

COMSTAR

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



February, 2006



The *U.S.S. Chesapeake* as conceived by artist and friend John Staton

Happy 15th anniversary, *U.S.S. Chesapeake!*

This is an important year for local fans of *Star Trek* and science fiction! First, it's *Trek's* 40th anniversary. Second, it's the 15th year that the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* has been actively involved in local fandom!

What are people saying about our anniversary? Here are just a few comments from some who know the *Chesapeake* very well:

"Congratulations to the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* on 15 years as a major force in Baltimore/Washington area fandom. It goes without saying that, without the crew of the *Chesapeake*, area cons and area fandom would have been far poorer all these years.

"My personal thanks to all of you for the hundreds of panels you've staged at Farpoint; for easing the loads of our programming chairs by providing endless ideas for topics and an endless supply of enthusiastic, erudite panelists; for just being there to smile and greet our committee members during the most hectic moments of the con; for letting us know our work is appreciated.

"I shouldn't play favorites, but I do believe you're the friendliest of the Starfleet groups I've worked with. Sometimes, as the song says, we all just wanna go where everybody knows our name, and they're always glad we came.

"Thanks to the crew of the *Chesapeake*,

the Baltimore media cons are just such places: places where fans, no matter their background or temperament, can always feel welcome. So here's to 15 more years, and a hundred more 15s after that!"—Steve Wilson, former head of the *Farpoint* and *Shore Leave* conventions.

"Congratulations to everyone at the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* on your 15th anniversary! As Farpoint programming chair and now convention co-chair, it's such a comfort to know that the panel slots on the schedule that include *Chesapeake* members will go off on time and smoothly.

"Your support of Farpoint has helped immensely and is very much appreciated. Here's to another 15 years!"—Sharon Van Blarcom, *Farpoint* co-chair

"It is certainly a pleasure for me to be able to add my two cents' worth!

"I'm trying to remember ... Shore Leave without the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* ... AM I CRAZY? WHY would I want to remember THAT? Not only do I not want to remember Shore Leave without the *Chesapeake*, I can't IMAGINE Shore Leave without the *Chesapeake*! It would be like losing a member of the family.

"Very few groups have been such a pleasure to work with. You all are the embodiment of the very best of fandom! I think

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Let's meet at the Hard Times Cafe in February!

The next meeting of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek and Science-Fiction Club* will be held on Saturday, February 25, at the Hard Times Cafe in Bethesda, Maryland. Please be sure that you bring enough money to pay for your dinner.

We'll gather at 5:00 p.m. to order our dinner. Then, at 7:00 p.m., we'll hold our

monthly club meeting, including information on the recent Farpoint convention, what fellow club members are up to and the latest news regarding *Star Trek* and other science-fiction TV shows and movies.

For directions, be sure to check out the insert that is included with this month's issue of COMSTAR. ■

CAPTAIN'S LOG: Where no club has gone ...

*Fandom, the final Star Trek frontier.
These are the adventures of the U.S.S.
Chesapeake.*

*Its mission: to enjoy strange new worlds.
To seek out new sci fi and new conventions.
To boldly go where no club has gone before!*

Fifteen years of fun and science fiction have flown by at warp speed.

When I look back over the past decade and a half, I have to admit I'm a bit overwhelmed at just how far we've come.

The U.S.S. *Chesapeake* has held club meetings all over the region, from West Virginia to the Eastern Shore and from as far north as Baltimore to as far south as Alexandria, Virginia.

We've attended conventions from coast to coast, and some have even ventured out of the country in pursuit of everything from autographs to toys — and a fun time along the way as well!

Still, our favorite spot for cons has to be the Hunt Valley Marriott, where we've attended the last OctoberTrek, every Farpoint and several Shore Leave conventions.

At most of those events, we've hosted hundreds of panels on a wide variety of topics, ranging from *Andromeda* to *The X-Files* with no end in sight.

Along the way, we've produced more than 150 issues of our monthly club publication, COMSTAR, and set up and maintained our special spot on the World Wide Web, www.usschesapeake.org.

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Check out our club
website: www.usschesapeake.org

The opinions
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those of the
entire club.

"Star Trek,"
"Star Trek: The Next
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Trek: Deep Space
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Also, we're sending out an extra helping of gratitude to Ange, who stuck with the group through troubled times and has since become a "chaperone to the stars" as they visit our local fan-run conventions. You'll always be our favorite Klingon first officer, N'Drea!

Next, we want to remember those who've been members of the club but have moved on to other locations or other interests.

Thanks for all your contributions to our group, and we wish you the best in all your future endeavors!

