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SideTrekked



NASA is predicting a full moon for Christmas 2015

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Letter to the Editor

Editor's Note: This Letter was received in response to our June edition, Issue 53.

July 8, 2015

Dear SF Londoners,

Thanks to Mark Ambrogio for editing the June 2015 issue of *SideTrekked*, Issue 53. As I write, I am not sure about an e-mail address to send this to you...maybe I can do it through Facebook, have to figure it out. I get hundreds of fanzines every year, and I respond to all that I get, so here's a letter to perhaps publish in the next issue.

Ana Tirolese, I hope you enjoyed Ad Astra this year. This is kind of our home convention, and I have been there every year since 1982. Yvonne's been to every single Ad Astra since 1980. We were in the dealer's room (Penney's Steampunk General Store), and we have already purchased tables there for next year. (I remember the Star Fleet piper...he wanted to perform to pay respects to the passing of Leonard Nimoy.)

It had been quite some time since we'd been to London (anyone remember Rhinocon?), but we were there earlier this year. After getting to know the Harry Potter fans and steampunk fans in London, we went to the City of London steampunk gala, and we had just the best time. We hope to return next year! Chris Rose was our gracious and informative hostess. (I am reminded...anyone with the club old enough to remember Bill Paul? He was my tenuous contact with London fandom for many years, with his group, the LaffGuards.)

Coming up this summer...Yvonne and I will have tables at ConBravo! 2015 in Hamilton the end of July, and at Unplugged Expo 4 at the International Centre in Mississauga. Anyone coming to those cons? If so, see you there. And if not there, perhaps see you with the next issue of *SideTrekked*.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney
penneys@bell.net

Lloyd also sent the following note to the club, as the journal was about to be published:

May 2016 be quiet and happy for all!

Original Fiction: *The Bailout*

The President looked up from the monitor.

"Again?"

"I'm afraid so, sir," Allen Riker, the Secretary of the Treasury said. "Past Administrations have set the precedent, and I doubt there is enough political capital to resist another bailout of the auto sector without serious damage to the rest of your foreign and domestic agenda."

"Really, sir, compared to the cost of the ongoing Indonesian intervention and the Multinational flotilla in the Indian Ocean, bailing out the auto sector is really a drop in the bucket," offered Marianne Spears from her seat as Secretary of State.

From the other end of the Cabinet table, the Secretary of Defense cleared his throat.

"Pardon me, sir, but just because other administrations choose to do something does not necessarily require this administration to be constrained to the same path."

The President looked up with interest.

"What do you mean, David?"

"Well, Mr. President, why have previous administrations chosen to make these bailouts? While we all know there are political reasons involving payouts to their supporters, the public reasons have always been to foster competitiveness, preserve the industrial base and preserve jobs."

"David, part of the reason this Administration was elected was because all the previous bailouts failed so spectacularly. You can hardly be suggesting that we offer the same shopworn reasoning to the public now?"

"Mr. President," the Secretary of State interrupted, "Surly you can see this is simply an attempt to prevent the transfer of funds from Defense to support the bailout, particularly..."

Before she could finish, the table erupted in a confusion of shouting claims and counterclaims as the various cabinet secretaries suddenly realized that their budgets could be raided to fund another auto sector bailout. While the President's political strategist and chief of staff both called for order, the Secretary of Defense sat quietly and allowed the shouting to pass around him. After a few moments, calm returned and the Secretary began to speak again.

"While my esteemed colleagues might have reason to believe my department is not eager to transfer funding (and they are right, of course), we need to look at the broader picture. Now Kevin there (pointing at the Chief of Staff) knows the political aspects and can quote chapter-and-verse how many votes this package will buy and how many will be lost district-by-district. What I would like to propose is we go to the basic principles."

"The basic principles?"

"Why yes, Mr President. You were elected in part to ensure money was spent wisely, and that the stated goals of the Administration would, in fact, be the real goals. Now the previous auto sector bailouts did not improve the competitiveness of the industry, and indeed the combination of propping up failed business models, reduced consumer choice and extreme regulatory interference in all aspects of the industry has left us in the situation where the companies require an annual bailout, and produce cars that no one wants to buy and frankly even the drivers in the government pool hate.

"Now Allen has stated it outright and Kevin will back him on the political side, we are pretty much committed to a bailout in order to keep the Administration on track with the rest of our agenda in Congress and with the voters. What I would like to propose is a way of actually spending the money so that we actually get an increase in innovation, competitiveness and employment, and furthermore, do it in such a way that the economy will improve and help us reach many of our other goals."

The members around the Cabinet table stared, mesmerized. The President finally broke the spell.

