

# IONISPHERE 5



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Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau**



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**Convention coverage: unfilled**

The Ionosphere is an electrically-conducting sphere completely surrounding the earth. The Encyclopedia Britannica (1959 edition) has this to say of it: "The name is derived from the presence of ions and electrons produced by the sun's ultraviolet radiation. The ionosphere exists in the earth's outer atmosphere—beyond the stratosphere—and extends from heights of approximately 46 to 400 miles. It was more commonly known as the "Kennelly-Heaviside layer" in the period 1901-30. The ionosphere makes possible all long-distance radio communications using high-frequency waves since it reflects the signals back to earth, keeping them from being lost in space.

"Before 1901 it was thought that wireless (radio) waves were useful only for short-distance communications since they were known to travel in straight lines, like light. However, the success of Marconi's trans-Atlantic tests in 1901 led to theories developed independently by A.E. Kennelly and O. Heaviside that radio signals were reflected back to earth from an electrically-conducting region in the earth's outer atmosphere. A similar region had also been proposed by Balfour Stewart about 1882, to explain systematic changes observed in the earth's magnetic field...

"Exploration of the Ionosphere is accomplished by special transmitting and receiving equipment capable of operating over a frequency-range as wide as 0.5 to 20.0 Mc/sec [microseconds] in some cases. The equipment may be manually operated, or [be] completely automatic with photographic recording. As the frequency of the exploring radio waves is increased, it becomes more penetrating, and requires higher densities of electrons for reflection...

"The ionosphere controls long-distance radio communication by establishing upper and lower limits of usable wave-frequencies. The upper limit is determined by its reflecting properties and the lower limit by absorption in the lowest part of the ionosphere. Ionospheric storms decrease the range of usable frequencies, and normally result in poor radio communications."

Thus the earth is completely surrounded by an overhead layer distinguishable from the atmosphere which may be considered something between us and space. Here communications have become involved and this may be considered an apt name for this fanzine based on that premise. The fourth letter has been changed from an "o" to an "I" to distinguish it from a scientific term. We have no actual charged ions surrounding this publication, but we reference something that totally surrounds the earth upon which we attempt to communicate at long distances. Perhaps SETI (the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence; the abbreviation shows it is an established agency) is having signals bounced back to it by the Ionosphere.

The name "Ionisphere" has been registered with my spell-check.

## Editorial      Why Fan-Pro Contacts?

Ever hear of the boom and bust? I first read of this in the fanzine **Sigma Octantis**, edited by John Mussells and Ralph Butcher, two students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The article in which this term was used was written by Joe Gibson. He said that science fiction seemed to him to go through periods of greater and lesser activity. Sometimes science fiction was thriving, sometimes experiencing hard times.

Since I have seen this term used sometimes on the net, I think this concept must have caught on, and indeed it did for awhile in the fanzine in which it was printed; a couple of other zines I read caught it up, and the discussion turned up in the N3F of those times. Back then they had only thirty-five years of news-stand science fiction to discuss. But over the years it has continued to be of interest, there being, I suppose, a lot of statisticians and market analysts in the field. And after seeing several busts, I suppose that gives some credence to the statement.

Of course, as was mentioned in the early days of debate, one man's boom is another man's bust, and so no one can identify a period of time as a bust period. I'd say if there ever was a bust this has been that, with only three marketplace magazines still going, and those obviously on a limited budget. But others will point to all the Hollywood productions of science fiction, and the existence of the Syfy Channel, and others will exhibit the New York Times Best Seller List, and say there's also a boom going on for science fiction—but both Hollywood and the Press are outside of fandom's spectrum.

I think science fiction is being ameliorated and dispersed, lured off in various directions by big money and big press. There is no centrality to it—as Yeats wrote, “Things fall apart, the center cannot hold” and you have a form of anarchy, where nothing continues to have a real identity.

So how call people back into science fiction's own realms?

That's just what fan-pro coordinating is about. There needs to be at least some sense of group identity, made up of interchange, for science fiction to thrive as such. Otherwise we feel our form of reading—fantasy and science fiction both—slipping from our fingers and getting lost in the vast and surging mainstream of literature. We have more to look at, less to hold onto. There has to be activity to keep it going, if we want to keep it going. And one valuable form of activity is interchange...exchange of ideas, discussion of our literature, and possibly books dedicated to science fiction as a topic. There have been a lot of these since the seventies, but there have just been the books, no discussions of them. Magazines don't contain fan material any more, as if the editors had lost cognizance of fandom. Here is a rift where none previously existed, that needs to be corrected—though with only three magazines and with fanzines not being made generally available, it's a difficult thing to do, like the forming of a tight enclave,

with its dangers of cultism. And there are science fiction cults, with people in them finding science fiction to be a gateway into tomorrow. Let us give some credence to this idea.

## On the net. Science Fiction and Fantasy Fan Sites

**Facebook Sites** (Find these by searching for Facebook, then doing a Facebook search for the sites)

SF FANDOM, John Thiel

ASIMOV'S SF, Rob Imes, Sheila Williams, Emily Hockaday

ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION AND FACT MAGAZINE FAN CLUB, James Thomas Green

F&SF APPRECIATION SOCIETY, John Thiel

FAN-EDS, Guy Lillian and Cathy Palmer-Lister

FAANEDS, Nick Farey, Ulrika O'Brien, Catherine Crockett

SOCIETY FOR THE PERPETUATION OF FANNISH FANDOM, Garth Spencer

NINTH FANDOM, John Thiel

N3F, Dennis Davis, George Phillies, David Speakman, Heath Row

SCIENCE FICTION DISCUSSION GROUP, Cus Custer, Ricardo Wang, Paul Cooper, Ang El, Jay Satyama

SF BOOK CLUB, John Grayshaw

POLAR BOREALIS MAGAZINE, Richard Graeme Cameron

SCIENCE FICTION POETS ASSOCIATION, Diane Severson Mori, Deborah Kolodji, Steve Johnson

WEIRD TALES, no supervisor

BEWILDERING STORIES, no supervisor

FANHISTORY, Ro Nagey, Catherine Crockett

SCIENCE FICTION, Jeffrey Redmond, Linda Owens

**Fantasy and SF Sites** STRANGE FICTION <http://strangefiction.com> FANHISTORY

<http://fanac.org>

SF & F WORLD <http://www.sffworld.com> SF MESSAGE BOARD <http://sciencefiction.yuku.com>

SF & F FORUMS—SFF CHRONICLES <https://www.sfchronicles.com> EFANZINES <http://efanzines.com>

We have three interviews this issue. Our first is with David Speakman, our Secretary-Treasurer.

