

COMSTAR

Newsletter of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek Club

February, 2003



The crew of the Columbia, lost as the shuttle re-entered Earth's atmosphere on Saturday, February 1.

Columbia's loss felt by all Trek fans, including the Chesapeake

Fans of *Star Trek* around the world have been expressing their grief at the loss of the seven-member crew of the shuttle *Columbia* on Saturday, February 1. At sites remem-

bering their loss across the world, *Trek* fans have joined with others to show their solidarity with the families and friends of the astronauts. At several Internet locations, including *startrek.com*, information on how to donate to funds supporting the families of the crew, bios of each crew member and text from the announcement of the loss of *Columbia* by President Bush have been posted.

And one of the crew was himself a fan of *Star Trek*. Lieutenant Colonel Michael Anderson served as payload commander. "I was always fascinated by science-fiction shows, shows like *Star Trek* and *Lost in Space*," Anderson, 43, said in a recent interview. "And going out of your house and looking up and seeing jets fly by, that seemed like another very exciting thing to do. So, it all kind of came together at a very young age, and I thought being an astronaut would be the perfect job."

And some *Star Trek* stars have begun speaking out. George Takei (Captain Hikaru

Sulu) weighed in with his thoughts on the *Columbia* tragedy at his official website, *georgetakei.com*. "The crash of the space shuttle *Columbia* was a shocking tragedy," he said. "The alarm has now been sounded. From the charred debris scattered over a hundred miles across Texas and Louisiana, the NASA program must rise again like a phoenix. We owe this to the memory of those heroic science-adventurers of the *Columbia*."

★ *Star Trek: Nemesis* is scheduled to debut on DVD exactly five months after its theatrical premiere.

The film is tentatively set to be released in Region 1 on May 13, *DVD Answers* reported. Region 1 comprises the United States, Canada and all U.S. territories, with the film expected to be released internationally in subsequent months.

Paramount Home Entertainment has not yet published any official information on the specifications of the *Nemesis* DVD. Previous releases of the *Next Generation* feature films were bare-bones sets, comprising only the film itself and the theatrical trailer. However, director Stuart Baird has said the *Nemesis* DVD set will include a commentary, interviews and scenes deleted from the theatrical version of the film. ■

Celebrate our 12th birthday on February 22

The next meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake will be held on Saturday, February 22, at the meeting room in the Hard Times Cafe located in College Park, Maryland.

We'll gather at 6 p.m. and eat dinner, ordering it from the staff. Then, we'll begin the meeting around 8 p.m.

During the club meeting, we'll discuss conventions (including the recent Farpoint

con and the upcoming Galaxy Con and Shore Leave), find out what fellow club members are up to and get the latest on *Star Trek* news, as well as an update on other areas of science fiction.

Do you need directions to this month's meeting? Then please be sure to check out the insert that is included with this month's newsletter. ■

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CAPTAIN'S LOG: In the beginning

Star Trek fans have always had a special affinity for the space program, which made the terrible events of February 1 all the more tragic to the crew of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake*. The unexpected loss of the space shuttle *Columbia* reminded us just how hazardous it can be even in our little corner of the final frontier, and I'm sure everyone in the club

shares the grief of the families and friends of the seven astronauts we lost that fateful day. During our meeting on February 22, we'll talk about expressing our sadness and continued

support for space exploration in a more tangible way.

Still, life goes on, and so must this column.

February always has special significance for our group, since this was the month in 1991 when the *Chesapeake* was organized. Can you believe that happened all of 12 years ago? While feeling particularly nostalgic, I got to remembering what was happening in the *Star Trek* universe just as our starship was getting out of drydock, so to speak.

That was a particularly exciting year, since it was the 25th anniversary of *Star Trek*. Fandom had recently grown by leaps and bounds. Where once there had only been scattered, tiny clusters of true believers, the Internet and conventions were bringing many of these groups together into a national network that was the envy of all the other "franchises" in the entertainment industry.

