

# WSFA JOURNAL

## MAY-JUNE 2024

### FIRST FRIDAY MAY MINUTES

Attendance: Cathy Green, Sam Lubell, Perianne Lurie, Rodger Burns, Jim Thomas, Bob MacIntosh, Gayle Surrette, ZenLizard, Angela Pound, Aaron Pound, Sophie Pound, Deidre and Bosley, Michael Ikeda, Elizabeth Twitchell, Judy Newton, Courtni Burlison, Sam Scheiner, Kim Hargan, Carolyn Frank, Bill Lawhorn, Sarah Mitchell, Frances Holland, Michael Taylor

Meeting called to order at 8:15pm.

Minutes of previous meeting read.

Treasurer said we have \$86,500+

Trustees: Elizabeth Twitchell said this would be the last election she runs as she's not running for reelection as a trustee. The Trustees's slate is:

President – Bob MacIntosh

VP – Kim Hargan

Treasurer – Sam Scheiner

Secretary – Cathy Green

Trustees – Sam Lubell, Apurva Desai, Frances Holland

WSFA Small Press Award Committee – Kim Hargan, Cathy Green

Rodger Burns volunteered as tribute to be the 2026 Capclave chair

Election meeting will be held after the business meeting. Secretary asked for a check that we had a quorum. It was confirmed that there was a quorum.

Capclave present – email has been sent with a link asking people to sign up for shifts at the Capclave fan table. We will also be tabling at the Gaithersburg Book Festival the week before Balticon.

Capclave future had nothing to report.

Websites, etc. - Paul Haggerty bought the wordpress plug in for registration for \$100 and it is now up and running. Gayle Surrette discussed issues with the WSFA Press book

WSFA Small Press Award – the committee is busy reading and will meet to create the finalist list on June 8.

Committee to Actually Discuss SF – today after meeting will discuss the very late Winter issue of F&SF; third Friday will discuss April issue of Lightspeed; first Friday June – short form categories Hugo Finalists (short story, novelette, novella); third Friday June - novel finalists and YA; first Friday July – series, astounding, and everything else.

Entertivities: Perianne Lurie recommended Dead Boy Detectives on Netflix. Judy Newton noted that the National Cathedral Flower Mart was happening and that the Lego model of the Cathedral included the Darth Vader gargoyle. Sam Lubell noted that tomorrow was Star Wars Day and that Balticon was at the end of the month

Meeting was adjourned at 8:43pm.

Elizabeth Twitchell called the election meeting to order.

Bob MacIntosh was elected President by acclaim.

Kim Hargan was elected VP by acclaim.

Sam Scheiner was elected Treasurer by acclaim.

Cathy Green was elected Secretary by acclaim.

Frances Holland was elected as a Trustee by acclaim.

Apurva Desai was elected as a Trustee by acclaim.

Sam Lubell was elected as a Trustee by acclaim.

Rodger Burns was elected as Capclave 2026 Chair by acclaim.

Cathy Green and Kim Hargan were elected to a two year term to the WSFA Small Press Award Committee by acclaim.

### **THIRD FRIDAY MAY MINUTES**

Attendance: Rodger Burns, Michael Taylor, Elizabeth Twitchell, Cathy Green, Jim Thomas, Bob MacIntosh, Ellen Montgomery, Greg Key, Mark Roth, Judy Kindell, Perianne Lurie, Paul Haggerty, Gayle Surette, Judy Newton, Kim

Hargan, Sam Scheiner, Judy Scheiner, Sam Lubell, Madeleine Yeh, Sarah Mitchell, Bill Lawhorn, Allison Brown, Michael Ikeda, Apurva Desai

Meeting called to order at 8:15pm. Minutes of previous meeting read.

Treasurer – nothing new to report

Capclave Present – GBF weather not looking great, but we will be there.

GOHs will be staying Thursday to Monday, therefore either Thursday or Sunday for possible GOH dinner. Paul is still working on Zambia integration into the website back end. Gayle discussed her concerns with proposed WSFA Press book

Capclave Future – preoccupied with Balticon, will touch base with Colette.

Committee to Actually Discuss SF – first Friday June will discuss Hugo finalists in short fiction categories, 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday June will discuss novel finalists and Astounding, first Friday July will discuss best series and all other categories.

Entertivities – Perianne Lurie noted that the upcoming theater season at the Kennedy Center will have a version of Schmiggadoon. Rodger Burns noted that on Steam Endless Legend was free for a week.

[https://store.steampower.com/aip/289130/ENDLESS Legend](https://store.steampower.com/aip/289130/ENDLESS_Legend)

Sam Lubell reminded everyone that Balticon is Memorial day weekend.