## **IO Interviews**      **DAVID SPEAKMAN**

**DAVID SPEAKMAN is a big name in fandom who has been active for many years and accomplished a lot of things. We're pleased to present a fan interview with him here. His email is [david@speakman.io](mailto:david@speakman.io) .**

**IO:** Looking over the information I have about you, the first thing of interest, considering that we also have an interview with Jacqueline Lichtenberg for this issue, is that you apparently have had a connection with Sime-Gen fandom. Can you describe that?

**SPEAKMAN:** I have no connection to Sime-Gen fandom other than that J. Lichtenberg's Sime-Gen servers were the first host of the N3F website, which I maintained until we moved N3F.org off to our own servers. As for my contact with Sime-Gen, they are good people, but sadly, I am not one of them.

**IO:** I note also that you are involved in the Bay Area SF Association. Could you give some of the history of this, and your present Bay Area sf activities?

**SPEAKMAN:** I am a very casual member of BASFA. Unfortunately, I have not been to a meeting since they moved locations from Sunnyvale to Milpitas. I don't remember what year I joined, but it was many years ago. You pay dues once and you're on the roll forever. So, I guess you can say BASFA is kinda like herpes, once you get a membership, you've got it forever. The organization, in general, is very geared toward cons—in particular the many Bay Area cons and Worldcon. For individual members, the group is very supportive of individual member interests. I particularly like how everyone gets a chance to speak, or not speak, as they wish, at meetings. Also, there is a large overlap of BASFA with local members of the Society of Creative Anachronism's Principality of the Mists of the Kingdom of the West, which I am not a member of, but I married into it. The Bay Area, and in particular the South Bay (Silicon Valley/San Jose), is probably the nerd pride capitol of the United States. With all of the tech companies and NASA Ames Research, nerd culture is celebrated here. It's just expected here.

**IO:** What is Fan Dominion? It sounds big and interesting—I did have a look at the site on the net, and wondered what all there was to it.

**SPEAKMAN:** I am a recovering journalist. In my previous career, I was a reporter and editor for newspapers, magazines, and in broadcasting, for about 20 years until I had a midlife crisis and decided to go to law school at age 38. But, once a journalist, always a journalist.

Fandominion started out as an e-zine that I developed more than a decade ago for N3F. Back then, N3F only had 4 paper zines a year, which was TNFF. I developed the site to help bridge the gap for folks who wanted news more often than every three months—particularly *genre* TV and film news, which gets dusty and useless after a few days, let alone three months. When I became Official Editor of N3F in 2012, the site withered, as I focused my energy on upping the frequency of publications, and bringing back TIGHTBEAM as a separate publication. But Fandominion is not completely dead. I've been working behind the scenes on some intellectual property and business plan items to hopefully re-launch the publication under a new name with combining media and print news and reviews and short stories under SFWA qualifying pay scales. But more on that later.

**IO:** I find that you work in silicon valley. Can you describe this employment?

**SPEAKMAN:** Professional career. I've been a paid writer since I was a teenager, selling stories and high school sports photos to local newspapers for \$20 a pop. In college, I studied graphic design and journalism at Ball State University. As a student, I worked as an intern for the NPR[National Public Radio] affiliate in Muncie, writing a weekly column on public radio in East Central Indiana. After college, this led to gigs at small town weekly and daily newspapers as photographer/reporter/editor until I got a job in the mid-1990s as an assignment editor (the assignment desk is like the managing editors for TV news) at WPTA-TV, the Number One news station in Fort Wayne, Indiana. In September 1987, I transferred to a sister station, KNTV in San Jose, California. My first day at work at KNTV was the day John Denver's plane crashed and we were the closest TV station with a satellite uplink. That was a busy first day.

I worked at NBC and ABC affiliates in the Bay Area before moving on to tech and venture capital reporting in 1999 during the first dot-com boom. I worked with a now-defunct company to develop one of the first streaming news reporting—both video and audio—over the Internet long before YouTube was founded. Any of the techniques we developed are still in use today. After that company folded with the chat-com bust, I returned to my roots in print journalism working for Red Herring magazine and a couple other publications. But with ad dollar dropping in print media, I saw the writing on the wall. So, at age 38, I pulled the plug on journalism and started applying to law schools. I currently work at a boutique law firm in downtown San Jose that focuses on civil litigation. Oddly enough, I am still mostly being paid to write, even if it is legal writing.

**IO:** I'd also like to hear an overall description of your activities in Fandom—when did you get into SF Fandom and what has been going on for you over the course of time in fandom?

**SPEAKMAN:** I grew up in rural northeast Indiana in a town called Churubusco that was basically 1,000 people at the crossroads of two highways cutting through soybean and corn fields. This was in the pre-Internet days. In high school, I became addicted to Heinlein before I discovered my love for short stories, especially those written by writers like John Varley. In 1982, a friend of mine named Gary Anderson and I were the only two SF fans in town. There was no such thing as organized SF fandom in rural America; it was a lonely time for us rural nerds back then.

One day, Gary saw an ad for N3F in the classified section of a short story pro zine (I do not

remember which one, probably Analog), and he joined for \$6. He's still a member today. Anyway, once I saw an issue of Tightbeam he loaned me, which was packed full of letters, musings, and art by weirdos like me, I fell in love with the possibilities. I joined N3F at age 14. This was during the time that Owen Lorion and David Heath were presidents and official editors. It opened up a new world to me. (I've been to too many cons to remember.)