We didn't realize it then, but one of the best things about being a fan in February of 1991 was the fact that Gene Roddenberry was still alive. Most of us weren't aware of it at the time, but the health of the man who created *Star Trek* was deteriorating rapidly. Every once in a while, we'd see Gene on TV waxing philosophical about the fictional universe we'd come to love, and the future seemed as bright as ever. Little did we know that seven months later, the Great Bird of the Galaxy would beam up to the Big *Enterprise* in the Sky.

Also, word was filtering out about the upcoming sixth *Star Trek* feature film. Nicholas Meyer had been wooed back into the director's chair, so there was a real sense of optimism about *The Undiscovered Country*, despite rumors that this was to be the final

outing for the original cast. Our patience (or lack thereof) would be rewarded in December, when Kirk and his crew received a wonderful sendoff in a movie most fans still consider one of the best of the series.

Over in "TV Land," *The Next Generation* was in the middle of its fourth season, and since it was a sweeps month, we got four new episodes to watch: "The Wounded," which introduced the Cardassians and established O'Brien's hostile relations with them; "Devil's Due," which showed us how much trouble we could get into when a woman who claims to be the devil blinks her eyes; "Clues," when everyone got knocked out but Data, who lied about what really happened; and "First Contact," wherein Riker got boinked by a woman who really, *really* liked aliens.

In those bygone days, fans who wanted more *Trek* could always turn to DC Comics, which had a successful monthly title featuring the original cast and another spotlighting the crew from *TNG*. And those books had a local connection: The *Star Trek* comic was scripted by Howie Weinstein, and *The Next Generation* was written by Michael Jan Friedman. (We'd get to know both of them at many local conventions in the years to come.)

If you preferred the written word to "funny books," you could always pick up a *Trek* novel, though most of the books of that time weren't much to write home about.

For the toy collectors amongst us, this was definitely not the best of times. Galoob had produced some action figures and ships during the first season of *Next Gen*, but their success was even smaller than their toys, so they lost their license with Paramount. Still, Playmates had just started what would be a much longer and more successful line of *Trek* figures that were, if nothing else, a bit larger than their predecessors.

Of course, this was long before we'd ever heard of *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager* or *Enterprise*. Still, the only thing more fun than being a *Star Trek* fan was sharing that passion with other *Star Trek* fans, which is what led to the creation of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake*. And that's just as true in 2003 as it was in 1991.

So here's to another Happy Birthday for the crew of the *Chesapeake* and at least another 12 years of fun and fandom! ■

Captain Randy Hall



Happy Birthday,
U.S.S. Chesapeake!

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SCIENCE *TREK*: Through the looking glass

I've talked in this column about science versus fiction and the present leading to the future. Well, truth be told, fiction isn't reality (How we wish it were!), and today is far from a future perfect. On Saturday, February 1, 2003, we tasted the bitterness of reality. Sixteen minutes from a safe landing, the space shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated on re-entry, killing all seven astronauts aboard.

All of us may remember where we were when the *Challenger* was lost, perhaps even young Justine. I was just home from high school. (Unlike all other school kids in America, we didn't watch the launch.) My mom asked me if I knew what had happened to the space shuttle. I said, "Yeah, it's up in space." "No," she said, "it blew up." This time I called my mother and told her what had happened.

The reality of physics

How many times in *Star Trek* have we seen a shuttle or a ship crash on a planet? Sparks and wires are everywhere, the primary characters battered, perhaps the "red shirts" dead? Compare that to the fiery breakup of *Columbia* with the near-instantaneous loss of her entire crew.

I'm not arguing that *Trek* physics aren't real—look three centuries into the past to see how far material technology has come today. No, I'm thinking of how we've tricked ourselves by this illusion we watch week in and out. We believe that people can survive their space ship crashing into a planet's atmosphere or even its surface. Reality jerks us back—we're not there yet.

The human face of tragedy

In the *Washington Post* the other day appeared an article on how what is now "almost routine" was so recently the stuff of science fiction. Included with the article was a photo of the *Enterprise's* diverse crew. From left to right: a Russian, a Japanese, a southern American, an African, a Midwestern American, a Scotsman and an alien. Then I look below and see another photo. In this one, there is an African-American, two women (one Indian by birth), an Israeli and three American men.

