



Brought to you by: K.D. Wentworth, Uncle Guido and Simon McCaffery

**Special "Ho Ho Doooh!" Issue •
December 1999**

***** HELLO, OSFW! *****

The December Christmas party will be held at 7:00 P.M. on Saturday, Dec. 11th, at the Wentworth/Kearns residence, 6915 S. New Haven, Tulsa. Directions: Drive down 71st St. between Harvard and Yale. Turn north at the light onto Oswego. Turn left at the first left turn, then left again at the next street which will be New Haven. The house is gray stone and will be on your left. Phone: 523-9729.

OSFW, K.D. Wentworth, and Uncle Guido will provide a ham, ice, cups, napkins, cutlery, plates, and condiments. Members are invited to bring a potluck dish (vegetables, bread, dessert, casseroles) plus a drink.

Those who wish to participate in the traditional cut-throat gift exchange should bring a wrapped present, not to exceed \$10 in value. The gift's theme should center around sf, fantasy, or horror.

Members are also encouraged to bring a 2-3 page fragment of a story not previously read to the group for the Fragment Contest. The selection should be in a plain manila envelope without your name or any other identifying information. It should, however, have a title to make guessing easier. One member will be selected to read the entries aloud and then we will try to guess the authors. There will be a prize for the person who gets the most answers right.

***** UNLOCAL NEWS *****

Ray Bradbury had a stroke in November, but has

been released from the hospital and is expected to make a full recovery.

A 6 hour miniseries based on DUNE is being shot in Prague.

Spielberg is slated to complete Stanley Kubrick's sf movie script, A.I.

***** WORLD FANTASY AWARDS *****

Best Novel: THE ANTELOPE WIFE by Louise Erdrich

Best Novella: "The Summer Isles" by Ian R. MacLeod (ASIMOV'S)

Best Short Story: "The Specialist's Hat" by Kelly Link (EVENT HORIZON)

Best Collection: BLACK GLASS by Karen Joy Fowler

Best Anthology: DREAMING DOWN UNDER by Jack Dann and Janeen Web

Best Artist: Charles Vess

The demise of Classic Genie has been scheduled for Dec. 27th. Subscribers are invited to join Genie's new web service. Many have already fled to SFF.Net, which hosts SFWA's official online presence, and/or Dueling Modems.

***** LOCAL NEWS *****

Brad Sinor sold a HIGHLANDER novel to Warner Books on proposal. The working title is EYE OF DAWN. It's due out next Nov./Dec.

Randy Farran was a semifinalist in Writers of the Future.

K.D. Wentworth is running for Secretary of SFWA.

E. C. Apperson had a short story published IN THE HAPPY TIMES MONTHLY and his 12 year old daughter has a short story coming appearing in POTLUCK, a children's magazine.

*** CONTINUUM ***

November, 1999

Three Manuscripts and an Editor or Who Stole the RAM?

by Amanda Gannon

Nine people showed up for the November meeting, some bearing snacks and some bearing great news. Since someone had stolen all the RAM chips from the Cyber Cafe computers, there was no surfing for naughty pictures on the 'net' and things got off to a more or less official start.

Randy Farran: Randy read "Signals," a story about a group of astronomers whose way of life is threatened by a proposal to put giant billboards into low-earth orbit. Signals from intelligent life originating from a distant star in Ophiuchus interrupt the launch of the first billboard, but what the astronomers learn from the transmission changes the way they look at the sky--forever. The story was funny, as I expected, and I think that its real humor value lay in pointing out the inevitability of advertising, along with death and taxes.

Greg Lower: Greg read "Carnies," a story about Darrian, a worker at a traveling carnival where the people never seem to age. He draws a girl into this strange world but her boyfriend returns to find her in an interesting take on the Persephone/Orpheus myth. The interactions between the characters were very human and believable, and the approach was new enough to keep me listening. I think we all agreed that carnivals provide great nightmare fodder, and while not scary in the strictest sense, this story did point out the otherworldly elements inherent in the setting.

