

Notes from the
Underground
July 2006

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Notes from the Underground is a bi-monthly newsletter published by Several Unlimited. Dues are \$12.00 per year in the US, \$16.00 overseas, payable September 1. Submissions of articles, reviews, and artwork are welcome. All written submissions should be typed (or very legibly handwritten). Please don't send original artwork by regular mail. The deadline for submissions is the first of every month.

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In Hoc Signo Vinces,
Dee
Editor, *Notes from the Underground*

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Meeting Announcements

The July Meeting will be at Jamie Ritchey’s house. The Video Party will be hosted by Erika Frensley.

Editor’s Announcement

We are exchanging newsletters with the Prydonians of Prynceton as PDFs (via email). If any Several member would like a PDF instead of, or in addition to, their paper newsletter, please email me (Dee Beetem).

It’s not too late! ApolloCon attendees can still send me their con reviews. I’ll publish them next month.--Dee

July Birthdays

Sanjay Mediwala	July 28
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Message From the President

by Jamie Ritchey

Ah, the doldrums of summer! I'm looking forward to kicking back and just vegging for a couple of months, but it looks like that won't happen. My family decided they have lots of use for my free time. But I do have a new songvid I've finished that I'll be showing at the next meeting to get beta comments from you guys. It was for an auction and the winner has been supremely patient considering how long it took me to do it. And I have another one to make for my Moonridge Zoo donation. That one went for the usual high amount of money. It makes me preen, just a little, that my work is sought after enough to generate a tidy sum for the zoo.

Next month is time for club officer nomination. Does anyone else want to become President? I would be more than glad to step down if someone else feels they deserve the nomination. Step up and speak your mind at the next meeting.

Upcoming Events

The Orange Show

Jeff McKissack's Orange Show is open every Wednesday through Friday between 9 am and 1 pm, as well as Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 5 pm. Admission is free for children under 12 and \$1 for all others.

Margaret McNickle, who's been here, says that the Orange Show is fun. Let's pencil it in for July 23, or failing that, July 29 (both are Saturdays, although we could go on Sunday if people want to). Meet first for lunch?

Contact Dee (doristheyounger@yahoo.com) to RSVP.

Orange ShowCenter for Visionary Art
2402 Munger St.
Houston, Tx 77023
(Close to the Gulf Freeway and Telephone Road)
(713) 926-6368

Downtown Aquarium

410 Bagby

Tickets \$9.25 (rides separate)

We're also planning a trip to the Downtown Aquarium (home to white tigers as well as fish!) It's open until 10 (11 Fri-Sat) so week nights are possible if people would prefer that to a weekend excursion.

ArmadilloCon 28, August 11-13, 2006

Doubletree Hotel North
6505 N. IH-35
Austin, TX 78752
Sponsored by FACT

For more information, call 512-477-6259

ArmadilloCon 27

P.O. Box 27277

Austin, TX 78755

Or send email: dillochair@armadillocon.org

GOH: Judy Czerneda; Toastmaster: Esther Friesner;

Special Guest: James Hogan

News and Reviews

ApolloCon Reviews

ApolloCon review by Erika Frensley

I was on two panels at ApolloCon this year, and (with the exception of computer glitches) they both went well. The descriptions of the panels made me a bit unsure of the convention -- really, the "The present painted in the future": SF as a Venue for Social Commentary sounded like a pseudo-educational panel. But surprisingly, the panels were fun, and lively, and truly thought-provoking. My two panels, the Songvid panel and the Doctor Who panel, went well (Doctor Who fandom is alive and well).

Peter Beagle is a wonderful guest -- funny, talented, and very warm. He dominated every panel that he was on -- but somehow, no one seemed to mind! The costume contest, although Firefly-heavy, was very good -- there are lots of talented costumers out there. The Video Room dedicated lots of time to short films, mainly fan films, based on Star Trek, Firefly, Doctor Who, Amtgard. Some original films were tossed in as well. Go to <http://www.apollocon.org/film.html> for the schedule and downloads. I like this move -- we've seen the big films all too often, but the smaller (and many times much more fun) films are real treats. I hope ApolloCon continues this trend.

I found out that ApolloCon hit just over 400 this year -- its first year attendance was around the 150 mark. Not a bad growth pattern for a Houston convention!

