



# COMSTAR

Publication of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek* and Science-Fiction Club  
December, 2005

## Enjoy the party! Come to the 2005 holiday gathering!

Be sure to celebrate the season with the crew of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek* and Science-Fiction Club on Saturday night, December 17, for one of our most popular and enjoyable events of the entire year!

The meeting will be held at the Potomac, Maryland, home of Chief Operations Officer Ann Harding.

We'll kick off the holiday festivities with our dinner at 5:00 p.m., which is again being coordinated this year by Second Officer Phil Margolies.

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard will be cooking turkey for club members to enjoy, so be sure to come hungry and bring plenty of food to share with your crewmates.

At 7:00 p.m., we'll start our monthly business meeting, which will include the latest updates on club member activities (including signing birthday cards), finding out the most recent news in *Star Trek*

and other science fiction, and planning many of our discussion panels for the fan-run Farpoint convention that will be held in Hunt Valley (north of Baltimore), Maryland, in mid-February—if there isn't any snow.

We'll also be talking about other conventions that will take place over the next year, including the anniversary con in Las Vegas during August, 2006.

At some point during the evening, we'll participate in our annual gift exchange. Be sure that you bring at least one wrapped science-fiction-related gift costing no more than \$20. Chief of Security Wayne Hall will manage this annual event. It's always fun to see what the creative minds in the club have sought out and brought to exchange with other club members!

Enjoy our time together while we share the holiday spirit! If you need directions to Ann's home, be sure that you check out this month's Insert! ■



## CAPTAIN'S LOG: A lot like Christmas

I'm happy to announce that I am officially in the Christmas Spirit™!

Every year, I don't get into the holiday mood until I hear just the right song at just the right moment. Usually, it's a tune about being home for Christmas, and since I listen to music and news on the radio while driving about an hour each way between Columbia, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia, every weekday, I expected it to happen early in the season.

Instead, I was just getting home after doing pitched battle with the second traffic-snarling snowfall of last week when I heard "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" on the radio.

I looked around and saw the snow on the ground, the colorful Yuletide lights all over the stores and the icicles hanging from houses in the neighborhood. *Y'know*, I thought, *it DOES look like Christmas!*

That cliché was still firmly in my mind when I got to my apartment, where I dug out my CDs of Manheim Steamroller (whose music always makes me feel like it's Christmas on the *Enterprise*), and I played my favorite tune of theirs, "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

Now properly merry, I headed to the Mall in Columbia, where I finally ended my weeks-long quest for Christmas cards appropriate for folks in a *Star Trek* and science-fiction club.

When I got back home, I got my gifts ready for the upcoming Holiday Party. I always get an extra one or two because you never know when someone in the club is going to bring a tube of tennis balls to the gift

exchange and try to pass them off as spherical phosphorescent asteroids or something.

Since that night, I've been contemplating the holiday season from a variety of angles. From a personal perspective, I'm glad to be wrapping up

my first year back at Cybercast News Service. I really enjoy my job, and the people are great to work with.

On the other hand, I hadn't realized how much I miss having new *Star Trek* on TV until Wayne and I came across some episodes of *Enterprise* in syndication while visiting our Mom in Pennsylvania over the Thanksgiving holiday.

The local station showed the final two episodes of a trilogy that featured Jeffrey Combs as the Andorian Shran, and it made me wonder what would have happened if the show had gotten another season, especially since I heard the rumor that he might well have become a regular character. That would have been, as they say, fascinating.

In the meantime, the networks' attempts to duplicate ABC's success with *LOST* have produced a pretty mixed bag. *Night Stalker* and *Threshold* have already bitten the dust due to low ratings, and the other shows I call "down-to-earth science fiction," like *Surface* and *Invasion*, may be saving lots of money by using contemporary settings and plotlines, but they aren't exactly setting people on fire.

Maybe I'm just "new-fashioned," but I still get a lot of fun from TV shows and movies featuring ray guns, funny-looking aliens and space ships. As much as I'd like it to be otherwise, I don't see much entertainment like that on the horizon.