"Go on...."

* * * *

The conference room looked over Detroit, but no one was looking at the familiar dark cityscape tonight as the board members filed in. Six weeks after the Cabinet meeting, the chairman of the board

swivelled impatiently in his chair, but his attention was fixed on the giant projection screen at the far end of the room. The President would be on shortly to start the press conference and make the announcement, but the room was tense.

"Come on, Bob, we have at least three Congressmen and a Senator on our side, and you know all the others in the pockets of our competitors and the unions. Are you trying to tell us that no one knows the details of the announcement tonight?"

"I'm telling you, Lee, outside of the dollar amount, no one has been able to find out any concrete details. The amount of rumour and disinformation is incredible, and I tell you, I've talked to the other boards and company chairmen, and no one has a clue what the President is going to say.

"The fact the voters elected an Independent as President of the United States has been nothing but a major headache for me and everyone else. All the usual rules don't apply anymore, and this President can operate pretty much as he pleases without being involved in party politics in the House.

"You can't trust your own people to do the right thing anymore since he can assemble a coalition of voters across the country to pressure the right Congressmen or Senators to get his bills passed. Those town hallers are going to kill our business if they cut off the bailouts."

"Bob, I thought you said the amount of the bailout was known?" another board member asked

"Pretty much to the last nickel. The problem is we don't know how much is going to each company, or what sort of "targeted" spending will be announced."

"Well, come on, Bob. We have 'green' programs, alternative energy programs, advanced technology programs, recycling programs, labour retraining programs, automation programs, fuel economy programs, company housing programs, even farming programs for Christ sake. Are you trying to tell us we don't have something in place to soak up every last dollar of the bailout?"

"I'm not trying to say anything Fred. We are positioned as well as anyone, and all the other players have pretty much the same game plan we do. I'm just edgy since we don't know exactly how things are going to break down. I mean all the chairmen of all the auto companies gave a presentation to the House

committee and the Cabinet panel, but I don't think the panel was listening to what we were saying, just going through the motions."

Before the angry retorts could begin, the picture brightened and the familiar view of the White House press room filled the screen. The White House press secretary walked to the podium with a mysterious smile on her face. The Chairman leaned forward, suddenly very alert. The press secretary never smiled before a conference that he could remember. On the screen, she flashed a dazzling smile and her dark eyes shone with excitement.

"Ladies and gentlemen, in a few moments the President will address the nation on the subject of assisting the auto sector during this period of financial difficulty. As many of you remember, previous administrations have taken similar steps in the past, but the results have been rather less than expected.

"This Administration ran on and was elected on a platform of doing things differently, but we recognize that it is now simply impossible to abandon sectors which have become dependent on government aid, without severe consequences. The President will make a short address describing the Administration's response, then take questions.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States."

The assembled reporters rose as the President strode to the podium.

"Good evening everyone. Please be seated.

"As you know, the auto sector is suffering from difficulties because of the financial situation, with the potential for catastrophic job losses and continuing economic fallout across large portions of the nation. For many years now, previous administrations have provided aid to various sectors of the economy in order to prevent financial calamity. Jobs have been saved in the short-term, but the deeper issues of competitiveness, innovation, productivity and investment have not been addressed properly.

"Previous administrations have tied grants and bailout monies to particular projects, mandates and other control measures, but experience has shown that the wishes of politicians and bureaucrats on Washington are rarely what the car buying consumers want, leaving the industry struggling with

inventories of unsold vehicles and unused production capacity as consumers shun the vehicles government tells the automakers to produce.

"Competitiveness is also lacking, as the same companies can continue to dominate the market without having to change their products, marketing or business plans with the help of bailout money. Rather than restoring competitiveness, the recipients of the bailouts have become steadily less competitive. Rather than fostering innovation, the recipients have become less innovative than their competitors, and new companies from nations as diverse as India, China and Singapore have entered the American market and steadily increased their market share.

"Perhaps worse is the long-term effects of bailouts on the rest of the American economy, which is starving for the talent and capital needed to innovate and compete both domestically and globally. The auto sector has, over the years, not only consumed a considerable amount of taxpayer funds directly, but also have expanded into other areas of the economy in order to harvest government funding in areas as diverse as labour training and education to farming. This expansion has crowded out private investment in many fields, and reduced productivity in these areas as well.

"My fellow Americans. This Administration was elected on the promise of saying what we meant and doing what we said. As a Marine, and then as a businessman, I learned the importance of keeping my word through experience. Sometimes it is very hard, and the choices we make cannot please everyone, or even most people, even if these are the right thing to do.

