

MISSION CONTROL

The Newsletter of ApolloCon—By Fans for Fans

Vol. VI, No. 2

Sat., June 27, 2009

Page 1 of 2

Free!

HERE WE GO!

Party Report

The most culinary adventurous of the Friday night parties was the Artist reception hosted by Patti Prevett, who was also the chef. The ginger peach and lemon blossom cakes were major hits, and the banana bread seemed to be popular as well, but your reporter was enamored of the Cowboy Caviar and the Mediterranean dip. And the drink of choice was lemonade/ginger ale mixture that was smooooooth.

Anita had brought art supplies and many of the artists present, including our Artist Guest of Honor, committed art, all to be donated to the Charity Auction. Pat Rawlings gave the stern injunction not to sell his masterpiece for less than \$2.00. Allison Parker inadvertently attempted to assassinate the hostess by putting eucalyptus on her feet; apparently Patti is allergic. Many persons were wearing kilts, and, led by the Receptionator, they participated in much talk of our clan—altogether now!—Clan on the run.

The Raleigh in 2010 NASFIC – bid party was hosted by Tim Miler. This was the party for SMOFFing. There was a discussion that the money for presupports had gone from \$5 to \$10 to \$20 with speculation that the next step was \$50. Ed Dravecky suggested a test Portland bid with \$10 presupports, but cleverly not specifying which Portland!

The rowdiest party of the night was held by the Nitro Nine Wholigans. The (See Parties, page 2)

Programming Changes

Saturday:

No changes as of press time.

During the Day:

Check the board by the Registration Table for last-minute changes.

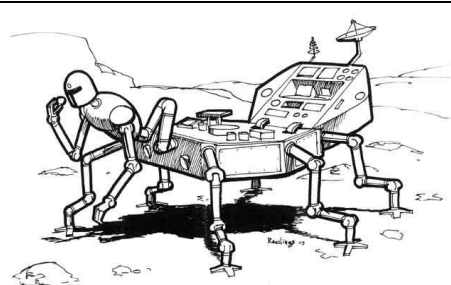
Gaming Winners

Two different Munchkin games happened on Friday. The winners of Munchkin were Tom Horn and Karen Wilson.

Order of the Stick technically had no winner, being called on account of time, however Chis Overstreet was ahead on points when the game was terminated.

Very Late Night

After the filk party finally wound down around 0200 Saturday, the only going concern was to be found in 766 (United Federation of Planets Marine R&R Caretakers). The MofC stayed until about 0100; sadly the rest of us had to give up around 0130!



Art by Pat Rawlings. Source: NASA

Foreigners

ApolloCon is attracting members from all over! Growing every year, its fame has spread to the far corners of the United States. The crowds around you include people from Washington state and Florida, from New York and New Mexico, and many places in between. Across the South, the Midwest, and the square states are represented. California and New England, here we come!

And On We Con:

Saturday's slate offers a full complement of panels, explaining and discussing many SFnal topics. Pure science has a few hours too!

Gamers can always find something in the Gaming Room, and LARPs occur in various special locations.

Learn more about coffee, tea, chocolate, and Scotch. Sign up for these tastings in Ops.

The Guests of Honor will host their own presentations. Wil McCarthy will discuss his area of physics; Pat Rawlings has a slide show; Special Guest Stanley G. Love will fill us in on NASA's activities.

Late in the day, there are auctions, one for charity. Then there's the Masquerade, followed by a Dance. Open filking happens at the same time; who knows when it will end?

Feed the PressCow

The PressCow has no interest in paper bearing pictures of past presidents. No; the PressCow likes plain white paper and ink!

Tell MISSION CONTROL about any interesting events that occur. Help write the newsletter! Use one of the forms provided or a napkin (not otherwise used, please!) or whatever piece of paper you have handy. Drop the message in one of the envelopes, located in the ConSuite and by the Flyer Table, or bring it by Ops.

Hours

Art Show 10 A.M. – 5 P.M.
—Auction follows at 6 P.M.

Dealers Room 10 A.M. – 6:15 P.M.

ConSuite 8 A.M. – 3 A.M.

Not Just for Beginners

Chocolate lovers of all levels will find something to love in Saturday night's chocolate tasting. We'll compare chocolate from 'American Rebels' (DeBries, Amano, Askinosie) with classic European producers such as Valronana and Cluizel. Space is limited; sign up in Ops.

