



Summer 2016

Thanks for reading this edition of *New Frontier*. The USS Bortas is a sci-fi fan club based in the Champaign-Urbana area of East Central Illinois. We meet the third Saturday of each month at 2 PM. We meet in a member's home, or in a park, or at a restaurant, or at Barnes and Noble Bookstore. To find out where we are meeting on any given month, please call our Captain, Allen Glenn at (217) 649-6718, or visit our newly updated website at www.ussbortas.net. Our website will give you lots of information about who we are and what we do! We would love to have you join us. We have a lot of fun and also do many activities for charity. So come on board!

Fleet Captain Shirley Kolb, Chief of Communications and Newsletter Editor, USS Bortas

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The Tesla Coil Concert at the University of Illinois Engineering Open House

by SoQol, Science Officer, USS BortaS, STI

After parking in Lot B-22, I made my way to Grainger Engineering Library. The Granger Engineering Library is located on Springfield Avenue, along the north edge of Bardeen Quad. This was late afternoon on Friday, March 11, 2016, A man was working at unloading objects and cables from his van onto the building's patio. After I watched for a bit, he was very busy, I asked what they were doing. "It's classified," was his answer. Then, he elaborated his response by explaining he was setting up for a concert later.

Step One completed: Locate and verify the stage. Step Two: Move car into a closer spot. I chose to lessen my walk back since I was scheduled to work that night. Step Three: Find a vantage point. Returning to the Quad I positioned myself on a rock across the stream south of the patio. There were not a lot of people there. I had an open field an hour before the show.

"2001, A Space Odyssey", the opening notes sounded across the Quad. The music had an electric buzz to it. EOH Director William Dong announced himself and welcomed us to the concert, "May I have your attention please? Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 96th Engineering Open House. My name is William Dong and I am your Director of Engineering Open House. And, here we present to you one of the famous exhibits we have: Tesla Coil Concert. So, how fired up you are?"

More bolts of power blasted from the twin towers, These bolts of plasma were not reacting to the music, they WERE the music. Two rods, located between the 7 foot (my estimate) tall Tesla Coils, were the grounding points. Then things got weird.

After the first selection ended, a stage hand removed the two rods and returned to center stage empty handed. Now what? Technical difficulty? The music started. Wait! He is still out there. Am I about to witness a terrible accident? Bolts snaked through the air and grounded through the man's outstretched arms. Then... standing mid-stage, he alternated attracting bolts in time with the music. It was a song from "Highlander," There Can Be Only One.

Not content with just being a human lightning rod, he became a one man light show, bringing lamps and glowing rods into the act. Then, as a change of pace, he caught a board on fire. Imagine Dirty Harry (Clint Eastwood) giving his "Do you feel lucky?" speech.

"You. I know what you're thinking: large sparks of high current or just high voltage? Well, to tell you the truth, in all this excitement I kind of lost track myself. I know you technical fellas are telling your ladies that these sparks are no different than the static that you get from walking across the carpet, just a lot bigger. They have a high voltage, but since the current is low, they are not really dangerous. If that is what you think, you'd be wrong. You'd be dead wrong. Let's pretend that this piece of lumber is your unprotected arm. Then, you have these Tesla Coils with more than 24 thousand watts. More power than your house and will blow the main breaker clean off. You have to ask yourself one question, 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do you feel lucky, Arm?"

Then, the board burst into flame. Not at all lucky.

Darth Vader came onstage as it was time for me to leave. I was 2 hundredths of an hour late clocking in for work.

I am reminded of another show which took place, as mentioned in The Truth About Tesla by Christopher Cooper. This coil did not make music but: "At the end of February 1893, he attended the National Electric Light Association convention in St. Louis. Lecturing before a standing room-only crowd of over four thousand, Tesla performed for the first time some of the displays of electrical engineering for which he would become famous. He illuminated fluorescent tubes wirelessly wielding them like industrial-era light sabers before a stunned crowd."

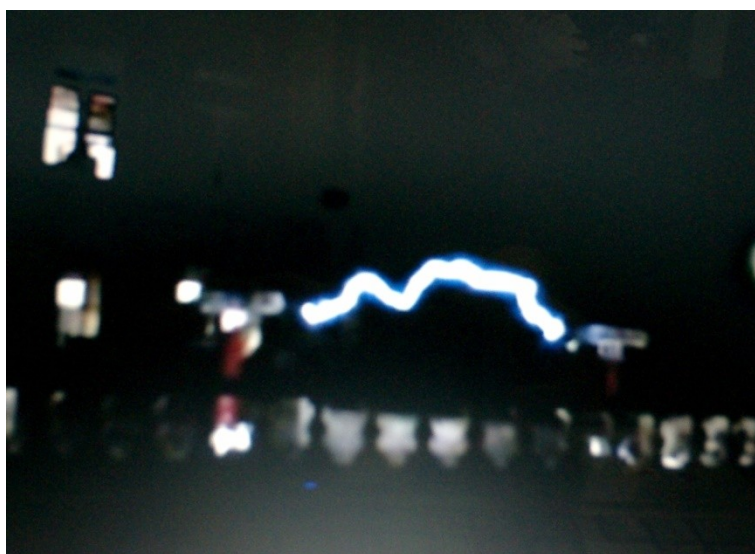
Take that! Darth Vader!