I was an active N3F loccer until my sophomore year in college when I let my membership lapse. In college I was involved with Star Trek: TNG fandom and roleplaying groups (mostly D&D). I also was involved in many Usenet internet groups regarding specific fandoms between 1987 and 1991. I had a period of gaffiation after college until I moved to Nerdvana (Silicon Valley) in 1997. With the advent of the World Wide Web, I rediscovered fandom with online Farscape fandom and proto-Steampunk series, the Secret Adventures of Jules Verne. Through the scifi.com message boards, I got involved with the group that runs DragonCon fan programming for TV and film. My first DragonCon was in 2001 and I've been a fixture ever since. It's odd that a guy who lives in Silicon Valley is more involved with a mega-con based in Atlanta, but that's what happened.

In 2002, I heard the news that Neffer David Heath, Jr., had died. His encouragement through N3F round robins and LoCs is one of the reasons I followed through on my dreams to move away from home and go to college. That nostalgia brought me back to N3F and I've been a fixture ever since. And then, there is my tabletop gaming group and addiction to funding SF-related Kickstarter projects.

**IO:** What impressions do you have of present-day fandom?

**SPEAKMAN:** Fandom is very personal and individualized and people tend to be tribal and competitive in an "us vs them" way. Unfortunately, these are not big-picture compatible viewpoints for a healthy community that is getting increasingly diverse. Aside from personal tastes in fandom, there are also generational differences—mostly due to changes in media technology and availability. For instance, how people born before 1946 discovered their SF Fandom (print and some radio) is completely different than how Baby Boomers discovered SF (pulp & print, film, some broadcast TV), which is vastly different than how Millennials became SF fans (primarily cable and streaming TV, from the internet with print as a minor first exposure). Again, these are generalities and it varies by individual, but there are true generational differences in how SF fandom is perceived.

Back in the pre-World Wide Web days, organized fandom was limited and it led to the emergence of Big Name Fans, who through inherent gatekeeping of the means of fan interaction, kept fandom from the 1940s through the early 1990s as fairly cohesive. Fandom on an interstate level was basically fandom by mail punctuated by cons. BNFs, as gatekeepers to fandom, had a lot of inherent control on shaping the identity of fandom and the means by which fans interacted with one another. People got very comfortable with this model. Then, the internet happened and all hell broke loose. With the advent, easy-to-make (and free) options for masses of fans to interact *via* their own websites and in infinite niches, the traditional model was turned on its end.

Not helping matters is that organized "traditional" fandom seems resistant to change. Originally created by those born before 1946, traditional fandom is primarily a print-oriented

affair. Boomers, who also were introduced to SF primarily by print, kept up this tradition. It's not uncommon for folks to refer to fans as "real fans" (print, film, comics), who are ignored as a niche fandom. This distinction seems like odd to a Gen Xer like me—and worse, most Millennials find it nonsensically absurd. We also are baffled by the Hugo nominations categories, which seems obsessed with arbitrary word counts on print SF, but lumps what few media nominations there are as long and short form. More than once I've heard an older fan tell a younger congoer to "turn off the TV and pick up a book." This is offensive bullying. It's also that kind of attitude that drives younger fans to the cons like DragonCon rather than WorldCon.

Advice I have for current fandom is that—like it or not—there is a generational shift. Whether they are considered "real" fans or not, people born after 1964—whose primary fandom, in general, is tv, film, or comics, are a sizeable majority of folks who consider themselves SF fans. And most of us, also, are avid readers of print SF. Pooh-poohing the so-called media fans as not real is a lose-win game for traditional fandom. As Worldcon and the Hugos become increasingly irrelevant to the majority of fans, both are in danger of being supplemented by an alternative, more inclusive culture that does not try to tutor people on how to be "real" fans. Instead, traditional fandom should listen, learn, and change with the times. Otherwise, the younger folks, who are the majority of fans today, are going to get fed up, realize they are the majority, and start pooh-poohing traditional fandom as a minority niche of "print fans" who are out of touch with SF fandom in general.

This possibility is sad, because there are valid lessons media fans can learn from print fans and their accumulated wisdom. One example is a concept of sercon—serious and constructive criticism of the SF product, which applies as much to media as to print.



A very interesting and instructive first interview with our secretary-treasurer. Next is an author member.



Photo and costume by David Rubin

## **IO INTERVIEWS** JACQUELINE LICHTENBERG



**JACQUELINE LICHTENBERG is an N3F member who has quite a history of both**

**fan writing and professional writing, and remains active on the net. In 1970**

**she was publishing Star Trek fiction in Trek zines, through which she met**

**Jean Lorrah, who was a professionally selling author. She published a book**

**with Bantam called STAR TREK LIVES when Star Trek was cancelled, and**

**made it a cause to promote and further publicize the show. Her first novel,**

**HOUSE OF ZEOR, was published in 1974 by Doubleday, a Sime-Gen novel.**

**Sime-Gen stories concern two non-human races in a synergy-like interchange.**

**She originated this series in a story published by IF in 1969 called**

**“Operation High Time”. Her Sime-Gen stories were written in collaboration**

**with Jean Lorrah and were published in the mid-70s by Doubleday in hard**

**cover and DAW and others in paperback. Some of her SF work has been**

**promotion. There has been a Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society**

**known as the JLAS, of which an observer wrote “she and her coterie were**

**making every concerted effort to create a fandom for her Sime-Gen books**

**akin to the Darkover one of her friend Marion Zimmer Bradley or the Star**

**Trek fandom she started out in.” JLAS membership included Peter Weston,**

**Marion Zimmer Bradley, Anne McCaffrey, John Foyster, and Alan Dean Foster.**

**It is said to have been originated by Charles Platt. In the 70s and 80s TNFF**

**and Tightbeam were full of discussions of these books.**

**Her email is [thej1box@gmail.com](mailto:thej1box@gmail.com) .**

**She does occasional reviews at**

**<http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com> .**

**IO:** You were said to have entered into science fiction and fantasy writing *via* fandom, and with help from Marion Zimmer Bradley. I recall that she was one of the people who did the fanzine **Femizine**. Did you have any connection with that fanzine or the fan group involved?