Amanda Gannon: Amanda read Chapter 2 of FRUITS OF SUMMER.

(Thanks to Warren for sharing this.)

*** A WRITER'S GUIDE TO BUYING A COMPUTER FOR UNDER \$180 ***

By Robin Miller

There is no reason for a beginning writer to spend more than \$180 for a computer and all the software needed to make it run, or more than \$400 for all the equipment needed to go into the desktop publishing business. The computer I am using to type the words you are reading right now is a seven year old 286 IBM PC clone with 2 MB RAM, a VGA monitor, and a 40 MB hard drive. It is worth \$100, tops. The "trick" that gives me full word processing and desktop publishing capability with this obsolete box is a little-known software package called New Deal Office 97 (<http://www.newdealinc.com/>) that gives me almost all of the useful features found in Windows 95 and Microsoft Office combined.

Unlike the Microsoft products, which require huge amounts of memory and expensive "state of the art" microprocessors to run, New Deal Office works on any PC this side of an IBM XT. And unlike Microsoft Office, which sells for over \$200 in most retail stores, New Deal Office 97 only costs \$79.

New Deal includes NewWrite, a full-featured word processor (including spell checker) far easier to use than Microsoft Word, a graphics program that handles BMP and GIF images, a contact manager for tracking submissions, a spreadsheet for calculating royalties, a database for information management, an on-screen calculator for the math-impaired, solitaire for times when you are "between assignments," an on-screen clock to check when you're working against tight deadlines, and a communications module adequate for sending out e-mail queries and proposals.

In other words, everything a writer needs to function, all in one low-cost package that takes about an hour to install and learn to use. A new \$2000 computer and \$500 worth of software won't make you write any better than a \$100 used computer running New Deal's \$79 package. Let's prove this with a little experiment:

Look at this paragraph, then at the ones that came before it. See any sudden improvement in writing quality? I didn't think so, even though I saved "writew.txt" to a floppy in New Deal, popped it out of my 286, drove to the nearest Staples store, stuck the floppy in a new multimedia Compaq on display here, and opened the file in Microsoft Word. I'm

standing in the store typing this right now, and people are giving me strange looks. But you wouldn't have known this if I hadn't told you. It's what's inside a writer's brain, not what's in his computer case, that counts.

Just to make sure this is true, let's switch machines again. Now I'm using an MMX graphics workstation with a giant 20" monitor, full of software so sophisticated I don't know what half of it is for. The owner of The Strand Cybercafe in downtown Baltimore, where I am paying \$8 per hour to use this monster, says its total value, including software, is close to \$8000.

Edgar Allen Poe is buried a few blocks away from here. He wrote with quill pens (often bought used from scrap metal dealers, according to local legend) and never saw a computer in his life. Does having an MMX workstation (and ergonomic keyboard) at my fingertips suddenly make my prose better than Poe's? Please don't answer that question.

But don't expect a fancy computer to make you a better writer than you really are, either. If you are writing poetry or novels, you really will write as well on a \$100 286 as you will on any other computer, so buying anything more expensive is a waste.

If you write heavily on and about the Internet, as I do these days, you'll be forced to spend \$300 - \$500 for a used 486 system like the one I recently acquired, with enough RAM and hard drive space to run Windows 95 and a memory-hogging graphics web browser, and you'll need to stick a (\$49 from an online surplus outlet [<http://www.surplusdirect.com/>]) 33.6K or faster modem in it for web searching, but a Pentium-based system (\$700 or more, used) is probably overkill unless you have an ISDN or T-1 Internet connection to go along with it.

As for new computers, they are so expensive that I don't even bother looking at them. And why would a writer want one? Editors don't care what kind of computer you own. All they care about is the quality of your work and the legibility of your printer's output -- which is why the one brand-new piece of hardware I advise all writers to buy as soon as they have a few extra dollars to spare is an inkjet printer. Canon, Epson, Lexmark, and Hewlett-Packard have all recently introduced color inkjet printers that sell for \$200 or less. I chose the HP 672C (street price \$199) because it works well with DOS and New Deal and the ink cartridges are refillable at low cost, but all of these printers, despite their low prices, put out

copy clear enough to please the world's fussiest bifocle-wearing editor.