Mark Roth said that at 8pm on Friday at Balticon he and Ellen will get married. Thomas Atkinson will officiate wearing Jedi robes. Dress code is regular clothing and WSFA is invited.

Old Business – none

New Business – Rodger suggested that we work on putting together a more detailed, updated, and codified business plan for publishing books via WSFA Press, suggesting that Gayle and Paul could maybe put what they have been doing in writing.

No one was there for their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Announcements: Secretary made usual announcement. Allison Brown said BSFS Amateur Writing contest is open until June 15<sup>th</sup>. Balticon web team

wants more people to work with wordpress. Balticon is hoping to have childcare next year and needs someone to set it up. Perianne Lurie has a ticket for sale to Back to the Future at the Kennedy Center. If no one claims it, she will sell it back to the Kennedy Center for a credit. Also, PSFS will be doing its Hugo discussion zoom panel June 8 or 9 and if people are interested, she'll get you on the list.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46pm

### **FRIDAY JUNE MINUTES**

Attendance: Fernand Gouveia, Elizabeth Twitchell, Cathy Green, Rodger Burns,

Kim Hargan, Perrienne Lurie, Aaron Pound, Kathi Overton, Sam Lubell, ZenLizard,

Bob MacIntosh, Michael Ikeda, Sam Scheiner, Allison Brown, Paul Haggerty, Gayle Surette, Jim Thomas, Frances Holland, Greg Key, Bill Lawhorn, Judy Newton, Carolyn Frank, Ann Rudolph

Meeting called to order at 8:15pm. Minutes of previous meeting were read. Treasurer said we have \$88K+ across all accounts.

Capclave present: has been reaching out to his program participants

Capclave Future: Colette has been talking to the hotel.

Capclave Far Future: has talked to Colette and will be meeting with her again this

weekend. Has people in mind for guests, is aiming for beginning of October to

avoid the major Jewish holidays.

WSFA Small Press Award Committee will be meeting tomorrow.

Committee to Actually Discuss SF will discuss the Hugo short fiction finalists. 3rd

Friday will discuss the novels, 1st Friday July will discuss everything else.

Entertivities: Perrienne reminded people House of the Dragon starts up next week.

Sam Lubell reminded people the BSFS picnic is June 29th. Mike Ikeda said Solstice Saturday on the Mall June 22 and Folklife Festival June 26-July1

No old Business

No new business

No one present for 1st, 2d, or 3rd meeting

Announcements:

Secretary made usual announcement

Perrienne reminded people about the GCOM Family Picnic and Euroquest November 7-10. Sam Lubell said this month BSFS Bookclub would discuss Babel

by R.F. Kuang. Virtual Balticon recordings are available via Balticon anywhere link

until July 15. Allison Brown is looking for someone to be in charge of organizing

childcare at Balticon. Gayle said there will be no book at Capclave this year because Sheree Reneee Thomas still hadn't sent a manuscript and it was now too

late.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:54pm

### **THIRD FRIDAY JUNE MINUTES**

Attendance: Cathy Green, Perrienne Lurie, Rodger Burns, Bob MacIntosh, Sam

Lubell, Michael Ikeda, Judy Newton, Jim Thomas, Carolyn Frank, Allison Brown,

Paul Haggerty, Gayle Surrette, Sarah Mitchell, Joe, Judy Kindell, Greg Key, Kim

Hargan, Bill Lawhorn, Madeleine Yeh

Meeting called to order at 8:15pm.

Capclave present: meeting tomorrow at Elizabeth Twitchell's house.

Capclave Future: Things still up in the air with the hotel

Capclave far future: waiting to hear from Colette re: the hotel; will probably tentatively contact potential guests about potential dates

WSFA Small Press Award voting is open. Every WSFA member should have received an email with their username and password. If you didn't check with

Sam S. To make sure you've paid your dues and check with Paul H. To make sure he has your correct email.

Websites, WSFA Press: Zambia is finally up and running for Capclave, otherwise

nothing to report

Committee to actually discuss SF: Hugo novel finalists tonight; 1st Friday July

other categories including Lodestar, Series, Astounding, everything else if have

time; 3rd Friday July ??

Entertivities: Perrienne recommended Fantasmos on Max, which is all in English,

unlike the creator's previous series Los Espookys, is an interesting weird new

series. Cathy Green reminded people the Smithsonian was doing Solstice on the

Mall

Old Business: none

New business: none

No one there for 1st, 2nd, or 3rd meeting.

