

FARPOINT

The Volker-McChesney Award was given to the *Chesapeake* during the recent Farpoint convention.

U.S.S. Chesapeake honored for service to fandom

Along with moderating its usual “track” of panels, the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* was honored for “service to fandom” during a banquet at this month’s Farpoint convention.

The Volker-McChesney Award honors fans in the memory of two hard-working fans, Beverly Volker and Marion McChesney, both of whom passed away during the past few years.

Captain Randy Hall noted that the award is especially meaningful to our club since the very first time the *Chesapeake* moderated panels was at Farpoint.

“That was the first time our group had the chance to spread our wings, and we’ve been flying high ever since,” he said. “At that first convention, we put on three panels; one panel on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. That was a long time ago.”

Noting that he can’t compete with the people in the Costume Call, he said that some things he and the club can do is talk for an hour about the upcoming *Star Trek XI* movie, whether Data was really alive or just thought he was, and “anything even remotely connected to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.”

During the convention, the *Chesapeake* began a new tradition under the unofficial slogan of “Fantastic Firsts at Farpoint” and hosting the video rooms, along with “Fan Film Friday.”

Under guidance from Officer Lorenzo Heard, Fan Film Friday included showings of the first episodes from such groups as *Phase II*, *Starship Exeter*, and *Starship Intrepid*, which is from Scotland.

▲ One of the big topics at the convention was *Star Trek XI*, which will be released in early May. Not long after the convention ended, Paramount released an



The new *Star Trek* logo recently released by Paramount.

updated emblem of that film, which resembles the original series but has more space between the letters than before.

Some fans have commented that it’s basically the same iconic font turned metallic instead of white, and with a few new lens flare streaks.

Still, with the film due to debut in May, even a slightly modified logo is making news.

Look for yet another trailer for *Star Trek XI* to appear with the upcoming film translation of the DC Comics graphic novel, *Watchmen*, on Friday, March 6. ■

More Hard Times for the *Chesapeake* in February

The next meeting of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake Star Trek* and Science-Fiction Club will be held on Saturday, February 28, at the Hard Times Cafe located in College Park, Maryland.

We’ll get together at 5:00 p.m. to order our dinner. Our club meeting will start no later than 7:00 p.m.

During this month’s meeting, we’ll talk

about the recent Farpoint convention, find out what fellow club members have been up to as well as discuss the latest news and rumors about *Star Trek* and other sci-fi television shows and feature films.

Need directions to this month’s meeting? Get this month’s Insert, which is in our Yahoo! Group. ■

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CAPTAIN'S LOG: Battle of the "Stars"

Two of the biggest franchises in science-fiction television and movies have a problem: The names of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* are too similar.

Both begin with the word "Star" and end with different four-letter words, "Trek" or "Wars."

To those of us who regularly visit the worlds of science fiction, that difference is often insignificant.

Trek fans, usually called "Trekkies" or "Trekkers," defend their choice by calling that franchise "intelligent sci-

ence fiction," which often discusses contemporary issues. They point to spinoffs over the past four decades and a "remastered" movie that will hit theaters in early May.

Wars devotees, occasionally referred to as "Warsies," do exactly the opposite. They say that six movie blockbusters demonstrate the superiority of the series, and then point to a new half-hour Cartoon Network series that uses state-of-the-art computer animation to depict *The Clone Wars*.

Many of us fans fall somewhere in between as we enjoy the "best of both worlds." I really like *Wars*, but I love *Trek*.

The biggest problem comes when people who aren't fans of science fiction venture into this "unexplored territory," and the results, as Spock would say, are "fascinating."

I was attending a weekend conference in eastern Pennsylvania on Saturday, June 11, 1999. Someone who knew I'm a longtime fan of the series gave me the bad news. De (as he was known to friends and fans alike) had played the lovably grumpy yet wise Doctor Leonard McCoy for a long time. Still, "Bones" was the first to leave us after Gene Roddenberry died in 1991, and it was certainly a sad day.

When I got back to my hotel room

that night, I decided to turn on the local news and see what folks in that rural area thought about all this.

Sure enough, before long I was looking at a graphic of Bones in one of his movie uniforms, and the female co-anchor said: "This is a sad day for fans of *Star Wars*. DeForest Kelley, who played the role of Doctor Leonard McCoy, passed away at his home in California." Then the broadcast went to a commercial break.