And if that editor still doesn't bite, the computer, software, and printer combination I have described above, total cost \$400 or less (including sales tax), is all it takes to self-publish a newsletter, 'zine or chapbook that looks as good as one written and laid out on an \$8000 graphics workstation.

***Robin Miller writes a weekly online column for The Netly News called This Old PC about buying and selling used and surplus computer hardware and software. He despises spell checker programs and insists on referring to them as "spill" checkers.*

*** THE ICE PICK ***

by Diana Carolyn Ice

YOU CAN WRITE A MYSTERY, by Gillian Roberts. Cincinnati: Writers's Digest Books, 1999. ISBN 0-89879-863-9. \$12.99.

Why am I reviewing a book about mystery-writing in a newsletter for writers of sf/f/h? Because many (or even most?) sf/f/h novels contain mysteries; and although we don't think of what we are writing as being a "mystery," it might strengthen our novels if we knew more about how to hide clues, exploit red herrings, and handle other mystery-writing techniques.

Roberts takes you from getting ready to write through marketing your finished novel. She teaches the seven "C" basics of designing characters and handling conflict, causality, complications, change, crisis, and closure as well as how to develop your own style, find a tone for your story, and construct a dynamite plot.

Roberts includes in her advice on character building a checklist that could be used for character creation in any genre. And in her chapter on setting--"Where in the world will your world be?"--she asks questions and provides advice that would be especially helpful in fleshing out a totally fictional place, such as sf/f/h writers usually create.

But the most helpful section is on plotting, which is the heart of any mystery. She explains how to provide alternative suspects and ways you might get an amateur sleuth believably involved in a case. And as she says, "Even if you are writing about the police, pros who have seen and done it all, this crime

can't be another routine murder, just another day's work. This one--your story--is an urgent and personal quest." And that's true whether you are writing an intergalactic cop or a castle guardsman in a medieval horror story.

She has advice on how to avoid the plot cliches, how to organize and keep track of your ideas, and how to structure your mystery. She explains what you need to tell the reader right away and how to hide the clues in plain sight.

The book is especially clear and easy to follow, and would be excellent for a beginning writer in any genre, as well as anyone trying to write a straight mystery or incorporate one into another genre. I recommend it highly.

*** MARKET UPDATE ***

CHANGES

EVENT HORIZON is "on hiatus." Editor Ellen Datlow has left the e-publication and joined the Sci-Fi Channel website where she will reportedly manage a fiction area and pay 20 cents/word for stories.

Despite the recent shake-up at AVON, the AVON ANTHOLOGY is still reported to be a "go." The editor reports being very behind in reading submissions.

DARK REGIONS is closed.

CONTESTS

THE BEST OF SOFT SF CONTEST. Contest Director. 1277 Joan Drive, Merritt Island, FL 32952. Entries must have been published or offered for sale in 1999. No fee. Length: 7000 words. Prizes: \$100/First, \$50/Second, \$25/Third. Winners retain all rights. Deadline: Dec. 15, 1999.

L. RON HUBBARD WRITERS OF THE FUTURE--P.O. Box 1630, Los Angeles, CA 90078--the next deadline is Dec. 31st. Get those entries in!

WARNER'S FIRST NOVEL CONTEST (Warner Aspect First Novel Contest, Editorial Dept., 1271 Ave. of the Americas, NY, NY 10020) is open again to unpublished sf and fantasy writers. The winning entry will be published by Warner. The contest runs from Dec. 15th, 1999, until June 30th, 2000. Send a disposable copy of your synopsis of the complete story plus the first several chapters (up to 60 pages). Include a #10 SASE for response. Only one entry per

person allowed. Finalists will be invited to submit their entire novel. More information is available on the Internet.