One former member we must give special thanks to is artist John Staton, who came up with the incredible design for our starship and our backstory in the *Trek* universe as well. Great work, John!

I just don't have the space (!) to list each person who's been part of the panels we've either run or contributed to over the years, but if you've been involved in the fun and the love for *Star Trek* and other science fiction we've shared with our fellow fans, know that your efforts are remembered and appreciated!

That brings me to special thanks for the folks at Farpoint, who gave us the fateful opportunity to run three panels lo, those many moons ago. Because of that, and the grand times we've had at this con over the years, it's especially fitting we celebrate our birthday here.

Thanks to everyone at Farpoint for running a terrific convention and for letting us be a part of it!

As for our current members, what can I say to pass along the entertainment and enjoyment we get every month from such a special group of people? To paraphrase my very favorite starship captain, "It's always been fun!"

However, I must extend extra gratitude to First Officer Abby, Second Officer Phil, Chief of Security Wayne, the columnists who put electronic pen to paper each month in COMSTAR, the folks who host our monthly club meetings and anyone I've succeeded in overlooking but should have mentioned here. It just wouldn't be the same terrific time without you!

So here's to a Happy 15th Anniversary to the U.S.S. *Chesapeake* and all her members and friends! Ahead Warp Factor 9.999! ■

Captain Randy Hall

The *Chesapeake* would never have made it out of drydock if not for them, and we want to say a hearty "Thank You" for their efforts.

SCIENCE TREK: Gazing back into my crystal ball

Hard to believe five years have passed since our 10th anniversary; even harder to believe the decade and a half since the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* first took to the stars. So much has happened in those spans — great by the measure of a gnat's life, but infinitely short measured by the age of the universe.

Yet, in that time, so much has happened. What, you ask? Can't recall what you ate for dinner (the one you just finished)? Well, for starters ...

Headlines

- "Science under Siege"
(*Time*, August 26, 1991)
- "Meteorite Hints at Early Life on Mars"
(*Science News*, August 10, 1996)
- "Meet the First ISS Crew"
(*CNN.com*, May 13, 1998)
- "Mir has completed its triumphant mission"
(*CNN.com*, March 23, 2001)
- "Lost: Space Shuttle Columbia"
(*CNN.com*, February 1, 2003)
- "Realistic Time Machine"
(*Science News*, July 16, 2005)

Anthropology

- Neanderthals ... cousins, not parents (1997)
- 9,000-year-old bone flutes discovered in China (September 1999)
- New World, Old City (4,000 years old)
(April 2001)
- Got Milk? They did 6,000 years ago in England (February 1, 2003)
- First (South) American civilization found
(January 2005)

Astronomy/Astrophysics

- First planet outside our solar system discovered (1991)
- First planet around a sun-like star discovered (October 6, 1995)
- Rain from space? (1996/97)
- Great antimatter cloud discovered (astrometeorologists predict — 40% chance of rain) (1997)
- The tenth planet found!? (October 2003)
- Gravity Probe B launched (April 20, 2004)
- Stardust space probe returns with comet and interstellar dust (January 15, 2006)

Medicine

- Discovered ... Fred Flintstone ... brain

surgeon (1997)

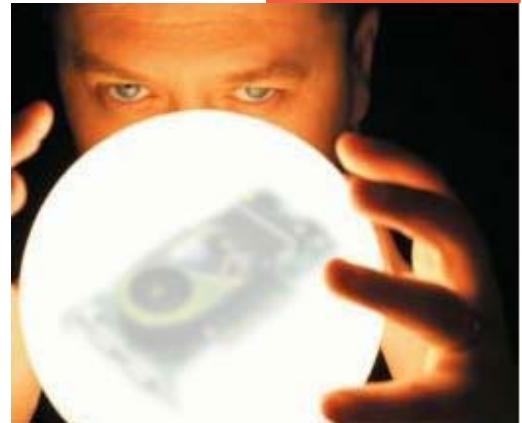
- Dolly + David = Bonnie ... first cloned sheep has a kid (April 14, 1998)
- How big's your inferior parietal region? Einstein's was 15% bigger (June 1999)
- Telesurgery cuts across an ocean for the first time (October 2001)
- First genetically engineered vaccine (May 2002)
- Human Genome Project publishes the map of all of us (April 2003)

Physics

- The undiscovered quark ... discovered: Top (March 2, 1995)
- For a brief time only, newly discovered elements 114, 116 and 118 (October 1999)
- Scientists make light stop and back up (January 2001)
- Fuzzy black holes ... who woulda thunk? (August 2004)

Technology

- Computer Beats Human in Chess Match (February 1996)
- Germ-fighting, computer-enabled clothing (1999)
- iPod iNtroduced (October 23, 2001)
- Military tests transparent armor (No, it's not aluminum, Scotty.) (October 2005)



Just to name a few. Let's see what the next few years have in store. See you back here in 2011 for the *Chessie's 20th*. ■

Web Notes:

- <http://einstein.stanford.edu/> (and you thought Einstein was just a guy with funny hair);
- <http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99996151> (Was Einstein's head a black hole?);
- <http://www.factmonster.com> (I'm sure there's something about Einstein in here); and
- http://beverlytang.com/archives/materials/transparent_aluminum.html (Close, but not exactly, Mister Scott.).