"The purpose of these auto sector bailouts is to ensure that American companies remain viable, and to ensure that American workers can continue to be employed. This can only be a long-term solution if these payments are investments that create the conditions for innovation and increasing competitiveness in American industry, something which has been given lip service in the past, but something this Administration intends to correct today, setting the stage for future prosperity and hopefully ending the cycles of bailouts.

"To this end, this Administration is pleased to announce we will be providing financial assistance for the recreation of the Pierce-Arrow corporation, Nash automobiles, Hudson, Tucker, Cord, DeSoto,..."

~ Arthur Majoor



*Ron and Steven at the annual August BBQ,
hosted by Dale in Coldstream*



Karen and Brian

Star Trek Continues – An Appreciation

One of my favourite TV series growing up was the original *Star Trek* series, so I want to tell you about *Star Trek Continues*, a series that imagines the adventures of the crew of the Enterprise in the fourth year of their original Five Year Mission. It tries very hard to revive the spirit of *Star Trek* and does a pretty good job of it, in my opinion.

Star Trek Continues is probably best described as a reboot of the original series with different actors in the pivotal roles – and a few familiar faces from the original series in guest roles. It also has a few features borrowed from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*; specifically, a holodeck and a ship's councillor. The sets, costumes, and props are identical to those of the original series.

You're probably wondering about the acting. Accurate sets are one thing, but if the acting is awful, very few of us are going to stick around very long. I'm happy to say that the acting is pretty good. The show is rather new – only five episodes have been produced as I write this – and the actor playing McCoy in the first episodes seems to have been recast in later episodes. The actor playing Spock also seemed a bit rough in the first episode or two. However, the cast seems to be coming together nicely as they work together more. I'm not going to detail each of the actors in the cast here – IMDB covers that better than I can – but I do want to mention a few interesting things about the casting. The man playing Captain James T. Kirk is Vic Mignona and he actually does far more than just play Kirk. In fact, he seems to be the primary creative force behind the reboot. He wrote or co-wrote each of the scripts, directs some of them and even edits the shows. I've never seen him in anything else but IMDB has a long list of credits for him.

If you pay attention to the credits, you will see that Scotty is played by Chris Doohan. That last name is no coincidence: he is actually one of James Doohan's sons. I think you will see the

resemblance to his father. In the original *Star Trek* series, Majel Barrett, who played Nurse Chapel, also did the voice of the ship's computer in many episodes. Barrett passed away a few years back, but a very familiar *Star Trek* actress plays the voice of the computer in *Star Trek Continues*, namely Marina Sirtis, who played Counsellor Troi in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

The stories are a mix of new creations and continuations/sequels of episodes of the original series. For example, one of the best regarded episodes of the original series was *Mirror, Mirror*, the episode that introduced the Mirror Universe where Mirror Kirk was a brute interested only in conquest and plunder for his Empire. *Star Trek Continues* shows us a sequel to this episode that tells us what happens on the Mirror Mirror Enterprise after Kirk challenges Mirror Spock to find a way to civilize the Empire. Another of the episodes show us what happens after the god Apollo and his consort are found drifting in an asteroid. The actor playing Apollo is none other than Michael Forest, the man who played the original Apollo. (And yes, they do explain why he looks so much older than he did in the original episode.) The first four episodes all take place aboard the Enterprise but the fifth episode takes place partly on Earth as Kirk and Bones find themselves in the middle of the American Civil War with Kirk in a Northern uniform and McCoy in a Southern one. I think the writers do a pretty good job with *Star Trek Continues*.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of *Star Trek Continues* is that it is all produced by fans. It's a true labour of love and I think it shows through in everything they do. I mean that in the most positive way. It looks polished and professional and I think you will enjoy it. You can watch *Star Trek Continues* absolutely free online at the show's website, <http://startrekcontinues.com>. While you're there, check out the behind-the-scenes features and blooper reels. For more information on the actors, check out the Star Trek Continues page at IMDB: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2732442/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

~ Reinhardt Christiansen

Some Reflections on Stephen King's *11/22/63* (Part Two)

11/22/63, a novel
Stephen King, author
Scribner, 2011

In the previous edition of *SideTrekked*, Part One of this essay began by noting the ways in which Stephen King may be seen as a "bridge author," as one who writes in more than one genre and appeals to different readerships, focusing on some elements of horror that may be seen in *11/22/63*. Concluding that analysis, this second half of the essay will examine some of the science fiction that may be seen in the novel.