Announcements: secretary made usual announcement. Perrienne said PSPS is

doing their Hugo finalist discussion panel Friday July 12 at 7:30pm on zoom. If

interested, send her an email, she has a limited number of "passes." Sam Lubell

reminded people (1) the BSFS Book club meets on 4th Saturday and is discussing Babel by R.F. Kuang this month; and (2) BSFS picnic is 6/29 at Patapsco state park.

Meeting adjourned at 8:39pm.

An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms around Us by Ed Yong (Random House, 2022)

Review by Kim Hargan

This is a fascinating popular science book, written by a science journalist on the staff of The Atlantic. The author reviews the knowledge science has gained up to the early decades of this century on how animals (including humans) sense the world, building on ever growing understanding of physics, biochemistry and sensory apparatus that humans don't share. He points out how resistant humans have been to understand how differently other animals perceive the world, especially as we are locked into our own Umwelt.

Umwelt is an important concept in this book. It was coined by a German scientist at the beginning of human understanding that other animals perceive the world in very different ways. The word can be broken down as "the world around", and as such can be translated as "environment", but in the field of sense studies it means "the world as perceived by an entity". For example, the human Umwelt, with trichromatic vision, a weak nose and ears that do not hear in the ultrasonic range, is very different from a dog's Umwelt, with dichromatic vision, a nose geared to identifying and tracking smells and ears that do hear up into the ultrasonic range.

One Umwelt comparison that I found fascinating had to do with colors. Our eyes have three types of cone cells for sensing light at different frequencies. One of the fascinating facts connected with that, are all the colors that we can see that are not in the spectrum of the rainbow, or non-spectral colors, which can't be represented by a single wavelength of light, such as purple (which our visual cortex combines out of mixed red and blue – it is not another "species" of violet), pink, and especially brown in all its shades, which looks like nothing on the rainbow. Yong describes our trichromatic "color field" as a triangle with the red, green and blue receptors defining the vertices, and literally containing millions of discernible non-spectral colors in the "area" of the triangle. However, most birds are tetrachromatic – they have a fourth set of cones that see into the violet or ultraviolet. He

describes this, for comparison, as being three-dimensional – the four types of bird cone cells define the vertices of a pyramid, with the human “color field” representing only a single face of that pyramid. The variety of non-spectral colors that birds can see, contained within the volume of that pyramid, could amount to hundreds of millions of such colors, the vast majority of which are simply not accessible to us. And that doesn’t even touch on what it might mean to be able to sense the polarization of light on top of the “colors”.

And it goes on and on, including how electric fishes use their electrical fields for sensing around themselves and even communicating, and the magnetolocation sense that allows some animals to orientate themselves and navigate with the help of the Earth’s magnetic field. So why offer this book to the notice of WSFA or potential writers of science fiction? As author Ed Yong notes, even though we know all kinds of stuff about molecules and electromagnetic radiation and quantum physics and genetics and sound waves and so on, what we personally experience is the Umwelt of the senses of the human body. And even that is not “identical” for all humans: color blindness, deafness, and so on create considerable differences even in how humans perceive the world. Sometimes science fiction writers try to imagine the Umwelten of really alien aliens, and how to express those alien Umwelten in a written text so that human readers get a taste of what those aliens perceive. Ed Yong describes a multitude of senses that are wildly alien to our human Umwelt right here on Earth coexisting with us. I would think this book would serve as an excellent resource for the science fiction author creating alien aliens in his/her worldbuilding, and I know that I will keep it on hand for that reason when I want to think about sensing the world in a way other than human.

#### Game Review – Deep Rock Galactic by Rodger Burns

Deep Rock Galactic can all too often be a very frustrating game.

In Deep Rock Galactic, you and up to three other players each take on the role of one of four dwarven space miners, dropping into the underground depths of an improbable planet called Hoxxes to explore

for various kinds of minerals while battling the native monstrous insect wildlife, avoiding a variety of natural hazards and generally trying not to die. Individual mission sessions can be in a variety of environments and feature any of several possible goals, and the specific cavern topography for each session is procedurally generated and unique.

It's this procedural generation, and the game engine flexibility it engenders, that can all too often make a session of Deep Rock Galactic seem needlessly frustrating and unfair. Sometimes it's blatant, when the game places an enormous chasm in your path and cheerfully invites you to try and cross without falling to your death, all while under attack by a seemingly endless swarm of giant bug-monsters. Other instances are more subtle, such as when you've traced and retraced the entire area of the session map looking for the last few units of morkite mineral needed to tick over to mission complete. It's even possible for an enemy slam attack or other physics interaction to glitch you out of essential game physics, leaving you unable to even touch the friendly platforms and escape rockets you need to interact with to win. When this sort of thing happens, ruining a promising session and leaving no option but to force-quit the game, Deep Rock Galactic can become teeth-clenchingly infuriating.

