Spiders Beat Butterbugs!

Vernor Vinge Wins Hugo

To continue (and finish out) last month’s library theme—UCSD graduates turned science fiction authors—we turn to local writers Vernor Vinge and Ray Feist.

Vernor Vinge

Vernor Vinge received a Ph.D. (Mathematics) from UCSD in 1971, and he went on to teach math and computer science at San Diego State University. Much to the delight of his fans, he recently retired from teaching in order to concentrate on writing full-time.

And, oh, by the way, he won a Hugo award last month!

A Deepness in the Sky captured a Hugo (Best Novel of 1999) in ballots cast by the members of this year’s World Science Fiction Convention. The award was Vinge’s second: his previous book, A Fire Upon the Deep, nabbed the prize in 1993. A number of Darkstar members were present in Chicago to congratulate him; see the photos throughout this issue, and also on the Darkstar website.

Runners-up for the award were, in order: Lois McMaster Bujold’s A Civil Campaign (which co-starred bioengineered butterbugs); Neal Stephenson’s Crypto-nomic; Greg Bear’s Darwin’s Radio; and J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. Full voting tallies are available at the Chicon 2000 website, www.chicon.org.

Readers familiar with Vinge’s work have come to recognize a recurring theme of his, that of the upcoming technological Singularity. He observes that our present pace of technological advancement isn’t just keeping
### October Calendar

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<td>Yoga at Old Student Center Classroom #2, 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Potluck at Doyle Park (UTC/La Jolla Colony) 7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Fall Festival on the Green at UCSD Library Walk, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Open Gaming at Old Student Center North Conference Room, 1:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Yoga at Old Student Center Classroom #2, 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Evening Gaming at International Center, 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner at Mandarin Garden(Mira Mesa), 7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Irregular Movies at Elisa &amp; Adam’s house, 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Yoga at Old Student Center Classroom #2, 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner at Mimi’s Café (Mission Valley), 7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Open Gaming at International Center, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>November Dark Matters deadline</td>
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<td>Sunday Films at International Center, Noon</td>
<td>Yoga at Old Student Center Classroom #2, 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Evening Gaming at International Center, 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner at Troy’s Greek Cuisine (Mission Gorge), 7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Long Gaming at Old Student Center North Conference Room, Noon</td>
<td>Halloween Party at Elisa &amp; Adam’s house, 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Yoga at Old Student Center Classroom #2, 5:00 p.m.</td>
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**Note:** This schedule is prepared in advance, so it’s always a good idea to check our web site for updates at http://darkstar.ucsd.edu. You can also subscribe to our mailing list from the web site to receive reminders and notices of last-minute changes, as well as discussion of various topics.

**Key:** To save space, the following icons are used to represent events run by other organizations we feel Darkstar members might enjoy. Consult the calendar listing for a full description. 🎈 = convention; 📚 = bookstore event; 🎤 = performance; 🎃 = Rocky Horror
Darkstar Events

Special Events
• Fri ~ 10/6/00 ~ Fall Festival on the Green, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., UCSD Library Walk. Darkstar will have a table at this annual Student Organization Information Fair. Stop by and see us!

• Sat ~ 10/28/00 ~ Darkstar Halloween Party, 8:00 p.m., Elisa, Adam, and Hans’s house, 11226 Adriatic Place (Mira Mesa), San Diego. Come party with us! Activities include creating Jack o’ Lantern Totem Poles, watching movies, playing games, and probably some surprises. Everyone needs to bring food & beverage to share. A main dish will be served. Costumes are highly encouraged but not required. Carpooling will be available. Directions will be available later. Donations to the pumpkin fund are appreciated. RSVP is required. Contact: Elisa Sheets, 858 586 9452.

Social Dinner Meetings
Come join us for dinner and general fannish discussion! Dinner meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. every Thursday except holidays. For rides from campus, meet at 6:45 p.m. at the Darkstar Office at UCSD in the Ché Café Building. Contact: Marjolijn Bekken, 619 232 7819.

• Thu ~ 10/5/2000 ~ Potluck Dinner at Doyle Park, 8175 Regents Rd., San Diego, 858 581 7170. Bring a dish to share; we’ll eat in the picnic area.

• Thu ~ 10/12/2000 ~ Mandarin Garden, 8242 Mira Mesa Blvd. (in Mira Mesa Mall), San Diego, 858 566 4720.

