



SITHFACTS 2021

"STILL MASKING FOR THE PANDEMIC" DECEMBER HOLIDAY ISSUE



2020 WORLD FANTASY WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The World Fantasy Awards winners for works published in 2020 were announced November 7 during the World Fantasy Convention 2021, held November 4-7 in Montreal, Quebec.

The Life Achievement Awards, presented annually to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service to the fantasy field, went to Megan Lindholm and Howard Waldrop.

The World Fantasy Awards winners are:

BEST NOVEL: *Trouble the Saints* by Alaya Dawn Johnson, **BEST NOVELLA:** *Riot Baby* by Tochi Onyebuchi, **BEST SHORT FICTION:** "Glass Bottle Dancer" by Celeste Rita Baker, **BEST ANTHOLOGY:** *The Big Book of Modern Fantasy* edited by Ann & Jeff VanderMeer, **BEST COLLECTION:** *Where the Wild Ladies Are* by Aoko Matsuda, and **BEST ARTIST:** Rovina Cai.

SPECIAL AWARD – PROFESSIONAL was presented to C.C. Finlay for *F&SF* editing, and **SPECIAL AWARD – NON-PROFESSIONAL** was given to Brian Attebery for *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.

This year's judges were Tobias Buckell, Siobhan Carroll, Cecilia Dart-Thornton, Brian Evenson, and Patrick Swenson.

NM's SALLY GWYLAN DIES

New Mexico author and Bubonicon participant Sally Gwyllan died October 8 in a traffic accident in Albuquerque. She was just short of turning 68 years old.

Witnesses to the accident said that Gwyllan was getting ready to cross San Pedro Blvd NE near her workplace – O'Brien & Padilla, P.C. – at Indian School Road when she appeared to stumble and then fell down in the street. She was struck by a car that had been turning the corner, and was pronounced dead on the scene. The incident was

not a hit-and-run as the driver immediately stopped and called for help.

Gwyllan attended the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop in 1985, and her debut SF story, "Salt," appeared in *The Infinite Matrix* in 2002. Other published stories include "In the Icehouse" in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2003), and "Rapture, Parts 1 & 2" in *Strange Horizons* (2004). Her final story was "Fleeing Osluge" in *Clarkesworld Magazine* (2018). In 2012, she self-published *A Wind Out of Canaan*, the first book in a planned "Away Yonder" series. She also attended Walter Jon Williams' Rio Hondo Workshop, and was a member of the Critical Mass Writers Group.

A Wind Out of Canaan is a historically based novel, with Philippa and other homeless kids riding the rails of the Depression-era Midwest in search of a way to another world. In a 2013 online interview with Santa Fe writer Emily Mah, Gwyllan exclaimed that she loved doing historical research. "Luckily for me, there's a great deal of primary material available on the era of the Great Depression – photos, maps, the WPA State Guide series, and more. The trick is to pick out only what the story needs, and not just throw in all the other good stuff you come across."

"The original seed of the novel was a book I came across in a thrift store, one with a title I couldn't pass up, *Boy and Girl Tramps of America* by Thomas Minehan, originally published in 1934," she continued. "It's cross between a sociological study of youths riding the rails, and his personal stories of his travels with them while he did his research. It's chockful of details of how they lived."

UPCOMING ASF'S MEETINGS

- **Tonight:** The return of the Holiday Gathering with a "Post-Apocalyptic Snacks" Theme and Food. Plus socializing and some video/cartoon shorts.
- **January 21, 2022 - A Week Late:** Our Annual Group Book Discussion! What did you read in 2021 & would recommend? Or warn us about?
- **February 11:** Jane Lindskold visits to talk about her two new *Over Where* novels from Baen Books. Plus the Valentine *ASFacts* (Deadline Mon, Feb 7).
- **March 11:** Club Auction with Bob Vardeman, Patricia Rogers & Mandy Self. Donations & cash welcome.
- **April 1 - A Week Early:** Science Talk? *ASFacts*!

Darth Vader, guest editor. Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Send Correspondence to — PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176-7257. Darth Vader's Phone: c/o (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwraig@nmia.com. *SITHFACTS* printed each December. *ASFacts* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. **NEXT DEADLINE:** Monday, February 7, 2022. **Club Officers:** Jessica Coyle & Craig Chrissinger, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Grant Kuck, alternator. Kris Kringle & Rudolph the Reindeer, Holiday Hosts. **Bubonicon 53 Chair:** Craig W. Chrissinger.

She also designed and helped build her own house in Laguna, NM, some miles west of Albuquerque. She liked to joke that the house was like “perennially camping out. Living in this house is something like wearing a set of clothes, including shoes and hat, which you designed and made yourself, compared to clothes bought off the rack,” she remarked in the 2013 interview. “The stove and refrigerator are propane. I’ve got enough electricity from my solar panels for lights, a laptop, a phone, and a CD player, and not a whole lot more. I’m not completely off the grid – my phone and computer are connected via a landline.”

Friends remembered her as someone who always wanted to know how things worked, and more than once she took apart a device to understand it. “Sally was a perfectionist about her writing, and about her many other projects as well. She was interested in learning about everything that caught her impressive imagination,” noted Albuquerque writer Yvonne Coats. “She was interested in how things were made and frequently remade things or started from scratch to see if she could find a process that worked best for her. She had a fine mind and was a delight in conversation. She was generous with other writers in terms of reading their work and offering incisive but gentle – usually – criticism. She was quiet in manner but consistently interesting when she chose to speak.”