**JL:** No, not *via* MZB and you've got your timeline wrong. I've never been a feminist and could do a whole essay on where the movement has been coopted and derailed.

I've been an active Neffer since the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, went pro at 25 with a first sale to Fred Pohl, the FIRST Sime-Gen story to be published. Three to five years AFTER that, during which I originated the STAR TREK LIVES project, I also sold HOUSE OF ZEOR—on Marion Zimmer Bradley's suggestion that I send it to Doubleday. Much later, she recommended Sime-Gen to DAW and they did RENSIME, as original mass market. The Marion Bradley connection is a Trek connection, *via* Devra Langsam at a Sime-Gen fanzine collating party. It's all really complicated, but there is no difference between Sime-Gen and Trek.

**IO:** Apparently you've done a lot of convention-going. Were you representing causes, movements, or groups when you went to conventions? Could you give a view of the conventions you've attended, what went on and how you fared at them?

**JL:** [answered with a series of links showing the following] All Sime-Gen titles and all Jacqueline Lichtenberg and/or Jean Lorrah titles are "intimate adventures". Jean Lorrah is the co-creator of Sime-Gen...Intimate Adventure was a proposal for a new *genre*. She says of this, "The new genre is already spread all over publishing—you'll find examples in every genre and in general literature, which is why it's so hidden it's gone unnoticed. It's right there in plain sight, therefore invisible." She distinguished this genre from "Action/Adventure" stories in which characters have no relationships that can change the direction of the plot. "The story's resolution must come through the protagonist DEFEATING the antagonist in physical combat. Intimacy replaces action in an Intimate Adventure. Instead of combat to the death on a field of battle, the protagonist must face trials and dangers, terrors and tests on the field of intimacy. Instead of weapons, there are emotions and psychology. Found in this genre are STAR TREK and ANDROMEDA, among others. You will notice all these prominent adventures have one thing in common—a vocal and enthusiastically creative following pouring out stories, articles, songs, conventions, jewelry, fellowship, and forming lifelong relationships." She became a Star Trek fan in April 1963, and in 1969 she started selling Sime-Gen Universe stories.

**IO:** Research says you've done occult writing. Could you describe some of your occult writing and give some of the titles?

**JL:** "Occult" covers a lot of territory. All my world building is based on a universe model that includes the realms beyond what our current science investigates. Through decades my own view of the universe (what EE Smith called in the Lensman series the visualization of the Macrocosmic All) has grown, morphed, expanded and changed. So all my published titles include (whether the characters or readers know it or not) the unseen, unknowable substrata behind reality.

A lot of my thinking can be traced through my reviews column “Re-readable Books”, written over the twenty years I was a science fiction reviewer (paid) for the **Monthly Aspectarian**. I now do an occasional review on a blogspot. The most basic and revealing material is the Tarot books I’ve done—I did two of them as Alien Romance blog entries so they are up for free reading, and then I put the set of five books up on Amazon Kindle to be handy for anyone interested. Then all of the Tarot just for writers’ posts were compiled and re-written into the five volume NOT SO MINOR ARCANA.

All of this is what I have developed BEHIND what is behind all the fiction I’ve done. Some reflects my understanding of the “real world”—and a lot does not, but is only theory that works for fiction. Almost none is known to the characters and never inflicted on the readers.

I do see that fiction, to have verisimilitude, must depict that “unseen” and unknowable dimension to human life—all writers infuse their work with something to fill that position in world building. But writers must convey that dimension in the language it exists in—the non-verbal world. It is not verbalizable.

**IO:** I’ve heard that the Kraith series was fan fiction. Is this a correct description of it? If so, was it developed into professional fiction?

**JL:** Kraith is some of my earliest works. I created the Kraith alternate Star Trek Universe, basically to argue that Gene Rodenberry did it all wrong (which is what fanfic is for and what it does—corrects the original I.P.) I created Kraith by adding Darkover to aired Trek. And I sprinkled in a lot of other favorite science fiction universes. The elements I lifted from these established, famous works were all about that “unseen and unknowable” non-verbal dimension to the fictional world-building (for Star Trek, for example, “Why is touch telepathy real in this universe?” What property of the space/time continuum facilitates touch telepathy?). I also created Kraith to be the laboratory for developing the Sime-Gen Universe into commercial fiction.

Kraith is fanfic in Gene Rodenberry’s universe. My objective was to study why fans loved Star Trek so much that they would write fan-fic in the Star Trek Universe (the answer burgeoned into the book STAR TREK LIVES!). I had to capture that unseen and unknowable scintillating effect that caused fanfic.

I wrote main plot line stories for Kraith (in T-Negative) [A Trek Zine], studied the responses and letters in other Trek zines (Kraith fanfic, even spun off some alternate-alternate Universe) and wrote House of Zeor to demonstrate my thesis in STL, which was that the main force of that draw was what I called THE SPOCK EFFECT, one of the tailored effects I identified in Star Trek Lives! The point was to prove that I understood why the fans love Star Trek (But Gene Rodenberry, most of Hollywood, and most fans and publishers did not understand it).

The core of the matter is INTIMATE ADVENTURE; not space ships, not hand-to-hand combat, not phasers, not beam me up, Scotty, not conquering, and not getting away with breaking the Prime Directive. (Not even pointed ears? I thought that’s a biggie.) The core of the appeal is INTIMATE ADVENTURES.

For decades I identified that as the HIDDEN GENRE. Jean Lorrah agreed I had nailed the dynamic; but as an English professor she identified what I had articulated not as a genre but as a

plot Archetype. I can easily go with that explanation. But to me it is hidden genre.