• Thu ~ 10/19/2000 ~ Mimi’s Café (Mission Valley), 5180 Mission Center Rd., San Diego, 619 491 0284.

• Thu ~ 10/26/2000 ~ Troy’s Greek Cuisine, 10450 Friars Rd., San Diego, 619 281 7741.

• Thu ~ 11/2/2000 ~ Souplantation (Kearny Mesa), 7095 Clairemont Mesa Dr. (same strip mall as Mysterious Galaxy), San Diego, 858 576 0622.

Gaming Meetings
Open Gaming Meetings are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month at 1:00 p.m. at UCSD. We bring a number of our favorite board/strategy games, but you’re encouraged to bring your own. Subscribe to the gaming@mib.org mailing list for Michael’s highly amusing reminders and other gaming messages. Contact: Michael Powell, 619 593 8035, mikey_powell@hotmail.com.

• Sat ~ 10/28/2000 ~ Long Gaming Meeting, Noon, Old Student Center North Conference Room, UCSD.

Evening Gaming Meetings are held various Wednesdays from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., at UCSD. Evening parking is $3 at the Information Booth. Special requests are welcome. Contacts: Holly Ourso, hollyourso@mysself.com; and John Davis, jdavis@envy.com.

• Wed ~ 10/11/2000 ~ Evening Gaming Meeting, 7:00 p.m., International Center Conference Room, UCSD.

• Wed ~ 10/25/2000 ~ Evening Gaming Meeting, 7:00 p.m., International Center Conference Room, UCSD.

Movies
• Sat ~ 10/14/2000 ~ Irregular Movie Series, 7:00 p.m. social hour, 8:00 p.m. movie; Elisa, Adam, and Hans’s house, 11226 Adriatic Place (Mira Mesa), San Diego. Join us for movies & talk. Films: The Andromeda Strain and The 13th Soldier. Bring a snack to share; soft drinks are also appreciated. Contact: Elisa Sheets, 858 586 9452.

• Sun ~ 10/22/2000 ~ Sunday Film Series, Noon, International Center Conference Room, UCSD. We continue our serial Radar Men from the Moon (Episodes 1–3 at noon; 4–6 at 1:00 p.m.). At 2:00 p.m. we will see the classic When Worlds Collide (1951). Show up at...
11:30 a.m. if you’d like to help out with setup! Contact: Adam Tilghman, 858 586 9452.

**Dancing & Yoga**

- **Regency Dancing is cancelled for October.** Contact: Kevin Hay, khay@ghoti.net.
- **Every Mon ~ 10/2, 10/9, 10/16, 10/23 & 10/30/2000 ~ Yoga,** 5:00 to 6:15 p.m., Old Student Center Classroom #2, UCSD. Gentle stretching and relaxation. Bring a blanket large enough to cover yourself, and wear loose comfortable clothing. Come, and you shall *Om* and *Namaste.* Contact: Holly Ourso, hollyourso@myself.com.

**Monthly Business Meeting**

- **Mon ~ 10/30/2000 ~ Darkstar Business Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., International Center Conference Room, UCSD. Open to all members. Meet at 6:45 p.m. at the Darkstar Office, Ché Café Building, before walking over. Contact: Elisa Sheets, 858 586 9452.

**Library Meeting**

- See “Library News” for details.

**Community Events**

**Performances**

*Dark Matters* lists these events because Darkstar members and/or friends thereof are in them, and/or we think Darkstar members would enjoy the show. These are *not* official Darkstar-sponsored events.

- **Every Fri ~ Rocky Horror & Crazed Imaginations,** midnight, La Paloma Theater, 471 First St., Encinitas. See Darkstar’s Kevin “TK” Lindgren in the RHPS cast for San Diego County. (See http://www.crazedimensions.org/ for more information.)
- **Swing Dance Event ~ Date & Time TBA.** Contact: Russell Hedges, russellh@home.com
- **Fri ~ 10/13/2000 ~ Allison Lonsdale,** 8:00 p.m., Lestat’s Coffeehouse, 3343 Adams Ave., San Diego, 619 282 0437. It’s Friday the 13th! Time to pull out all the songs about vampires, serial killers, and Jack the Ripper! Dress in morbid attire...or as a famous murderer. No real weapons, please..

