year, the Marriott is offering sleeping rooms at \$99 single-quad occupancy, with free WiFi in sleeping rooms. Reservations are needed by August 17. That's 1-800-228-9290. Remember to tell them you're with Bubonicon.

And just like in the past, we're keeping all Room Parties on one designated floor – this year it's the 3rd Floor – with the hotel and your con chair being informed of such at least four days in advance. You can request the "party" floor, a quiet floor, or state you have no preference.

Our special guests this year are Becky Chambers, Keith R.A. DeCandido, A. Lee Martinez, and artist Chaz Kemp. We're expecting many con regulars, of course. So far, Loretta Hall, Carolyn Kay, Jane Lindskold, Emily Mah, S.M. Stirling, David Lee Summers, Lauren C. Tefteau, Ian Tregillis, Sarena Ulibarri, Robert Vardeman, and Connie & Courtney Willis have said they will be with us.

The con-com has to come up with at least 34 possible panel topics by March 1, and then we will send out invitations to potential participants the third week of March. We're asking for all Fan Programming proposals/preliminary requests for time & space to be submitted by the end of Thursday, April 30, so we have time for any questions or clarifications before we build the tentative schedule.

Some planned programming includes the Green Slime Awards, the mass autographing session, the usual two auctions, at least one game show, the costume contest, films, fan/video programming, kids programming, and the Sunday Afternoon Tea. We are considering starting programming 30 minutes earlier on Friday so that the Charity Auction and the possible charity screening of *Dr. Horrible* can start sooner.

The theme for Bubonicon 52 is "A GAME OF CARDS (PLAYING WITH A FULL DECK)." There are several card-inspired films, books & stories, and TV shows – not to

mention in songs (“The Gambler” reminds us that we got to know when to hold ‘em and know when to fold ‘em).

And in keeping with tradition and to honor the memory of NM’s own Pioneer Author, we plan to make financial donations, at least, to the (Jack) Williamson SF Library Collection at Eastern NM University, the Roadrunner Food Bank, and NM PBS.

Dealers’ space applications go live the 2nd or 3rd of March with emails to past dealers, and a link on the website to a google-form survey. The rates are \$95 with a weekend pass, and \$120 with two. There is a maximum of two spaces per dealer, and spaces are not considered sold until payment and a signed contract are received. For more Dealer info, please email Kennard Wilson at dealers@bubonicon.com.

Meanwhile, Roslee Orndorff & Kathy K. Kubica and their staff are gearing up for the 2020 Art Show. As usual, art show packets will be available online late June. We don’t plan to mail out packets, but if you don’t have internet access we can take care of you. If that’s the case, please send a two-ounce paid SASE to the San Mateo address. Info is available from artshow@bubonicon.com.

More general info is available from the website: www.bubonicon.com, by writing to the San Mateo address, by calling our Google Phone (voicemail) at 559-0931, and by emailing us at bubonicon@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

***Gideon the Ninth* by Tamsyn Muir, 2019 Tor, hc \$25.99, 437 pages.**

Review by Jessica Coyle

Celebrated short fiction author Tamsyn Muir’s debut novel *Gideon the Ninth* is a wildly original rollercoaster of a book that sucks the reader in immediately and doesn’t let up until the last page. The story starts with Gideon trapped as a servant to the Ninth House and its Reverend Daughter Harrowhark Nonagesimus. An orphan who was raised by the Ninth House’s ancient nuns and retainers, Gideon longs for nothing more than to find fame and fortune serving in the Emperor’s military.

Her opportunity for escape comes when Harrowhark is invited by the Emperor to a deadly trial of wits and skill for the magician heirs to all of the houses. If Harrowhark succeeds, she will be become an immortal, all-powerful servant of the Emperor, but no necromancer can ascend without a swordsman to serve as their cavalier. Without Gideon’s sword, Harrowhark will fail, and the Ninth House will die.

When they arrive at the location for the trial, they are introduced to the magicians and cavaliers of the other eight houses. It quickly becomes clear that the trial is much more dangerous than anyone realized when the participants begin to die. Will Harrowhark’s powerful magic and Gideon’s fighting abilities be enough to keep them alive?

Gideon the Ninth is one of the most original works of fiction I’ve read in a long time. Gideon’s sarcasm, Harrowhark’s dark demeanor, and the in-fighting between the two make for an unlikely team that you find yourself rooting for.

Muir keeps the reader guessing what is really happening during the trial right up until the end, and the suspense kept me wanting to read more. I really enjoyed *Gideon the Ninth* and cannot wait until the sequel is released this June.