ApolloCon review by Dee Beetem

First and foremost: Peter Beagle, the GoH, was fantastic! I loved his “Last Unicorn” so much and he is such a sweet man—but what can you possibly say to an author when you haven’t read most of his later books? I bought (and had autographed) a copy of his collection “The Rhineros Who Quoted Nietzsche”—which I **will** read—and let it go at that.

For me the high point of ApolloCon was the panels—and not just because I was one of the panelists. SF fan that I am, I like to hear and participate in real sense-of-wonder science speculation. (The ‘Immortality’ panel, for instance.) My own panels were:

Alternate history. Questions included: Why do you never see alternate history stories for fiction (except for Star Trek)? What’s happening in mystery and romance alternate history? How do historical ‘counterfactuals’ compare with SF? Does ‘Groundhog Day’ count?

Intro to roleplaying for newbies: Other panelists were LARPerS, I held up the end for tabletop RPGS.

The ‘greying’ of fandom, or how to keep up the membership in older clubs: One of the other panelists nailed it when he said he’d requested a moratorium on old fans discussing their aches and pains and operations during the meetings. Young people have to put up with codgers at school and on the job; it’s optional during their leisure time.

The Fourth Bear, by Jasper Fforde

by Rose Beetem

Jack’s back. Detective Chief Inspector Jack Spratt of the Nursery Crime Division, that is. Along with his second-in-command, Detective Sergeant Mary Mary, Jack deals with crimes involving Persons of Dubious Reality. Bad press after the Red Ridinghood case (“Red-Cloaked Tot in Swallowing Drama!”) puts Jack on suspension just as the notorious psychotic killer, the Gingerbreadman, escapes from St. Cerebellum’s.

Shut out of the case, Jack is drawn into the Missing Persons case of journalist Henrietta “Goldy” Hatchett, star reporter and Friend of Bears. Is her disappearance connected to underground porridge trafficking, her investigation into the secretive world of extreme cucumber growing, or the sinister origins of SommeWorld, the World War I re-creation theme park created by the mysterious conglomerate QuangTech?

Welcome back to the idiosyncratic world of Jasper Fforde! The Nursery Crime Series was spun off from his novels about Thursday Next, a

SpecOps officer who fights literary frauds and forgeries within the fictional worlds themselves – ‘The Eyre Affair’, etc.)

The Nursery Crime Series, which debuted with ‘The Big Over Easy’, continues with ‘The Fourth Bear’. Familiar names from nursery rhymes and children’s books take on a whole new character in this uniquely literary police procedural. You don’t have to recognize all the references to enjoy the book—although the more you do, the better it is.

Fforde’s unflagging inventiveness makes his digressions as interesting as the next plot twist—and personally, I always wondered about those bowls of porridge. How could a medium-size bowl be cold and a smaller bowl be just right? It contradicts the laws of physics as well as cookery!

In addition to the Goldy case and the rampage of the murderous Gingerbreadman, Jack and Mary face more personal crises as well. Jack’s marriage is in trouble, and despite dumping him 734 times Mary can’t get rid of her boyfriend Arnold and find a more suitable beau.

Give Jasper Fforde a try. Either series is great, and ‘The Fourth Bear’ is a wonderful addition to the Nursery Crime series. Fabulous news for Thursday Next fans: watch for her return July 2007 in ‘The War of the Words’, while the NCD will return for ‘The Last Great Tortoise Race’.

Websites of the Month

Computer Publisher Provides All Books Free

<http://www.sys-con.com/read/229882.htm>

All computer how-to books in the In Pictures series are being provided free **through the month of July** as downloadable PDF files. Anyone who visits In Pictures' Web site at <http://www.inpics.net/> can download any and all of its 22 different books.

"We could have spent \$100,000 on advertising," said In Pictures creator Chris Charuhas. "Instead we decided to give away \$100,000 worth of books. When people try them, they like them, then spread the word." These books aren't restricted by a digital rights management system. You can freely copy and share (but not sell) them with anyone.

The books cover computer basics, Microsoft and Open Office, and web layout, graphics, and programming. In Pictures books are written as low-word (duh!), high-graphics manuals.

Do check this out! A cheap way to get a manual and basic info on new programs, especially graphics and Open Office that you don’t use yet.

The Superhero Test!

<http://www.seabreezecomputers.com/superhero/>

Which Superhero are you? Answer the questions in this to find out whether you are more like to Superman, Spiderman, Green Lantern, or some other spandex-wearing troubleshooter. For example:

- * Do you like to fly?
- * Do you like to wear a cape?
- * Are you very virtuous?
- * Are you a persistent do-gooder?
- * Are you somewhat reserved and easy going?
- * Are you an intelligent geek?
- * Do you like redheads?