Even genius has purpose. What was Nikola Tesla's purpose that day in February 1893? Nothing less than wireless electrical power transmission in hope of attracting investors. Waves, water and sound, need a medium, water and air, to travel from a generating source. The medium for electricity is this unmeasurable substance know as ether. Ether permeates everything. An oscillating step-up transformer (Tesla Coil) would wirelessly transmit power through the air where it would be captured, do its work, and have a return path through the ground. Because the transmission medium is everywhere, transmission through the ground with an air return path would also function. Free electrical power for everyone! A contemporary of Nikola Tesla, Albert Einstein, would propose quantum mechanics for the movement of electrical charge. No ether required. Investors in Tesla's wireless electrical power transmission saw no return profit. Paradoxally, I have a radio which does not need a plug or batteries to produce sound. It runs off power transmitted through the air by an AM radio station (oscillating transformer). Mind blown.

The 2017 Engineering Open House is scheduled for Friday, March 10, 2017 and Saturday, March 11, 2017. The Tesla Coil Concert is Friday, March 10, around 7 PM, for a good seat.



There Can Be Only One



Monster Spark

Star Trek SCE – A Great Read!

By Shirley Kolb

In *Star Trek: The Official Magazine*, No. 56, Spring 2016, there was an article about the Star Trek SCE books. I had heard of these before, but didn't really know much about them. Originally they were all issued as e-books, but now they have been collected into 13 printed books, each of which contains from two to six of the e-books. There are 66 stories altogether.

The premise of the books is that there are specific ships in Starfleet whose purpose is to investigate alien technology to salvage or possibly reverse-engineer it, or to go to various planets where there have been engineering disasters and try to clean them up. These ships are manned by engineers mainly, but have a Starfleet Captain as well as a linguist and a cultural specialist. SCE stands for "Starfleet Corps of Engineers". Guess who their leader is? Scotty! He works at Starfleet Headquarters but he is in charge of sending the ships out and helping to pick the crews. I thought that was really a great idea – giving him a specific job after he was rescued from the 75 years in the transporter buffer. As you know, being a "man out of time" made him feel that he did not have a purpose. This gave him the purpose he needed.

The books focus on one particular ship and you get to know the crew really well. The Captain is named David Gold and he is Jewish and married to a rabbi named Rachel Gilman who lives in NYC and they have several grown children. The main engineer is named Sonya Gomez, and she was in the Next Generation episode "Q Who?" where she spilled hot chocolate all over Captain Picard. (I don't remember this but perhaps some of you do!) Throughout the books she is teased rather relentlessly about this. There is also a pair of Bynars named 110 and 111. There was a Next Gen episode about Bynars also, although I don't think these are the same two. Other characters include Lieutenant Kieran Duffy, Lieutenant Commander Domenica Corsi (Chief of Security), Dr. Elizabeth Lense, and a Nasat (which is a huge pill bug) whose name is P8 Blue but she goes by Pattie, amongst other crew.

There is some tie-in to familiar characters – LaForge is in the first few stories, Nog is in one, Scotty is in several, including one called Foundations which is about the early years of the SCE which were back in Captain Kirk's time.

I usually prefer books about characters that I know from the series, but I decided to give these a try and I am very glad I did. They are excellent! For the most part the stories are really good, and the characterizations are superb. I feel like I know all of the crew as well as if I had seen them on the screen. (Just ask my husband – in some of the books serious things happen to some of the crew, and I have been mourning over it like I was on the ship!) I have been getting them all out of the library. So far I have read eight of them. I had to buy #9 and am waiting for it to arrive. (The library could not find it from inter-library loan, even though they went outside of our system to look for it.)

So if you want a good summer (or anytime!) read, I suggest checking these out! Titles are listed below.