Second Officer Phil Margolies

ART CREDITS:
startrek.com 1,
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images.google.com 2, 3, 4, 5
candorville.com 6
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REFLECTIONS: New Wave

We were now entering the third season of *First Wave*, and one would think that the producers had things pretty much settled, character-wise. With Cade Foster (Sebastian Spence), Crazy Eddie (Rob LaBelle) and Joshua (Roger Cross), we had an established triumvirate (a word I can spell but cannot pronounce), a group with the necessary strength and character to build a really good show around.

As I said, one would THINK that would be enough, but one would be wrong.

I love when a show — especially a good show — doesn't take success for granted. I love when a show doesn't rest on its creative laurels, soaking in accolades for a job well done and continue to give the people the same crap week after week, even though the audience is soaking it up like a sponge.

Television is famous for this. Redundancy strikes swiftly and without warning, and a television show — ANY TV show — can become redundant and boring by adhering to the formula television is known to foster (no pun intended). Everything works, to a certain extent, but not everything is fresh. Keeping a show fresh and avoiding redundancy is probably the most difficult thing to accomplish in TV, mostly because fans get comfortable seeing the same things week in and week out.

Your average television viewer usually doesn't realize when he or she is being served re-cycled crap week after week. The producers, who are making "entertainment," will spoonfeed their audience regurgitated drama until the audience catches on. Producers do this because most audiences actually want this, not wanting to have to think while watching their favorite show.

Producers who are attempting to make art resist the urge of cinematic cloning and aren't afraid of shaking things up. This goes against the grain of most TV viewers, but as a writer, your job is to give the audience what it needs, not what it wants. If you're lucky, you'll find an audience that's not afraid to grow with the show, that's intelligent enough to "ride the wave" and see where they end up.

I bring this up because even though *First Wave* rode the crest of a strong second season, the producers decided to shake things up a bit by introducing two new characters. One was

militant, anti-alien activist Jordan Radcliff, played by Traci Lords. (Yes, THAT Traci Lords. Star of numerous X-rated films, including one of my all-time favorites, "New Wave Hookers." Yowsa!)

The other came in the form of a very powerful alien leader who arrived to supervise the actual invasion of Earth and was evil personified. His name was Mabus (Robert Duncan).

The coolest thing about both of these new characters was the fact that they were both mentioned in actual quatrains written by Nostradamus. Jordan Radcliff's band of terrorists were called "The Raven Nation" (sounds like a Janet Jackson song) and was alluded to by Nostradamus, who wrote about the "formation of a dark nation."

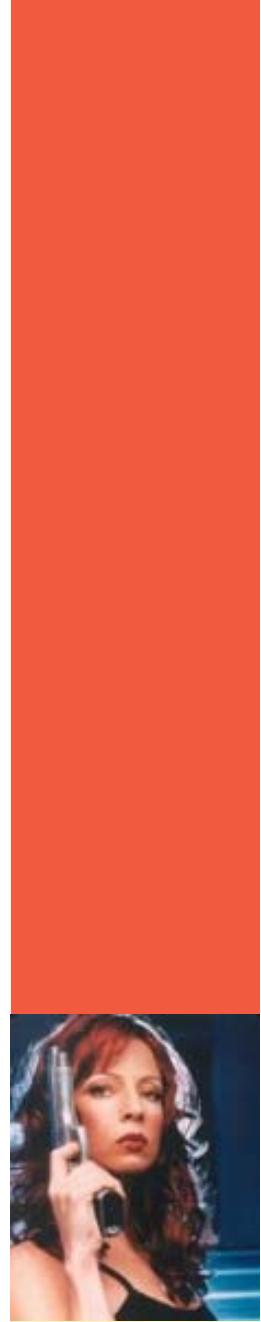
He also predicted the coming of three anti-Christ figures. The first has to be Napoleon, the second is surely Adolf Hitler, and the writers made Mabus the third. It tickles me to no end to think that these guys actually sat down and read Nostradamus' prophecies. Yes, I have a book of his prophesies. I've had it for years.

