

Las Vegas F & SF Day SPECIAL

Woody Bernardi observed proper convention tradition by opening the First Annual Fantasy & Science Fiction Day fashionably late. It wouldn't do for us upstarts to begin precisely on time when more established conventions never commence at the scheduled time.

Joyce and I had driven over a little early and, we thought, received our reward in the form of what looked like the most advantageous handicapped parking spot. Joyce

glowed with motoristic pride as she whipped our familiar red Chrysler into the first space in the handicapped zone. From our perspective, the space turned out to be as handicapped as the woman using it; the actual entrance was a long, somewhat agonizing walk for Joyce.

We found some of our favorite fans, and some anticipated new faces, queued up in front of the still-shut building when we finally reached the right door. Besides

Woody Bernardi, Kent Hastings and James Taylor, the group also included a couple, the Andersons, that Joyce and I especially wanted to meet. He'd popped up on the VSFA listserv, I sent a friendly private email and we launched into a highly enjoyable rapid-fire correspondence in the days leading up to the con.

One of the other fans addressed him as "Scott," the name that appeared on the "sender" line of his listserv posts, but the newcomer politely told the fan in question that he preferred the name "Merric."

"That's a tremendous relief. I thought, in one of your letters this week, that you

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Is Steve Brust praying to Roscoe that I put his photo on the front page of *VFW*? Well, this *is* the front page and his photo *is* here.

Inside Story

Welcome to the Special Issue

Welcome to a first for *Vegas Fandom Weekly*, a Special Issue. All of *VFW #24*, except for a few regular items like the calendar, are missing in favor of the complete report on the Las Vegas Fantasy & Science Fiction Day and the Las Vegrants Post-ConOpen Party. Most of it is probably true; apologies for any inadvertent fabrications. What could better justify a Special Issue than the first general interest convention in Las Vegas in more than a decade?

Just as the one-day con gave many attendees their first taste of Fandom, this issue may well be the first (or nearly the first) fanzine that they have ever seen. I want to assure those embryonic fans that there are many other fanzines, most really, that do *not* have umpteen pages of me. So if you aren't one of those folks who finds me charmingly roguish, there are many other fanzine that go entire issues without printing a word by me or even mentioning my name.

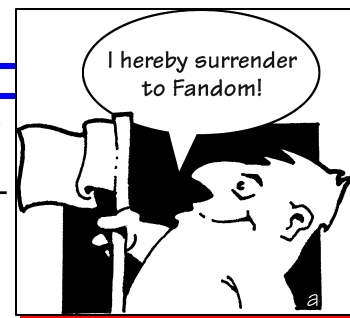
In a similar vein, I urge you to check out the next couple of issues of *VFW* before making any hasty decisions about swearing off it together. This fanzine normally covers all the doings of Las Vegas Fandom and also presents short articles, letters of comment and contributions from such as Joyce Katz, David Gordon, Roxanne Gibbs, Woody Bernardi and More. (No, not Natasha Moore, though she is herewith invited to send a letter.

OK, I admit it. Those issues will have a lot of me, too. No way around it; I'm pretty much the Kingfish. Still, there's a *lot* of news, plus a very good chance that you'll see your name in print, underlined to facilitate rapid ego-scanning. You might even see your photo, if you get within range of Alan White, David Gordon or Ruth Davidson.

You won't have to wait more than a day or two to see *Vegas Fandom Weekly #25*. I expect to distribute it Thursday or Friday. It'll have all the news and reports this issue lacks, a new column by a major fan from Beyond the Sea, an article by me and a column of letters from readers. If you'd like to comment on your Fantasy & Science Fiction Day experiences, for example, this would be an appropriate time to do so.

Everybody else: I hope you enjoy this convention report, lavishly embellished with photos by David Gordon.

— Arnie



Vegas Fandom Weekly #24, May 4, 2005, The Fantasy * Science Fiction Day Special, is written and produced by Arnie Katz (PMB 152, 330 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107; Email: cross-fire4@cox.net; phone: 702-648-5677).

Special Thanks to David Gordon (convention photos) Alan White (cartoons), Joyce Katz (proofreading) and Woody Bernardi (Star Reporter).