In that 2013 interview, Gwylan said, “I guess I never grew out of being a mad scientist/carpenter. I love reinventing wheels just to see how to get them to work like they’re supposed. I’d wanted to build my own house for most of my life, though my vision of what it would look like kept changing.”

Looking back at her time at Clarion and Rio Hondo, she told Mah that they were more useful than the couple of creative writing classes she tried in college. “The most important thing is getting honest feedback from others who’ve struggled with the same sort of problems you face every time you sit down to the computer. There’s also a creative fizz to putting a lot of writers together for an extended period of time. Story ideas spark, but other things as well. At Clarion, which lasted six weeks, some of our excess energy ended up in a mad teddy-bear kidnapping plot, rides in the dorm dryer, and water-gun battles. The latter at Damon Knight’s instigation; he was notorious well-known for this. But we also learned about the practicalities of a writer’s life, which given that most of us were unpublished at the time, was really valuable.

“Rio Hondo doesn’t have instructors, just a bunch of smart, great writers who’ll put your story through a gentle



but thorough wringer,” she continued. “And competitive cooking! I can’t pick one writer who taught me more than all the others. It’s like a kaleidoscope, with many, many bright lessons going together to help make me who I am as a writer.”

Sally Gwylan was born November 4, 1953, in Texas, was raised all over the South, and moved to New Mexico while in high school. She graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1975 with a degree in Bachelor of University Studies. Most recently, she had worked with law firms doing records management. Prior experiences included working at a wooden puzzle-making shop, driving a taxi cab, and owning and operating a food truck. Gwylan was Secretary/President of the local Rocky Mountain Sacred Harp chapter at the time of her death, and sang with the group for many years.

At Bubonicon, Gwylan assisted with the Sunday Afternoon Tea for many years, and ran a workshop on how to make a paperback book by hand in 2012.

She is survived by a nephew, Tommy, of Reno, NV, and good friend Landra White of Albuquerque; along with many friends from the writing community, her singing group, and various law firms. Her cat, Horace, has been adopted by Coats and Michael Collins.

NY TIMES NAMES 2021 BEST BOOKS

The editors of *The New York Times Book Review* selected their ten best books of the year, including *The Love Songs of W.E.B Du Bois* by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers and *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue, [Locusmag.com](https://www.cusmag.com) reported at the beginning of December.

They also listed 100 Notable Books, including the following genre titles: *Appleseed* by Matt Bell, *Bewilderment* by Richard Powers, *Build Your House Around My Body* by Violet Kupersmith, *A Calling for Charlie Barnes* by Joshua Ferris, *Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* by Wole Soyinka, *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr, *Detransition, Baby* by Torrey Peters, *Harlem Shuffle* by Colson Whitehead, *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue, *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Light Perpetual* by Francis Spufford, *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles, *The Love Songs of W.E.B Du Bois* by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, *The Magician* by Colm Tóibín, *The Morning Star* by Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Year Abroad* by Chang-rae Lee, *One Last Stop* by Casey McQuiston, *Our Country Friends* by Gary Shteyngart, *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich, *Something New Under the Sun* by Alexandra Kleeman, *Strange Beasts of China* by Yan Ge, *The Sun Collective* by Charles Baxter, *Velvet Was the Night* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, and *What Strange Paradise* by Omar El Akkad.

MARTIN ANNOUNCES SKY RAILWAY OPENING

On November 20, George RR Martin announced the opening of Sky Railway, the renamed and renovated historic short-haul railroad he purchased, with other investors, in 2020. “Mostly what I have been doing is throwing out ideas and writing checks,” Martin said.

“We had two big old diesel locomotives, so right off

we decided we would run two trains: the Wolf and the Dragon. And to paint them, and give each its own character and a look unlike any other train in the country, we hired Santa Fe's own Jorael Numina, an amazingly gifted muralist and graffiti artist."

Sky Railway began as Santa Fe became a curious and unique destination. The railroad carried into Santa Fe artists, tourists, wealthy eastern eccentrics, archaeologists, dreamers, and others seeking its unique mixture of cultures, mountains, fresh air, and exquisite light. Many scientists who joined the Manhattan Project traveled incognito on the train, before being whisked up by car to the secret city of Los Alamos. Presidents rode the line, including Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John Fitzgerald Kennedy. It is fair to say that without the Santa Fe Southern Railroad connection, Santa Fe would be a less exciting place. The railroad helped create the City Different.

In 2020, Sky Railway was born from the ashes of Santa Fe Southern. Prominent Santa Feans came together to save the historic, 141-year-old railroad. They are Bill Banowsky; owner of the Violet Crown Cinemas and a filmmaker; and Martin, the novelist, co-creator of Meow Wolf, and owner of the Jean Cocteau Theater. They were joined by several others, including author Douglas Preston and artist Gary Oakley.

The group of train enthusiasts combined personal resources to revive the historic railroad and turn its purpose into delighting and entertaining Santa Fe locals, along with the town's three million annual tourists with their Adventure Trains.

The train runs between Santa Fe and Lamy, NM. Tickets are available for purchase, and Sky Railway started running December 3. For more information, see Martin's official announcement on his blog or the Sky Railway site – www.skyrailway.com.

In his post, Martin also talked about his other doings. "I have not driven a single spike, laid a single rail, reupholstered a seat, crawled under a coach to check the wheels, and I won't be selling tickets or driving the trains either... though I do reserve the right to blow the whistle now and again. Nor have I been in the kitchen with Dinah. I have working, yes, yes... but not on the railroad.

