

The Science Fiction



Oral History Association

Recording Science Fiction History as it Happens

February 2003

Your newsletter composer apologizes for the delay in the production of this newsletter. It's been a few years since I did one on a regular basis and I'm getting back into the pattern of things. I expect to be better about this in the future.

--Mike Gardiner

Member and former treasurer Jean Barnard would like other members to know that she is now having trouble reading and people interested in possibly acquiring some portion of her library (which includes science fiction, science fiction fanzines, and mysteries, as well as a lot of material on organic gardening, and other various topics) should contact her at 1810 Charlton, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

--Anne Murphy

Elections!

In accordance with our bylaws, there will be an election conducted by mail following the publication of our next newsletter. Now is your time to appoint persons for listing on the ballot. Officers are to be elected for the following six positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two Directors at Large.

In addition, the board hopes to revise the bylaws [the current bylaws are in this

newsletter. There was already one amendment not reflected in them, which makes secretary and treasurer into two positions]. If you have suggestions or comments concerning the bylaws please submit them to SOFA for inclusion in the next newsletter. The board has discussed (with varying levels of support) the following ideas for bylaw changes:

1) Update the office of record address to be current.

1a) Allow the board to select the office of record (making it no longer explicitly tied to the home of the president.)

2) A new board member position "Publications Head" would unburden the Vice-President of one of their duties.

5) The bylaws should be made gender neutral.

6) The terms for board members be made 2 years as opposed to 1 year.

7) In the case of resignation or repeated absence of an officer the board may appoint a replacement to serve until the next regular election.

8) The board may appoint titled positions. Persons fulfilling these positions will not vote as board members, however they can speak to the board during board meetings.

Any bylaw changes would take effect after approval by a majority of the voting members.

Please send your nominations or bylaw change suggestions to elections@sfoha.org. The membership is invited to attend the SFOHA meeting at ConFusion to give and hear commentary on bylaws and candidates for positions.

Look forward to seeing your ballot in the next newsletter "post-ConFusion" in January.

--Bill Murphy, officer of elections

THE MONUMENT OF LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

by Eric Leif Davin

Lloyd Biggle, Jr., Ph. D., has died of leukemia at age 79 and we are all impoverished by his passing. However, the magnitude of our loss may not be readily realized since Biggle, while the author of 25 books and some 100 short stories, did not concentrate solely on writing science-fiction over the last twenty years. Nevertheless, he was profoundly important to the field.

I first became aware of Lloyd 40 years ago. In 1962, when I chanced across his *Analog* short story "Monument," later expanded into a 1974 novel of the same name. I have not re-read it in

the intervening years, but I still have a vivid memory of it as one of a handful of stories which had a powerful impact upon me in my teens. It was my first exposure to the concept of "imperialism," although I didn't know the word at the time and was barely aware of the phenomenon.

In "Monument" a spaceman is stranded on an idyllic planet with a primitive society far beyond the expanding sphere of galactic civilization. There he is content to "go native" and live out his life, an interstellar Gauguin on a far-distant Tahiti. He knew, however, that the "shock wave" of the all-conquering galactic society he had left behind would, at some point, reach his pastoral world and overwhelm it, absorb it, and transform it into a dependent and exploited colony. But, it would not affect him. It might be many years, perhaps centuries, before such contact was made. In the meantime, the stranded spaceman would have long since passed away. He need not have worried about it. But, he did.

So, the spaceman began to educate his people about the nature of the "outside world." He made clear what would happen when the tsunami of the more "advanced" society finally poured over them. They would have to adapt or die. And he formulated a set of protocols to invoke once contact was made. More than knowledge of their rights under galactic law, he gave them a form of legal and diplomatic jujitsu by which they could deftly negotiate their way through the Byzantine maze of the galactic hierarchy. By doing

so, they would use the rules, procedures, and practices of the galactic imperium itself to safeguard their independence. And, when "first contact" finally came, long years after the spaceman's death, this was exactly what his people did. And, thus, they preserved their freedom. And that freedom was his "Monument."