Today the world has changed markedly, and we now have mass market publication of the unhidden genre I pioneered, which is now called Science Fiction Romance—and that is one subdivision of Intimate Adventure. Intimacy is not about romance or sexuality. It exists on an entirely different plane of reality.

Intimate Adventure replaces the “action” in Action Adventure (which is what Rodenberry thought he had created) with an adventure (a move outside your comfort zone) on the level of becoming entangled (like modern physics’ defining of relationships between particles) within the personality dynamics of another person (human or not).

One great example is the older film AFRICAN QUEEN. One of my favorite examples in science fiction is Hal Clement’s MISSION OF GRAVITY, or NEEDLE. The only model our current human culture has for this type of relationship-driven fiction is sexual relationships, but intimacy has nothing to do with sex. Intimacy is an independent variable. But that is incomprehensible to humans, so most readers see only closely entangled emotional relationships as sexual, while in practice in our current civilization sexuality is often the antithesis of intimacy. Many marriages break up for lack of intimacy while the sexual component runs hot.

In Gaming, there is the term “immersive”—which includes much of the Intimate Adventure dynamic—characters you become, characters you emulate or admire, and know, somewhere deep inside where words do not exist. Intimacy is non-verbal.

**IO:** What are the publication dates of your fanzine, Ambrov Zeor? When was the first issue, when the last?

**JL: Ambrov Zeor**, a fanzine devoted to Sime-Gen, publishing fanfic by fan writers willing to be edited by me, started within months of the publication of HOUSE OF ZEOR—1974. I’m not sure when the final print issue was published—I think we topped twenty issues. I think the first issues were what I did on five carbon copies done on a Selectric typewriter. Most of the material we have rights for is up for free reading on the net. There were at one time something like five fanzines devoted to fiction, non-fiction, and letterzine style—we even had an apazine for awhile. So while fans were writing Kraith (there were fifty creative writers, artists, and poets who created Kraith with me—a structure modelled on how a TV series is created) I was writing Star Trek Lives and Sime-Gen. I sold the first Sime-Gen story in 1968 and it came out in January 1969. House of Zeor was the second fiction project I undertook after failing at encapsulating the complex Sime-Gen Universe in a fanfic (I was widely known for Kraith; easy to find)—and since most were Star Trek fanzine-trained writers (or like Jean, already professional writers), it took only a few rewrites to bring Sime-Gen submissions up to professional standards.

Today’s readers of fanfic know the Beta Reader transition started with online fiction—Beta Readers function as editors in many instances, and are more famous than the writers they work with. Star Trek fanzines began that tradition as **T-Negative** and **Spockanalia** were both founded and edited by academic professionals (Devra Langsam is now a retired children’s librarian). They knew writing and imposed high standards. Ruth Berman had me rewrite a few times. And subsequent zines started trying to hit that high mark on T-Neg and Spockanalia. Production standards—many missed widely and didn’t know it. When Ambrov Zeor started, the Trekzines’

high standard of professional level writing carrying a story payload of fannish appeal was our minimum standard. Writers submitting to us were willing to take the tedious editing mostly because they were used to it. All the editors who published *Ambrov Zeor* (there were quite a few over the years) were also well-educated women willing to let me work with writers to improve the readability of the stories (not necessarily absolute adherence to the Published Universe's background).

Before long, there was just way too much Sime-Gen fanfiction being submitted for one zine, and other zines started, most notably **Companion In Zeor** started (on mimeo) by Karen MacLeod—and when we folded the print *Ambrov Zeor* Karen hung onto the web and continued doing issues that were not printed on papyrus. *Companion In Zeor* is still accepting submissions!

But, last year, at the series publisher's request, Karen and Zoe edited an anthology of fanfic short stories, which has been published. This year one of our most popular writers has begun turning three of her fanzine stories into professional fiction (which takes a lot because fanfic can assume the readers have read the books, and professional fiction cannot make that assumption).

So this year, Sime-Gen book 14 is out, the first in a trilogy of Sime-Gen novels by Mary Lou Mendum (and Jean Lorrah and I meddling with this and that to make it fit the official timeline), *A CHANGE OF TACTICS*. It is essentially the same as the book posted on [simegen.com](http://simegen.com) for free reading, except the background is added, and the plot now begins the development of heavier-than-air flight, and the Selyn battery technology necessary for that—the very technology and subsequent scientific breakthroughs that allows for space flight.

Space is the natural setting for Sime-Gen, but due to fan curiosity, we got stuck in the horse-and-buggy era of redevelopment of human civilization. The game company *Loveful* that has licensed 150 years the Sime-Gen timeline to develop a rip-roaring good space war originally passed over Sime-Gen novels, but when I pointed them to *EASY AS HOP, SKIP, AND JUMP*, they jumped at the chance to get the license. Sime-Gen is humanity in space, but an altered and charged, morphed and redesigned humanity.

**IO:** You've spoken of "personal fiction" in a quote I've found, and described it as involving man's relation with other men, and the converse. This sounds existential. Do you think there is anything existential about your writing?

**JL:** No, "existential" is a fairly well-defined academic term, and when it comes to fiction, I'm no academic. I generally dislike any novel labeled "existential".

Science fiction asks "What if...?" "If only..." or "if this goes on...". The best science fiction always uses all three. My contention is that science fiction is not a genre at all, but literature. To prove that contention, as I proved the Spock effect by selling *House of Zeor* on a money-back guarantee to Spock fans (not general Trek fare but Spock fare), I am working to have a Sime-Gen novel in each and every genre.

Jean has done *TO KISS OR TO KILL* in the structure of a Romance genre novel.