***Firefly: Big Damn Hero* by James Lovegrove (story concept by Nancy Holder), Nov 2018 Titan Books, hc \$22.95, 336 pages.**

***Firefly: The Magnificent Nine* by James Lovegrove, 2019 Titan Books, hc \$24.95, 336 pages.**

Reviews by Craig W. Chrissinger

We’ve had various *Firefly* comic books, but it still comes as a surprise that two original novels of Captain Malcolm Reynolds and crew finally were published 16 years after Fox’s short-lived space western series originally aired.

The good news? James Lovegrove’s *Firefly* novels are good and entertaining, and feel like bonus episodes. The bad news? It took so dang long for them to come out, and now the third book is delayed five months to March 2020.

In *Big Damn Hero*, we get a lot of background on Malcolm Reynolds’ youth on Shadow in the small town of Seven Pines Pass, where his friends and he help with family farming while getting in trouble with harebrained schemes.

Now, while on Persephone to pick up crates (full of unstable explosives) for transport to a waiting buyer, Mal has disappeared. Book and Inara use their resources to search for him, but to no avail. With the cargo growing volatile and Alliance cruisers in the area, first mate Zoe has to choose between rescuing her captain and saving her crew.

Where has Mal gone? Has he been kidnapped, and if so, for what reason? And what of the rumors of a band of veteran Browncoat malcontents who want revenge for the war?

And in *The Magnificent Nine*, an old flame of Jayne Cobb has sent a plea across the galaxy to come to the arid world of Thetis to help face down tyrant criminal Elias Vandal, who is threatening to overrun the town of Coogan’s Bluff with his trigger-happy army.

When Serenity is forced to make a difficult landing after being hit by a missile over the hardscrabble desert, the crew discovers the savage outlaw gang will stop at nothing to get what they want, and that Jayne’s former girlfriend, Temperance, is singlehandedly raising a teenage daughter, Jane, who was born less than a year after she and Jayne parted ways. Could this girl, who bonds with River, be our Jayne’s unknown daughter?

Both original stories are set between the TV series and the movie *Serenity*, and they nicely walk the balance of the time between. Neither Book or Inara have left the ship yet, and Mal’s frustrations with lack of jobs is not as intense yet.

Lovegrove is very good at capturing the feel and sound of the characters, their interactions, and their dialog. For example, in *Big Damn Hero*, Mal tells Badger (the client with the crates of explosives): “Don’t think my understandin’ of that word is the same as your understandin’.”

These *Firefly* books are a fine, shiny addition to the much-missed TV show and crew of *Serenity*. They are fast, fun reads, and I really enjoyed them both. And the first book has just been rereleased as a trade paperback. So, get out there and enjoy seeing new adventures of Mal, Zoe, Jayne, Wash, Kaylee, Inara, Book, River and Simon - Big Damn Heroes and definitely the Magnificent Nine!

ASFS MEETING REPORTS —

OCT 2019: RADFORD & CRYSTAL SKULLS

Benjamin Radford, skeptic, returned to ASFS to talk on Crystal Skulls for 40 people. He told the audience that Crystal Skulls are “among the strangest and most mysterious artifacts in the world. They’ve been in museums, in Indiana Jones, one is on exhibit in London, and some say they have the power to kill.”

As props, he brought Dan’s Crystal Skull, a vodka bottled by Dan Aykroyd, which is made from iceberg water and comes in a clear skull decanter - and a skull crafted from glass that came from New Mexico.

“The crystal skull in the British Museum is 13 pounds, and carved from one piece,” he noted. “And you can find ‘new age’ skulls in Sedona, Arizona. Some are plastic resin, some are glass, and some are actual crystal – mostly quartz.”

The question becomes why crystal skulls are so invocative? “They are symbolically expressive of humanity and medicine,” Radford said. “So, crystal skulls are more interesting than a crystal femur. New Agers have constructed an intricate belief system around crystals involving auras, reincarnation, chakras, vibrations, and so on.

“They often are used for scrying and prophecy, where people light it up and interpret the forms they see,” he continued. “Crystal skulls are at the center of a large cottage industry within New Age circles, including books, seminars, newsletters, videos, and more. People pay one hundred dollars or more per hour to be in a room to meditate near a crystal skull.”

One example is the San Luis Skull found in San Luis Valley, NM. “Near the Colorado border, a glittering object was found in the dirt,” Radford said. “It was highly stylized, six inches high, asymmetrical. Donna Koch did research after finding it. She said it was possibly priceless and full of potential powers. A psychic told her not to sleep near it, and to keep the skull in a cedar box. She believed the skull was cursed. ‘Some people are plumb scared of it,’ she said.”

But when the San Luis Skull was taken to the Denver Museum of Natural History, curators confirmed it was actually crafted from glass. It turns out that glass skulls are not uncommon in folk art, and often can be found for sale in art and curio shops in Colorado. The skull in question was left by an artist and his wife on vacant land to decide where on their property to build their dream house.