Lloyd returned to the theme of the weak confounding the mighty in another memorable story written at the beginning of his science-fiction career, "The Tunesmith" (*If - Worlds of Science Fiction*, August, 1957). It concerns a future where the only surviving art is in the form of singing commercials and the hero, a tunesmith writing such commercials, vainly attempts to apply high artistic standards in a totally decadent culture. The next year T. E. Diky reprinted it in *The Best Science Fiction Stories and Novels*, Ninth Series, published by Advent. That began a more than thirty-year odyssey of reprintings around the world, including widely circulated pirated publications in the Soviet Union.

"I wondered then, and still do, what Russian readers made of that story," Lloyd told me in 1998. "Probably it was presented to them as evidence of decadent capitalism." I disagreed, telling him one need not live in a capitalist society to be moved by the story, which isn't really about how advertising dominates society at all. Rather, "The Tunesmith" shows a principled person making a difference in a totalitarian society in which life and beauty have been all but stomped out. It is about how the influence of one such

individual can bring down the entire dictatorial edifice, even though, like Samson, eyeless in Gaza, he might be destroyed in the process. *That* was what his Russian readers responded to, I told Lloyd, and what their censors missed.

That was also what Orson Scott Card responded to when he requested "The Tunesmith" be published in a 1991 double-novel volume along with a novel of his own. For the publication Card wrote both an introduction and an afterword to the story. The introduction, "How Lloyd Biggle, Jr., Changed My Life," explained that Card had encountered "The Tunesmith" when he was eight years old and it had played a pivotal role in his life, shaping his career and heavily influencing his first writing. "As is the case with such testimonials," Lloyd said "Card got most of the facts about me wrong, but it was a nice tribute and totally unexpected," since he'd written the story 35 years previously and had all but forgotten about it.

But, Lloyd then went on to say that this is what writing is all about. "You should write as well as you can," he said, "making every project the best work one is capable of at that moment -and then forget about it. What readers and critics make of it may be flattering or horrifying or insulting -- only too often they like, or dislike, a book for all the wrong reasons -- but once a job of writing is finished, it passes beyond the author's control. Praise, when it comes -- as with all these belated honors for 'The Tunesmith' -- is, only too often, too late to matter."

By the time he was 22,

Lloyd Biggle was a World War II veteran with a paralyzed foot, a shortened leg, and a Purple Heart. He limped painfully the rest of his years, necessitating back surgery late in life to implant eight large screws, a couple of rods and, as he put it, "miscellaneous doo-dads." Using the G. I. Bill he went back to school after the war and, an accomplished musician, eventually earned a doctorate in musicology. But, writing was what he wanted to do. He published his first story ("Gypped," *Galaxy*, on a musical subject) in 1956 and by the early 1960s was able to "retire" to a full-time career as a writer. "I always believed," he said, "that one should not retire from something, but to something one loves. That way you can do it for the rest of your life." And this Lloyd did, writing and publishing new work until the very end. When friends asked when he was going to retire, he laughed, "I'd have to retire from my *retirement!*"

There are many good writers who enjoy their work. However, there are few who have also made the work of their fellow writers better in a material sense, and this Lloyd did as well. In 1965 he was a co-founder of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA), the still-extant "union" of fantasy and science-fiction writers, serving as its Secretary-Treasurer during Damon Knight's initial presidency. And because of his service as an SFWA officer, he was chosen as editor of the organization's seventh collection of Nebula Award stories in 1972.

But it was a second important science-fiction organization which Lloyd

founded and led that brought him and me together. Lloyd was persuaded of the vital importance of recording the oral history of the science-fiction field before it disappeared forever with the deaths of its practitioners. However, since no person or institution was engaged in doing so, in the late 1970s he brought a dozen or so people together to launch the Science Fiction Oral History Association (SFOHA). Lloyd remained its guide, cheerleader, and main workhorse for a quarter of a century thereafter. During that time, thousands of taped interviews with both writers and active fans were conducted, duplicated, cataloged, filed, and deposited in three separate university archives to help insure both access and future survival.