NEW LISTINGS

THE AGE OF WONDERS. SFF Net, 3300 Big Horn Trail, Plano, TX 75075. Editor: Jeffry Dwight. Anthology buying fiction about the "interface between human and machine, examining how computers, artificial intelligence, medical advances, and 'smart' devices will change the way we live and think in the next two thousand years or so. Be brave, be daring; be inventive--think of the impact the light bulb, the car, and television have had on society, and how hard it would have been to predict, in 1600, the devices, the infrastructure necessary to produce and maintain them, or the societal changes that can be traced directly to them . . . then write a story about the devices yet to be invented, and what they will mean to the people who use them." "Focus on the people rather than the technology." Do not submit stories before Jan. 1, 2000, but submit early as Dwight warns the anthology will likely fill before the closing date, March 1, 2000. Length: 5000 words. Payment: 8 cents/word (\$400 max) upon acceptance for First World Serial Rights. No reprints. E-mail submissions (plain ASCII or MS Word only): darkfire@sff.net.

ALIENQ SF. 11231 San Fernando Rd., San Fernando, CA 91341. Editor: None listed. Needs sf. Length: Any length. Payment: \$50 upon publication. E-mail subs okay. E-mail: editor@alienq.com. Website: <http://www.alienq.com/>

ETERNITY, the Online Journal of Speculative Imagination, P.O. Box 930068, Norcross, GA 30093. Editor: Steve Algieri. Will open Jan. 15th, 2000. Needs sf/f/df/h/mystery/suspense/thrillers/historical romance. Avoid child abuse themes. New writers welcome. Length: 3000 words. Payment: 5 cents/word. Return time: 2 months. E-mail: pulpeternity@hotmail.com. Website: <http://www.pulpeternity.com>

WHISPERS FROM A SHATTERED FORUM, 11 San Miguel Dr. #B, St. Charles, MO 63303. Editor: Cullen Bunn. Needs h/df. Avoid erotica. Include brief bio with cover letter. Length: 4000 words. Payment: 1/4 cent/word. E-mail subs okay. E-mail: cbunn1117@earthlink.net.

ZOETROPE ALL-STORY, 260 5th Ave., Suite 1200, New York, NY 10001. Adrienne Brodeur. Needs story with a mainstream emphasis. "Story should have traditional elements, i.e. characters we

care about, narrative arc, etc." Length: 7000 words.
Payment: \$1200. Website: <http://www.zoetrope-stories.com>

***** MANY THANKS TO *****

KDW & Guido
Diana Carolyn Ice
Warren & Lana Brown
Robin Miller
Amanda Gannon

***** SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION *****

A subscription to *Son of GPIC*, the official newsletter of the Oklahoma Science Fiction Writers, may be obtained by mailing a check or money order in the amount of \$13.00 (\$18 per household), prorated by quarter, to:

K.D. Wentworth, Treasurer
6915 New Haven
Tulsa, OK
(Checks should be made out to K.D. Wentworth)

Please note: An "X" on your mailing label indicates OSFW has no record of either 1999 dues or GPIC subscription renewal. This GPIC will be your last.

***** OSFW INFORMATION *****

The OSFW meets at members' homes the second Friday of every month to read, critique,

and promote in general SF, Fantasy, and Horror writing. All willing to contribute and (after a couple of trial meetings) pay their dues are welcome. There is no age limit but **parents should understand that material with adult themes and language is read and discussed.** Membership dues are \$13.00 per year, adjusted by nearest quarter, which includes a subscription to GPIC. Checks should be made out to K.D. Wentworth, and may be sent to K.D. at the address above.

***** GPIC NEWS AND ARTICLES *****

GPIC solicits news and articles from OSFW members. We prefer they be on disk or sent via e-mail. Pseudonyms are OK. We accept files on either a 3-inch Mac or PC disk. We like RTF files but we can convert most Word and Word Perfect files; always include a separate ASCII file just in case.

Otherwise, arrange to send them by e-mail to Simon at: simon.mccaffery@wilcom.com.

You retain copyright on material. If this is of special concern you might let us know who you really are along with your pseudonym. We reserve the right to edit (although we try not to).

***** NEXT GPIC DEADLINE *****

Pesky deadline for January issue: December 22