Cartoons: Alan White (2)

Reporters this issue: Joyce Katz (memory jogging)

VFW is free for the asking — and you may get it anyway. It is posted on the SNAFFU and VSFA websites as well as at efanazines.com.

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wanted to be called 'Merrie,' I confessed. "I didn't know if I could hack calling you by a hobbit name." I assure him that "Merric" was fine by me, as long as I didn't have to be Frodo.

Fans began streaming into the Clarke County Library's comfortable, spacious and well-lit meeting room as soon as the building opened at 10 AM, so the con chairman had to resort to his "outdoor voice" to make himself heard above the gabble of fannish voices.

Woody introduced Linda Bushyager, who was to run the opening item, and then went around the room calling the names of the various fan and pro notables. If we were all ready such luminaries as Woody claimed, the meeting room would've needed no artificial light.

With all the BNFs and pros suitably fluffed up, Woody then turned the room over to Linda, who sat alone at the speakers' table. She led a lively discussion of science fiction with a Vegas angle. It came off like a topic discussion at a SNAFFU meeting; Linda primed the audience with an excerpt from a classic SF short story and challenged us to



Linda Bushyager caught the slight scary assignment of moderating the opening panel — with no panelists!



Woody Bernardi, inhabited by the Spirit of Trufandom, blesses the multitudes.

guess the origin of its insightful and passionate description of the yearning for that slot jackpot.

She stumped us all, I'm embarrassed to say, with a selection of "Little Maggie Money-Eyes" by Harlan Ellison. The audience, now determined to expunge this blot on their collective stfnal knowledge, offered many examples of novels, short stories, movies, TV programs and graphic stories that had a Las Vegas connection.

Neil Shulman brought up Heinlein's *Podkayne of Mars* after I'd mentioned Alexei Panshin's well-crafted stories about the interstellar gambler Villiers and the fact that the *Leisure Suit Larry* series of computer adventure games derived from a text adventure by Ken Williams in which the player visits a futuristic Las Vegas planet. In the original, the player tried to win money by gambling to bankroll efforts to successfully seduce three women.

Elizabeth Bear chimed in with Tim Powers' *Last Call*. Zelazny's short story *The Unicorn Variations* also rated a mention.

Neil Shulman went in an unexpected direction by bringing up *Oh God, You Devil* because of the final scene in

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which God and the Devil play five-card stud for the souls of humanity. Jolie LaChance brought up several books, including Robert Aspin's *Fool's Paradise*.

The talk about poker reminded Linda of how important the card game was in *Star Trek – The Next Generation*. The entire series finished up with the crew at the poker table and, she added, the games gave the writers a way to show Data's development of human emotions and behavior.

That set us on a course for where No Man Has Gone Before. I reminded fans about Quark's on *Deep Space Nine* and Elizabeth

Bear brought up "A Piece of the Action" from the original series.

Several fans in the audience mentioned a movie that I hadn't seen, but now will try to find, *The Cooler*. It's about a man who gets hired by a casino because he has a unique paranormal power; he can drain the "good luck" from others who are near him. So if someone is cleaning up at roulette, he just walks past the wheel and the hot streak is finished. Complications set in when the Cooler falls in love and his power reverses to spread good luck.

When I mentioned Phillip K. Dick's *Solar*

United Vegas Fandom



Fantasy & Science Fiction
One-Day Convention

This is the logo for the convention, which I used on both the advance flyer and the program one-sheet program. All right, so it's a teensy-weensy bit gaudy. After all, this is Vegas.



Teresa Cochran (left) and Arnie Katz (right) flank Neil Shulman and his mom in the audience before Neil took the stage for the ‘Plausible Futures’ panel.

Lottery, in which the protagonist fixes an annual lottery to select a new dictator, it prompted Linda to mention Shirley Jackson’s *The Lottery*, in which the winner was put to death,

Joyce brought up a Harlan Ellison story – she couldn’t think of the title – in which a character gambles by inserting his penis into a hole in the machine. Winners got sexual pleasure, while losers got the mini guillotine.

With every male fan sitting with legs tightly crossed, Neil Shulman talked about a less painful subject, *Back to the Future 2*, in which a key plot element is a trivia book that, if sent to the past, will allow the character’s younger self to clean up on sports bets.