Mary Lou Mendum's *CLEAR SPRINGS CHRONICLES* are sociological science fiction featuring Saul Alinsky's rules for Radicals (in an era when there is no trace of his book, his work, his reputation, or even a fertile human culture ready for his technique). *House of Zeor* is a "damsel in distress" western. *UNTO ZEOR, FOREVER* is a teen doctor novel (a genre! Today

you see it on the popular TV series *Bones*, and other medical drawings. *RENSIME* is a science fiction novel with politics (and a little terrorist warfare). *MAHOGANY TRINROSE* is a “coming of age” novel. And so on, each novel specific to a genre, showing you can write any genre IN science fiction. Sime-Gen is not “mixed genre”, it is no genre at all. But the entire series is science fiction—pure, genuine, nothing-but, science fiction.

Science fiction fictionalizes (and maybe idealizes) science—science is the systematic accumulation of tested and reliable facts about reality. Fiction is the systematic accumulation of facts about the unseen and unknowable component of reality—about “life” and the “meaning of life”—about life, the universe, and everything, about Matters of Ultimate Concern.

So to create Sime-Gen to be the vehicle to prove science fiction is not a genre, I read everything in the library on writing, stage writing, TV writing, novel writing, everything about writing. Today, I point my writing students at Blake Snyder’s *SAVE THE CAT!* series to learn the difference between creative writing and commercial writing.

To write science fiction, you have to take one premise (only one) of known, solid, settled science and challenge it—maybe with some of the latest discoveries, or simply defying the premise “it is impossible to go faster than light”. So: “what if it were possible to go faster than light?” Or: “If only it wasn’t impossible”. Or, “If this new scientific or mathematical discovery goes on in this direction...”

In the 1960s, the general public (Trek viewers) were introduced to the science fiction we’d been reading for decades. Anything about *Star Trek* was the least bit original. Gene Roddenberry made big at that by trying to use established sf writers, and succeeded only marginally, and displeased the Powers That Be because of the hassle of dealing with novelists trying their first screenplay.

When *Trek* was cancelled (the first time) I thought that was the end. My faith in human nature was deeply shaken. Then came the rebellion (we were science fiction fans, after all!) and if “they” wouldn’t do it for us, we’d jolly well do it for ourselves! Most of “us” were women, and most of Hollywood was run by men (we didn’t know Lucille Ball’s role in getting *Trek* on the air). Hollywood didn’t think *Trek* was popular because they thought women didn’t like science, or science fiction. That delusion still prevails in some circles. Most of those creating and writing fanzines and putting on cons were WOMEN! Note that *Sime-Gen* #14 is by three women—a PhD in biology, a chemist and an English professor. Also note that the national women’s movement hasn’t noticed us yet.

So *Star Trek* fanzines were born, and I knew humanity was fine. It was just Hollywood that was a bit dull.

We now have a real online TV original *Trek* made by other than them. And new *Trek* coming to a streaming subscription-only service.

Back during cancellation, I looked at where the trends were leading and recreated a science fiction premise I’d had brewing since I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I joined the N3F. By the late 1960s I had a much better grip on what it took to do commercial fiction, so I reworked and simplified the unseen and unknowable foundation of the Sime-Gen Universe. Since it created on the non-

verbal level, it took decades to articulate the foundation, and what I finally came up with still isn't commercially bedazzling.

"LACK OF COMPASSION IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE." That theme is homage to Robert A. Heinlein, in case you missed that.

One of the rules of commercial storytelling that I learned in high school is "Everything changes except human nature!" That's the premise behind teaching the Greek Plays, or Shakespeare, *etc.* I hated these courses, and wrote papers trashing the classics (like *LES MISERABLES*) for lack of IMAGINATION. Didn't get good grades for it, either.

The science fiction premise I hit on is "what if Human Nature changed?" (Since then, a number of writers watching genetics research have explained that premise, but none that I know of have yet hit on comparison.)

That's science fiction. Take what everyone knows beyond doubt to be there, and ask "What if... it is not true?"

So here's the UNSEEN AND UNKNOWABLE foundation of Sime-Gen—God looks at the miserable mess humans are making of life, repeatedly through the millennia, and tries to teach us by introducing THE LESSONS (Garden of Eden, Noah, Tower of Babel, Mount Sinai) of how we manage life in physical reality. Very clearly (look at our wars) we have just not grasped this simple lesson—have a little compassion for each other; five of the Ten Commandments are about how to treat other people, but we just don't pay attention. So the foundation behind Sime-Gen is 1) What if God is real? 2) What if our repeated refusal to learn compassion wears out His patience? 3) What if we won't learn, he'll just do it for us—teach us once and for all definitely to have compassion for each other? So what if he mutates humans so that lack of compassion is a death sentence?

Another premise is REINCARNATION—what if reincarnation is real? If it is not real now, for us ancient humans, what if God makes it real so our stubborn souls can LEARN THE LESSON by being born and living over and over until we can "get it"? So for another thousand years or so, souls are born and live short lives and die ugly deaths until they LEARN lack of compassion is a capital offense against the (recently revised) Laws of Nature.

WHAT IF HUMAN NATURE CHANGES—that? The science fiction premise GOD IS REAL might be a Horror Genre Premise for some readers. But the characters in these stories don't know that's what happened or why. They don't know God, and for the most part don't care. I introduced the Church of the Purity and later Jean Lorrh created the Church of the Unity—because all human cultures create religions. But though the churches play a big role in the CLEAR SPRINGS CHRONICLES, the characters for the most part don't care.

So yes, there is a great deal of esoteric thinking behind what is behind what is way way behind the novels. But this is not "existential" in the academic way of thinking. It is the systematic, almost scientific, application of Ancient Wisdom and mysticism to World-Building in order to create a place for these (truly odd) stories. These are stories of Intimate Adventure—what intimacy is (and is not) and why humans are built for it.

Thematic material ranges through the definition of "human"—the use and abuse of power—the definition of government—the meaning and use of self-discipline—the meaning of "life" and



reason for living—the juxtaposition of the individual and the group. Perhaps the biggest envelope theme around Sime-Gen is that life is not a zero-sum genre where winning is rewarded. Life is an infinite universe genre where excellence and achievement are rewarded by the Laws of Nature; knocked back to almost nothing of a population (by unspecified, unremembered, untraceable causes), humans would rebuild civilization (or would they bother?)