“It was a cornerstone for the house location,” Radford explained. “It was not ancient, mysterious, magical or crystal. Many mysterious events around the San Luis Skull were likely just coincidence. Koch and others simply made the common psychological mistake of blaming any bad occurrence on the skull.”

Another famous crystal skull is the Skull of Doom, supposedly found by F. A. Mitchell-Hedges, a British archaeologist, in 1927 in a ruined Mayan in Belize. Arthur C. Clarke called it, “the weirdest gem in the world, one of a handful of strange manmade objects.”

Mitchell-Hedges said the skull was “at least three thousand years old, and according to legend was used by a Ma-

yan high priest when performing esoteric rites. Crystal expert Frank Darland, who studied it for six years, concluded the skull has mysterious powers.

“Though dramatic, the Skull of Doom story is only myth and legend, and falls apart under close analysis,” Radford said. “Mitchell-Hedges made no reference to the skull at the time of his return from the Mayan ruins in the following decade. The truth is that he bought the skull from a collector in 1933. While it was almost certainly a single quartz crystal, none of its supposed abilities were verified.”

He summed up the saga of crystal skulls as “they were made in the last century by talented European carvers. They are very impressive. They aren’t magic, but they are very cool. I looked at the one in the British Museum a long time, and I covered crystal skull investigations in my book, *Mysterious New Mexico*.”

Asked what he has been working on more recently, Radford said he worked on an investigation of moving coffins in Barbados. “Supposedly every time this vault was opened, the coffins had moved,” he said. “And I just did the one hundred and second episode of my podcast, and am working on a book on the politics of fear in America.”

NOVEMBER: NASA MISSION CONTROL

Christopher Marsh, an engineer who worked on NASA programs 1978-1994, talked to 34 people on the history of the original NASA Mission Control Center, an update of a presentation he gave at Bubonicon 51. Marsh also brought a mock-up he built of a single console station in the 1960s Control Center.

“I worked with engineers, flight controllers and astronauts who got us to the Moon,” he said. “It was a lot of fun, and probably the best job I’ve ever had. And the future is not now, it was 50 years ago when we sent men to the Moon.”

Data from a space capsule came down to ground stations then to Goddard, and finally to Mission Control, Marsh explained. The information coming from space vehicles was through radio waves on various bandwidths.

For the Mercury program, Mission Control was in Florida. Then in 1961, a new Mission Control was established just outside of Houston – NASA moved to Houston in 1965. Ford actually designed the Manned Spaceflight Center in Houston as they had established Ford Aerospace.

“For Gemini, the computer complex consisted of five IBM 7094s using transistors,” Marsh said. “And the typical control room positions were in four rows, and people worked in three shifts. There are two floors of Mission Control. They alternated missions.

“In 1995, a new control room was built in an annex followed by another one in 1998,” he continued. “The original MOCR/FCR2 is now a national landmark. There are now three control centers actively in use. Getting to space, back in the day, was a massive team effort. At one point, four hundred thousand people were working to get man to the Moon – mostly contractors.”

In 1985, Marsh was part of a team tasked to develop

new technology for the Control Center. John Young, then head of the astronaut office, looked at the proposal and basically sent back a memo saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Once Young transferred to engineering, the updates began to take place, Marsh noted.

DECEMBER 2019: DESSERTS & FILMS

Just 34 people came to watch comedic holiday film shorts, and to judge the 15th ASFS Dessert Cook-Off by tasting many delightful food samples.

As is the norm, St. Andrew's space was split between the movie area and dessert tables. Shown during the evening were the *Muppets* advertising appearances (for Facebook Portal and Farmers Insurance), three *Simon's Cat* episodes ("Valentine," "Halloween," and "Missing Cat"), the music video of "Dear Baby Yoda," Two *Late, Late Show with James Corden* Crosswalk: The Musical segments ("Frozen" and "Grease"), the "Frankenstein" episode of *Drunk History*, Jimmy Fallon and Kristen Bell on *The Tonight Show* doing a musical history of Disney animated movies, four *Saturday Night Live* sketches ("Grouch ad," "Toy Commercials," "Space Mistakes" and "Space Walk"), and a compilation of *Tom & Jerry* cartoons.

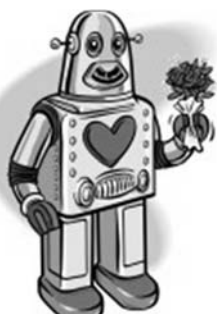
In the Dessert Cook-Off with "Emergency Space Rations" as the Theme, there were 17 entries from 15 people – Julie Heffernan, Una Olmsted, Geneva Schult, Leigh Fanning, Brenda Cole, Harriet Engle, Leah Ransom, Meg Olsen, Kevin Hewett, Al Kulp, Patricia Rogers, Roberta Johnson, Jessica Coyle, Yvonne Coats & Mike Collins, and Anonymous.

