



**NOTES FROM THE  
UNDERGROUND  
JUNE 2007**

## 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 Vincas,  
Dee  
Editor, *Notes from the Underground*

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## Meeting Announcements

The June meeting will be held at Dee Beetem's house. There will be no Video Party on June 22, since ApolloCon is the same weekend. However, since Apollocon conflicts with our usual Video Party, Steve Dial has suggested that we hold the video party on the fifth Friday this month, and he has volunteered to host it if some of the Several are available.

## June Birthdays

❖ Anita Haddock      June 4

## Editor's Announcement

We are exchanging newsletters with the Prydonians of Pryncton as PDFs (via email). If any Several member would like a PDF instead of, or in addition to, their paper newsletter, please email me (Erika Frensley). The PDF of each newsletter is also posted on the Several Unlimited website.

## Club News

### Message from the President

*Jamie Ritchey*

Due to circumstances beyond our control, there is no message from the President this month.

### Veepster Message

*Dee Beetem*

Apollocon will be held on June 22-24, 2007 at the Doubletree at Intercontinental, 15747 John F. Kennedy Blvd. Although Several Unlimited didn't volunteer to help with the con, I'm sure many of us will be attending. If any member intends get a room at the hotel—and is willing to hold a brief meeting there—please email me and I'll set it up.

I will also check and see if it's too late for us to volunteer to host a con suite party. We could invest a few hours, chips, etc., and meet some new people. Who's planning on attending this year?

### Message from Steve Dial

We usually do not have a video party in June. This is because June usually has only four Fridays, and the fourth Friday is the weekend of the Apollocon. This year, however, June has five Fridays, so we can have a June video party on Friday, June 29; one week after the Apollocon. I am willing to host this video party. How many of you are interested in attending it?

### Internet Sale Ringmaster Sez...

*Erika Frensley*

We're done. Finished. No more things to do. Well, except for tracking down a lost box, making sure that everyone got their checks, and closing out the books, that is.

The Internet Zine Sale (and the RevelCon Orphan Zine Sale) is a lot of work – I never realized how much work it was until now. And, this year especially, the club didn't make very much. There's talk of not having a sale next year... and I'm inclined to agree. We have been running the sale for over 10 years... actually closer to 15 years, and I think we can all say... We're pooped. Let's try doing something else for RevelCon, like a party room (or even having parties that folks show up to).

## Upcoming Events

### **ApolloCon 2007, June 22-24, 2007**

Houston's Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Conference

<http://www.apollocon.org/>

DoubleTree Hotel Houston Intercontinental Airport

15747 John F. Kennedy Blvd.

Houston, TX 77032

- ❖ **GOH: C.S. Friedman**
- ❖ **Editor GOH: David G. Hartwell**
- ❖ **Artist GOH: Jeff Sturgeon**
- ❖ **Filk GOH: Graham and Becca Leathers**
- ❖ **Fan GOH: A.T. Campbell, III**

A single event for fans of speculative and imaginative fiction of all kinds, including literary, media, and interactive.

Panels, Art Show, Masquerade, Dealers Room, Gaming (including LARP), Filking, Book Exchanges, Short Film Contest, Media Room. Writer's Workshop.

For more information, write:

ApolloCon

P.O.Box 541822

Houston, TX 77254-1822

Or send email to [info@apollocon.org](mailto:info@apollocon.org)

Sponsored by the Houston Science Fiction Association, a 501(c)(3) organization.

### **Conestoga 11, July 20-22, 2007**

Oklahoma's largest literary science fiction & fantasy con

<http://www.sftulsa.org/>

Radisson Tulsa, HWY 169 & 41st St.

10918 E. 41st Street

Tulsa, OK 74146

- ❖ **GOH: Laurell K. Hamilton**
- ❖ **Artist GOH: John Picacio**
- ❖ **Toastmaster: Elizabeth Moon**
- ❖ **Fan GOHs: Richard & Michelle Zellich**
- ❖ **Special 1632 GOH: Eric Flint**

Art Show, Writers' Conference, Dealers' Room, Short Film Contest, Gaming, Filksinging, Author Readings, Masquerade, Charity Auction, Panels, Podcasts, and Penguin Playhouse Theatre! Of course, this is only some of the many activities and events we have planned.