When Neil Shulman plugged his screen play about Jesus going to Las Vegas, it set off memories of movies in which Las Vegas had gotten the worst of it. Linda suggested *Mars Attacks* and other Vegas apocalypses flowed from the audience.

When we’d worked out the schedule a

couple of months ago, we’d decided to build in 10-minute rest periods after each program item. That might be a prescription for disaster at a hotel-based con, with its many possible diversions, but there really wasn’t much temptation to stay too far from the meeting room. (except to go to the bathrooms, located on another floor and on the other side of the building).

The break gave fans time to look at the display tables, grab a bottled water, courtesy of SNAFFU and browse the giveaway books.

Kent Hastings did a really nice thing; he went to Kinko’s and had them run about 40 copies of *Vegas Fandom Weekly* to pass out to attendees. I had distributed a one-sheet “program” with the schedule on one side and a version of the event flyer on the others. There were also flyers for VSFA and SNAFFU.

I don’t know who donated the books, used as a delivery medium for the info-laden SNAFFU bookmarks, but they didn’t stint the classics. Instead of the expectable dross,

Las Vegas Fan Event Calendar

Las Vegrants Meeting May 7 7:30 PM

The informal club mets on the first and third Saturdays of the month at the Launch Pad, the home of Arnie and Joyce Katz.

SNAFFU May 13 8:00 PM

This formal SF club meets the second and fourth Friday's of each month. This time, it will be held at Borders bookstore on Sahara at Decatur.

Las Vegas Futurists May 13 7:00 PM

This discussion group looks to the world of tomorrow on the second Friday of each month at Borders bookstore (2190 N. Rainbow Blvd.) The featured speaker is Ted Kaehler.

Sunday Social May 28 2 PM

VSFA is sponsoring this event, open to all Las Vegas fans, at The Tap House. The theme this time is science fiction and fannish art.

VSFA Meeting June 6 7:30 PM

This formal club meets at the Clark County Library on the first Monday of each month.

Got a meeting or event? Let me know and I'll post it here. Write (crossfire4@cox.net) or call (648-5677) and you'll see it here.

there was what looked like the nucleus of a small, but classy SF library.

Dick Pelletier, the moderator of the "Plausible Futures" panel, opened by showing the e-audience copies of several speculative articles he has written for print and online me-

dia. Dick's presentation picked up noticeably when he described his desire to use time-travel technology to visit his brother the night before his fatal heart attack, download a record of his brain and place it in a clone in the future. When he talked about something close to him like that, he came across as much



The Plausible Futures Panel: (left to right): Neil Shulman, Dick Pelletier, Elizabeth Bear and Kent Hastings

more human and genuine than during the “show and tell” portion of his contribution.

Elizabeth Bear took over, saying that her expectations for 2060 are “a little less cheerful than Dick’s.” She explained that she doesn’t consider herself a predictive writer, but rather a fabulist. She talked about the Singularity and the way authors such as Vernor Binge have delved into different aspects of the concept. Ayesha Ashley seconded Bear’s interest in the singularity and its consequences. She said that she liked such stories because they excited her curiosity about what would happen as we pass through these gates.

Kent Hastings discussed *Anarquia*, which he called an exploration of the impact of technology on the future. He describes some of the plot, which turns on Werner Von Braun’s decision not to join the Nazi Party and, instead, go to Spain where he meets a computer genius and Hedy LaMarr.

Kent discussed his contributions to the “Free Space” series and lamented that interference from David Hartwell apparently kept his story from inclusion. Kent also waved a copy of a libertarian journal that had devoted a several articles in the same issue to *Anarquia* and its creators.

Neil Shulman showed copies of a half-dozen of his books that he felt bore on the subject of Plausible Futures. He was especially pleased to show the 20th anniversary re-issue of *Alongside Night*. David Gordon drew fans’ attention to the fact that this was an edition from Shulman’s current publisher, which meant that the company had paid some coin to get the rights. In these days of limited SF lists, that’s a fine endorsement from the folks who endorse Shulman’s checks.



Sitting above the world’s largest SNAFFU logo is club president Michael Bernstein.