Then my mind goes back to the familiar picture of *Challenger's* crew: an African-

American, two women (a Jew and a school teacher), a Japanese by birth and three American men. How curious it is that these three crews would be so similar. This country of ours is not perfect in living up to its values, yet we strive to be. We're not there yet, and we've got a long way to go, but we know the way.

More than a bloody nose

This subhead, of course, comes from *Q Who*, where Q quipped to Picard, "If you can't take a little bloody nose, maybe you had better go back home and crawl under your bed."

This was more than a bloody nose. It hurts. As we watch those fiery streaks of light. As we hear the stories of the seven brave souls who perished returning home. As we ponder what went wrong and why and who is to blame. As we wonder about the future of the shuttle and of the space program.

Q and Picard are imaginary characters; the seven who died with *Columbia* were real people. Children today might play at being *Star Trek* characters, but they will want to grow up to be Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark, Rick Husband, William McCool and Ilan Ramon. And when they do grow up and take the reigns that these seven left high above the Earth, our children and theirs will lead us to Kirk, Picard, Sisko, Janeway and their crews. We're not there yet, but we're heading in the right direction.

My wish

Okay, there's more than one. I wish that *Columbia* and her crew had landed safely. I wished the same for *Challenger*, and for all those who have died and will die striving for the stars. I know I can't have those things. Such accidents and mishaps will inevitably occur as we push back the boundaries of space. Rather, I wish that we remember the names and deeds of those who risked these first steps toward the final frontier. We're not there yet, but we're on our way. ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies



ART CREDITS:
startrek.com 1
startrek.net 3, 4, 5
Presentation Task
Force 2, 6, insert front
Dynamic Graphics
insert back

REFLECTIONS: The significance of *DS9*

Significance: The condition of quality or being significant. The sense of something: meaning.

Yes, I know last month was supposed to be the *Deep Space Nine* appreciation issue, but I have more to say on the subject—or less, as the case will be. It's time we heard from the club. At one of our weekly food-consuming rituals (at the Old Country Buffet), we were discussing the significance of *DS9* and its significant moments and scenes. I thought, *The world must hear this!* So I have asked members of the club for their significant *DS9* moment. I didn't specify, I didn't elaborate because I wanted to know what significance was to the individual. That is why the examples may vary, depending on the attitude and the mental health of the person asked.

The question is: What is your most significant *Deep Space Nine* moment?

Abigail Lindstrom says: "Any time Vic Fontaine is singing!"

Marc Villa says: "It's the scene in 'Body Parts' where Quark tells Rom he has Dorek syndrome, and Rom replies, 'You're going to diiiiiiiiie!'"

David Brewer says: "The end of the episode 'Duet,' which I thought was already a good episode! The surprise at the end let me know what kind of show this was going to be."

Annie White says: "'The Visitor.' A great story, probably the best *Trek* ever."

Wayne Hall says: "It's in 'Shadows and Symbols,' where Benny Russell was confined to a hospital isolation ward and is writing the history of *DS9* on the walls. Doctor Wykoff is trying to make him drop the pencil and hands him a paint roller to paint over what he had written. Benny knocks the doctor to the ground and writes: 'Sisko opens the orb ...' The energy shoots from the Orb, crossing the galaxy, and the wormhole opens again."

Michelle Brem says: "Never being a big *TNG* fan, I was a fan of the original series, so I didn't get into *DS9* at first. It wasn't until I saw 'Our Man Bashir' that I started watching it on a regular basis. Being a big James Bond fan, I was really impressed by that episode, and it made me look forward to the show each week." Samantha Brem had no comment.

Scott Nance says: "The scene in 'The Visitor' where the older Jake is pulled into the same region of subspace as Sisko, and Sisko realizes that finding him has turned into an

obsession. Sisko begs Jake to get on with his own life."

Stephannie Baldau says: "Watching 'What You Leave Behind' with the club and seeing everyone stand at the end of the episode brought a tear to my eye." She also adds: "Trying to explain to my father, who was an active civil rights advocate, the significance of 'Let This Be Your Last Battlefield' and 'Far Beyond the Stars.'"

Peter Chewning says: "The scene at the end of 'Trials and Tribble-ations' where Sisko meets Kirk. It was a perfect blending of the fictional fan standpoint plus the technological achievement of inserting Avery Brooks into a scene with William Shatner in his prime."