Conestoga is proud to be host to 1632 Minicon 6. The 1632 fans have been gathering annually at the site of the Ring of Fire for five years. This year, the fans plan a trip to Germany to visit the landing site. Meanwhile the US is not forgotten and the US 1632 minicon will move to Tulsa, Oklahoma in an alternate programming track at Conestoga.

For more information write:

Conestoga, Inc.  
PO Box 700776  
Tulsa, OK 74170-0776  
Or send email to [conestoga@sftulsa.org](mailto:conestoga@sftulsa.org)

### **Vidcon '07, July 20-22, 2007**

Vidcon is Florida's only con devoted to fan fiction in all its forms. Come and interact with other fans who read, write and love fan fiction. We are gen and slash friendly!

<http://www.stonehill.org/vidnews.htm>

Clarion Inn and Convention Center  
2701 E Fowler Ave, Tampa (near University of South Florida)  
Tel: +1-813-971-4710 Fax: +1-813-977-0155

Membership:

Vidcon '07 membership is only \$40 until July 1st, \$45 at door. Vidcon membership includes:

- ❖ **All panels and workshops**
- ❖ **Access to our well-stocked consuite and the dealers' room**
- ❖ **Dinner Friday and Saturday**

Send checks or money orders made out to Vidcon or Stone Hill to:

Stone Hill SF Assoc  
P.O. box 22134  
Plant City, FL 33564-2213  
Or email Deb at [deb@stonehill.org](mailto:deb@stonehill.org)

## News and Reviews

### Sci-fi writers join war on terror

By Mimi Hall, USA TODAY- excerpted. All rights reserved.

[http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2007-05-29-deviant-thinkers-security\\_N.htm?csp=34&POE=click-refer](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2007-05-29-deviant-thinkers-security_N.htm?csp=34&POE=click-refer)

Looking to prevent the next terrorist attack, the Homeland Security Department is tapping into the wild imaginations of a group of self-described "deviant" thinkers: science-fiction writers.

"We spend our entire careers living in the future," says author Arlan Andrews, one of a handful of writers the government brought to Washington this month to attend a Homeland Security conference on science and technology.

Those responsible for keeping the nation safe from devastating attacks realize that in addition to border agents, police and airport screeners, they "need people to think of crazy ideas," Andrews says.

The writers make up a group called Sigma, which Andrews put together 15 years ago to advise government officials. The last time the group gathered was in the late 1990s, when members met with government scientists to discuss what a post-nuclear age might look like, says group member Greg Bear. He has written 30 sci-fi books, including the best seller Darwin's Radio.

Now, the Homeland Security Department is calling on the group to help with the government's latest top mission of combating terrorism.

Although some sci-fi writers' futuristic ideas might sound crazy now, scientists know that they often have what seems to be an uncanny ability to see into the future.

"Fifty years ago, science-fiction writers told us about flying cars and a wireless handheld communicator," says Christopher Kelly, spokesman for Homeland Security's Science and Technology division. "Although flying cars haven't evolved, cellphones today are a way of life. We need to look everywhere for ideas, and science-fiction writers clearly inform the debate."

Bear says the writers offer powerful imaginations that can conjure up not only possible methods of attack, but also ideas about how governments and individuals will respond and what kinds of high-tech tools could

prevent attacks.

The group's motto is "Science Fiction in the National Interest." To join the group, Andrews says, you have to have at least one technical doctorate degree.

"We're well-qualified nuts," says Jerry Pournelle, co-author of the best sellers *Footfall* and *Lucifer's Hammer* and dozens of other books.

Pournelle and others say that science-fiction writers have spent their lives studying the kinds of technologies and scenarios Homeland Security officials have been tackling since the department began operating in 2003.

"We talk to a lot of strange people and read a lot of weird things," Bear says.

At the Washington conference, Bear offered to put biometrics researchers in touch with movie special-effects experts. The experts might be able to help the government determine how to match the face of someone walking through an airport to a grainy photo of a known terrorist.

Bear's latest book, *Quantico*, is a sci-fi thriller that has FBI agents and a bioterrorism expert racing to hunt down a homegrown terrorist.