In the beginning, 20 or more people met on a weekly basis to participate in this labor of love. However, long before it was awarded a special Hugo at the 1988 New Orleans Worldcon, the SFOHA had become virtually a one-man volunteer endeavor and that man was Lloyd Biggle. He was at that Worldcon in order to tape interviews and was "startled" by the Hugo Award. "It was astonishing," he told me. "I didn't know that anyone down there knew about us!"

Meanwhile, in 1986 I had begun contributing to the SFOHA archives copies of taped interviews with science-fiction pioneers which I'd been conducting independently. Over the years these interviews were also serially published in *Fantasy Commentator* and, in 1999, as *Pioneers of Wonder: Conversations With the*

Founders of Science Fiction, from Prometheus Books. Lloyd was extremely happy to see the interviews in book form and told me, "I thought from the first that you were making a valuable contribution.... The publishing business is such an uncertain animal that I was frankly worried that you might end up having to console yourself with the knowledge that, anyway, Biggle appreciates it!"

My book was reviewed well in all the field's magazines but one, I was interviewed on both national and regional radio, and it sold as well as can be expected for such a project. I even received a number of votes for the 2000 Hugo for best related work. When I sent a copy of a particularly favorable review to Lloyd he replied, "I can tell you that a review such as the one you sent me should be framed, because these don't happen often. It couldn't have been more flattering if you had written it yourself. (Actually, it couldn't have been that flattering if you had written it. We all have an ingrained modesty that filters out the most excessive hyperbole.) Frame it and carry on."

But Lloyd didn't merely support this years-long project with cheerleading. He was also crucial to obtaining perhaps my most important and pivotal interview that with Margaret Weinbaum Kay, the widow of early science-fiction giant Stanley G. Weinbaum, who died in 1935. In 1988 Lloyd recruited me to interview "Marge" after several earlier recruits had failed to follow through. I visited Marge Kay at her wonderful desert home in southern California, initiating a deep, rewarding, and years-

long friendship which resulted in me finding a home for Weinbaum's manuscripts, correspondence, and records at Temple University in Philadelphia. The subsequent interview became the nucleus of a special issue of *Fantasy Commentator* devoted to the work of Stanley G. Weinbaum, including an important analysis of Weinbaum's correspondence by Sam Moskowitz. It also resulted in Marge making me the literary executor of the Weinbaum estate.

None of this would have happened but for Lloyd's intervention. And he was glad to have done so. "Your interview that pleases me most," he said about my book, "is that of Margaret Kay. I don't know if you are aware of how long I worked, and how much effort I put in, trying to find someone who would call on her and interview her. She was more than willing; several times I had promises that it would be done: but nothing ever happened. And all of that material might have been lost. Having done everything I could, that would have been crushing for me."

No project as long and as difficult as my book was can be accomplished alone. All along the way I had crucial help in various forms from supportive people. I named them on the dedication page of the book: A. Langley Searles (editor and publisher of *Fantasy Commentator*), Sam Moskowitz -- and Lloyd Biggle, Jr., and his Science Fiction Oral History Association. Without them, very little of the history I captured and preserved would have been saved. Their selfless cooperation and

assistance not only created for me a small community of scholars, but also a community of friends.

In June, 2000, Lloyd wrote me that, "Things are not looking bad here. I've been having success with mystery short stories, something I enjoy writing much more than SF shorts. There has been a steady improvement medically [he was undergoing chemotherapy]. I just celebrated my 77th birthday with expectations of seeing at least a few more."