"I have been writing *Winds of Winter*," he continued, "editing three new *Wild Cards* books, sitting down with

some amazing screenwriters and showrunners to create three hundred and seventeen new *Game of Thrones* successor shows for HBO and HBO Max, and serving as executive producer on various other television and film projects in various stages of development, including *Dark Winds* for AMC, *Jokertown* for Peacock, *Roadmarks* and *Who Fears Death* for HBO. Oh, and I was



the executive producer on our (recently wrapped) short film of Howard Waldrop's *Night of the Cooters*. So I have been working."

NPR's BEST BOOKS OF 2021

NPR's Books We Love (formerly Book Concierge) has an extensive list of Best Books in an assortment of categories, including "It's All Geek to Me" and "Young Adult," with hundreds of titles recommended by "NPR staff and trusted critics," reported Locusmag.com in late November.

The Sci-Fi, Fantasy & Speculative Fiction category includes titles by leading authors like Charlie Jane Anders (*Victories Greater Than Death*), Alix E. Harrow (*Splintered*), Becky Chambers (*A Psalm For the Wild-Built*), Fonda Lee (*Jade Legacy*), Rivers Solomon (*Sorrowland*), Cadwell Turnbull (*No Gods, No Monsters*), Caitlin Starling (*The Death of Jane Lawrence*), Claire North (*Notes From the Burning Age*), Jeff VanderMeer (*Hummingbird Salamander*), Nnedi Okorafor (*Noor*), and many others.

HATCH CHILE GROWN IN SPACE, ASTRONAUTS PLEASANTLY REACT

The Paper Staff Report, 11-07-2021

When NASA wanted to spice up the menu for astronauts aboard the International Space Station, they knew exactly where to turn: New Mexico.

Chile seeds arrived at the Space Station aboard SpaceX's 22nd commercial resupply services mission in June, and NASA astronaut Shane Kimbrough planted them in one of the ISS' three crop growing chambers.

Four months later, they were able to harvest their crop and add them to space tacos using fajita beef, rehydrated tomatoes and artichokes, and the hatch chile grown on the ISS.

The reviews from the astronauts were, well, out of this world.

Astronaut Megan McArthur tweeted, "Friday Feasting! After the harvest, we got to taste red and green chile. Then we filled out surveys (got to have the data!). Finally, I made my best space tacos yet: fajita beef, rehydrated tomatoes & artichokes, and HATCH CHILE!"

While getting delicious chile in space may have been the primary goal of the astronauts used to rehydrated meals, NASA also had a scientific goal in mind.

It is the first time NASA astronauts will cultivate a crop of chile peppers on the station from seeds to maturity, according to a release from NASA. The experiment allowed for crew to eat some of the chile and send the rest back to Earth for analysis, as long as all the data indicates they are safe for the crew to eat.

"It is one of the most complex plant experiments on

the station to date because of the long germination and growing times,” said Matt Romeyn, principal investigator for PH-04. “We have previously tested flowering to increase the chance for a successful harvest because astronauts will have to pollinate the peppers to grow fruit.”

Before selecting a cultivar to grow aboard the space station, researchers spent two years evaluating more than two dozen pepper varieties from around the world. They narrowed it down and selected the NuMex ‘Española Improved’ pepper, a hybrid Hatch pepper, the generic name for several varieties of chiles from Hatch, New Mexico, and the Hatch Valley in southern New Mexico.

New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham made sure her fellow governor to the north – who has (incorrectly) argued that Colorado makes better chile – got the news.

She tweeted, “ICYMI: #NM Hatch green chile has now been grown in space. Beat that Colorado @jaredpolis.”

SF BOOK GROUP READS ON

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, December 20, inside Jason’s Deli (northwest corner of Louisiana & America’s Parkway NE) to discuss *Midnight Riot: Rivers of London Book 1* by Ben Aaronovitch. The group then meets January 17, 2022, at Jason’s Deli to talk about *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell. Masks covering the mouth and nose are required when not actively eating or drinking.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the 3rd Monday each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on them at Page One Books. For more info: Leah at msransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

LACKEY MAKES STATEMENT AFTER SFWA ANNOUNCEMENT

The Board of Directors of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America and newly named Grand Master Mercedes Lackey have responded to the issue of earlier comments made by Lackey about writing trans characters, *Locusmag.com* reports. SFWA sent a statement to their membership on November 17, 2021, that reads:

“After we announced Mercedes Lackey as SFWA’s next Grand Master on 11/4, stances that Ms. Lackey had taken on writing trans characters resurfaced online. One was from a reader Q&A conducted in 2003, and another was from a 2017 Quora response on her feelings towards

using chosen pronouns at the time. We recognize that these comments have caused harm to the trans community.

“Last year, we said, “We have a responsibility to admit our failings and to continually commit to dismantling [...] oppressive and harmful systems, both within this organization and ourselves,” the statement continues. “SFWA cannot apologize on Ms. Lackey’s behalf, but we can acknowledge our contribution to this hurtful situation and stand with those in the trans and nonbinary communities. With that in mind, we asked Ms. Lackey if she would make clear her current feelings on these issues.”

They then linked to Lackey’s statement, posted on her social media sites, which reads:

“Before all else: trans women are women, and trans men are men. This is something I fiercely believe, and will always support. I have made awkward statements that have caused pain or distress. My desire is, and has always been, to support the trans community and be the best ally I can. I regret that I communicated poorly and fell short of the mark.

“I’m affirming here that I do, and always will, support trans rights and trans people,” Lackey continued. “An individual’s pronouns are every bit as valid – and far more important – than the dictates of copy-editors in the commercial publishing industry. I wish I’d listened to you and fought for those pronouns when copy editors changed them.