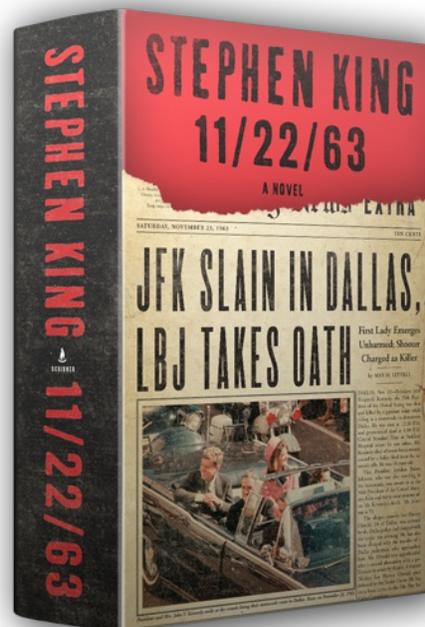
Although the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is ostensibly the central subject of the novel, the actual events of that day (11/22/63, as the title reminds us) form a relatively small part of the novel – certainly compared to the person of Jake Epping, and his ongoing jaunts through time. In many ways, the novel is as much a biographical portrayal of Epping, as it is an exploration into the events of that fateful day. We learn, in the opening pages of the book, that Epping – or, probably more appropriately (given how well we know him by the closing pages), Jake – was married previously (page 1), is a high school teacher of English (pages 9 – 11), and is a regular patron of Al's Diner (page 12). By novel's end, we've accompanied Jake (or, perhaps more accurately, been led *by* him) through impossible adventures, by which point he has been married again, to Sadie, in what he describes as the happiest time of his life (page 619), albeit "in another life" (page 842).

This sense of embarking into an adventure "in another life" aptly describes the science fiction of *11/22/63*, which may be experienced through the prisms of People and Place. It is through People, or, more accurately, other people, that Jake discovers the possibility of time travel and experiences its excitement – and dangers. This is seen most explicitly in Jake's friendship with the person of Al Templeton, the owner of Al's Dinner. In the novel's opening pages, we learn that although Jake frequents Al's Diner regularly, Jake and Al are not (yet) tremendously close, that they have a "strictly

cook-and-client relationship." Unexpectedly summoned to the diner, Jake is confronted by a very different Al than the one he had only seen only twenty-two hours previously: Al has lost "thirty or forty pounds" and is suffering from lung cancer, having been "manically" healthy the day before (pages 15 to 17). We learn, of course, that it is not so much that Al has aged tremendously in one day, but that he has spent a great deal of time in the past.

Unlike descriptions of time travel in other works of science fiction, what King describes is not something that is achieved through years of considerable research and perseverance, but by "accident," as Al shares with Jake (page 44), an accident which is very much tied to the place of Al's Diner. "Place," as a theme, figures throughout the whole novel, beginning with Al's Dinner, in Lisbon Falls, Maine – the portal that is ever-set to September 9, 1958. Through the portal of Al's Diner, Jake takes the reader on a journey in the past, from small-town New England to big-city Texas.

~ Mark C. Ambrogio



Book Review: *The Wool Omnibus*

The Wool Omnibus

Hugh Howey, author

Broad Reach Publishing, 2012

The Wool Omnibus gathers together the first five stories in author Hugh Howey's *Silo* series. Set in a vividly-described post-apocalyptic world, the stories centre on the silo, a large underground structure over one hundred storeys deep that shelters its many residents from the toxic world outside. Generations have lived their entire lives within the confines of the silo, with their only glimpse of the outside world being supplied by view screens lining the walls of its top floor. These screens continue to offer little hope, showing only a bleak landscape of barren hills and crumbling buildings, and the cost of maintaining this view is high: lenses located outside the silo need to be cleaned to keep the view clear, and being sent outside to clean them is a one-way trip into a poisonous environment, a death sentence.

Surrounded by a hostile world, life inside the silo may also hold its dangers. At first glance the world inside the silo can seem safe and stable, with food production, power and water facilities, school, job shadowing, and a functioning, if rudimentary, economy. Increasingly, though, there are signs of strain. The strict rules that govern life inside the silo can be harsh, tensions are building, and there are hints that the silo's history, much of which has been lost or destroyed, hides dark secrets that might threaten its future and that some would do anything to keep hidden.

Full of compelling and sympathetic characters, including a mayor tiring under the increasing burden of holding things together and a sheriff haunted by both the loss of his wife and the mysteries surrounding her death, *The Wool Omnibus* grips the reader's attention quickly. It manages to keep that attention with generally well-paced action and with tantalizing hints of the silo's mysterious past and of what its future might hold. Grappling with questions concerning human nature, relationships, and what it takes to survive in a harsh and dangerous world, *The Wool Omnibus* is an engaging and thought-

provoking read, well worth picking up and very difficult to put down.

~ Stephanie Hanna