#1 – Have Tech, Will Travel

#2 – Miracle Workers

#3 - Some Assembly Required

#4 - No Surrender

#5 - Foundations

#6 - Wildfire

#7 - Breakdowns

#8 - Aftermath

#9- Grand Designs

#10 - Creative Couplings

#11 - Wounds

#12 - Out of the Cocoon

#13 - What's Past

Cunningham Children's Home – A Trip Report

By Paula Kesler

It was a chilly day for an away mission to explore the Cunningham Children's Home. Our guide explained the history of how the Home came to be as it is today. Treatment of troubled youth sure has changed over the years during the Home's existence. We went on a walking tour of the grounds after our introduction. I can just imagine this land as it was when the Cunninghams owned it. There was a long, sweeping, tree lined lane which ended at a mansion. Set back from the main road, there was a sense of privacy and distance from the cares of the world. Back then there were outbuildings on the grounds, stables and such, to serve the main house. The mansion is gone now. It was attacked by termites and had to be torn down. One side of the lane's double row of trees remains and can still be seen on the grounds. Today the Cunningham Children's Home has a mixture of old and new buildings to serve their young clientele. The buildings are a testament in brick and stone, evolving to meet changing needs.

Recent BortaS Activities

By Shirley Kolb

As usual the BortaS has been busy. In April we had our annual roast. The roastee this year was Faith Steinberg, and the roasters were Captain Glenn (read by Sara Glenn), Marlee Glenn, Julie McGowan, and Chad Steinberg. The roast was held at Minneci's Italian Restorante in Champaign. Everyone (including Faith!) had a great time. Faith chose Marlee to be next year's roastee and she has already chosen Papa Del's on Neil Street in Champaign for the location.

Various crew members have participated in volunteer projects, including making blankets for cancer patients at Christie Clinic, making sympathy cards to be sent to the loved ones of cancer patients who pass away, and making cards for service members.

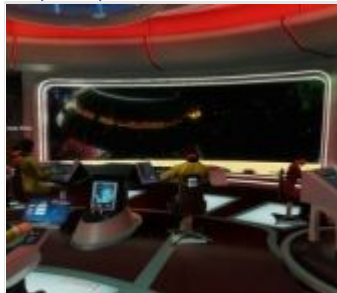
Upcoming events include attending the movie *Star Trek Beyond* on July 23rd together as a group, with dinner and discussion to follow, making a display at the Rantoul Public Library for the 50th Anniversary of Star Trek in September, and our annual bonfire in October and Christmas in January.

New Star Trek Game Announced

By Paula Kesler

A new computer game with a Star Trek theme. The "Star Trek: Bridge Crew" game is an interactive 3D game. The goal is for the players to work together to solve missions. See the link below.

[Warp full speed ahead into this first Star Trek: Bridge Crew trailer](#)



Warp full speed ahead into this first Star Trek: Bridge ...

Ubisoft's Red Storm division has unveiled a first official look at the upcoming virtual-reality game Star Trek: Bridge Crew.

[View on www.blastr.com](http://www.blastr.com)

Preview by Yahoo

Me Madness

By Shirley Kolb

In 2014 and 2015, Star Trek won Me-TV's "Me Madness" as the most memorable program. For 2016, it seemed to be on the way to a third consecutive victory. But just as in "March Madness" there are sometimes some upsets, so it happened this year. Star Trek did make it into the Final Four, with The Andy Griffith Show, The Carol Burnett Show, and The Twilight Zone. But it was beat by The Andy Griffith Show, which I believe went on to become the 2016 champion.

In March 2017, keep an eye out for Me Madness. We should vote to bring Star Trek back into the number one slot where it belongs!

Also if you haven't already, I suggest signing up for Me-TV's newsletter. It is full of a lot of fun facts about all kinds of shows, cereals, toys, actors, etc. There is often information about Star Trek in the newsletter. It also has some fun quizzes you can take about various shows or actors. (www.metv.com)

George Takei Reacts to Gay Sulu News: "I Think It's Really Unfortunate"

In the summer of 1968, George Takei attended a pool party at the Hollywood Hills home of Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry. The actor, then 31 and famous for his role as Hikaru Sulu, helmsman of the USS Enterprise, swam up to his boss and "had a conversation with him, a very private one. I was still closeted, so I did not want to come out to him." Nevertheless, Takei - who announced he was gay in 2005 - was fully attuned to the gay equality conversation gaining momentum at the time. He felt it was a topic worth exploring on the socially minded science-fiction series, which had previously tackled issues like the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War through keenly observed allegory.

But the show had recently seen its lowest ratings ever, with [an episode featuring TV's first interracial kiss between Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura](#), which NBC affiliates in the South refused to air. While sympathetic to his star's pitch, Roddenberry felt he was in no position to take those kinds of risks. "He was a strong supporter of LGBT equality," recalls Takei, now 79. "But he said he has been pushing the envelope and walking a very tight rope - and if he pushed too hard, the show would not be on the air." Alas, the show was canceled the following season anyway.