**Bookstore Events**

- **Fri ~ 10/13/2000 ~ Book Signing,** Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore, 7051 Clairemont Mesa Blvd., San Diego, 858 268 4747. Contact the bookstore for more information about the visit by Kevin J. Anderson and Brian Herbert, because nothing more was available at press time.

**Library News**

*by ‘Lissa Ackerman, Librarian*

Now that UCSD is back in session, Darkstar’s Anne Proud Memorial Library has additional hours for checkout. The library is open during office hours, library work parties, or by appointment with the Librarian. You can arrange a visit by e-mailing her at librarian@darkstar.ucsd.edu. Check-out time is four weeks with renewals available.

Each month, our Library Committee fills the office display shelf with books fitting a particular theme. In September and October, we turn our attention to science fiction and fantasy authors who’ve attended UCSD over the years. (See cover story on Vernor Vinge.)

Many of you have moved in the last year. You need to update your contact information (e-mail address and phone number) in the Darkstar library system. Update forms are located in the Darkstar office by the library computer. We send late notices via e-mail, and call to remind patrons of late books (and occasional upcoming events).

- **Mon ~ 10/9/2000 ~ Library Committee Meeting,** 6:30 p.m., Leucadia Pizzeria, 7748 Regents Rd. (by Vons), San Diego, 858 597 2222. Monthly planning meeting for Darkstar’s library project; all are welcome. For rides from campus, meet at 6:15 p.m. at the Darkstar Office, Ché Café Building, UCSD. Contact: Elisa Sheets, 858 586 9452.

We are continuing to label series and award winners, and we could use your help. If you’re interested, please contact the Librarian or search the dslib mailing list archives (at http://darkstar.ucsd.edu) for instructions. The next library work party will be announced via e-mail and listed on the website when a date is selected.

**What I Did At Chicon**

*by Cathy Mullican*

When I looked at the programming schedule before the convention, I saw so many interesting panels I wasn’t sure I’d do anything else—like visit the hucksters or the art show. When I got there, I found I could only sit for about two or three panels a day.

My favorites included: “Xenoarcheology Roadshow,” Terry Pratchett’s reading,
Jack Chalker’s “tour” through WorldCon history, and a panel on Daniel Pinkwater. Other panels I attended included one of the many panels on gender/feminist issues in SF, a discussion on the role of the Science Fiction Book Club in today’s world, and one on the myth of fannish tolerance.

Jody Lynn Nye, Nick Polotta, and Jack McDevitt were our esteemed professors of xenoad- cheology, and a good time was had by all examining the strange relics of 20th century Earthmen—is that a lawyer’s spine or a baby ottoman? (If you’ve ever read David Macauley’s Motel of the Mysteries, you have some idea what xenoadcheology is like. If you haven’t read it, you should; it’s hilarious.)

Terry Pratchett read selections from Nanny Ogg’s Cookbook (half recipes, half etiquette) and from his current work-in-progress, The Truth. The room was far too small for the crowd he drew; luckily, my other panel ended early, so I secured a good seat. Given the popularity of Pratchett’s work, they should’ve put him in a larger room.

On the other hand, if you ever think you’re attending a con with problems, find an old-time fan and ask about the 1968 WorldCon in Berkeley—the weekend the Berkeley riots broke out. SCA equipment under trees. Trees full of spiders + tear gas = equipment full of spiders. Which was minor compared to the masquerade.

This was only one of the tales of disaster Jack Chalker told in his “tour” though WorldCon history. (While it was billed as a tour and was near the exhibits, Mr. Chalker was using a mobility scooter. We sat around the table and listened to him talk.)

The Daniel Pinkwater panel caught my interest because I’ve been fond of his books for a long time. I was in junior high when I came across The Snarkout Boys and the Avocado of Death and its sequel, The Snarkout Boys and the Baconburg Horror in my public library. I was hooked.

But I could find no more in my library. I kept an eye out in bookstores, but had little luck. Fortunately for all, Pinkwater’s YA novels have begun to be republished in omnibus form, and these treasures are once again available. Pinkwater grew up in Chicago, and many of the bizarre events in his books are, in fact, things that really happened.