Phil Margolies says: "It's gotta be in 'Emissary' when Sisko sees his wife trapped under a beam and he tries to free her, even though the ship is under attack and breaking up all around him. He asks this ensign to help him free her, but the ensign instead drags HIM away kicking and screaming. That scene told you everything about his character."

Dave MacPherson says: "The scene in 'In the Pale Moonlight' where Sisko, hearing about the destruction of the Romulan shuttle, goes to Garak's shop and punches him out."

Randy Hall says: "It is very difficult to come up with an INSIGNIFICANT moment on *DS9*. In 'Emissary,' right off the bat, they did a wonderful moment when, while trying to explain linear time to the Prophets, Sisko goes from teacher to student in a revelation of his character as the wormhole aliens make him realize he has never gotten over the death of his wife. That moment established a strong sci-fi element and was a defining of Sisko's character."

Well, there you have it. The ruminations of the club *Chesapeake*. It hardly seems appropriate for me to add anything after that, but if I had to pick a significant moment, I would have to say for me it was in "Past Prologue" after Kira had spoken to a Starfleet admiral behind Sisko's back. He tells her, "Go over MY head again, Major, and I'll have YOURS on a platter!" I said to myself, "I like this guy!"

Next month: *DS9* episode logs continue, winding down with the final season. Until then, peace. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



Benjamin Sisko figures prominently in the significant moments of *DS9*.

RANTINGS: "It's dead, Jim"

This column was begun before the space shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated while returning to Earth on February 1. I had thought about scrapping this column, but I decided against it. The crew of the space shuttle *Columbia* joins the crew of the space shuttle *Challenger* and the crew of *Apollo I* in reminding us of the enormous dangers involved in the exploration of space and the unknown. As someone once said, "Risk is our business."

And as his pointed-eared friend said, "And now, to the business at hand."

Star Trek is over, *finito*, done, dead and buried, pushing up daisies like a Monty Python parrot. It is true. The juggernaut that grew out of the little show that refused to die finally did in 2002, killed as much by its own previous success as by the incompetence and ignorance of those charged with its maintenance. For those who have been waiting for a review of *Star Trek: Nemesis*, wait no longer. It was the most unimaginative, uninspired mess I have seen in some time. The "jokes"

were not funny. There was not one thing in this movie that was not taken from somewhere else in the series. Riker and Troi get married. Riker FINALLY gets his own command. Data finds ANOTHER brother. The *Enterprise* gets blasted to hell AGAIN. Data sacrifices himself after down-

loading himself into his brother, B-4. And other members of the crew go on with their careers and their lives. I sat in the theater and watched the whole thing. I kept thinking, "BIG FAT HAIRY FRICKING DEAL!" You would have thought that a script written by John Logan, who wrote *Gladiator*, would be better than this. But that is what happens when you have movies written by suits in committee.

So what is the solution? Actually, Berman and Braga had the right idea with *Enterprise*. Bring in new faces to work on the series and give it a "fresh" approach. The problem was they should have started at the top with themselves and resigned. Of course, if there were any justice in the world, Berman and

Braga would be working at a driving range retrieving balls for two dollars a bucket. Maybe after *Nemesis*, they will get what they deserve. Odds are, they won't. We are not that lucky. But if this were an ideal world, we would have a talented producer and director "reinvent" the *Star Trek* franchise. Who? Spielberg? Naw. He'd make it too touchy feely. Francis Ford Coppola? That could work. He could cast Marlon Brando as the starship *Enterprise*. Nahhhh. Brando would have to lose too much weight to play the part. Quentin Tarentino? It would certainly be interesting. Kirk captures a bunch of Klingons and turns to Spock and says, "Bring out the gimp." (You would have to have seen *Pulp Fiction* to get this.)

