

COMSTAR

Newsletter of the U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club

May, 2004



Star Trek Communicator, the magazine of the official *Star Trek* Fan Club, is celebrating 150 issues.

Star Trek Communicator reaches landmark 150th issue

Twenty-five years of *Star Trek* stars and fans are summed up in the special 150th issue of *Star Trek Communicator*, a gold-edition collector's item of the official *Star Trek* Fan Club's bi-monthly publication.

Communicator opens its archives to bring you its last full interview with Gene Roddenberry—right off the original pages as they appeared in 1989, plus bits from its first interviews with Patrick Stewart (1988), Whoopi Goldberg (1990) and a giggling Kirstie Alley (1982).

There's also the *Trek* veterans no longer with us: Roger C. "Harry Mudd" Carmel, Mark "Sarek" Lenard, Bibi "Carol Marcus" Besch and Merritt "David Marcus" Butrick.

But there's more than archives. Cast and crew members from all generations of *Trek*-dom send their greetings, as well as many fans and readers.

Plus, get the story and pictures of how founder Dan Madsen began it all as just another fan's newsletter from his bedroom as a teenager in 1979 and then went on to develop the multi-franchise club, magazine and retail operation licensed in 1982 and now owned by Decipher, Inc.

This issue is available in local bookstores at a cost of \$6.95.

▲ With May 20th quickly approaching,

everyone from former *Trek* producers to NASA administrators is pondering whether or not *Star Trek: Enterprise* will be renewed for a fourth year or share the fate of the original series, *Star Trek*, which was cancelled after just three seasons.

In an article at *USA Today*, Bill Keveney noted that if *Enterprise* is not renewed, this fall would be the first season in 17 years without a first-run *Star Trek* series. Despite the show's dwindling ratings, Keveney noted several factors in its favor, not the least being the approximately \$200 million that Paramount makes from the various *Trek* series, movies and merchandise.

Former *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* producer and creator Michael Piller believes *Enterprise* will be renewed, but he said that no matter what happens, he doesn't believe this will be the end of *Trek*. "It wouldn't be the end of the world," Piller said. "It will be back. It will be great again."

Though *Enterprise* creator Rick Berman has spoken confidently about the show's chances of renewal, in the latest issue of the *Communicator*, he does acknowledge that it might be time for a break. "As to whether it could use a rest for a while, that's a valid question," Berman commented. "I think, eventually, *Star Trek* will take a breather." ■

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You "May" enjoy attending the next club meeting!

The next meeting of the U.S.S. Chesapeake club will be held on Saturday, May 22, at the Laurel, Maryland, home of Starfleet Intelligence Officer Annie White and Chief of Computer Operations John White.

We'll gather around 6 p.m. at a nearby restaurant for dinner, then head to their home for the meeting by 8 p.m.

During the club meeting, we'll discuss upcoming *Trek* and sci-fi conventions, 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.

Need directions to this meeting? Then please be sure to check out the insert included with this newsletter. ■

Captain Randy Hall's column will return in this space next month. Really.

BOOK REVIEW: *Abyss* by David Weddle/ Jeffrey Lang, 292 pages, Pocket Books

In the second installment of the *DS9* Relaunch, Doctor Bashir is once again approached by Section 31 to be a special operative for one of its assigned missions. This time, it's a quest to stop one of his own, another successfully genetically altered human being. Not only does he have scientifically advanced reflexes, intelligence and skills, but he was also trained by Section 31. This makes the task an arduous one, but Locken also has his own army since he was successful in breeding his own Jem'Hadar soldiers.

I must say that *Abyss* is STILL my favorite book of the Relaunch series. Doctor Ethan Locken sheds new light on the reasons for Section 31's ongoing fascination with one Doctor Julian Subatoi Bashir. Locken was such a good operative that they wanted another one. And Bashir is the closest thing to Locken in the known universe, which may also prove to be a curse.