And he did see at least two more, with a ceaseless deluge of material flowing from his keyboard. He wrote a short memoir of his friend, Isaac Asimov, and a number of science-fiction short stories and novellas. However, in later years he concentrated more on mysteries, completing two Sherlock Holmes pastiche novels and three contemporary detective novels. In 1999 he created Lady Sara Varnley, a Victorian sleuth active in the early 1900s, as a female answer to Holmes. When the inspiration for Lady Sara first hit him, he wrote 320 pages of her short story adventures in a spurt of activity and then began on a novel featuring her. Her short story adventures appeared in various mystery magazines and anthologies over the next three years. (Perhaps we might yet see the collected adventures of Lady Sara between book covers at some near future date.)

In 1991 Lloyd began a new practice because he said friends and relatives thought he and his Polish-born wife, Hedwig, lived such interesting lives. He began sending out a year-end round-up Christmas

letter. His letter for 2000 included a four-page single-spaced summary of his literary work for that year alone. At the end he said, "I wrote this as a demonstration.... Take it as read: Working authors work. As for retirement -- in 1986 I visited a long-time friend, English author William F. Temple, at his home in Folkestone, England, who had recently retired from a Civil Service job. He asked me, 'Lloyd, when are you going to retire?' Me? Retire? Full-time authors don't retire. Even retired authors don't retire. To quote from my newest Lady Sara Varnley story, a work-in-progress not yet titled, 'O1d authors never die. They just get graver and graver.'

While his 2001 Christmas letter was not as exhaustive, after discussing his outpouring of stories and articles for the year, Lloyd said, "Just this morning I finished proofreading the galleys on a new science fiction novel, *The Chronocide Mission*, which will be published any moment now by Wildside Press." He also included a SFOHA newsletter which said, "SFOHA is Not Dead Yet! It has been reactivated and revitalized!" And Lloyd was still its president.

I won't be getting a 2002 Christmas letter from him detailing his most recent work, but I know the nature of it. Lloyd was writing, editing, and proofreading to the end. As he said, "Working authors work.... Frame it and carry on!"

And that is Lloyd Biggle's monument.

BYLAWS

of the

SCIENCE FICTION

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

[Note: Original Bylaws, 1977. Revised 1985.]

Article I

OFFICES

Section 1. OFFICE OF RECORD. The Office of Record for the Association shall be the current president's address. That address at the time of adoption of these revised Bylaws is: 569 Dubie Avenue, Ypsilanti, MI 48198.

Section 2. OTHER OFFICES. The Association may also have other offices for special functions as the business of the Association may require.

Article II

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Association shall be: 1) To search for recordings in the area of Science Fiction Oral History made in the past; 2) To record current events in Science Fiction Oral History or obtain records of such events; 3) To arrange special interviews and events of historical interest in the area of Science Fiction and record them; 4) Insofar as possible to reprocess tapes when necessary in order to make the recordings accessible to Science Fiction scholars and fans; 5) To maintain dual archives of such recordings, one consisting of the originals and the other consisting of a complete set of duplicate copies kept at a different address for safekeeping. 6) To donate copies of said recordings to official regional depositories that the Association will establish from time to time at universities in the United States and foreign countries where they will be available for study and preserved for historical purposes; 7) To promote interest in Science Fiction Oral History with programs at Science Fiction Conventions and elsewhere and in all other ways possible; and 8) To acquire such equipment as may be essential to carry out the objectives of the Association.

Article III

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. ELIGIBILITY. Membership in the Science Fiction Oral History Association shall be open to anyone who pays the organization's Current annual dues.

Section 2. DUES. Dues shall be Five Dollars (\$5.00) annually, payable at the time and place the Board of Directors shall determine.

Section 3. INCREASE OF DUES. In order to take effect, an increase in dues must be proposed by the Board of Directors and approved by a majority of the members voting on the proposal.

Section 4. RESIGNATION. Any member may resign by written notice to the president. Upon receipt of such notice, the resigned member's name will be dropped from future rolls of the organization and removed from the organization's mailing list. A member shall forfeit the unexpired portion of his dues resigned to the Association.