"Her character," explained Brancato. "comes from an immensely wealthy family and suffers a great loss — her family is destroyed by the aliens. Inspired by Cade's journals, she has formed a militia unit that was operating underground and was preparing, in fact, for an actual Armageddon. But she was arming and training her band of several hundred vicious fighters in secret until she meets Cade Foster. They decide to form a kind of uneasy partnership to combat this plague together.

"Radcliff is the opposite of Cade. He's a blue-collar guy, a former thief who grew up in Chicago. By contrast, Radcliff was debutante, a socialite, a woman from a powerful business who indulged in the best things that life had to offer. Her response to having that all ripped away is even more violent and anger-based than is Foster's."

The dichotomy between these two characters, depending on the task at hand, resulted in an intriguing personal dynamic. Standing on the brink of an invasion, Radcliff wanted to fight. Alerting people was just a waste of time; she felt they were beyond that stage. She wasn't concerned with the life and limb of

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First Wave's Jordan Radcliff, played by Traci Lords

RANTINGS: Is there a NAMBLA meeting in the Batcave?

The 1950s were a tumultuous time for the Caped Crusader and the Boy Wonder. The characters continued to be fleshed out and expanded in the comics.

The classic Batmobile debuted in *Detective Comics* #156 in February 1950. The first comic book meeting of Batman and Robin with Superman occurred in *Superman* #52 in 1952. Batman doubled for Superman in *World's Finest* #71 in 1954.

Ace the Bat Hound debuted in *Batman* #92 in 1955. Kathy Kane made her first appearance as Batwoman in *Detective Comics* #233 in 1956. Bat-Mite's first appearance came in *Detective Comics* #267 in 1958.

In 1959, a character named Mister Zero appeared in *Batman* #121, later changed to Mister Freeze. There would be no TV show until the '60s, although "Batman" Robert Lowery would do a guest shot as Clark's friend Gary Allen in the 1955 *Adventures of Superman* TV episode "The Deadly Rock."

But in 1954, Batman faced his most dangerous opponent: Doctor Frederic Wertham, who published a book called *Seduction of the Innocent* that detailed the evils of comic books on American society.

Wertham was a psychologist who blamed comic books for everything from juvenile delinquency to post-nasal drip. He said that Batman and Robin were homosexual lovers because "Robin was drawn with bare legs, that were often wide open, and that Robin seemed devoted and attached to only Batman." He also said that when at home, Bruce was usually in a dressing gown.

To hear this guy tell it, Batman was a charter member of NAMBLA (the North American Man-Boy Love Association) and a pedophile. He had also said that Wonder Woman was a lesbian with bondage fantasies. Maybe I've been missing something all these years.

There's been a long tradition of heroes with kid sidekicks: Green Arrow and Speedy, the Flash and Kid Flash, Aquaman and Aquaboy, Wonder Woman and Wonder Girl, Captain America and Bucky, and the Human Torch and Toro, to name several.

The idea was to give the kids someone to relate to and represent every kid joining in the adventures with the hero. The publishers discovered over time that the kids didn't want to be represented by the sidekick; they wanted

to be THE HERO.

Wertham NEVER read a comic book in his life. That's like congressional wives who don't listen to rock & roll forcing their cuckolded husbands to hold hearings on rating popular music. Tipper Gore actually did that in 1985.

The fact that the allegations were a bunch of crap didn't stop the U.S. Senate from holding hearings about censoring comic books. Some towns had door-to-door collections of comic books, which were burned in the center of town. The "evil of comic books" gave parents the excuse to control what their children read.

These events hit the publishers directly. They completely FREAKED and agreed to a most restrictive set of rules called the Comics Code Authority. It's also why Batwoman and the first Batgirl were introduced, to make a nice, safe, "nukular" family.

It seems that every so often, the government must look for a nice, easy and simple scapegoat to blame societal ills on. In the early 1930s, movies were to blame, and the Hays office was created to censor content in films. For the 1950s, comic books were the problem. In the '60s and '70s, it was TV. In the '80s, music lyrics corrupted our youth. The '90s tried to blame everything on all media.

The thing that these "witch hunts" do is give people a target to focus on. They also let parents off the hook and don't force them to deal with the central issue: *There are a lot of lousy parents in the world, and that's why their children are monsters.*

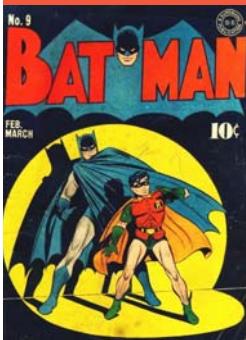
Some parents refuse to accept the responsibility that the fault lies with them; they cannot be bothered with raising their child. This kind of parent looks on their children as "tax deductions."