When the broadcast returned, the camera was pointed directly at the female co-host, and in the most sincere sympathy she could muster, apologized for her mistake and promised to be better informed next time.

The camera pulled back to show both of the hosts, and the male co-anchor said loudly: "So stop calling us, please!"

Nevertheless, the connection between the franchises hasn't always been negative. *Wars* creator George Lucas has often stated that the "cantina bar scene" in the very first film, now called "A New Hope," was based on the diversity of aliens he'd seen in episodes of *Trek*.

However, *Star Trek XI* director J. J. Abrams recently told the *Los Angeles Times* that the challenge of making new entries in the *Trek* universe is particularly difficult because the last three *Wars* films "got it right" in terms of design, locations, characters, aliens, and ships.

Still, Abrams believes that *Star Trek XI* will succeed if the characters are handled properly, he said. The key to *Star Trek* is to go "from the inside out" by being "as true to the characters as possible."

So does all this friendly banter mean that confusion about the two franchises is over? Can everyone just "live long and prosper?"

Maybe, but in mid-January, when Barack Obama was about to be sworn in as the new U.S. president, the clash between

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The ultimate battle in space.

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Check out our club website: www.usschesapeake.org

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SCIENCE TREK: Norman, compute!

Many of the folks reading this column work with computers on a day-in/day-out basis. I'm one of them, if you didn't know (Hopefully by the time you read this, it will be a new, improved relationship, but we'll see.)

I think that over the past few decades, we've seen the Computer Age come of age. Way back when™ (circa 1996) I needed more RAM for my Mac (I only had eight Megabytes ... 16 with RAM Doubler), so I bought another 8 MB at the cost of only \$700.

(Translation for the next columnist over: Had sheep, needed more sheep to run my apple farm, so I bought eight more sheep ... and it cost me a lot of dough!). A dozen years later, the price for four Gigabytes of memory (500 times what I bought) is about \$50 ... or 14 times less!

Reaching back in time 30 years from 1996 (that's 1966 if you don't want to do the math yourself), the price for a single megabyte of RAM (the memory chip used on the Apollo spacecraft that went to the moon in 1969) was \$1,000,000. I'll let you do the comparative math this time. Suffice it to say, memory has gotten a lot cheaper even as the processing power has improved.

In 1965, Gordon Moore, the co-founder of Intel—a leading computer chip manufacturer—observed that the processing power of microchips doubled about every two years. (In technical terms, the number of transistors that can be placed on an integrated circuit doubles every two years). The so-called “Moore's Law” has held true for the past 43 years with no sign of collapse.

Computers have truly become far more powerful than their now primitive ancestors. Compare today's Centrino processors to yesteryear's Pentium and x86 processors, and you'll see that even a low-end \$500 computer today is far faster than

the leading home computers of a decade ago. (Remember the faux radio saying ‘Here's the Golden Oldies ... last week's top 40!’?)

Beyond the laptop or desktop model sitting in your house or your cubicle, there are far more powerful computers in laboratories, universities, and military/intelligence installations around the world. These computers are being used to explore complex realities such as mapping explosions, investigating astrophysical environments, and breaking ciphers. The IBM Roadrunner supercomputer at Los Alamos National Laboratory is currently the world leader in terms of operations per second (a sustained 1.105 petaflops—it does math really, really fast).

The flip side of the solitary supercomputers are the massively parallel processing networks, where those standard issue laptops and desktops in the home or office use a little bit of their processing power to solve a small part of a large problem.

An example is SETI@Home (SETI as in Search for Extraterrestrial Life), which has been running for nearly a decade. About 140,000 computers running SETI@Home, creating the equivalent of a single supercomputer performing about 500 petaflops.

So where is all this computer power leading us? Fans of dystopian science fiction would answer Skynet as in the humanity-destroying sentient computer in the *Terminator* series. More optimistic fans may say *Star Trek*, where computers with faster-than-light processing capability (using localized warp fields, of course) power the control centers for warp-capable starships.

On the bad computer side, we have

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Kirk and Spock (right) baffle the android Norman (center) in “I, Mudd.”