But, when its game engine isn't spawning arbitrary unfairness, Deep Rock Galactic can be remarkably engaging, absorbing, and just plain fun.

Part of this is due to variety. Deep Rock Galactic offers the chance to explore in several different biomes, all of which look and feel remarkably different, and reward getting to know the terrain and potential environmental perils. The game's also built around several different kinds of mission goals, that have distinct tempos and objectives, and you can (and should) choose from any of four vocations of dwarven expertise to decide how to tackle a particular session. This gives Deep Rock Galactic a lot more novelty than other games of its type. The other thing that makes Deep Rock Galactic appealing is the sheer amount of care put into building its different biome environments, with big-picture look&feel and small details alike making the game world come alive. Deep Rock Galactic doesn't have a plot or story worth speaking of, and its grasp on hard science is threadbare at best. It knows what it does well—environmental worldbuilding and cooperative exploration gameplay—and doesn't waste time or effort on trying to do anything else.

Deep Rock Galactic is playable on PC (Steam), Xbox One and PS4/PS5 consoles. It retails for \$30 but is regularly on sale for -67% discount. Four 'season' expansion packs have been added to the game for free since release, with a fifth season due for release in June 2024.

A Review of Godzilla Minus One

(all spoilers)

mark roth-whitworth

If you haven't seen it, go see it, then come back and read this.

This was an amazing movie, and should have had more Oscar nominations. It probably would have, if a) it had been made in the West, or b) it didn't have Godzilla in it. The acting was wonderful. All the other good things people have said about it are true. However, they all missed the, well, kaiju in the room.

This was not a monster movie.

I can hear the chorus of you – “but, Godzilla...”

Nope. What is the movie about? Suppose we were to take Godzilla out of the movie, what's left? With any other monster movie, there's nothing left if you take the monster out.

If you take Godzilla out of this movie, what you have is a movie about the end of WWII, from the Japanese point of view. Replace Shikishima seeing Godzilla on Odo Island with an American bombardment of the island, and nothing is changed in the story. He returns to Japan, with PTSD, big time, to find his parents dead, and the country literally in ruins, as bad or worse than Europe.

Do you, reader, personally know someone with PTSD? I do, and did – some have passed, some still here. These were in Vietnam, in combat. The people I know with PTSD live one day at a time, not planning ahead. Their friends they had that died should have had an “after”. Why do you think so many have substance abuse issue? It's trying to end the war, or to at least blot it out for a while.

Shikashima's seen comrades killed. He knows that he could have maybe made a difference... or maybe not, but that's not the point. He survived when they didn't, and he feels he doesn't deserve to be alive, that he should have died with them, or instead of them.

Oh, yes, and he's maybe 20. Or maybe 19. It was the end of the war, and they were desperate. They were drafting 16 year olds. He's an ensign – every pilot I ever heard of was at \*least\* a lieutenant.

If you don't understand that, you don't understand the movie.

He comes home, and his parents are dead, his neighbor lost her family. Noriko, who adopts him, is now an orphan. So is Akiko, the infant. They are \*all\* orphans.

Everyone else is dead. And the nation is shattered, utterly. There is no “other housing”, what they’re living is is all there is. They can’t go anywhere else. They’re trapped, living in the rubble. You want a day after the apocalypse? For them, this is it.

He doesn’t marry Noriko, though they treat each other as if they were. They sleep separately. He denies being Akiko’s father. Inside, he’s still living in the war, with no way out, and he doesn’t deserve a family, an after-the-war-ends, and certainly not a happily-ever-after.

Tachibana is the same. You don’t see him, because he’s hiding.

Godzilla’s presence is, as a friend put it, a McGuffin. It gives Shikashima a war he can fight, and one he can do his part, that he feels he failed at in WWII. He brings in Tachibana, who takes it up for the same reason. This is a return to the war, but a good war, one to defend their homeland, their families, their friends, and it is one they will win, whether they live or die.

Remember the letter and money to the neighbor? He’s lost Noriko to the new war, and knows no one will be left, and it breaks his fear. There’s nothing left but his duty, and this time, he will do it. Tachibana knows what Shikashima’s mind, as clearly as a newspaper headline. With that, his mention of the ejection mechanism is his hope that perhaps this young man can win without dying.

The ejection seat isn’t just a tacked-on happy ending. By doing that, Shikashima gets to see he \*won\*, that he did kill Godzilla (for now, movie fans). Learning that Noriko lives (remember, it’s only been a few days, a week maybe, since Godzilla first came ashore to destroy Ginza), lets him see not just the monster’s death, but that he won his war.

And that war is finally over. THAT is what this movie is about.