Section 5. TERMINATION. Any member whose dues have not been paid within ninety days of the prescribed renewal date for memberships shall be deemed terminated.

Section 6. NONTRANSFERABILITY OF MEMBERSHIP. Membership in the Association shall not be transferable or assignable.

Section 7. NON-LIABILITY OF MEMBERS FOR LIABILITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION: No member of the Association by reason of his or her membership shall be individually or personally liable to creditors of the Association for any indebtedness, liabilities, or undertakings of the Association, it being intended that all creditors of the Association look only to the assets of the Association for payment of claims or performance of undertakings.

Section 8. LIFE MEMBERSHIP. The Directors may, by unanimous vote, establish a Life Membership category, to be conferred upon anyone who donates to the organization's equipment fund an amount established annually by the Directors. Said

amount shall be not less than fifteen times the annual dues. Life Members shall enjoy all of the privileges of membership for life without further payment of dues.

Article IV

MEETINGS OF MEMBERS

Section 1. **OFFICIAL BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED ONLY BY MAIL.** All elections and questions referred to the membership for decision shall be handled by mail. Reports, financial statements, announcements of policy, and all other information, including copies of any publications intended to be supplied without charge to the membership, shall be sent to each member by mail.

Section 2. **OFFICIAL MEETINGS.** The Association may conduct official meetings at such times and places as its officers may determine. Notice of such meetings shall be circulated as widely as the Directors and Officers may consider practicable. Any vote taken at such meetings shall be deemed an advisory vote only and shall not be official or binding until the question is referred to the entire membership by mail and approved.

Section 3. **MAJORITY VOTE.** All issues voted on by the membership shall be decided by a majority of the actual votes received within the voting period, which shall be stipulated on each ballot.

Article V

RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

Section 1. **ELIGIBILITY TO RUN FOR OFFICE.** Any member whose dues are paid in full shall be eligible to run for any elective office and vote in any election or on any proposition submitted to the membership for decision.

Section 2. **RIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS TO PROPOSE ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES AND BYLAWS CHANGES.** Any member in good standing shall have the right to propose questions on Association policy or projects for membership vote, or to propose changes in the Bylaws. Such proposals must be sent to the Elections Committee Chairman not less than 30 days prior to the mailing of the annual election ballots, accompanied by a brief statement in support of the proposal. The proposal and supporting statement will be included on the ballot, along with a statement of similar brevity containing the current administration's view of the matter.

Section 3. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND BYLAWS CHANGES** The Association's president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and director(s)-at-large are elective office and can be filled only by the vote of a majority of the qualified members voting. The Association's Bylaws can be amended only by the approval of a majority of the qualified members voting.

Article VI

ELECTIONS

Section 1. **ELECTION CHAIRMAN.** The president shall appoint Chairman of Elections annually. The chairman has the option of forming a committee with members of his or her own selection. The task of the Chairman of Elections is to find qualified candidates among the membership willing to run for office, work with the organization's secretary-treasurer to see that a properly prepared ballot (which will also include policy proposals or proposals for Bylaws changes) is mailed to the membership in good time, receive the completed ballots, tabulate the results, and announce them to officers and candidates. As indicated in Article V, Section 1, any member may nominate himself or herself for office and receive a place on the ballot.

The Election chairman shall also be responsible for receiving and tabulating voted ballots on proposals submitted to the membership at times other than the annual election.

Section 2. **CANDIDATES** Each candidate for elective office shall be permitted to make a brief statement concerning his platform or the objective or goals he will pursue if elected, and this will be included on the ballot or with supplemental material mailed to the membership along with the ballot.

Section 3. **ELECTION DATE AND TERMS OF OFFICE.** Ballots shall be mailed to the membership as early as possible in the month of October. The deadline for their return to the Election Chairman shall be not later than November 30. The newly elected officers shall take office on January 1 and serve for a period of One year.