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startrek.com 3

REFLECTIONS: *Earth's* final season revisited

A badly burned Sandoval is still alive and on the abandoned Taelon mother ship. Renee and Street search the now-tame volcano for Liam and find an Atavus chamber embedded in volcanic rock. The Atavus were a race that inhabited Earth long before humans and were forced underground by an asteroid shower. They lay dormant in chambers all over the world. Some were awakened when Liam merged the Taelon and Jaridian species. They also feed on human life force.

Renee and Street are attacked by Atavus while searching. During this confrontation, Ra'jel, who holds the collective consciousness of the Taelons that for a time resided on the mother ship, is released. Ra'jel tells them that the joining of the Taelons and the Jaridians has unleashed the "final conflict" and that Renee has been chosen to save humanity from the Atavus. Renee and Street barely escape a meeting with Howlyn (NO, his last name is NOT wolf, David), the head male Atavus. Sandoval arrives in the Taelons' mother ship, takes the Atavus chamber aboard and negotiates a deal with Howlyn to help him take over Earth.

Meanwhile, Renee, who is recovering in a military hospital, tells Director Urich that the Atavus is a major threat. He doesn't buy it, and the government turns its back on Renee Palmer. Ra'jel tries to reason with Sandoval, but to no avail. Ra'jel orders the mother ship into the atmosphere, which would destroy the ship and all aboard.

Howlyn's plan is to use Taelon technology to create Atavus/human hybrids, enough to form an army and take over Earth. Sandoval brings Urich to the mother ship in an attempt to turn him into a hybrid, but he is saved by Renee and brought back to Earth. Urich is alive, but injured and falls into a coma. Sandoval decides to revive Boone (remember him?), and alter his mind in the hope that

he would lead them to Renee. Boone does find Renee, but his mind was unaffected by Taelon technology. Boone joins Renee in her crusade against the Atavus, but he realizes his control may gradually wane, and he would be a spy for Sandoval. For the sake of the Resistance, Boone leaves again.

Renee becomes emotionally involved with Howlyn's young son Yulan, who had a human-like soul. She feels obligated to protect him from his father. In the series finale, Liam is set free by the "collective will of the universe" to help Renee fight the Atavus. Liam leads her to the Atavus starship, which contains elite Atavus soldiers trapped in stasis, buried under the Siberian desert. Howlyn and Sandoval track them to Siberia, where they capture Yulan. Howlyn takes him while Sandoval proceeds after Renee and Liam.

Sandoval is killed trying to capture Renee. Howlyn manages to revive his crew, but they rebel and kill him. Director Urich, who was awakened from his coma with Taelon technology, orders troops to Siberia to quell the Atavus threat. Renee and Liam lead those troops against the revised Atavus. The ship's interdimensional drive is transported to the Taelon mother ship, along with the Atavus race, which is still in stasis. Ra'jel is taking them to the Atavus home world, where Yulan may show them a better way. Ra'jel convinces Renee to join Liam and explore the universe.

Thus ends one of the most unique genre shows to ever air in the United States. Sometimes the uniqueness was planned; sometimes it was an accident; but most of the time, it was out of necessity. The show stumbled a bit during its third season but righted itself during its fourth and returned to its original plans in its final season.

Also, the biggest kick for me is the two female leads for an action/adventure show. The world had never experienced that before and may never again. ■

Conn Officer Lorenzo Heard



WAYNE'S WORLDS: A frustrating TV February

February is normally a big month in the television industry.

One of the main reasons for this is the Sweeps period ... you know, when all the networks play all their best material in order to get the highest ratings possible? The Sweeps are when the rates for advertising are set, so it is a huge deal.

The Sweeps usually happen three months in every calendar year—February, May and November. But that's not how it is happening in 2009.

You may have noticed some programs are now airing reruns. That's normally death in a Sweeps period. However, this year the Sweeps have been shifted from February to March. They will take place from Thursday, March 5, until Wednesday, April 1.

Why is this happening? It's because of the FCC-mandated digital transition that was supposed to take place on midnight (local time) on Tuesday, February 17. The industry wanted to be sure everyone had their converter boxes in place before they started measuring audiences.

Usually I'm on top of this kind of thing, but the change of month surprised me. And it is going to make for a bumpy ride until the season ends in May.