What theories would such humans develop to explain their predicament? What pains would they avoid?

This rebuild of civilization depicts a changed humanity rebuilding without digging up what Ancients did. They just do it a new way.

With the essence of the human spirit radically changed at its very source, would we be ready to go to the stars? What would we find there? How would we react?

It's the Space Age that interests me, and that is what Sime-Gen is all about.

There is that mere 150 years of space-war against non-humans (who are much more like us Ancients because they have never had the advantage of mutating) to get through, and then those really get interesting.

**We're pleased to get this interview from Jacqueline Lichtenberg, one which answers many questions general fandom has had about what's been going on for so many years. Here are some links which provide further information about some of the subjects appearing in this interview:**

#### **LINKS**

Jacqueline Lichtenberg: <https://amazon.com/author/jacquelinelichtenberg>

Sime-Gen: <http://www.simegen.com/jl>

Reviews by Jacqueline Lichtenberg: <https://www.simegen.com/jl/reviews/rereadablebooks/trekcon.html>

Intimate Adventure essay: <http://www.simegen.com/jl/intimateadventure.html>

Fiction from Ambrov Zeor: <http://simegen.com/sgfandom>

Astrology: [http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com/2010/03/pausing-for-you-to-catch-up-with-me\\_30.html](http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com/2010/03/pausing-for-you-to-catch-up-with-me_30.html)

Tarot: [http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com/2010/pausing-for-you-to-catch-up-with-me\\_23.html](http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com/2010/pausing-for-you-to-catch-up-with-me_23.html)

If: <http://www.simegen.com/jl/IFS-GConnection.html>



Our third interview is with Matthew Hughes, a writer of science fantasies. Mr. Hughes has been found at the science fiction forums on the net and still is found at the F&SF Forum, and also on Facebook. We'll learn more about him in what I'm trying hard to make the next page.

## **IO INTERVIEWS**      MATTHEW HUGHES



**Matthew Hughes writes science fiction and fantasy.**

**His sff novels are: FOOLS ERRANT and FOOL ME TWICE, BLACK BRILLION, MAJESTRUM, THE COMMONS, THE SPIRAL LABYRINTH, TEMPLATE, HESPIRA, THE OTHER, THE DAMNED BUSTERS, COSTUME NOT INCLUDED, HELL TO PAY, SONG OF THE SERPENT (as Hugh Matthews), and A WIZARD'S HENCHMAN.**

**His short fiction has appeared in ASIMOV'S, FANTASY &**

**SCIENCE FICTION,  
LIGHTSPEED, POSTSCRIPTS, STORYTELLER, INTERZONE,  
and several  
invitation-only anthologies edited by Gardner Dozois and  
George R.R. Martin,  
including the best-seller, ROGUES. He has lately been self-  
publishing  
collections of his short fiction as 9 TALES OF HENGHIS  
HAPTHORN, THE  
MEANING OF LUFF AND OTHER STORIES, THE COMPLEAT  
GUTH BANDAR, and  
DEVIL OR ANGEL AND OTHER STORIES.  
Formerly a journalist, he spent more than twenty-five years as  
a freelance  
speech writer for Canadian corporate executives and political  
leaders.  
His works have been short-listed for the Aurora, Nebula,  
Philip K. Dick, A.E.  
Van Vogt, and Endeavor Awards.  
His web page is at <http://www.matthewhughes.org>  
He has a blog at [https://www.amazon.com/Matthew-  
Hughes/e/](https://www.amazon.com/Matthew-Hughes/e/)  
His email address is [himself@archonate.com](mailto:himself@archonate.com)**

**IO:** A look at your bibliography shows that much of your writing is fairly recent, and the earliest date I spotted was in the 1990s. How long have you been writing fantasy and science fiction? What was your first sale? Was it to one of the magazines?

**HUGHES:** I wrote a very bad fantasy novel in 1974, but I didn't make a serious effort until the mid-1980s, when I gradually wrote my first fantasy novel, FOOLS ERRANT. In 1987, I landed a major New York literary agent, the late Oscar Collier, but he was unable to find a publisher for it. "Not a typical fantasy novel" was the usual reason given. Finally, I sold it on my own to a Canadian publisher, Maxwell Macmillan Canada, who brought it out just as the firm was being taken over and dissolved. I sold it myself, again, in 2000 to Warner Aspect, which published it in 2001 along with a sequel, FOOL ME TWICE. But 2001 was not a good year for light-hearted comical fantasy.

I didn't begin selling to the magazines until my second sff novel, BLACK BRILLION, was in Tor's pipeline. I thought I'd raise my profile by selling short stories to the magazines. My first effort was "Mastermindless", the first Henghis Hapthorn story. I sold it to F&SF on my first try. Altogether, I've sold about eighty shorts, novelettes, and novellas, virtually every one I've written.

**IO:** How long have you been reading fantasy and science fiction? What got you interested in it?

**HUGHES:** I started around 1962, because my eldest brother used to leave magazines and paperbacks around and I would read anything in those days. I was particularly captured by the Jack Vance novella, “The Dragon Masters” in *Galaxy*. But I tailed off reading sff in the mid-1980s. I supposed my tastes had not evolved with the field. I still read Vance and Gene Wolfe when they produced a book, but otherwise I gravitated to crime writing, especially Elmore Leonard, Lawrence Sanders, and several British authors.

**IO:** You’ve been on the forums quite a bit; you seem to like to do some mixing and talking. Have you been in any science fiction clubs, or at any science fiction events? Do you do any article writing?

**HUGHES:** No article writing. I don’t know enough. I used to be active on rec.arts.sf. written in the Usenet days. I used to go to cons, but haven’t since WorldCon in London in 2014. Once I get my enlarged prostate whittled down, I’ll probably go to a few again. I enjoy doing panel work.