“I have never felt that I had the ability to write trans point-of-view characters well, and I expressed that badly in the past. Trans characters in fiction are more than just their gender, and their stories should show the richness of their whole lives in full. I am grateful for the many authors who are doing that well today. They are inspiring. I will do everything in my power to continue to grow and learn, as I feel we all should. I have learned a lot from patient friends and fans. I apologize for hurting people.”

The SFWA message concludes, “The current and past presidents of SFWA named Ms. Lackey as our next Grand Master because they believe the body of her work has contributed greatly to the science fiction and fantasy genres. We invite you to reach out to us with your feedback on how we can improve the award to be more inclusive of all communities we serve.”

The SFWA has asked that such feedback be directed to the SFWA Office at office@sfa.org.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY LISTS BEST BOOKS OF 2021

The New York Public Library announced its lists of the best books of 2021 in various categories, including 100 Best Books for Adults, 50 Best Books for Teens, and 145 Best Books for Kids, reported *Locusmag.com* in late November.

The Adult category includes numerous genre titles,



with *Light from Uncommon Stars* by Ryka Aoki, *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir, and *Remote Control* by Nnedi Okorafor, plus many more. The Teen category has *Iron Widow* by Xiran Jay Zhao, *Dustborn* by Erin Bowman, and *Beasts of Prey* by Ayana Gray, among others.

For more information, including the complete lists in all categories, see the New York Public Library website.

DIANA G. GALLAGHER DIES

Writer and artist Diana G. Gallagher died December 2 of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She was 75 years old, reported Locusmag.com in early December.

Gallagher wrote space opera *The Alien Dark* in 1990, but was best known for her tie-in work for properties including *Angel*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Smallville*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *Charmed*, and *Star Trek*. She also wrote the middle-grade book series, *The Complicated Life of Claudia Cristina Cortez*, and chapter-book series, *Pet Friends Forever*.

She was active in fandom as a fantasy artist – best known for her hand-colored print series, “Woof: The House Dragon” – and won a Best Fan Artist Hugo in 1989 (as Diana Gallagher Wu). She was also a prolific filk creator, winning Pegasus Awards in 1986 and ’94.

Born March 19, 1946, in Paterson, NJ, she eventually settled in Florida. Gallagher was married four times; her third marriage was to author William F. Wu (divorced 1990), and her final to writer and fan Martin R. Burke, who predeceased her in 2011.

2021 MYTHOPOEIC AWARDS WINNERS

The Mythopoeic Society announced the 2021 Mythopoeic Awards winners in an online ceremony on October 17, Locusmag.com reported.

MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY AWARD FOR ADULT LITERATURE: *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune, MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY AWARD FOR CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *A Wizard’s Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher, MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD IN INKLINGS STUDIES: *Tolkien’s Lost Chaucer* by John M. Bowers, MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD IN MYTH AND FANTASY STUDIES: *Fantasies of Time and Death: Dunsany, Eddison, Tolkien* by Anna Vaninskaya.

ROBERT THURSTON DIES

SF writer Robert Thurston died October 20 in Ridgefield Park, NJ, reported Locusmag.com in early November. He was 84 years old.

Thurston attended the first Clarion Science Fiction Writers’ Workshop in 1968, and his debut SF story, “Stop Me Before I Tell More”, appeared in *Orbit 9* in 1971. His final story was “Nobody Like Josh” in Asimov’s (2016). First novel *Alicia II* appeared in 1978. Other SF novels

include *Set of Wheels* (1983, expanded from 1971 story “Wheels”), *Q Colony* (1985, expanded from 1981 story “The Oonaa Woman”), and *Trial of Heroes* in 2004. *Thriller For the Silverfish* appeared in 1985. He also wrote numerous tie-in novels, including several *Battlestar Galactica* and *Battletech* books and Isaac Asimov’s *Robot City: Robots and Aliens #3: Intruder* (1990). His novel *Robot Jox* (1989) was based on a Joe Haldeman screenplay. Thurston was a finalist for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 1973.

Robert Donald Thurston was born October 28, 1936, in Lockport, NY. He was a US Army veteran, and studied English literature in graduate school at the University of Buffalo. For two decades he was the administrator for the Opportunity Scholarship Program at New Jersey City University, and also taught writing at various colleges. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Rosemary Thurston (née Fox), and their children.

WASHINGTON POST NAMES BEST BOOKS OF 2021

The Washington Post published a piece on the best SF, fantasy, and horror of 2021, selected by writers Silvia Moreno-Garcia and Lavie Tidhar, reported Locusmag.com in mid-November. Books mentioned include:

Unity by Elly Bangs, *His Name Was Death* by Rafael Bernal, *Inscape* by Louise Carey, *Goddess of Filth* by V. Castro, *Philosophy Through Science Fiction* edited by Helen De Cruz, John De Smedt & Eric Schwitzgebel, *A Dowry of Blood* by S.T. Gibson, *Strange Beasts of China* by Yan Ge (translated by Jeremy Tiang), *The Liar of Red Valley* by Walter Goodwater, *Revelator* by Daryl Gregory, *The Album of Dr. Moreau* by Daryl Gregory, *Composite Creatures* by Caroline Hardaker, *The Final Girl Support Group* by Grady Hendrix, *Ten Low* by Stark Holborn, *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro,

My Heart Is a Chainsaw by Stephen Graham Jones, *The All-Consuming World* by Cassandra Khaw, *The Cabinet by Un-su Kim* (translated by Sean Lin Halbert), *Sword Stone Table* edited by Swapna Krishna & Jenn Northington, *Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke* by Eric LaRocca, *AI 2041: Ten Visions for Our Future* by Kai-Fu Lee & Chen Qiufan, *Dangerous Visions and New Worlds* edited by Andrew Nette & Iain McIntyre, *Sinopticon* by Xueting Christine Ni, *Notes From The Burning Age* by Claire North, *Son of the Storm* by Suyi Davies Okungbowa, *How to Get to Apocalypse and Other Disasters* by Erica L. Satifka, *The Memory Theater* by Karin Tidbeck, *Hummingbird Salamander* by Jeff VanderMeer, *The Secret Skin* by Wendy Wagner, and *Skyward Inn* by Aliya Whiteley.