Section 31's interest is not just about acquiring another operative, although that has been on their agenda for years. Their main goal is to stop Locken from implementing his own plan for his Jem'Hadar soldiers. To do so, they must find his equal, hence Bashir's involvement.

Doctor Locken, like most scientists of the mad perspective, firmly believes that there needs to be a single, intelligent, unifying force



organizing the quadrant. The ironic thing is that's Section 31's credo, but the problem is that everyone thinks THEY are that single, intelli-

gent, unifying force. Nobody wants to repeat the mistakes of the Eugenics Wars, so there can only be ONE ruling body. In the 24th century, no one wants to share.

After being visited by Cole, the new operative assigned to make Bashir's life interesting, he tells Kira of the visit. Soon, he and Dax are sent to confront Locken and hopefully show him the error of his ways and convince him to give up his plans for conquest. In case they are met with resistance, Ro and Taran'atar, a Jem'Hadar soldier sent to Deep Space Nine by Odo to study human behavior, are covertly accompanying them to provide a bit of muscle.

Locken's holed up on an M-class planet in the Badlands, and this is Ro's expertise since the Badlands were Maquis territory. She takes them to Sindorin, the only M-class planet in the Badlands, and we meet a people called the Ingavi, old friends of Ro's from her former renegade days.

Inevitably, Locken is compared to Earth's most famous genetically engineered spectacle: no, not Dolly—Khan. The interesting thing is the fact that even 300 years later, his name still evokes panic and fear in the Federation. Apparently, he has replaced Freddy Krueger as the world's worst nightmare, or as Randy put it, he has become the "galactic boogie man."

The authors waste no time in showing not only a parallel between Locken and Khan, who is Locken's idol, but also Locken and Bashir. We are led to ponder how one different decision in Doctor Bashir's life or another road taken could have led him to the exact position Locken is in now. The dialogue between them is enlightening, thought-provoking and terrifying. It almost gets to the point where you start to expect them to finish each other's sentences.

This bit of genetic solidarity does not sit well with Ezri. When speaking to Locken, every word out of her mouth seems dipped in poison. Every remark is caustic and harsh. I was afraid I'd turn the page and find that Locken was fed up and had given Ezri a taste of a phaser. Or as Wayne said, I'd read: "When Ezri woke up, it was morning."

Rating: ★★★★★. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard

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SCIENCE TREK: Bombs up, up and away

The latest news in the contentious world of archaeogeomorphology is the recent discovery of a possible impact crater about 250 million years old off the coast of Australia. The impactor that allegedly caused it would have hit about the time of a massive extinction of 90 percent of the Earth's creatures. Did this "hammer of God" cause the end of the Permian era? Next time on *StarDateline Friday*.

Okay, I made up "archaeogeomorphology," but the rest of it is true—or at least theorized. One question, though, that can easily be answered is this: What could the creatures of Earth have done to protect themselves a quarter of a billion years ago? The answer, obviously, is nothing. It's likely that a combination of dumb luck and genetics saved those who survived. Flash forward to today, however, and ask the same question. The answer, unfortunately, is probably the same, though there are a few things we can try. This, then, is their story.

Three simple questions

First, what are we hitting? Asteroids and comets are made of very different "stuff." Asteroids can be stony or metallic, while comets are basically rocky snowballs. What happens to the object depends, among other things, on what it's made of. Results include shearing off a chunk, possibly leading to a significant change in orbit (of the asteroid or comet) or blasting it into a million tiny meteoroids. While most scenarios, including one from *Next Gen*, conclude that a million tiny asteroids is just as bad, or even worse, than the Big One™, it is possible that many or most of the smaller asteroids will burn up in the planet's atmosphere.

One thing we're doing that can help us is the comet return mission—a probe sent to collect comet dust is on its way back to Earth. Other previous or upcoming missions include an asteroid lander (accomplished) and an asteroid sample return (in the pipeline).

Second, what are we hitting it with? Nuclear bombs are likely the most common choice in science fiction and earlier science theory, but they are not the only tool in our arsenal. Powerful lasers could burn off chunks. Another alternative is conventional weaponry. Given enough warning, we could also mount giant rocket engines and steer the

beastie away. One problem with blasting is that a low-density object would likely absorb the blast and not be destroyed nor deflected.