It surprised me because the Sweeps are normally as predictable as runs to the supermarket whenever a weather person predicts an inch of snow in the Washington, D.C., area. And the networks ran new material for a while, which made me think things were operating normally.

The bumpy ride is going to come when we have a Sweeps month in March, then one month off in April followed by another Sweeps period in May. The networks are going to have to be careful how they spend their precious 22-episode commitments. So pay attention to your TiVo or *TV Guide*—it's going to be tough to know when new material is airing until the end of May.

Related to this is the recent change by the Congress of the digital transition from February 17 to June 12.

I have one television hooked up to digital cable, but with the other I use an antenna just in case my cable drops out, which has been known to happen just when I want it most.

I recently bought my converter box for the second television last weekend.

I hooked it up that night and set it to use the regular antenna, comforted in the knowledge that I was finally ready for February 17.

Now I understand why the opposite of "progress" is "Congress."

I don't normally have a lot of sympathy for broadcasters (who often make tons of money, especially during political campaigns), but now many channels are going to have to transmit two signals—one digital, one analog. With the broadcasting industry still suffering from last year's Writers' Strike, this will add more millions of dollars into the expense of running a television station until June.

I hear that some stations will simply wait until June to begin transmitting digitally. However, one station near me had already told listeners that they were already abandoning the analog signal. No word on what they'll do now.

I guess I'll switch my digital converter box so it can receive those signals and see just who has started and who hasn't.

Just what I need—another guessing game! ■

Chief of Security Wayne Hall



Got one of these converter boxes yet?

COMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

February 28The next meeting will be on Saturday, February 28, at the Hard Times Cafe in College Park, Maryland. We'll gather for dinner at 5 p.m., followed by our monthly meeting no later than 7 p.m.

CAPTAIN'S LOG: Battle of the "Stars" (concluded)

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Trek and *Wars* again popped up.

Obama and his family attended a morning religious ceremony to receive a message from Bishop T. D. Jakes, senior pastor at Potters House in Dallas, Texas, who described the situation the new president faced.

"The problems are mighty, and the solutions are not simple," Jakes said, "and everywhere you turn, there will be a critic waiting to attack every decision that you make."

"I say to you as my son who is here today, my 14-year-old son—he probably would not quote scripture. He probably would use *Star Trek* instead, and so I say,

'May the force be with you.'"

During an interview that night, Jakes laughed about the miscue and assured reporters that he'd received a proper education about the difference between the "Stars" from his son, Dexter.

Of course, he might have sought "the right stuff" from the new president, who spoke about his fondness for Gene Roddenberry's vision during a campaign stop in Wyoming during March of 2008.

"I grew up on *Star Trek*," Obama said. "I believe in the final frontier."

Let's hope he never says that he enjoys *Star Wars* and hopes all fans of the franchise will "live long and prosper." ■

Captain Randy Hall

SCIENCE TREK: Norman, compute! (concluded)

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HAL, WOPR, M5, Colossus, and Master Control Program. On the good side, well, they often don't have names, they just do their job. Still, Google "science fiction evil computers" and you get about 2.8 million results. Replace "evil" with "good" and you get over 15 million!

So where are computers going? ("To Disney World," David shouts!) Getting smaller, faster, and cheaper (I sound like a NASA pitch man). Physicist Richard Feynman predicted in 1959 that computers could eventually be constructed at the molecular level.

Other scientists are already talking of photonics as a replacement for electronics (photons instead of electrons). For better or worse, we're heading toward the future. What will it look like when we get there? You'll just have to stay tuned. ■

Web Notes:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore%27s_law (Is there a Wiki Law?),
- <http://www.top500.org/> (I wonder who's #501?),
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supercomputer> (I love Wikipedia.),
- <http://setiweb.ssl.berkeley.edu/> (Not at my house, maybe at yours.),
- <http://www.google.com/search?q=skynet> (I got over 8.9 million hits.),
- <http://blog.wired.com/underwire/2009/01/top-10-evil-com.html> (Hal's Pals ... I love rhyming.),
- <http://kroeker.net/published/writing-the-future.htm> (computers in science fiction), and
- <http://w5.cs.uni-sb.de/~butz/teaching/ie-ss03/papers/hciinsf> (human computer interaction in science-fiction movies).

Second Officer Phil Margolies