This will continue until people accept responsibility for their actions, but since that's a hard thing to do, don't expect scapegoating to end any time soon. If children aren't growing up to be the "perfect little angels" they were designed to be, it's far easier to blame that on an outside force than for parents to admit that they might be doing something wrong.

HORRORS. That means you might actually have to do some work on yourself.

"*Cassius has a lean and hungry look, He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.*" —Caesar

Procurement Officer Peter Chewning



Batman and Robin, the Boy Wonder

COMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

February 17-19 Our first major con of 2006, Farpoint at the Hunt Valley Inn in Hunt Valley, Maryland! We'll celebrate our 15th birthday with a special party on Friday night. We'll also conduct several discussion panels. Guests will include Penny Johnson-Jerald (Kasidy Sisko) from *Deep Space Nine* and *Trek* producer Harve Bennett.

February 25 Let's talk about the Farpoint convention by gathering at the Hard Times Cafe in Bethesda, Maryland, for dinner at 5 p.m., followed by our meeting at 7 p.m. For directions, please see this month's Insert available in our Yahoo! group online.

Happy 15th anniversary, U.S.S. *Chesapeake* concluded

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President Kennedy said it best: "Ask not what the convention can do for you, but what you can do for the convention!" Oh, all right, maybe that isn't *exactly* what he said, but if he'd ever tried to program a con, he would have!

"The *Chesapeake* brings such a selfless and rich contribution to the convention every year — not to mention the best panel titles anywhere! It really is a gift that your group has such diverse interests. It provides almost

every fan group with a place to discuss their favorite show. Many fans write in asking for panels, but very few can either find people to run the panels or feel adequate to do it themselves. Thanks to you, almost no one ever goes away disappointed!

"Thanks again for your many contributions and congratulations on 15 years of fun, friendship and fandom!" — Marilyn Mann, Co-Con Chair, Co-Programming Coordinator, *Shore Leave 28* ■

REFLECTIONS: New Wave concluded

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innocent people, she just wanted the aliens to be gone.

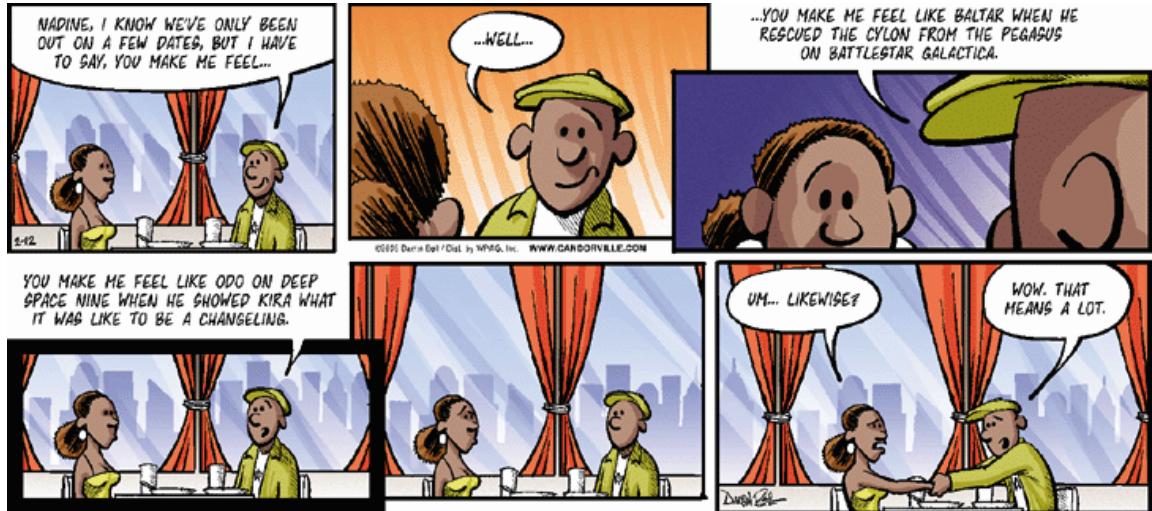
Foster, on the other hand, had a more spiritual take on the matter. He believed the aliens could be stopped and the invasion aborted, and he was VERY concerned with the loss of innocent human life. He wasn't

willing to sacrifice people for a victory over the aliens. Jordan saw human casualties as the price we have to pay. Speaking of conflict, she and Crazy Eddie might have gotten along. I could see that, but her and Joshua? There was going to be trouble.

Next month: *Wave* goodbye. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard

Candorville



Editor's Note:
Weapons Officer
Patrick McBee's
Holodictation column
will return next
month!