But Star Trek has lived long and prospered for studio home Paramount, spawning six TV series and 13 feature films. True to its title, the latest big-screen outing, Star Trek Beyond, has gone where none have gone before: Star John Cho - who assumes the Sulu mantle for the third time in the reboots - has [told Australia's Herald Sun that the character is revealed to be gay](#).

The idea came from Simon Pegg, who plays Scotty in the new films and penned the Beyond screenplay, and director Justin Lin, both of whom wanted to pay homage to Takei's legacy as both a sci-fi icon and beloved LGBT activist.

And so a scene was written into the new film, very matter-of-fact, in which Sulu is pictured with a male spouse raising their infant child. Pegg and Lin assumed, reasonably, that Takei would be overjoyed at the development - a manifestation of that conversation with Gene Roddenberry in his swimming pool so many years ago.

Except Takei wasn't overjoyed. He had never asked for Sulu to be gay. In fact, he'd much prefer that he stay straight. "I'm delighted that there's a gay character," he tells The Hollywood Reporter. "Unfortunately, it's a twisting of Gene's creation, to which he put in so much thought. I think it's really unfortunate."

He explains that Roddenberry was exhaustive in conceiving his Star Trek characters. (The name Sulu, for example, was based on the Sulu Sea off the coast of the Philippines, so as to render his Asian nationality indeterminate.) And Roddenberry had always envisioned Sulu as heterosexual.

Proving that is not so simple a matter, however. Sulu never had an on-screen love interest during Star Trek's initial three-season run. He did mention a daughter, Demora, who appeared in 1994's Star Trek Generations, the seventh film in the series (she was played by Jacqueline Kim).

But the only reference to how Demora was conceived appears in a secondary canonical source: the 1995 Star Trek novel The Captain's Daughter. "It was, to put it crudely, a one-night stand with a glamazon," Takei explains. "A very athletic, powerful and stunningly gorgeous woman. That's Demora's mother."

Takei first learned of Sulu's recent same-sex leanings last year, when Cho called him to reveal the big news. Takei tried to convince him to make a new character gay instead. "I told him, 'Be imaginative and create a character who has a history of being gay, rather than Sulu, who had been straight all this time, suddenly being revealed as being closeted.'" (Takei had enough negative experiences inside the Hollywood closet, he says, and strongly feels a character who came of age in the 23rd Century would never find his way inside one.)

His timeline logic, however, is enough to befuddle even the most diehard of Trek enthusiasts, as the rebooted trilogy takes place before the action of the original series. In other words, assuming canon orthodoxy, this storyline suggest Sulu would have had to have first been gay and married, only to then go into the closet years later.

Not long after Cho's bombshell call came another, this one from Lin, again informing that Sulu was indeed to be gay in Star Trek Beyond. Takei remained steadfastly opposed to the decision.

"I said, 'This movie is going to be coming out on the 50th anniversary of Star Trek, the 50th anniversary of paying tribute to Gene Roddenberry, the man whose vision it was carried us through half a century. Honor him and create a new character. I urged them. He left me feeling that that was going to happen,'" Takei says.

After that, all was quiet from Beyond until a few months ago, when Takei received an email from Pegg "praising me for my advocacy for the LGBT movement and for my pride in Star Trek," he says. "And I thought to myself, 'How wonderful! It's a fan letter from Simon Pegg. Justin had talked to him!'" Takei was certain the creative team had rethought their decision to make Sulu gay.

That is until one month ago, when he received an email from Cho informing him that the actor was about to embark on an international media tour for Beyond. Cho said it was bound to come out that his character was gay, and "what should he do?" A disappointed Takei told Cho to go about his promotional duties, but that he was "not going to change" his mind on the matter.

"I really tried to work with these people when at long last the issue of gay equality was going to be addressed," Takei says. "I thought after that conversation with Justin that was going to happen. Months later, when I got that email from Simon Pegg, I was kind of confused. He thinks I'm a great guy? Wonderful. But what was the point of that letter? I interpreted that as my words having been heard."

Takei for his part is hoping to take Sulu in new directions as well, potentially on CBS' upcoming Star Trek series, slated to premiere in January 2017 and co-run by Alex Kurtzman and Bryan Fuller, who is openly gay.

"Leonard Nimoy made two cameo appearances [in Star Trek films]. There's no reason why an ancient, wise Admiral Sulu can't appear, or maybe an alien creature who sounds like me. That should be fun," Takei says, then lets out his famous, basso profundo laugh.

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