As a result, I'm really looking forward to watching new episodes of *Stargate SG-1*, *Stargate Atlantis* and *Battlestar Galactica* on the Sci Fi Channel after the start of the year, not to mention more action with Jack Bauer on *24* and more episodes of my favorite new series, *Prison Break*.

And things aren't totally bleak on the *Star Trek* front, either. There'll be a new *DS9* Relaunch novel in February, and the *New Voyages* fan series will have new offerings to enjoy in the spring.

Next year will also be a big time for *Trek* and our club as well, since we'll be celebrating some big anniversaries with fun activities!

Until then, I hope to see you at the Holiday Party on Saturday, and here's wishing all the members and friends of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year! ■

Captain Randy Hall



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# SCIENCE TREK: You say you want an evolution

A moment of silence, please. I write this column on December 8, 2005. I hope most of you recall the reason for yesterday's anniversary—the attack on Pearl Harbor 64 years ago. How many remember today is an anniversary as well? (Hand down, Alec.)

Twenty-five years ago today, Mark David Chapman killed John W. Lennon with five shots to the back from a .38 caliber revolver. A column for another time, but think ... how different would the world be today had Lennon survived?

How far we've come. Eighty years ago in Tennessee, substitute biology teacher John Scopes stood before the court accused of teaching evolution, Charles Darwin's 19<sup>th</sup> century theory that complex life forms evolved from simpler ones through a process of "natural selection." (Want details? See the Web Notes.)

Back and forth argued Scopes' famed attorney Clarence Darrow and the legendary William Jennings Bryant. In the end, the jury convicted Scopes, and the judge ordered him to pay a \$100 fine, which the state Supreme Court threw out on a technicality.

Despite decades of supposed scientific and socio-political accord, continued controversy has kindled the flames this century. In Kansas, Pennsylvania and Virginia, among other states, boards of education debate the merits of added disclaimers of evolution or teaching "intelligent design" (which posits that an intelligent force or being is the shaper of evolution).

Most in the scientific community argue that intelligent design is not science, but rather a thin disguise for religious views. The key question, of course, is: What's *Star Trek's* take on the subject?

Let's see, did the Klingons evolve bumpy foreheads over a mere century, or is there more to that story? (That's your cue, Lorenzo.) Why were so many (but not all) Classic *Trek* aliens humanoid? (Alien actors were kinda hard to find in the 1960s.) Matching social evolution on different planets? (See Parallel Planet Development, Hodgkin's Law of.)

*The Next Generation* – "The Chase": The first, or perhaps last, word on evolution and *Trek* is "The Chase." In this sixth-season episode, Picard and Crusher learn from a billions-of-years-old hologram that an early

humanoid race seeded its DNA across the galaxy, leading to the peoples called humans, Klingons, Romulans (and presumably Vulcans) and Cardassians. So we're the product of intelligent design, but where did Salome Jens' people come from?

*The Next Generation* – "Evolution": That darn Wesley and his nanites. As Marshall Fine on Amazon.com says: "It's an intriguing episode, one that uses its plot to debate the nature of life as it applies to sentient mechanical beings."

*The Next Generation* – "Genesis": The crew "deolves" into primitive life forms, including Spot the cat, which becomes an iguana. If you're seeing Brannon Braga's early attempts at science, you've got pretty good eyesight.

*Enterprise* – "Dear Doctor": Morality and ethics versus natural selection. Did Phlox and Archer do the "right thing" in deciding to keep the cure from the Valakians? You decide.