Kids in Tow

The boardroom on the second floor holds special-interest programming for our younger set. For those aged 4 to 14, astronomy and selenography will be presented. Children under 12 must be accompanied by their adult(s)—so all can learn (perhaps just what interests a particular child). They can also learn relevant (more or less) crafts.

Charity Auction

A surprise is in store for those attending the Charity Auction: Pat Rawlings, our Artist Guest of Honor, has donated a hundred dollars' worth (conservative estimate!) of prints, posters, and other goodies. Bidding for this lot starts at \$50.

Self-Replicating Fen

Our youngest member is only two weeks old! Seems like every year, at least one ConComm member produces another fan-to-be!

Parties (continued from page 1)

advertised Daleks chanting "Inebriate, inebriate" were not in evidence, but a lot of people having fun were. The hostess seemed to be a friendly giant leprechaun named Nicole Redo with a giant shamrock toadstool trashcan. Cherie Morgan was teaching a group how to play a game of FLUX—the Monty Python version. Wil McCarthy was there answering questions and explaining the finer points of programmable matter, something that seems to happen a lot for some reason. The Wholigans are returning tomorrow night and at this point, they look like the party to beat for other fun.

Under the management of Chuck and Val, the ConSuite was no slouch of a party itself. While we were there, a large number of unrelated foody discussions went on at the same time, for some reason.

At ApolloCon, Saturday is really the big night for parties, and so we're looking forward to another night of little sleep, doing our research so you can read about it here. Is that dedication, or what?

Interview: Wil McCarthy, Guest of Honor

Mission Control: Thank you for coming to ApolloCon. Do you think the Singularity portrayed in the stories in 'Transhuman' is likely?

Wil McCarthy: Depends what you mean by singularity, I guess. Mathematically speaking, if you see a singularity, it usually means there's something wrong with your equations! More specifically, in the real world there is never such a thing as limitless exponential growth; eventually you run up against a resource limitation and the growth levels off, or even crashes. Also, Moore's Law notwithstanding, I don't really believe in human progress as an exponential climb toward heaven. Real progress comes in fits and lurches, with lots of false starts and blind alleys. But I do think the future holds some amazing things, so in that sense my answer is a guarded yes.

MC: Which is easier to write, science fact or science fiction?

WMcC: You have to ask? Science fact is much easier, because you don't have to make anything up. Of course, in hard science fiction you're not supposed to make anything up either, but the willing suspension of disbelief is a lot lower, so you can get away with sloppier reasoning, and in a way that makes it more difficult, because you can't just $F=ma$ your way out of every problem. Also, the plot and setting and characters all have to fit together in a logical way, and in nonfiction you don't have to worry about that. Of course, it still needs to be entertaining, but that's more a matter of picking the right subjects to write about. Fiction projects take a long time to cook, whereas the real world is always ready to be described.

MC: Do you write fiction because you want to or because you have to?

WMcC: Well, a long time ago it was because I wanted to. Then it became my job, so on any given day, whether I wanted to do it or not was kind of irrelevant. Now I'm making a living as an engineer again, so whether I want to write fiction has become a relevant question, but also a moot one, because I don't have the time!

MC: What happens if you don't write any fiction?

WMcC: Empirically, there's a serious risk that I'll start a company. It's happened twice now.

MC: When you start a story, what comes first: the characters, the plot, or the message?

WMcC: Hmm. I'm not sure that's really the right question, because I believe it's inherent in good fiction that the characters, plot, and message are seamlessly integrated. The medium is the message, yes, and so are the characters and the things that happen to them. How could you have one without the other? When a story is ready to be written, it grows the way salt crystals do in a saturated solution: very suddenly, pushing everything else out of their way. Even if it takes a year to write, the "Aha" moment comes first, and contains essentially a hologram of the entire project. The rest is just a process of turning the hologram this way and that way, looking for hidden details.

MC: When you start a story, what comes first: the characters, the plot, or the message?

WMcC: Hmm. I'm not sure that's really the right question, because I believe it's inherent in good fiction that the characters, plot, and message are seamlessly integrated. The medium is the message, yes, and so are the characters and the things that happen to them. How could you have one without the other? When a story is ready to be written, it grows the way salt crystals do in a saturated solution: very suddenly, pushing everything else out of their way. Even if it takes a year to write, the 'Aha' moment comes first, and contains essentially a hologram of the entire project. The rest is just a process of turning the hologram this way and that way, looking for hidden details.

MC: Thank you.