For more, see *The Washington Post*’s website.

ORYCON GOING ON HIATUS

OryCon, "Oregon's Premier Science Fiction/Fantasy Convention," announced in early November that the con will be going on hiatus.

They announced on Twitter:

"For over 40 years, OryCon has worked to bring you some of your favorite writers, artists, and creators in the science fiction and fantasy fandoms... We had to postpone OryCon in 2020 due to the pandemic. That means that all of our staff have been planning OryCon42 for two years; being forced to make hard decisions about what to keep and what to change and adjust with every new order from the Governor's office implement whole new policies, and worry about the health and safety of everyone for two years now. In light of the stress of the pandemic and the overall stress that our OryCon staff has been under, OSFCI has decided to place OryCon on hold after OryCon 42, Nov 12-14, 2021. Please take note that we are not canceling OryCon forever, but rather are taking a hiatus for a year or so to reflect and evaluate our convention and bring it back fresh in the future."

OryCon 42 was held November 12-14 in Janzen Beach, Oregon. You can find out more about their decision to go on hiatus at twitter.com/Orycon/status.

BIG BIRD GETS FLACK FOR COVID VACCINATION

From NBC News, NY Post & Newsweek 11-7-21

Big Bird's seemingly innocuous – and obviously fictional – announcement November 6 that he has been vaccinated against COVID-19 caused a stir online, as Republicans like Senator Ted Cruz of Texas accused the yellow anthropomorphic bird of tweeting "government propaganda."

Big Bird, Elmo and other *Sesame Street* characters appeared on CNN for a Saturday morning program called, *The ABCs of COVID Vaccines*.

"I got the COVID-19 vaccine today! My wing is feeling a little sore, but it'll give my body an extra protective boost that keeps me and others healthy," the 8-foot, 2-inch Muppet wrote on Twitter. "Ms. @EricaRHill even said I've been getting vaccines since I was a little bird. I had no idea!"

While Big Bird has been on "Sesame Street" for decades, his ageless character is meant to be six years old. He became eligible for the vaccine only in late October, when the Food and Drug Administration announced that it had authorized the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5 to 11.

Rosita, a furry, turquoise Mexican monster, was inoculated against COVID-19 on Nov. 5.

Unfortunately, Elmo – who is just 3 – isn't yet old enough to get his COVID shot.

"Elmo was so happy to talk to @DrSanjayGupta at

the town hall today! Elmo learned that Elmo's friends can get the COVID-19 vaccine now, and soon Elmo can too!" he tweeted early Nov. 6.

The right wing quickly seized on Big Bird's tweet.

"Government propaganda... for your 5 year old!" Cruz tweeted.

"Brainwashing children who are not at risk from COVID. Twisted," Lisa Boothe of Fox News wrote.

Robbie Starbuck, a Republican running for Congress in Tennessee, joked about Big Bird's dying from the shot, saying "7 days later* Big blood clot Bird is served!"

The Texas senator's comment sparked a backlash by those accusing him of politicizing a public health issue.

"There is no better illustration of how Republicans have politicized basic public health than Ted Cruz getting mad because Big Bird tweeted about being vaccinated," journalist Aaron Rupar wrote in response.

Commenters also criticized Cruz and others who condemned the tweet for not knowing that *Sesame Street* had previously promoted vaccination on the show.

Many people were happy to see Big Bird's tweet, thanking *Sesame Street* for discussing the shot. People also shared clips from decades ago in which the yellow puppet introduced to concept of vaccination to the show's audience.

In 1972, Big Bird got vaccinated for measles. And in a clip he is shown approaching a line of children who are waiting to get a measles vaccine. A sign above them reads "Don't wait. Vaccinate."

"I know what I'm going to do right away," he said in the 1972 segment. "I'm going to get in line."

Sesame Street has been addressing COVID-19 throughout the pandemic, discussing vaccines and teaching kids about masks and staying healthy.

Little research has been done about birds' getting COVID-19, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says "chickens and ducks do not seem to become infected or spread the infection based on results from studies."

GARY PAULSEN DIES

Gary Paulsen died October 13 at home in Tularosa, NM, of cardiac arrest, reported [Locusmag.com](https://www.locusmag.com). He was 82 years old. Paulsen was best known for his YA novels about wilderness survival, notably *Hatchet* (1986).

In all, he wrote more than 200 titles, with numerous SF works (adult and YA) among them, beginning with *The Implosion Effect* in 1976 and including *The Green*



Recruit (1978), *The Night the White Deer Died* (1978), *Meteorite Track 291* (1979), *Compkill* (1981), *Canyons* (1990), *Amos and the Vampire* (1996), *The Transall Saga* (1998; as *Blue Light*, 1999), *The White Fox Chronicles* (2000), and *The Time Hackers* in 2006.