Neil mentioned that a publisher’s blurb had set his novel in 1999, though the book itself makes no mention of a year. After all, the author confessed, he wanted sales to continue past that date! He then pointed out that Ace Books, for the paperback edition, had pushed the time of the story to 2001, but that the latest edition had simply remained what it was in the beginning, extrapolation about society two decades in the future.

After Neil discussed the media history of his latest, *Escape from Heaven*, and tried to raise \$13.4 million for the movie from the audience, Dick read a description of a Greg Bear novel that essentially recounted the novel’s plot.

Elizabeth Bear then showed her class by boosting someone else’s work, *Spin*, by Robert Charles Wilson. The novel posits the arrival of aliens who enshroud the Earth in an impenetrable barrier called the Spin. Life on Earth continues, thanks



to an artificial sun, but the Spin has the added effect of slowing down time within it while the rest of the universe races along as usual. As she conceded, this isn't exactly a plausible future, but she felt that its exploration of the impact of removing outer space as a consideration merited its mention.

I elaborated on Elizabeth's thesis that science fiction isn't especially predictive. I denied that science fiction foretells the future is a "media simplification" that arose in the 1940's. Society had bashed science fiction pretty heavily, dismissing it as "that crazy Buck Rogers stuff." SF's defenders pointed to stories that contained elements that actually *had* come true, like the submarine in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* or the atomic bomb in that *Astounding* story. The media, eager to crawl back off that limb, did a 180-degree turn. SF wasn't "crazy," it was Nostradamus with rayguns.

Michael Bernstein termed science fiction "not usefully predictive," a clever and incisive way of saying it in a single, forceful sentence. Neil picked up on this with a comment that, science fiction teaches us that "the future is something that we make, even though we can't control it. Neil also rejected the phrase "the foreseeable future," because "unless you're Uri Geller" it's not foreseeable. "The

future is as indeterminate as sub-atomic particles," he concluded.

David Gordon pointed out that, while the future may not be predictable, there is a connection between science fiction and science. He reminded fans that SF had fired the imaginations of many budding scientists who had then tried to make real the mind-expanding concepts they'd first encountered in the stories.

Dick closed the panel with another strong plug for his articles, which he described as "mind-boggling." He said he couldn't wait to be part of "this incredible, magical future."

That brought us to the two-hour lunch break. Woody had providently hooked up with Baja Fresh, a Mexican-like restaurant across the street. Not only was it convenient, but Woody got the eatery to rebate a percentage of what con-goers spent there. Las Vegrants can hardly wait for our cut of the swag.

What was a short walk for most proved to be a rather long and difficult one for Joyce and Teresa, who clung to each other as they carefully negotiated the path between the Library and the crosswalk that led to the restaurant.

Seeing Joyce's trouble, Woody took her keys, fetched the car, picked us up – we'd only gotten about halfway there on foot, drove us to the restaurant and brought us back to the con and a much more convenient parking place. Although Joyce was pretty tired by the end of day, Woody's thoughtfulness spared her much pain and agony.

The lunch itself went well from every respect. I usually prefer hard-shell tacos to soft ones, but the two I ate went down very easily and enjoyably. I ordered them with hot salsa, which certainly gave them a bit of zip.

We sat at a largish table with about a dozen other fans. The lunch break was long enough that no one had to rush the meal,



Ayesga Ashley (left) listens as Elizabeth Bear makes her point.



Joyce Katz (left) and Arnie Katz served on the “Fans to Pros” panel..

which gave us a chance to talk more with Merric & Lubov Anderson.

Someone toward the other end of the table mentioned the Hugos. Lubov surprised me by saying that, as a professional artist, she felt that “Hugos” should only be given for word-oriented achievement. I thought she rather liked my idea of naming the Award after Frank R. Paul or perhaps Jack Gaughan. I also told her the sad history of the fan Hugos, which I would dearly like to see renamed or even abolished. (I’d much rather win a Fan Award, voted on by knowledgeable fanzine fans who have seen the material.)