Finally, I quote science-fiction writer Iain Banks (*New Scientist*, 19 November, p 24): "Symbolically, reason has already triumphed in the debate over intelligent design. The faith-based side has shifted from using the term 'creationism' to using 'intelligent design.' So their argument has ... evolved." ■

## Web Notes:

- <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/John%20Lennon> (A History of The Man);
- <http://www.msu.edu/course/mc/112/1920s/Scopes/> (Don't monkey with this page.);
- [http://anthro.palomar.edu/evolve/evolve\\_2.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/evolve/evolve_2.htm) (Man, he looks pissed.);
- <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/origin.html> (Just the FAQs, ma'am.);
- [http://www.geocities.com/naran500/infamy/star\\_trek.html](http://www.geocities.com/naran500/infamy/star_trek.html) (There had to be a hall of shame.);
- [http://www.carm.org/evolution\\_archive/star\\_trek\\_education.htm](http://www.carm.org/evolution_archive/star_trek_education.htm) (If you read no other page here...);
- <http://www.stdimension.org/int/Investigate/biology.htm> (Okay, read this one, too.);
- <http://quantumnow.com/trek/life.html> (So, how will we know it?); and
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/cult/st/interviews/berman/page13.shtml> (The evolution of *Star Trek*.)

Second Officer Phil Margolies



An early humanoid from *TNG's* "The Chase."

ART CREDITS:  
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[startrek.com](http://startrek.com) 3, 5, 6  
[images.google.com](http://images.google.com)  
2, 4, Insert back

## REFLECTIONS: Catch the *Wave*

As the spring of 1999 crept in slowly, dragging like a tortoise with a groin injury, I was giddy with anticipation.

Sometime around March of that year, on a Sunday if I'm not mistaken, the USA Network decided to show previews of the Sci-Fi Channel's up-and-coming new shows. At last! I could finally sample what was yet to come and maybe eliminate what need not be watched in the process.

What I couldn't figure out was why the USA Network was showing these programs and not Sci-Fi. I decided I'd watch them anyway.

I wasn't disappointed. I found the *Sliders* episode to be quite funny, although they didn't air the season premiere but an episode down the line. The same with the new show *Farscape*; they showed what turned out to be episode seven, "PK Tech Girl." (Hey! This sounds dangerously close to my screen name!)

This was the show that had Randy doing cartwheels immediately afterwards. He just loved what he saw. Me, I was more enamored with the third show they aired, something called *First Wave*.

At first glance, one might have thought the show was a re-imagining of an old science-fiction chestnut named *The Invaders*, and at first glance, you might have been right, but a second glance revealed a very different approach on a very familiar premise.

Successfully blending the "fugitive flight" and the "alien invasion" elements, *First Wave* intelligently played on the kind of do-or-die, flight-from-abduction action of *The Fugitive* and the psychological thriller of an imminent alien invasion we love from shows like the *Twilight Zone* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

What intrigued me further, besides the use of a lone hero (a very rare thing at the time in science fiction and heck, even network television) and the apparent re-inventing of a genre was that when the hero walked into a situation, he wasn't backed by a crew or a group of people sympathetic to his cause. He didn't have a secret government informant or even a partner. All he had was a book, a 500-year-old book of Nostradamus' prophecies that chronicled each step of the first wave of the invasion.

We followed the events surrounding Cade Foster, whose occupation was safecracker. He was a criminal whose reputation for the ability

to enter any safe or vault was legendary. He then met a woman who changed his life (Isn't that always the case? A man is perfectly happy until some woman comes along and changes him, usually for the worse.) and made him see the errors of his ways. He gave up the criminal life and became a security consultant for large businesses, advising them on the most effective ways to safeguard their secrets from a guy like him.

The aliens decided to make him one of their 117 (He was subject 117.) test subjects. They began to fool around with his life, to see if they could control his reactions and make him forget things they wanted him to forget.

They made the mistake of killing his wife, thinking they could control his emotional response to this action. Of course, they were wrong, and it ultimately led Foster to discover the aliens and their plot, thus beginning his quest to quell the alien plot to take over the planet and replace its inhabitants.

This series was the brainchild of one Chris Brancato, former *X-Files* scribe (You can tell a show was either good or popular because all of its ex-writers become show runners elsewhere.) and writer of the film *Species 2*.