Gary Melvin Paulsen was born May 17, 1939, in Minneapolis, MN, and spent part of his childhood in Manila in the Philippines. He graduated high school in Minnesota, briefly attended Bemidji State University, and served in the Army from 1959 to 1962. He spent some time in Los Angeles, writing for TV, including *Mission: Impossible*. He later lived in Alaska, on a ranch in New Mexico, and frequently spent time sailing the Pacific. He received the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the American Library Association for lifetime achievement in young adult literature in 1997.

He is survived by his wife, illustrator and author Ruth Wright Paulsen, their son, and two grandchildren.

WILLIAMS WINS FORRY AWARD

The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) selected composer John Williams as this year's recipient of the Forry Award for lifetime achievement in the SF field, reported *Locusmag.com* via File 770. Williams created the scores for SF and fantasy films including the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* franchises, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Superman*, and installments of the *Jurassic Park* and *Harry Potter* film series.

The award, named for Forrest J Ackerman and given annually since 1966, was presented at the October 9 meeting of LASFS. Their convention, Loscon 47, was held November 26-28 in Los Angeles.

BUBONICON 53 CONFIRMS 2ND Co-GOII, STILL KEEPING EYE ON COVID'S FUTURE

Rae Carson of Arizona has been confirmed as co-Guest of Honor for Bubonicon 53, which should be held August 26-28, 2022, in Albuquerque - fingers crossed.

Carson, born in 1973, is primarily a Young Adult fantasy writer. Her debut novel, *The Girl of Fire and Thorns*, was published in 2011, and was a finalist for the William C. Morris YA Award and the Andre Norton Award. It was selected as 2012 Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults by Young Adult Library Services Association. She also has written several tie-ins for *Star Wars*.

Her works include *The Empire of Dreams*, *The Rise of Skywalker* novelization, *Crown of Empires*, *The Gold Seer Trilogy*, "The Shadow Cats, a The Girl of Fire and Thorns story," the Hugo-nominated "Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse," *Star Wars: Most Wanted*, "Omega Ship," and "The Red One" in *Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View*.

Carson is married to science fiction writer C. C. Finlay, who very stepped down last year as editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

Other special guests for Bubonicon 53 are Keith R.A.

DeCandido as co-GoH, A. Lee Martinez as Toastmaster, and Chaz Kemp of Colorado as Guest Artist. Con chair is Craig Chrissinger, with Jessica Coyle and Mandy Self acting as assistant chairs.

Of course, it was the COVID-19 pandemic that caused Bubonicon 52 to be cancelled in 2020 and then go virtual in August 2021. And with COVID case numbers and hospitalizations up, and the new Omicron variant causing concern, the Bubonicon Inc Board and the 2022 con-com again are having to watch what happens in the next couple of months.

With all that in mind, weekend passes for Bubonicon 53 will not go on sale until early January at the earliest. It's a fluid situation out in the world, even as more people get vaccinated - and some think "a return to normal" is a myth as the world has changed too much from "the before times."

Perry & Terri Rodent want to remind fans that we are all in this together. Please stay safe, wear those masks, wash your hands, get vaccinated, and be well. And cross your fingers for August 2022!

Updates will be posted on www.bubonicon.com, of course, and in this newsletter.

REVIEW ROUND-UP

You Sexy Thing by Cat Rambo, 2021 Tor Books, hc \$25.99, 304 pages.

Review by Becky C. Davis

Who is the hero of *You Sexy Thing*?

Thing! A sentient bioship which has been used for over 40 years as a simple transport vessel by its over-rich previous owners. But *Thing* does not know how to cope with the motley assortment of humans and sentients who hijack it as their space station is pulverized by another sentient - but irrational—species. The access code given the crew by *Thing's* now-deceased owner is a ruse which sends the bioship toward a penal colony. Plot twist! That command is soon over-written by a member of the Intergalactic Association of Pirate (Authorities?) who is masquerading as a food critic and gets on the ship. *You Sexy Thing*, as a sleek bioship, is valuable for ransom. The crew captain, Niko Larson is valuable. The stowaway (yeah, a stowaway), also with the crew, possibly an Imperial Princess, is valuable for ransom. And the captain, the crew and *Thing* must thwart the pirates. *Thing's* maturation as an emotive and sentient ship is the grand voyage of this book.

Cat Rambo (aka "them") knows how to twist plots and extract story substance from their characters. They have over two hundred short stories and a stint as President of SFWA to their credit.

This book has a shipload of plot twists and unique characters between its pages. It has non-human sentients who can speak "Galactic," but an enhanced chimpanzee who must "sign" to communicate - and the other sentients sign back. An eight-foot tall sentient who believes he is a Michelin chef. Two young humanoid who can transform into were-lions (magic? Where did that come from?). The captain-leader who has more mothering in her than command-and-control. An evil pirate guy who reminds me of Jabba the Hutt.

If I was 17, I would eat this book up and plead for a sequel, or two. As an older reader, I am quizzical of the

“magic” here and the too-easy way the sentients interact.

Thing, the conveyor of this motley mob of travelers is central to the book. It learns joy, irritation, frustration, grief, happiness, stubbornness, diplomacy, and how to cook grand meals during the transit across space to the pirate colony. *Thing* is tasked by a program command to take the passengers to a penal planet (they did hijack *Thing* from its rightful owner), but it is finding ways to remain a willing “partner” to this odd assemblage of comrades.

Watch for the sequels.