In addition, if we don't carefully plan the deflection, we could make the problem worse. Imagine being the one to deliver this report: "The good news is the asteroid won't hit in 2015. The bad news is, well, I'd plan to be out of town in June. Way out of town."

Third, when are we hitting it? A few months ahead of impact is better than a few days. Much, much better. But a thousand years is not infinitely better, but damn close. Think of it like this. A Mini Cooper is barreling toward you at 85 miles per hour. If the driver steers slightly to the right when the car is 10 feet away (space is time, just ask Han Solo), it's still probably going to hit you. If the driver of a tractor trailer steers slightly right a mile away, you're very safe—but perhaps not the driver on the other side of the highway.

The game

The name of the game is not to blow up the asteroid, but rather to deflect it—a far easier task, particularly if we spot 'em far enough in advance. As you can hopefully see, the three questions listed above are tied very closely together.

One vital question, though, is not scientific or technical at all: Will Congress pay for us to study and develop these anti-impact technologies? Without funding to build our "defense shields," our options are the same as if we were the dinosaurs 65 million years ago: hope and pray.

Web Notes:

- <http://impact.arc.nasa.gov/> (NASA's impact hazards page);
- <http://www.lpl.arizona.edu/impac effects/> (Calculating what happens if we miss.);
- <http://sherpa.sandia.gov/planet-impact/asteroid/> (The Big Apple gets the Big Wipe-out.); and
- http://www.fact-index.com/a/as/asteroid_deflection_strategies.html (Can't argue with the fact index, can you?). ■

Second Officer Phil Margolies



ART CREDITS:

startrek.com	1, 5, 6
psiphi.org	2
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vidiot.com	4
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REFLECTIONS: *Voyager*, standing apart

Editor's note: In last month's column, Lorenzo discussed that Voyager was the flagship program of the fledgling UPN network. It sought to stand apart from other Treks by using a different stage for storytelling. However, while Voyager adopted most of the good things Next Gen had to offer, it adopted their general approach to storytelling, which didn't work terribly well in the 1990s. Viewers had gotten used to their emotions and intelligence being challenged and taxed. The absence of conflict made the characters seem boring, and the avoidance of controversy and the unwillingness to take chances made for ordinary veiwing. These things made Voyager seem out of step with the times, and "ordinary" is an anathema to Star Trek.

Not wanting to set yet another show on board yet another starship in the Alpha Quadrant, co-creators Rick Berman, Michael Piller and Jeri Taylor met the challenge head-on by sending the crew farther than any other Federation starship had explored—to the uncharted regions of the Delta Quadrant. This premise would allow them to explore new territory, chart new worlds, meet new races and keep them away from the Klingons, Romulans and all the other familiar nuances that come with the Alpha Quadrant.

Voyager continued with mostly mediocre stories. Occasionally, there would be a real gem, but those were few and far between. After initial acceptance, the love affair started to wane, and the fans complained ... loudly. Paramount responded to the grumbling by persuading Ms. Taylor to retire and promoting the much-hated (for mostly dumb reasons) Brannon Braga to executive producer, and the show got MUCH better in a hurry.

While still under the auspices of Jeri Taylor, Braga once confided in me his disap-

pointment with the show's direction. He felt that *Voyager* should have been "*The X-Files* of *Star Trek*," and I agreed. *Voyager* should have been a journey into the unknown every week, and when he took over, that's exactly what it became. He also brought back the story arcs and the much-needed conflict by introducing the newly unborgified Seven of Nine and jettisoning the cute and lovable (but totally unnecessary and useless) Kes.

I give Braga sole credit for saving that show, and when I told him this, his expression was one of total surprise. It seemed that after years of being dumped on by *Trek* fandom, a compliment caught him totally off-balance. He thanked me, with a non-trusting leer and a bit of hesitation in his voice. I could tell he was very skeptical of my praise. I assured him that I really did appreciate his work on *Voyager*, but to put him at ease, I told him most of his *Next Gen* stuff was pure crap.