**IO:** What is your impression of magic? How would you compare it with science? Do you have any thoughts on the placement of these in the world?

**HUGHES:** No deep thoughts. I’ve adapted some of Jack Vance’s ideas for spellcasting. There are definite rules and it’s an art that requires practice and dedication. It’s also about the focusing and application of will to what I call “fluxions” which are similar to ley lines and form a network of magical power conduits, in several discreet colors, crisscrossing the landscape.

My main contribution to the concept has been the idea that, quite arbitrarily, the fundamental principle of the universe switches arbitrarily and randomly from rationalism to magic (which I call “sympathetic association”) every few thousand years, then back again. The idea came to me when I was considering the career of Sir Isaac Newton, who began as a dedicated alchemist and finished as the leading proponent of the Enlightenment and scientific method. I wondered if the world had changed when he was in mid-career.

**IO:** One of your titles emphasizes Hell, and it seems to figure a lot in your stories. Are some or many of your stories set in Hell? Do you have thoughts about Hell you are trying to put across in your stories?

**HUGHES:** I once had an idea about what it would be like if Hell went on strike. Years later, I developed that into a novelette that I sold to F&SF. Then I pitched it as the basis for a novel to Angry Robot Books and they liked it. They wanted a trilogy, so I wrote the TO HELL AND BACK series. But that was mere happenstance. Mostly I’ve written about far-future milieus, like the Dying Earth or the age that immediately precedes it.

**IO:** You do series stories in a number of settings. Would you list these series stories, like the Raffalon stories?

**HUGHES:** Okay. There’s Raffalon, which I’m just about to release as a nine-story collection, 9 TALES OF RAFFALON, first as an ebook and later as a POD paperback.

Then there are the Henghis Hapthorn stories, again nine of them, and most of them appeared in F&SF. The first six were the jumping-off point for the three Hapthorn novels.

There is a series of stories about Gunth Bandar, explorer of the collective unconscious, which also ran in F&SF. Guth was originally a supporting character in BLACK BRILLION and would

have had a larger role to play, but Tor wanted the novel shorter than I intended it to be, for purely dollars-and-cents reasons. So I decided to write the rest of Guth's adventures as a series of shorter pieces which I later assembled into the novel *THE COMMONS*, published by Robert J. Sawyer's imprint. It's a kind of companion novel to *BLACK BRILLION*.

Now I'm working on a series of Dying Earth fantasy stories involving Baldemar, a young man who grows up to be a wizard's henchman. They're running in F&SF. I'm also doing a series of Sam Spade space-opera stories about Erm Kaslo, a far-future private eye. They were going to appear in **Lightspeed**, but things change and I'm now looking for a new home for them.

**IO:** How would you describe Raffalon as a character? What is his significance to you as a character?

**HUGHES:** He's like any professional thief, a high-scorer on the psychopathy scale. My experience of the world doesn't lend itself to an appreciation of pure good-guy heroes. I'm drawn to the anti-hero, instead. Raffalon doesn't have great significance to me, although he does represent an aspect of my own career: he's reasonably skilled at what he does, a solid journeyman, but he encounters more of his share of bad luck. For an example, revisit the history of *FOOLS ERRANT* as outlined above.

**IO:** Do you have any major purposes in writing?

**HUGHES:** I like to entertain, and because I'm pretty good at it, it's rewarding. I like to hear from fans. Also, I've always made my living as a writer, mostly as a freelance speechwriter, all my life. So it's what I've done since 1971 or thereabouts to put groceries on the table. Now I'm writing sff and crime (often mixed together) because I enjoy the work. I have something of a fragmented psych, in a Jungian sense, but when I'm writing I seem to be more complete than at other times.

Mr. Hughes' bibliography can be found at [www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?8986](http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?8986)



## LETTERS

**GEORGE PHILLIES:** Congratulations on your two excellent interviews, with Chris Nuttall and Robert J. Sawyer. Your cover was superlative! We could

definitely use STFnal covers just like that for TIGHTBEAM.

Their histories in writing were very different. I heartily endorse Sawyer's claim that the best fiction is Science Fiction. His bit about exploring gender, *etc.*, is a literary taste. Perhaps it would be interesting to work through all the Neffers who are authors, to be sure we have a fannish perspective.

As some readers may be distantly aware, there was a minor kerfuffle over the Hugo awards a few years ago, which led to Hugo fandom being awarded a Neffie for reviving that most ancient and honorable of all customs, the all-hobby fan feud. People have not had so much fun since the First Great Exclusion Debate. It is good to note that in their artistic styles the two authors come from opposite perspectives on this issue, but both write wonderful works.

Chris mentions doing military space SF and fantasy...his styles on these are very different.

Please keep up the very good work.

*I will do that. I'll be happy to edit cover art for Tightbeam, hope I can find some covers you will really like.*

*I'll be glad to interview any authors we have in the NFFF, as soon as I learn that that's what they are. You keep giving me tips, I'll keep interviewing them...if they're not too shy for an interview.*

*Perhaps Chris should do an article on military SF for one of the NFFF zines.*

**LLOYD PENNEY:** I first met Robert J. Sawyer as a fellow student at our alma mater, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto, now Ryerson University. We both had short stories published in the school's literary journal, the White Wall Review, and Rob was the editor for one year, too.

*Interesting to hear where Mr. Sawyer got some of his technological education.*

Correspondence for this zine should be addressed to [kinethiel@comcast.net](mailto:kinethiel@comcast.net)





**VIEW OF THE IONOSPHERE**

**A new member of the NFFF writes the following story:**

**NOT LONG by Will Mayo**

**But then standing there at the edge of the clouds looking down at the earth I said to my father how sorry I was that I'd looked so much to make a name for myself rather than concentrating on living a while.**

**"It doesn't matter," he said. "They won't be along that much longer."**

**And that was that.**

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