McG could be possible now that he is not doing *Superman*. Of course, he can always make a *Charlie's Angels* movie. Hmmmmmm. Superman and Batman. Now, there are franchises that are in REAL trouble. The suits over at Warner Bros. can't make up their minds what the hell they want the movies to be—other than the biggest-grossing films of all time, of course. Hey guys, here is a hint. Tell good stories, portray the characters right and stay the hell out of the director's way. Besides, those film franchises are dead, too. Do you really think that Warner Bros. would have hired Chris Nolan (*Insomnia*) to revive Batman if Superman was going to go anywhere? Or do you think that Brett Ratner (*Red Dragon*) will REALLY get the Superman film made when no one has been able to do it since 1987? The current superhero craze will be long over before either of these ever gets made. But what do you expect? The whole AOL/Time/Warner/TNT/CNN multi-headed beast is collapsing under its own weight anyhow. Oh, well. As the Grateful Dead put it, "Ashes, ashes, all fall down."

In June 1969, *Star Trek* aired the last episode of the Original Series. One month later, Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Now we have *Nemesis*, which would seem to spell the end of the line. The space shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated upon re-entry. The president has vowed that the space program will continue. Gee, it sounds like the space program is in a lot better shape than *Star Trek* is.

Was ever known so great and little loss, on one part and on the other ■

Officer Peter Chewning



COMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

February 22 Happy birthday, U.S.S. *Chesapeake*! It's time for our yearly anniversary party as we celebrate another year of fun as fans of *Star Trek* and other science fiction! For more information, check out the insert that is included with this newsletter!

MARCH

March 15 Spring is about to be sprung! Don't miss our last meeting of the winter as we get ready for warmer weather again! Check out the *COMSTAR* when you receive it next month!

HOLODICTATION: Looking for love



Ever since I can remember, I have been looking for love. When I was a child, I found love in my family. Then, when I was a teenager, I was looking for love from a girl. And this pursuit was ongoing until I met Susan. I was very lucky to find someone who loved me the way that I loved her. The past two years have been very special for me.

I also was looking for love in other things—even in science fiction. The most passionate and ongoing love affairs that I had found have been ongoing for over 30 years.

This person has carried on a love affair with the same person and has forsaken all others in his endless love for this person. He has had his distractions from time to time, but they were only small diversions from his one true love. He has given up everything when it comes to her. He has even given up friends

and co-workers to preserve and save his love, but he is not a jealous man when it comes to his love.

He has shared his love with those few who he found worthy of her love. He has done everything that he could to keep her healthy. He has lied, cheated and even stolen to protect and preserve this love. He has carried his love for this person and probably uttered his love for her with his last breath.

So on this Valentine's Day, I hope that you find that one true love in your life and that you have the opportunity to enjoy it for as long as you can. Happy Valentine's Day!

(P.S.: If you haven't guessed it by now, I was talking about the love affair that Captain James T. Kirk has had for the *U.S.S. Enterprise*.)

Peace through superior firepower! ■

Weapons Officer Patrick McBee

CLUB BIRTHDAYS:
Chief of Computer Operations John White on Monday, March 3.

Phasers on FUN!

Identify the episode from the clue provided

Adapted from a trivia chat in the Star Trek Community on America Online

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. "For hate's sake, I spit my last breath at thee." | 8. "They warned us about Ferengis at the academy." |
| 2. "I don't know. I think the resemblance is rather striking." | 9. "With an armful of this stuff, I wouldn't be afraid of a supernova!" |
| 3. "I am considering resigning my commission." | 10. "Vedek Bareil was on the transport." |
| 4. "Love me, love my dog." | |
| 5. "Mind your own business, Mister Spock! I'm sick of your half-breed interference!" | |
| 6. "You're not quite human, are ya?" | |
| 7. "I have a friend at Starfleet Intelligence." | |

- Answers:
1. Khan, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*
2. Commander Riker, *Next Generation*, "Disaster"
3. Lieutenant Wolf, *Deep Space Nine*, "Way of the Warrior"
4. Captain Janeway, *Voyager*, "Caretaker"
5. Android Kirk, *Classic Trek*, "What Are Little Girls Made of?"
6. Captain Montgomery Scott, *Next Generation*, "Relics"
7. Constable Odo, *Deep Space Nine*, "Prophet Motive"
8. Ensign Kim, *Voyager*, "Caretaker"
9. Lieutenant Sulu, *Classic Trek*, "Wolf in the Fold"
10. Constable Odo, *Deep Space Nine*, "Life Support"