Brancato may have created the show, but the execution was put forth by none other than film legend Francis Ford Coppola, director of such classic films as *The Godfather*, *The Godfather, Part II*, *The Conversation* and *Apocalypse Now*. *First Wave* was one of Coppola's first forays into the world of television, and he chose Brancato to spearhead the operation.

"I had it in my mind that Francis's bent was toward science fiction and other-worldly types of stuff. It felt to me that what might become an interesting show was a cross between the type of excitement you get from a *Fugitive* pursuit show, where the lead character is constantly pressured by the potential of being apprehended by both humans, who he's trying to save, and aliens who would like nothing more than to get rid of him, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, which would be a vision of alien life come here, overtaking our bodies for the purpose of doing experiments on human beings so the aliens can decide if they want to do a full-scale launch or attack on the planet."

Next month: Ride the *Wave*! ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



Sebastian Spence  
starred in *First Wave*

## RANTINGS: Twin sons of different mothers

This will be an unusual column. (What else is new?) I'm going to look at two films, one that will be out next year and one that's in theaters now. Both of these films are important because they examine a timely issue in different ways.

In March of next year, *V for Vendetta* will be released. For the uninitiated, this film is based on the graphic novel series by Alan Moore. If you haven't read this important work, you REALLY should. Some of you will see the parallels to our world, some of you frankly will not. No insult intended, but two people can look at the same thing and draw different conclusions.

The Internet Movie Database describes the film this way: "The futuristic tale unfolds in a Great Britain that's a fascist state. A freedom fighter known as V uses terrorist tactics to fight the oppressive society. He rescues a young woman from the secret police, and she becomes his unlikely ally."

It is an era when the rights that have been guaranteed since the time of the Magna Carta have been "compromised" and are only available to those who can pay for them (the U.S. government's next great idea).

This society is ruled by fear. Anytime any one questions any government action or policy, they disappear and are never heard from again. As V says: "People should not be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people."

In any society that's supposedly "of the people, by the people and for the people," that's the way it should be. It's really the only way to keep governments honest and doing the job they were elected to do. Sadly, we do not live in the world where the people rule anymore, if we EVER did.

The film is set to star Hugo Weaving (*Lord of the Rings*), Natalie Portman (*Star Wars I, II & III*), Stephen Rea and John Hurt and opens March 17, 2006.

The other film is the recently released *Good Night and Good Luck*, which tells the tale of Edward R. Murrow's attempts to take down Senator Joseph McCarthy through his news program *See It Now* in the late 1950s.

This film recreates not only the early days of live television, but also the climate of fear. Murrow states: "We shall not live in fear one of another. Dissent is not disloyalty. We cannot defend freedom abroad while deserting it at

home." We never seem to remember these lessons very long.

After World War II ended, paranoia reigned supreme. The Axis threat had ended, and we needed an enemy, so the "Red Menace" was born. This justified the HUGE amounts spent on arms manufacture and defense contracts that actually drive the U.S. economy.

The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee had a wide scope to investigate pretty much anything it wanted to. Nothing was out of bounds, including civil rights and racial issues. It was abolished in 1977.

Such wide-ranging and far-reaching powers of investigation in the hands of an unscrupulous and ambitious politician like Senator McCarthy are a recipe for abuse. McCarthy was a self-appointed judge, jury and executioner of the rights of Americans.

The committee made it real easy for you; you could hang your friends or yourself. If you did something outrageous like *actually* invoking your 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment right against self-incrimination, you were judged guilty without any charges filed or a trial. It was a situation that not even Franz Kafka could have written. The climate of fear was such that no one dared stand up to them.

Edward R. Murrow decided to show McCarthy and basically use his own words and actions against him. Director George Clooney decided to use the actual footage of McCarthy. Clooney showed his film to a high school class, and the class wanted to know the name of the actor who played McCarthy, not realizing they were looking at actual footage.

As Murrow said in his broadcast: "He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right. 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.'"