"We'll play 'What if?' with anything," says Sage Walker, an emergency medicine physician turned sci-fi writer and the only woman in the group. She says the discussions with government officials "tend to be very intense and far-ranging."

So are discussions between the writers. During a coffee break at the conference, Walker, Bear and Andrews started talking about the government's bomb-sniffing dogs. Within minutes, they had conjured up a doggie brain-scanning skullcap that could tell agents what kind of explosive material a dog had picked up.

The 9/11 Commission called the 2001 terrorist attacks a result of the government's "failure of imagination." For this group, Walker says, there's no such thing as an "unthinkable scenario."

Why offer their ideas to the government instead of private companies that pay big bucks?

"To save civilization," *Ringworld* author Larry Niven says. "We do it in fiction. Why wouldn't we want to do it in fact?"

## Media West Con 27

### *Dee Beetem*

For Erika and me, Media West is never just the con. A couple of shows we went to first:

**The Blue Man Group** (Chicago) is a comedy/mime/audience interactive group who wear blue makeup that makes them appear semi-robotic. Their comedy routine, which is rather hard to describe, made me wonder how the anonymity of masks affect us when we watch comedy or drama—whether in Greek tragedy, kabuki, or See Threepio.

**Underneath the Lintel** (Lansing) is a one-man play about a librarian who checks in a book that was overdue for a hundred years. After an increasingly obsessive investigation, he comes to think that it was checked out by the Wandering Jew. At a Borders in Chicago, we told the next customer in line that we were going to Lansing, and he recommended the play. He was the ‘one man’!

### **Media West (really)**

This year’s hot fandom was Supernatural, which I’m not into. Most new songvids were Supernatural too—all to rather whiny music, with the same clips appearing over and over. I’ve now seen Mom getting toasted more than often enough. What I’d like to see is a vid about their Dad done to the song “Winchester Cathedral.” Sick humor! Any takers?

This year Erika and I both signed up for the Panel Death March. A couple of them were:

**Obscure shows** (which we loved but think nobody else did): We all swapped stories about semi-unknowns like Adderly, Legend, My Partner the Ghost. Everyone, of course, was dying to locate copies of these long-cancelled treasures, so I suggested that we could set up an I Finally Found It section on the Several website to connect up the fans who wanted copies of obscure shows, fans who had them, and fans who wanted help converting their videotapes to swappable DVDs. Erika (who was actually on the panel) agreed, so I expect we will be getting more traffic on the Several website.

**Websites vs. fanzines** (is the gap closing?): Yup—no doubt about that. Some fans still insist that they want zines that they can read in bed, but it’s easy enough (and cheaper!) to print out stories from the Net. I discovered that I need to investigate LiveJournal, since apparently a lot of fanfic is most easily accessed through LiveJournal. That being said,

maybe the Several could start up a fanfic webzine or website. Anyone besides me interested? You don't have to live in Houston to be part of this.

Other panels I was on: **Galaxy Quest** (Never give up! Never surrender!), **Is Historical Accuracy in Fanfic Important** (preaching to the choir here) and a couple of crossover panels.

Also I learned that I like caramelized goat cheese.

*By Erika Frensley*

This year I foolishly volunteered for seven panels, thinking that certainly they would not that much of my opinions. I was wrong... My panels included anime panels, Doc Savage (where the very small group discussed the archetype of Doc and whether that archetype was returning today), the morality of the new Doctor Who, crossovers, obscure fandoms, and oldtime radio shows. The play this year was "Harry Potter and the Goblet Survivor, sung to the music of Don Quixote, and starring a ferret as Draco Malfoy. The ferret stole the show...

## Websites of the Month

### DM of the Rings

<http://www.shamusyoung.com/twentsidedtale/?p=612>

Lord of the Rings inspired D&D, so now we have Lord of the Rings as a D&D campaign. You know, as D&D games acutally happen. Rebellious gamers, frustrated DMs, side jokes, computer conversation, pizza wars... the REAL D&D experience.

## Calendar and Maps

<b>June 8, 2007</b>	<b>Several Unlimited Meeting Dee Beetem, 4701 Kinglet 713-729-4716</b>
<b>June 22-24, 2007</b>	<b>Apollocon</b>
<b>June 29, 2007</b>	<b>Video Party (tentative) Steve Dial 713-771-6297</b>