Back at the Clarke County Library I was again impressed with the work Mindy Hutchings, Ruth Davidson, Michael Bernstein, James Taylor and Natasha Moore – and any others I am too poorly sighted to have seen or too churlish to remember – did hosting the various tables in the back of the room and just outside the meeting room entrance. One of the pur-



poses of the con was to bring Vegas Fandom to the notice of potential participants and these goodie-laden tables and friendly greeters certainly accomplished that goal.

I moderated the Fans into Pros panel, which also featured Steve Brust and Joyce Katz. I retold how I became a science fiction professional, opportunities given by Ted White (on *Amazing and Fantastic*) and Terry Carr (at ace Books) and then talked a little about how Fandom had taught me to have confidence that people would want to read the

things I wrote.

Steve Brust discussed his somewhat different personal fanhistory, though he also mentioned that he had done some fanwriting and even Pubbed His Ish in an apa or two. Steve also picked up one of my comments and spoke movingly of the lies a writer must tell himself to persevere. He also admitted that he didn’t want to examine those lies, because that might make them less effective

Joyce portrayed Fandom as an incubator of writing talent. She specifically referenced a fanzine, *Four Star Extra*, that helped her, Bill Kunkel and Charlene Komar Kunkel Storey take the final steps to become full-time professional writers.

Audience questions really enlivened this panel. My favorite came from, I think, Teresa Cochran, who asked about writing when you’re not inspired. I responded that if I waited for inspiration before I sat down to write, I would not have sold 20-30 million words or written all that fan stuff.



Neil Shulman (left) and Dick Pelletier contemplate the meaning of the future.

Steve Brust expanded on that, stating that he had to start to write and then hope that inspiration would come.

Linda Bushyager announced it was time for the drawing for the four autographed book covers. Elizabeth Bear and Natasha Moore pulled the winning tickets. I know they did a sensational job, because Joyce won one of the covers.

Although Steve Brust came to the convention, and performed in exemplary fashion, he really was not yet well from a horrible eye infection that put him in the hospital for 10 days. He still reports to the hospital, morning and evening, for intravenous antibiotics to knock out the infection completely.

Before the con, Steve arranged with Woody for the Fans to Pros panel to take place earlier in the day so as not to conflict with his scheduled afternoon hospital visit. He also asked if he could be interviewed instead of making a lengthy key-

note speech. Fortunately, David Gordon jumped into the breach. His deep knowledge of, and sympathy with, Brust's work yielded a very satisfactory program item.

One of David's most intriguing themes was Brust's superior writing style and the way he used it to convey subtle nuances. David did some short readings and allowed Steve to comment at intervals.

Speaking of his novel *Reign in Hell*, Brust confessed to feeling that he hadn't quite reached the goals he set, but he added that he is always gratified when someone tells him that it's their favorite Brust book.

Brust expressed an aversion to putting his politics in his novels and said that he always made other characters ridicule the positions when he did incorporate them to thwart his own desire to lecture. He feels his stories express his worldview, but that is far different than campaigning for distinct issues.

Neil Shulman started the "Print Meets Electronic Media" panel with a 10-minute video that dramatized scenes from *Escape from Heaven* using art from the graphic novel version of Shulman's book and voice-over

dialogue from his screen play. It wasn't easy to catch the sense of the story from the fragments, though Neil did supply plenty of background during this panel, but most of the fans seemed to enjoy it. I also noted that Neil likes some of the same rock music I do.

James Hudnall talked about the way some of his graphic story creations have fared in other media. He seemed especially let down by the TV series of *Harsh Realm*.



He regretted that the TV producer couldn't get a grip on the basic concept behind the graphic novel, the idea of pocket universes.

Kent Hastings revealed that someone had optioned *Anarquía* as a potential movie. That "someone" turned out to be Neil, though he didn't say if the \$13.4 million he'd mentioned earlier would also fund a movie version of the alternative history novel. Kent also showed *World of Tomorrow*, the coffee table book by Forry Ackerman and Brad Linaweaver, for its connection to the movie *Sky Captain*.

Neil indicated that working on something based on an existing property was sometimes even harder than starting from scratch. "There are very few advantages starting with existing source material," he commented.

This brought up the differences among the media. A big one is that novels often feature interior monologues that don't translate to movies. Hudnall said that this might explain why most Stephen King novels haven't succeeded as films. So much of the books are about the character's internal life.