Article VII

DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. **PRESIDENT.** The president shall be the chief executive officer of the Association. He shall preside at all meetings of members and of the Board of Directors, and in order to carry out Association projects and policy as determined by the board, he shall have full authority to appoint all committees (except the election committee) and designate their chairmen.

Section 2. **VICE-PRESIDENT.** The vice-president shall perform the duties and exercise the powers of the president during the absence or disability of the president. He shall perform such duties as may be delegated to him by the president or the board of directors. In addition, the vice-president shall be the officer responsible for the Association's publications.

Section 3. **SECRETARY-TREASURER.** The secretary-treasurer shall keep minutes of all official meetings (or arrange to

have this done in his absence.) He shall keep the membership records He shall have custody of the Association's funds and shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements, making disbursements of said funds as approved by the president. He shall provide the Election Chairman with a list of names and addresses of members qualified to vote or run for office before each election. At the end of his term of office, he shall furnish to the board of directors a full financial accounting of all funds handled during his term of office.

Section 4. DIRECTOR(S)-AT-LARGE. The director-at-large has the responsibility of providing an additional viewpoint representing all interest concerned in the Association's policy decisions; the membership, fans, professional writers, scholars, teachers, and the libraries serving as depositories. When the immediate past-president is willing to serve as a director, one director-at-large will be elected. When the immediate past-president is unwilling or unable to serve, or there is none, two directors-at-large will be elected.

Section 5. PAST-PRESIDENT. The immediate past-president shall, if willing and able to serve, automatically become a director-at-large for one term with the same responsibilities as the newly-elected director described in Section 4. At the time of the Election Chairman's appointment, the president must indicate in writing whether he plans to run for re-election; and, if he does not, whether he is willing to serve as a director-at-large during the following year. If he runs for re-election, or if he indicates unwillingness to serve as a director, the Election Chairman will provide for the election of two directors-at-large. If he fails to inform the Election Chairman of his intentions, the Election Chairman shall proceed as if his answer were negative.

Article VIII DIRECTORS

Section 1. NUMBER. There shall be five directors, consisting of the Association's president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer: a director-at-large, and the Association's immediate past-president; or two directors-at-large if the past-president is unwilling or unable to serve.

Section 2. DUTIES. The board of directors shall be the Association's policy making and planning body, and its approval shall be required for major purchases, such as recording equipment.

Section 3 MEETINGS. If directors are located geographically so as to make meetings difficult or impossible, their business may be conducted by mail. Whether meeting in person or conduction business by mail, approval by a majority of the entire board shall be required on all proposals set before it.

Section 4 SPECIAL ELECTIONS. The directors shall have the emergency authority to present proposals to the membership for vote at any time, including amendments to the Bylaws or an election to replace a resigned officer.

Section 5. REGIONAL OR LOCAL CHAPTERS The directors shall have the authority to authorize the founding of regional or local chapters of the Science Fiction Oral History Association and to coordinate their activities with those of the Association.

Section IX COMPENSATION FOR OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

No officer or director shall receive compensation. Officers and directors may receive reimbursement for official expenses with the approval of the Association's president.

Section X PAPERS AND RECORDS

All of the Association's papers and records, as they become outdated, shall be deposited with the Voice Library at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, which will maintain them as a special collection. Correspondence and papers of all officers relating to Association business shall be deemed the property of the Association and shall periodically be deposited in the same collection.

Section XI DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS ON DISSOLUTION

Section 1. In the event of the Association's dissolution, all assets owned by it, including its archives, recording and copying equipment and cash, shall be donated to the Science Fiction organization unanimously selected by the Directors as the most capable of maintaining the archives and carrying on the Association's work in the oral history of Science Fiction.

Section 2. If the Directors fail to find or agree upon a science fiction within a period of six months after dissolution, the donation shall be made to the Voice Library, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Section XII EXTENSION OF CURRENT officers TERMS

Because these revised Bylaws change the terms of office to coincide with the calendar year, terms of current officers are extended to January 1, 1986.



Science Fiction
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