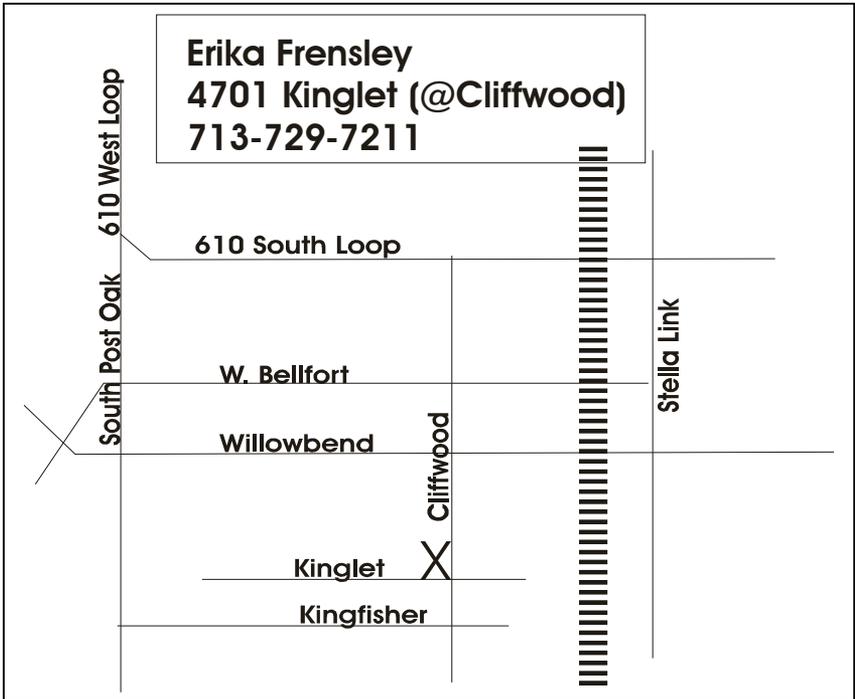
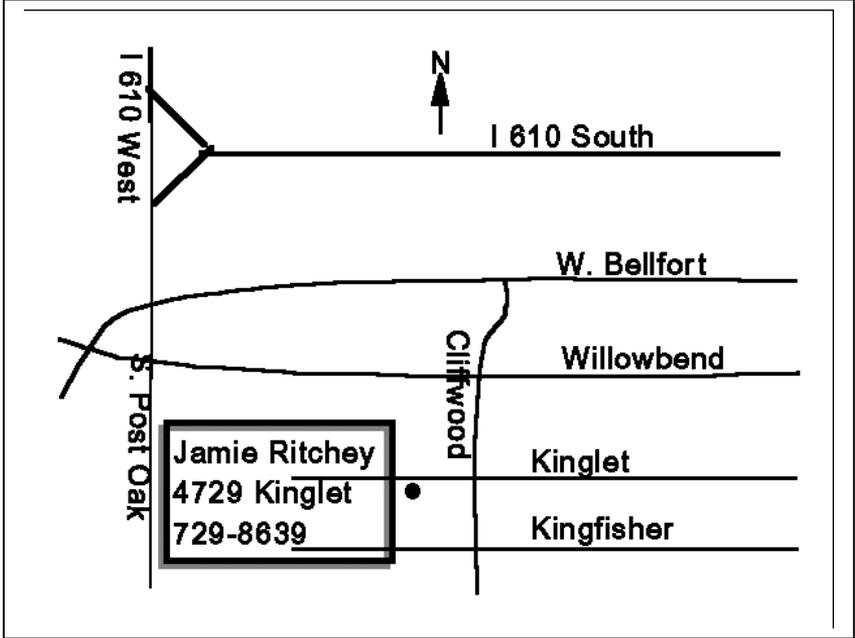


Superman Dean Keane with
Teri Hatcher as ULTRAWOMAN

Calendar and Maps

July 14, 2006	Several Unlimited Meeting Jamie Ritchey 4729 Kinglet 713 729 8639
July 22, 2006	Orange Show?
July 28, 2005	Video Party Erika Frensley 4701 Kinglet 713 729 7211
July 29, 2006	Orange Show?





The Doctor

illo by David D'Amico