Another difficulty peculiar to science fiction involves the scale of events. A lot of the best SF is on the grand scale, whereas films are usually about more personal, individual situations.

James Hudnall pointed out another problem with transforming SF novels into movies: It's hard to communicate all the elements of the world in which the story is set. He felt this was a shortcoming of *Lord of the Rings* and in the detective genre, *LA Confidential*. He termed them "oversimplification" and that "a lot was missing."

The final program item presented Las Vegas fanhistory and outlined the variety of fan activity available in Glitter City. I discussed the two abortive local Fandoms that grew and died all too briefly in the 1950's and 1960's and then Woody Bernardi discussed the Fantasy Fiction Club of UNLV and did a nice job of explaining how

the university group fed into Alex Borders' effort to start the organization that soon became known as SNAFFU.

I picked up the narrative with an abridged version of how SNAFFU encountered Fandom and thrived. Joyce Katz (who likes to see her name in glorious underlining) shared her feelings toward Vegas Fandom and again showed why she is not only one of the most beloved fans, but also one of the greatest..

Teresa Cochran as one of the newest local fans, talked about the welcome she received and how much fun it is to explore the possibilities. This was her first stint as a program participant and I thought she came across as shy and sweet — and quite a testimonial to Vegas Fandom's hospitality.

I didn't think the audience could stand much more of us getting misty-eyed, so I nudged Woody, who thanked everyone for coming and sent them all home happy.

Joyce and I had assumed that the Vegants' Post-Con Party would start at the same time as the regular gatherings, 7:30. We reassessed the situation at the end of the



convention and realized that some fans really had nowhere to go to easily while away the two hours. So we ended up bring Woody home with us, closely followed by James Taylor and his passenger Teresa Cochran. Hot on their heels were too unexpected, but extremely welcome, guests, Michael Bernstein and Darmon Thornton – and not just because they'd brought more food with them.

Figuring that people would be very hungry after a full day of fanning, Joyce began some serious cooking. Gallantly, Woody and James volunteered as assistant chefs and finished and served the heavy-duty stuff, the meatballs and pasta, chicken and the lasagna. The rest of us *shlepped* the snacks from kitchen to living room until the big, square coffee table had no room for anything more.

You never know where the freewheeling conversations at a Vegrants gathering will take you. One minute, I was making a distinction between a fan of *Star Trek* and a *Star Trek* fan and in the next I was trading quips with several others about the National Hockey League. I won't claim that James Taylor, David Gordon and I had a plan to revive the league in the wake of its canceled season, but our jokes didn't leave it any deader than we found it.

Ayesha Ashley was in a musical mood as she made her first visit to the Launch Pad. She brought her guitar and was slightly *miffed* that there didn't seem to be much opportunity to play it. Then her natural ebullience took over and she chatted happily about Blues, triggered by some of the music on the stereo. (I try to mix up artists and styles, including both things that most people like and performers whom I want them to hear.)

Ayesha demonstrated an unexpected talent; she's a practitioner of Accu-Pressure. Her ministrations temporarily eliminated the pain in Joyce's ankle and reduced the soreness of her back muscles. The last fan who tried to work on Joyce, a year or two ago, seemed more eager to *give* pain rather than take it away, so this was quite a pleasant contrast for her.

Bill & Laurie Kunkel and Ross Chamberlain, none of whom had been to the con, arrived. They wanted to know about the day, which gave everyone a chance to give Woody some egoboo. The fans who have hooted at his blunders in the past certainly owed him recognition of this triumph. Others helped, some quite a lot, but Woody had steered the con through some troubled waters and fielded a very enjoyable event.

The crowd thinned out as midnight approached and Joyce and I lost little time in doing the same once the last of the late-stayers floated out the door.

Congratulations to Las Vegas Fandom for pulling together. Thanks for a fine day of fanac.



Bye-Bye... For Now

And so the fans returned to their homes to dream fannish dreams and prepare for the next wave of Las Vegas fan events.

They're coming, too. So is the 25th issue of *Vegas Fandom Weekly*. In fact, it'll be here in about two days.

See you all then — and don't forget to fill my life with happiness by dispatching a letter of comment. — Arnie