At least, that’s what the panelists, who’d all met him at least once, told us. Topics of discussion included favorite books, best books to start with, the difficulty of locating many titles, and the difficulty of assembling a complete bibliography. (He has also written as Manus Pinkwater, Daniel M. Pinkwater, and other names.)

Of course I managed to get to the Dealers’ Room and spend too much money. My favorite vendors were:

- Fo’ Paws Productions (http://www.fopaws.com/) has great fannish t-shirts and other silk-screened items such as totes.
- Meisha Merlin Press (http://www.meishamerlin.com/) features works by such authors as Jody Lynn Nye and S.P. Somtow.
- Nancy Lebovitz (http://www.nancybuttons.com) has an amazing array of buttons and does custom work, too.

It wouldn’t be a Worldcon without great parties:

- Charlotte ran longest and had great barbecue. Everyone fell in love with Charlotte’s kitty-hawks—small plush cats with wings. They sold out.
- Xerps in 2020 and Chernobyl in 3004 had the best decor.
- There was a good B4 in 2160 party, too. I had fun, and I’ve never even seen a full episode of Babylon 5!
- Congenial had a good party early in the con; small party, but yummy cake and they were, indeed, very congenial.
- I never made it to Japan’s party (they tended to close relatively early, perhaps due to time differences between here and there), but it was crowded and popular.

The funniest moment of the Hugo ceremony was when the GalaxyQuest guys got so excited they left their Hugo on stage.
The masquerade also featured some very talented entrants. My favorite was “The Awakening,” inspired by Tolkien, which won Best of Class in the Journeymen division. Susan Eisenhour and Margaret Blakesley had a wonderful tree/Ent costume and a beautifully choreographed awakening. The funniest entries were “Mother-in-Law of Gor” and “Peace Keepers,” from Fyderdyne Labs.

On a sadder note, a lot of recent pro and fan deaths were announced, including Orson Scott Card’s son (Charlie Ben, the one with CP). For details on the others, see the Chicon daily newsletters or your usual genre news outlets.

Finally, some lessons learned:
• No matter how many authors will be at the con, pick one or two you want to sign things.
• Don’t try to get all of them in one con. Books are heavy.
• When the guy running the UK in ’05 bid table says “That candy’s filled with whiskey,” he means it.
• Be early for Pratchett readings. Very early.

For more photos from Chicon, see Brendan Dillon’s website at http://ducttape.simplenet.com/chicon/.

Blast from the Past: Classic Book Reviews

By Christine Needham

“That country where it is always turning late in the year...” opens the introduction to Ray Bradbury’s book, The October Country, a collection of 19 short stories, each with a decidedly eerie theme.

Although the stories were published between 1943 and 1955, some of them are still plenty scary by today’s standards. One specific example is “The Man Upstairs,” which tells of boarding house with a new tenant who sleeps all day and “works” only at night.

While the stories in this collection still endure, they reflect the time in which they were written, or the 1920s and 1930s, the time of Bradbury’s boyhood. For example, “The Scythe” and “Homecoming” emphasize farming as the norm, in a way that few stories do now.

In the stories set in the city, the reader gets a definite sense of the “newness” of big city life. It’s difficult to explain. It’s kind of like listening to an old recording of classic blues. The “tinny” sound of the instruments and the scratch of the record (even if it’s been digitally remastered) evoke a sense of the time when they were made.

Perhaps the best reason to read this book now, besides the October tie-in, is that it’s a collection of short stories. Yes, that’s right, if you’re thinking “Well, summer’s over, it’ll be nothing but textbooks until winter break,” need not fear. Most of these stories can be enjoyed in half an hour or less.
You can continue your pleasure-reading pastime without causing serious sleep loss.

In short, it’s both timeless and timely.

**Selective Media:**
**Genre Media**
**Commentary**

by Bob Evans

Welcome to my first “Selective Media” column. I’ve been invited to write about genre films and media for *Dark Matters*. First, I’m honored and pleased to be asked.

I hope my opinions are helpful and informative.

Second, I’m leaving reviews of current films to others. What I plan to do is write about the intersection of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror with TV and film. Sometimes these columns may be rants about what drives me crazy (like hearing the term “life-force” in a science fiction context), sometimes it will be discussions of under-rated or over-rated films of the past—in short, whatever strikes my interest that month in genre films.