Below is my list of *Voyager's* best episodes. The "*" indicates MUST SEE episodes.

Season One: "Caretaker,"* "Time & Again," "Eye of the Needle,"* "State of Flux"

Season Two: "Maneuvers,"* "Meld,"* "Dreadnought," "Lifesigns," "Deadlock," "Innocence"

Season Three: "Flashback," "Chute," "Blood Fever," "Unity," "Before & After," "Distant Origin,"* "Worst Case Senario"*

Season Four: "Scorpion" II, "The Gift,"* "Nemesis," "The Raven," "Message in a Bottle,"* "Hunters," "Waking Moments," "Prey," "Killing Game" I and II, "Living Witness,"* "Demon,"* "One"

Season Five: "Night," "Drone," "In the Flesh,"* "Timeless,"* "Infinite Regress," "Counterpoint,"* "Latent Image,"* "Dark Frontier," "Course: Oblivion,"* "Someone to Watch Over Me,"* "Equinox"

Season Six: "Survival Instinct," "Barge of the Dead,"* "Tinker, Tenor, Doctor, Spy,"* "One Small Step,"* "Pathfinder," "Blink of an Eye,"* "Collective," "Good Shepherd,"* "Life-line," "Unimatrix Zero"

Season Seven: "Imperfection,"* "Critical Care,"* "Repression," "Flesh & Blood" I and II,* "Body & Soul,"* "Shattered," "Lineage," "Prophecy," "Work Force" I and II,* "Human Error," "Friendship One,"* "Homestead,"* "Repentance,"* "Endgame." ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



RANTINGS: Most of you already knew this, but ...

I am a terrorist. That's right. I admit it. According to the occupational government of this country, I'm a terrorist. This administration has said time and time again: "If you aren't with us, you're with the terrorists." This means that if you disagree with this administration on anything, you are a terrorist, too.

What are my qualifications? I'm glad you asked.

I'm strongly pro-choice. According to presidential advisor Karen Hughes, that *alone* makes me a terrorist. She said as much to Wolf Blitzer during the March for Women's Lives. Wolf Blitzer. With a name like that, you just know he had relatives who stood trial at Nuremberg.

I'm a registered Democrat and plan to vote for John Kerry for president. I'm sure that will put me on a terrorist watch list somewhere. I've never been a member of the National Education Association, but I support their efforts to represent teachers wholeheartedly. The secretary of education recently called the NEA a terrorist organization.

I used to say that in the Classic *Star Trek* episode "Patterns of Force," Kirk and Spock beamed down to a planet controlled by the Republican Party. It was a one-liner, but a good one. But the humor has gone completely out of this situation. The current administration is doing its level best to make fantasy a reality. Orville R. Wyerich wrote about the Reichstag Fire: "The right-wing Nazis and the left-wing Communists were cut from the same cloth—the point is not that the far right destroyed civil rights. Rather, the point is that a democracy can be destroyed by creating a law-and-order crisis and offering as a 'solution' the abdication of civil liberties and state's rights to a powerful but unaccountable central authority."

Sound familiar? I'm opposed to the USA PATRIOT Act because I think a government that needs to gather intelligence on its citizens is one that cannot be trusted. By the way, did you know that the ACLU filed suit challenging the constitutionality of the FBI's methods obtaining information under the Patriot Act on April 6? No? Of course not, because the case was kept under seal to avoid violating the

secrecy rules of the Patriot Act. That's some catch, that Catch-22.

I cannot even damn the Republicans or conservatives. As much as I might disagree with them, this goes beyond that.

This administration is *so* reactionary in its attitudes that it is trying to undo every bit of social progress in the past 150 years. The social programs of the Kennedy, Johnson and FDR administrations are already under attack, like Head Start and Medicare. They're already trying to take away rights for gay people. Don't be surprised if, during a second Bush administration, they not only try to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, but also *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education*. If you can't remember, this is the Supreme Court case that opened the door for integration of schools.