***Questland* by Carrie Vaughn, 2021 Mariner Books, tp \$15.99, 296 pages. Review by Craig W. Chrissinger**

When literature professor Addie Cox is asked to guide a mercenary strike team to help figure out some odd incidents on an isolated island being developed for live, high-tech fantasy role-playing, she is puzzled at first. Turns out that the head project and her ex-boyfriend may have gone rogue. There’s an invisible force field cutting off the island, and it appears that safety protocols have been turned off on the various robotic creatures and puzzle traps.

Carrie Vaughn’s story here is a fast-paced fun ride with plenty of references to D&D, *Labyrinth*, *Lord of the Rings*, Monty Python, and such. Her fantasy island and characters are solid enough for this thriller, though some may wish for a little more meat on the tale. Still, as always, *Questland* is another good read from this Colorado author. Recommended for everyone who has gamed, or watched many fantasy films.

***The Last Graduate: The Scholomance Book 2* by Naomi Novik, 2021 Del Ray, hc \$28.00, 389 pages. Review by Jessica Coyle**

The Last Graduate is the second book in Naomi Novik’s *Scholomance* series, which began with last year’s *A Deadly Education*. The story picks up with El and her friends becoming seniors at the Scholomance, a special high school for young magicians. The school is a brutal place where the students have to fight to survive. Thanks to combat magician Orion Lake, and his ability to destroy any monster that the school throws at the students, so many students are surviving that the school’s resources are stretched to the breaking point.

El, Orion, and their friends decide that in order for everyone to survive, the students must come up with a plan that will allow all of the students to escape during the senior’s graduation, which is the only time anyone can leave the school. As the most powerful two magicians at the school, it falls on El and Orion to become the power behind the students’ plan. Will they be able to save everyone and destroy the school once and for all?

Novik shows once again why she is considered one of the best young writers working today. El is a compelling main character, whose prickly exterior hides a kind and noble heart. The secondary characters, especially El’s close friends, are well fleshed out, and the worldbuilding is interesting and original. Again, I highly recommend this series.

***Grave Reservations* by Cherie Priest, 2021 Atria Books, hc \$26.00, 294 pages. Review by Craig W. Chrissinger**

With *Grave Reservations*, Cherie Priest is taking a break from the worlds of gothic ghosts and steampunk. Here is a fun mystery that is half crime investigation and half light-

hearted romp with a newbie psychic joining forces with a single-dad detective to solve a couple of murders.

After travel agent Leda Foley has a gut feeling and changes detective Grady Merritt’s flight home to avoid being in a plane crash, her life changes. Despite Leda’s psychic powers being inconsistent (and mostly working during “klairoyant karaoke” at a Seattle bar), Grady believes that her special abilities just might help crack a cold case.

Leda agrees on the condition that Grady take a look at the unsolved murder of her fiancé. Of course, as most readers can guess, the two cases are connected. The questions are how and why.

Leda, her best friend Niki in a plastic bootie, and Grady are engaging characters for the beginning of a psychic cozy mystery series, and Priest puts her knowledge of Seattle and its atmosphere to good use. It’s a fun, quick and witty read. Here’s hoping for more karaoke and police procedural soon.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS — **OCTOBER 2021: RADFORD TALK**

A group of 25 people were on hand to hear skeptic/local author Benjamin Radford talk about Psychic Detectives, spotlighting one case from 1982. “The case began with a murder!” he began. “Amie Hoffman, New Jersey cheerleader, goes missing in November 1982 after leaving her job. Her body is found two days later floating in a reservoir, with several stab wounds. Two weeks later, the killer took the life of a second woman. The FBI is called in.”

Captain Jim Moore, a detective, decided to contact a local psychic named Nancy Weber. Moore later contacted Sergeant Bill Hughes of the New Jersey State Police. Weber was featured on several TV shows, and wrote the self-pubbed book, *Psychic Detective*. She claims to have solved (or “helped solve”) many police investigations.

“They took Nancy to the crime scenes, where she conducted a séance and claims she began communicating with Hoffman’s ghost. Using her powers, she discovered about a half-dozen ‘specific details’ about the killer.”

In January 1983, a serial killer was arrested, said Radford. His tires matched tracks discovered at the second murder site. James Koedatich confessed, and he had served time in Florida for killing his roommate in 1971.

The case came to Radford’s attention in 2008 when he was on the *Skeptiko* podcast and was challenged by host Alex Tsakiris to investigate a “good, rock-solid case of psychics.” Tsakiris referred to Weber’s information in the Hoffman case as “amazing” and “off-the-charts extraordinary.” And one blogger wrote, “It cannot be explained any other way.”

But it was not until 25 years after the murders and Koedatich’s arrest that people were questioned, and “everyone involved – including Weber – admits her info did not solve the case,” Radford revealed. “Once a body is found, psychics retroactively claim to have told police important details. Still, Tsakiris interviewed all three principals and concluded that all three agreed that Weber provided info on the most important aspects of the incident.”

But when investigating, Radford found that Weber claimed she had specified the killer had served prison time in

Florida, and Moore agreed. However, Hughes disputed that, saying Weber had only claimed the killer served time in the South. She also claimed that the killer's last name began with a "K," but Moore and Hughes say she only said that there was a "k" sound in the name. And she claims she said the killer was of Polish descent, but Moore and Hughes agree she only said that the killer was "of Eastern European descent."

"In each case, Weber's memory is that she gave very accurate, specific info," Radford said. "Moore and Hughes agree on a few facts, but not on several others. Tsakiris wants us to believe that the detectives both somehow forgot virtually all the specific info Weber told them."

"If Weber is telling the truth, why didn't her specific info lead to the arrest of Koedatich before he killed again?" he continued. "They should have been able to find the serial killer within an hour with her detailed info."