BEST OVERALL went to Patricia Rogers' Martian Potatoes, RUNNER-UP to Harriet Engle's Green Chile Pecan Pie Bars, and HONORABLE MENTION to Meg Olsen's Soy lent Green (sweet). In the EMERGENCY SPACE RATIONS THEME CATEGORY, Geneva Schult took the prize for Black Hole Bento Box (ESR).

THANK YOU RECOGNITION for assistance in setting up/cleaning up goes to Geneva Schult, Luke DeProst, Roberta Johnson and Dale, Mike McCommas, Leah Ransom, and Patricia Rogers. (And if we missed anyone else, apologies.)

EDITOR NOTES TO FILL THIS SPACE

• HARD TO BELIEVE FEBRUARY IS about 3/4 done. Where is the New Year going? We've had snow and cold days, rain and warm days. Kind of a rollercoaster winter! I kind of planned to do an essay-type entry here with commentary on books I've read and TV shows and Mystery Science Theater Live 3000, but now it's suddenly a lot later into the evening than I had hoped. Sigh, but I still want to touch on some things I've read and seen and observed, so here we go —



• OUR HOLIDAYS WERE QUIET as Jessica was sick during Christmas, my 58th birthday and New Year's with the long-lasting cold that's going around. So, I found myself with time for reading. I devoured books 3

and 4 of Martha Wells' *MurderBot* series (which are freakin' awesome - I love them. Such well-written SF adventure), J. Michael Straczynski's autobiography, *Becoming Superman: My Journey From Poverty to Hollywood* (Heartbreaking but inspiring - Joe's father was physically abusive to his mother, and she was a prostitute before marriage. The family lived in real poverty and moved around a lot. It's amazing he became a functional, talented adult writer who worked on *Murder, She Wrote*, the revived *Twilight Zone*, and *Babylon 5*. I cried at points, and was stunned by the reality of Joe's life at others), Mallory O'Meara's *The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and the Lost Legacy of Millicent Patrick* (which tells the tale of the woman who designed the Gill-man and *This Island Earth*'s Mutants; it rambles a bit, but is fascinating), the two *Firefly* original novels reviewed in this issue (worth reading and fun), *The Toll* by Cherie Priest (creepy, good Southern gothic horror), and graphic novel *Firefly: Sting* by Delilah S. Dawson (Well done - Saffron, the enigmatic rogue, forcefully recruits the women of Serenity for a heist). I also caught up on comic books of *Elvira*, *Firefly*, *Black Cat*, *Bettie Page*, *Count Crowley*, and *Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Comic*.

• SPEAKING OF MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000, Jessica and I spent Valentine's Day at Popejoy Hall thoroughly enjoying *MST3K Live: The Great Cheesy Movie Circus Tour*, with Joel Hodgson. They riffed *Never Retreat*, *Never Surrender*, a terrible '80s film with plenty of cheese and laughs. We saw Patricia & Scott, Devin & Deb, Ian & Sara, Geneva & Rick, and Suzanne & husband at the show. And afterward, some of us went for snacks and drinks with Joel at Two Fools Tavern, just up from UNM. We talked with Joel about time on the road, sleeping on the tour bus, and fairly normal things. The rest of the cast showed up, and we all had a nice visit until they had to get back to their tour bus before it was going to leave at midnight for Denver.

• WHICH LEADS US TO DENVER... Jessica and I went to Colorado Springs mid-January for the revived COSine convention. Heavy fog between Bernalillo and the north end of Santa Fe, and some high winds near Pueblo, CO - but nothing like last year's drive up! We had a nice time, were each on three or four panels, played in Peri & Lee's trivia game, visited Nina & Ron Else in the Dealers Room, had some liquid nitrogen-produced ice cream, visited with Rose Beetem and Laura Givens, and had Sunday breakfast with Connie & Courtney Willis, and Kevin & Rebecca Hewett. Our Denver friends, Tim and Kaia, made it down for Saturday afternoon (and Tim's SF Name That Tune), and Jessica and I went to Bingo Burger and Poor Richard's Bookstore that evening. The drive home Sunday afternoon was smooth sailing.

• TV & FILMS: We've managed to see and enjoy *The Mandalorian* and *The Boys* on streaming TV, and have enjoyed *Evil* and *Stumptown* on regular TV. The final episode of *The Good Place* was brilliant and very satisfying. *Color Out of Space* is an interesting HP Lovecraft story of cosmic creepiness with a crazed Nicolas Cage, and we enjoyed *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* for what it was (not perfect) and the fabulous new version of *Little Women*. Also, *1917* is visually incredible, and a fairly tense war drama.

• OUT OF ROOM. Thanks to Jessica for her review. As always, more stuff needed (Mon, April 13 deadline). — Craig