McCarthy was eventually censured by the Senate and died soon after, but the specter of those times always threatens to return. As Berthold Brecht remarked upon the death of Hitler: "The bastard is dead, but the bitch that spawned him is in heat again."

On that note, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

*O, what men dare do! What men may do!  
What men daily do, not knowing what they  
do!*—Claudio ■

Procurement Officer Peter Chewning



*V for Vendetta* soon will be a major motion picture.

# COMING EVENTS

DECEMBER

December 17..... We'll meet at Chief Operations Officer Ann Harding's home in Potomac for dinner at 5 p.m., followed by our meeting at 7 p.m.

## HOLODICTATION: Coping with the rules

In our own way, each of us has to deal with people who just don't perform the tasks they're supposed to. I've been troubled by this with a co-worker, and it finally got to the point where I had to say something to my supervisor. I don't want to see this person get in trouble, but when you've had enough, you have to let it go or it'll devour you.

When dealing with this, I pulled out my *Ferengi Rules of Acquisition* and found a solution to my problem. I started looking at each rule to see if it applied. I came across a number of the rules that not only applied to this situation, but will also help me deal with something similar in the future.

Rule #7: *Keep your ears open.* If you use this rule in dealing with co-workers, you'll pick up a lot of information that can be used later. These people always tend to incriminate themselves.

Rule #19: *Satisfaction is not guaranteed.* This is self-explanatory.

Rule #21: *Never place friendship above profit.* This is an important rule to remember. A co-worker who doesn't pull his or her weight will try and make you a friend. This is a two-fold problem. The first is that he or she will use the friendship to get you to do most of his or her work, and the second problem is that he or she will count on the friendship so that you won't tell your boss about the lack of productivity.

Rule #40: *She can touch your lobes but never your latinum.* NEVER, but NEVER lend these people money. You'll ruin any working relationship you had if he or she can't pay you back—especially if you see him or her come in with a new car or something else expensive.

Rule #44: *Never confuse wisdom with luck.* A co-worker like this will insist he or she is lucky to have a friend like you. This is not luck. He or she has planned this. If not you, he or she would find someone else. Also, he or she knows how to work the system (again, not luck).

Rule #47: *Never trust a man wearing a*

*better suit than your own.* Again, this rule needs little or no explanation.

Rule #48 (My Favorite): *The bigger the smile, the sharper the knife.* Beware of this rule. It can be career-ending if not heeded.

Rule #52: *Never ask when you can take.* This type of co-worker will use this rule all the time. Be on guard; the main thing he or she will take is advantage of you.

Rule #60: *Keep your lies consistent.* Most people ignore this rule, and this is good for you. If you use Rule #7, you'll find him or her violating Rule #60.

Rule #85: *Never let the competition know what you are thinking.* If you want credit for your work, then obey this rule. Just remember: There are no friends in business, just profit.

Rule #94: *Females and finances do not mix.* You never go fishing off the company pier; it will get you into big-time trouble and maybe in jail.

Rule #99: *Trust is the biggest liability of all.* Another rule that doesn't need any explanation.

Rule #121: *Everything is for sale, even friendship.* This type of co-worker will sell you out in a heartbeat. Again, take heed.

Rule #177: *Know your enemies... but do business with them always.* This is another important rule to know. If you take heed to all the other rules, this can be very profitable for you.

Rule #223: *Beware the man who doesn't make time for oo-mox.* Translated for your application: Beware the man who doesn't make time to play. He has something up his sleeve or he's just in dire need of a life.

Rule #266: *When in doubt, lie.* Beware of this rule. It could be a lot of trouble for you by this person. He or she will do it every time.

And finally, Rule #285: *No good deed ever goes unpunished.* This is a universal rule.

There you have it, how to deal with a co-worker who doesn't do his or her job.

And now, I'd like to extend to you a very happy holiday season. Whatever holiday you celebrate, I hope that it's a joyous time for you and your family.

*Take care, friends!* ■

*Weapons Officer Patrick McBee*



The Ferengi Rules of Acquisition can help in real-life situations.