Hell, I'm surprised that they don't try to do away with the Voting Rights Act of 1964, as well as the Emancipation Proclamation. We have such a climate of fear that people are informing on each other for "questionable activities," like having an opinion and expressing it. The last time we had a situation like this, an alcoholic megalomaniac from Wisconsin was railing in the Senate about having a list of Communists in the state department and ruining a lot of lives in the process.

Tales of the common man taking up arms against the totalitarian state have been a staple of science fiction and other literature for years. George Orwell wrote *1984* and *Animal Farm*, Ray Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451*, William Golding in *Lord of the Flies*, etc. Writers from Rod Serling to George Lucas have contributed stories of this genre as well. Unfortunately, most of those tales require a violent confrontation that causes the regime and society to collapse.

One writer said it the best: When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands that have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to the separation.

O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain! ■
Officer Peter Chewning



McCoy and Kirk dress as Ekosians in the Classic *Trek* episode, "Patterns of Force."

CLUB BIRTHDAYS:
For upcoming club member birthdays, check out the Calendar section in our Yahoo! Group.

COMING EVENTS

MAY

May 22 The May sweeps are here! So is the May meeting! We're getting together at the "Whites' House" in Laurel, Maryland. Mark your calendar and be there!

JUNE

June 19 After a cold spring, it's great that the summer is nearly here! Let's enjoy our first meeting of the season! Watch this space for more information next month!

JULY

July 9-11 Shore Leave 26 at the Hunt Valley Marriott in Hunt Valley, Maryland. This year's guests include Cirroc Lofton (Jake Sisko in *DS9*), Nicole deBoer (Ezri Dax in *DS9* and Sarah Bannerman in *The Dead Zone*), Chase Masterson (Leeta in *DS9*), *Stargate SG-1*'s Teryl Rothery (Dr. Janet Frasier) and Michael Welch (young O'Neill), and Mercedes McNab (Harmony Kendall in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*). The deadline for pre-registration is Monday, May 31. Cost at the door for the entire weekend is \$60. To get more information about the con, check out their website at shore-leave.com.

July 17 Let's get together and discuss how this year's Shore Leave convention went during our July club meeting. More details will be available soon!

AUGUST

August 21 Time for our annual club olympics! Plan now to attend this yearly fun club happening!

HOLODICTATION: Fear factor

I have always been one who considers the risks involved in the things I do. Unlike Captain James T. Kirk, I do not always "boldly go where no man has gone before." I guess it's the human instinct of survival that holds me back from some things and pushes me through others.

In *Star Trek*, we've seen time and time again where some beings don't think of the consequences (good and bad) that result from their actions. And those in way over their heads tend to get their just reward and/or punishment. Case in point: In the episode, "The Arsenal of Freedom," the people of Minos built such an efficient weapon that it destroyed the entire population. (Where was quality control or even the legal department?)

The point I'm making is that I'm seeing the result of someone else's lack of judgment and responsibility. As you all know by now, I've had surgery on my shoulder and should

be home recovering. This is the first major surgery I've had. There is a BIG fear factor in this for me. There are so many unknowns that wait on me. The biggest is that I might never wake up. I know the possibility of that is slim, but it's still there. I know that I'm just fearing the worst, but isn't that part of our make-up? If I didn't have this failsafe device built in, I might be out there bungee jumping off the Wilson Bridge during rush hour or going into a biker bar and yelling "Sissy!"

I'm very fortunate to have a great family and a great group of friends. I'm sure that I'll come through this with flying colors and a great-looking scar.

So I guess it's good to have a built-in fear factor. I'm always re-evaluating mine. Just look where I work and where I live.

To quote Doctor M. Howard, a great physician: "Anesthetic!" ■

Weapons Officer Patrick McBee



Data and Tasha Yar plan a rescue in the *TNG* episode, "The Arsenal of Freedom."