Although I attended Chicon, I don’t have much to report. My personal opinion was that the programming was substandard for a Worldcon, and this extended into the media departments as well. (That’s not to say I didn’t have fun, but I’ve been to better Worldcons.)

The best media-related progrmning I saw there was a Q&A session with Robert Gordon, the writer of this year’s Hugo-winning *GalaxyQuest*. It was a pleasant change of events to have both the writer and director of the Hugo-winning film present at the convention.

The most interesting fact I learned from the Q&A was that Mr. Gordon does not attend conventions regularly. He visited a few Star Trek conventions in researching the film, but ChiCon was his first taste of Fan-run conventions. But his comments implied it’s not his last.

When asked if he would tell Hollywood about the Worldcon and the Hugos, he cautioned the members about getting what they wished for. He warned that the flare of Hollywood lights could spoil the very special thing he saw in the Worldcon. I believe he is right. I would hate to see *E!* at the Worldcon. This enclave is special and should be kept that way.

There was a screening of an indie film titled *The Storm* set on a research base on Titan. Sadly, due to a last minute schedule change I was unable to see this. I arrived at the original time, and saw that the film was in the final act. Not wishing to spoil it, I walked away muttering curses at the con staff, not for the first or the last time.

I’d like to comment on the growing trend in indie films for genre-related material. *Pi*, *Cube*, and *The Storm* are indicators, I think, of a coming wave of genre films on a limited budget. As the capabilities of digital cameras and editing systems grow, I think we’ll see a re-birth of fast, cheap genre films. In accordance with Sturgeon’s law, 90% will be
steady, but is in fact accelerating! He predicts that sometime in the next 50 years, our science will become so advanced that we’ll scarcely recognize our children (or ourselves) as human.

Vinge’s A Fire Upon the Deep (1993) is set in a universe where technological transcendence is the norm: civilizations are constantly on the wax and wane, and are often as not consumed by their newly powerful science. Occasionally, however, one survives into the next level of existence. (Godhood? Who knows.) In Fire, circumstances force the younger and older races, despite their vastly diverging world views and mutually inscrutable motivations, to join together and fight an ancient galaxy-destroying evil. In typical Vinge fashion, he side-steps a detailed discussion of these transcendent races—after all, how well can a brilliant, but human, author describe the workings of superhuman minds?—and instead chooses to tell the tale from the perspective of the humans and human-like creatures. Tricky, eh?

A Deepness in the Sky takes places about thirty thousand years before the events in Fire, and within a civilization far removed from the tidal flows of galactic racial transcendence.

But Vinge nevertheless manages to explore the notion of the Singularity, this time from the other direction: what would happen if there were an absolute ceiling on technology? What if intelligence augmentation, faster than light travel, and the like were impossible? Would humanity be doomed to stagnation, or could we work past this limitation?

Finally, Vinge’s 1981 novella “True Names” is widely recognized as the seminal work of the cyberpunk genre, even ahead of William Gibson’s Neuromancer. Vinge’s novella illustrates how issues of self, identity, and accountability can converge when real-world conflicts intrude on the electronic realm. The story is due to be reprinted in an essay anthology covering the modern cyberspace frontier, but you can find it on our library’s display shelf. Look for Vinge’s 1987 short story collection, True Names and Other Dangers, and read a few more stories while you’re there!

Ray Feist

And to finish out our tour of UCSD-alum authors, we turn to Ray Feist, who graduated from UCSD in 1977 with a BA (Communications). He continues to reside in San Diego County with his family.

On the shelf this month is the first of Feist’s “Riftwar Saga” books, Magician: Apprentice. This book is the tale of the orphan Pug, whose strange sort of magic gets him mixed up in the eternal battle between Order and Chaos. Unsubstantiated rumor says this series is set in a game world he created while an undergrad at UCSD; read the books and decide for yourself!

That’s it for this month! In November, we’ll look at books about colonization and exploitation of native civilizations—just in time for Thanksgiving!

Dr. V.V. Lurquesalot, Babysitter for the Sherkaner Underwood Research Laboratory Institute (SURLI), with Prometheus Award. Photo by Brendan Dillon

"Spiders Beat Butterbugs!" continued from page 1.

crap—but a few will be diamonds.

I’m including my email address here (robertevans@home.net) because I want your comments on my column. Let me know what you like and don’t like. I may not agree with you, but I’ll consider it.