To prove his point, Radford found a New Jersey Bell Phone book for 1982, and showed how only four people in the listings fit the "specific details" Weber supposedly gave. "It is likely that Weber and the police were so convinced of her powers that they fell victim to 'confirmation bias,' he stated. "So, the 'best case' for psychic detectives rests on nothing more than the almost 30-year-old contradictory memories of three people."

Radford concluded, "I'm not against psychics or psychic detectives. If they could do what they claim, that would be wonderful."

CLUB BUSINESS: Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle were retained as co-executive secretaries for 2022, Harriet Engle was re-elected as moderator, and Mike McCommas was chosen as alternator. For the December Holiday Party, "*POST-APOCALYPTIC SNACKS*" was chosen as the theme, and folks decided they were most comfortable with "individual pre-packaged commercial food" for the gathering.

NOVEMBER: HALL ON AREA 51

"How do I know Area 51 exists?" space historian/author Loretta Hall asked 27 attendees. "Because I've been there. It is in Nevada about 80-100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. This large area was established in 1951 for atomic bomb tests, and Area 51 was activated in 1955 by the CIA to develop spy craft for surveillance of the Soviet Union."

Area 51, which is located by Groom Lake, has expanded several times. It has been known by many aliases over the years. At one time, it was "The Ranch," and at another time "Water Town." It also was called "The Box" or "Red Square" by aircraft pilots who were not allowed to fly over it.

"The CIA was gearing up to test the U-2 spy plane as part of the utility aircraft fleet. They didn't want to designate it as a reconnaissance craft," Hall said. "The U-2 earned the nickname of 'Dragon Lady' with its single engine and single seat. It was a radical design, and difficult to land. The training flights of the U-2 caused a huge increase in UFO reports. It flew higher and faster than other aircraft, so it was unusual and confusing to those who saw it. One U-2 lost engine power and had to do an emergency landing at Albuquerque's Kirtland Air Force Base."

"And, of course, one U-2 was shot down in 1960 over the Soviet Union," she continued. "But by then, the CIA and Lockheed's Skunk Works were working on a replacement – the A-12 Oxcart, or the 'Archangel.' It was painted black so the sun would reflect off it, and thus be less visible. Nicknamed the

'Titanium Goose,' it was designed to reflect radar. Also in the late 1960s, Area 51 was used to try to reverse engineer Soviet MiGs. The CIA analysis in Vietnam showed that the MiGs were more maneuverable, but the main problem was U.S. training."

Because the Soviet Union also tried to spy on Area 51, counter-intelligence efforts included making tape outlines of imaginary aircraft, and creating false heat signatures.

"Between odd-shaped aircraft and conspiracy theories, alien sightings became more common," Hall said. "I read *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America's Top Secret Military Base* by Annie Jacobsen, which was good but it had errors like saying Kirtland AFB is just north of White Sands."

"Jacobsen's other odd claim is that an alien craft did not crash near Roswell, but was deliberately sent by Joseph Stalin," she continued. "The occupants were supposedly manipulated by Dr. Josef Mengele to appear like children under five-foot tall with unusually large heads and abnormally shaped almond eyes. But why would that be? Jacobsen says Stalin wanted to land a craft in the USA and create a panic like had happened with Orson Welles *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. He wanted to show his superiority."

Another conspiracy theory is that Area 51 is attached by tunnels with other underground military bases, such as White Sands and Oakland. That rumor may be based on tunnels built for Nevada underground atomic bomb testing grounds. There have been 935 atomic tests in Nevada, compared with three in New Mexico, 496 in Kazakhstan, 214 in Russia, 12 in Australia, 23 at Bikini Atoll, and two in Mississippi.

"By the time Area 51 was established, fallout was present," she noted. "Some atomic detonations caused actual damage to Area 51, and it was abandoned for two years."

In 1979, Area 51 was transferred to the US Air Force, and now is called the "National Classified Test Facility."

"Don't try to go into Area 51," Hall concluded. "You will be caught. But do stop in Rachel, Nevada, for a bite or tourist items. They can tell you how to get to Area 51's back gate, where you can take a picture of the security shack like I did."

EDITOR NOTES TO FILL THIS SPACE

- OK, HOLIDAY SEASON 2 OF THE PANDEMIC! Sigh. Try to enjoy your Christmas, Midwinter, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day, and/or New Year's. Due to Climate Change, it's been warmer than usual here in Albuquerque. And now let's see how quickly the COVID Omicron variant spreads, and whether it's less deadly. Yay! At least most people are vaccinated now, even if waiting to get a booster dose.

Coronavirus hanging around meant no Milehicon for us again, and we're debating whether we can go to Colorado Springs in January for the MST3K Time Bubble Live Show and/or COSine...

- THE LYRICS OF RUSH'S "TIME STAND STILL" come to mind as I approach my 60th birthday in the same month the Attack on Pearl Harbor was 80 years ago and John Lennon's murder was 41 years ago: "Summer's going fast-/ Nights growing colder/ Children growing up —/ Old friends growing older/ Experience slips away..." Yes, still digging through boxes in my garage and closets, finding lots of stuff I collected in the 1980s and 1990s. So, I'm nostalgic, and examining where I came from and who I am today.

- THANKS to Jessica & Becky for reviews, and to Jane L, Yvonne C, Emily M & Landra W for info for Sally Gwylan's obit! See you all in February 2022. Happy Holidays! Stay safe — Craig C.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

*Have a great
Christmas, Kwanzaa,
Midwinter, and/or
Boxing Day...*

**AND MAY WE ALL
HAVE A JOYFUL
NEW YEAR IN 2022!**

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