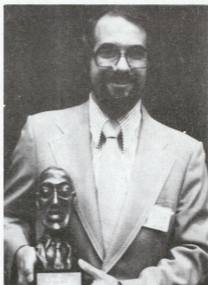


# The Fourth World Fantasy Convention

Photos by Paul C. Allen



Robert Weinberg (with "Howard")

by Paul C. Allen

Remember the "good old days" when Worldcons were attended by fewer than 1,000 people and could be easily accommodated by one hotel without severely overtaxing facilities? The Fourth World Fantasy Convention, held October 13-15 at the Sheraton-Fort Worth Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas, was a little bit like attending an early '60s SF Worldcon. The last attendance count I heard (unofficially) was a little over 500; large enough for one to meet a lot of people and small enough to find those one wanted to meet.

Appropriately enough, the convention opened at noon, Friday the 13th. The Guest of Honor was Fritz Leiber and Artist Guest of Honor was Alicia Austin. Andrew J. Offutt filled in as toastmaster for Gahan Wilson, who was unable to attend. Although the theme of the convention was to honor the life and works of Robert E. Howard, it was not centered solely around Howard. The schedule of events was a relatively full one

(though not nearly as crowded as that at an SF Worldcon), but left plenty of time for wandering. (I was one of those that tended to wander and missed quite a few of the panel discussions.)

The huckster room, a special Robert E. Howard display assembled by Glenn Lord, and an art display room opened Friday and remained open throughout most of the convention. Included in the Howard exhibit were a number of manuscripts and rare editions of his writings, including one of the few existing copies of the British first edition of *A Gent From Bear Creek*. Robert Weinberg narrated a slide presentation detailing the history of *Weird Tales* Friday afternoon; and he provided a realistic perspective, covering the high and low points (at times, hilariously low) of the magazine's life.

An informal general reception began at 7:30 that evening with toastmaster Offutt introducing special guests and 'celebrities.' At the

conclusion of the introductions, Lin Carter rose from the audience and introduced Guest of Honor Fritz Leiber, whom the toastmaster had overlooked—while said toastmaster attempted to hide behind, first, a curtain, and next, the American flag (correctly assuming that no one would throw anything at the flag). On that note, the reception adjourned and the autograph parties began, highlighted by the introduction of three new deluxe books by Donald M. Grant. Providing autographs were Fritz Leiber, Alicia Austin, L. Sprague de Camp, Karl Edward Wagner, Stephen Donaldson, C. J. Cherryh, and George Proctor, among others.

Saturday activities consisted of nearly wall-to-wall panel discussions, most of which I missed. One of the few I attempted to attend was adjourned due to what we all thought was a fire on the top floor of the hotel; it turned out to be a rather unglamorous breakdown in the ventilation system.

A quick rundown of the panels and people: "On the Writing of Howard Patches" with L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Carter, Andrew Offutt,



*Fritz Leiber, Karl Edward Wagner*

Roy Thomas, and Karl Edward Wagner; "Dark Fantasy" with Charles L. Grant, Harlan Ellison, Fritz Leiber, Lisa Tuttle, and Hugh B. Cave; "Dark Fantasy, Part 2" with Manly Wade Wellman, Stephen King, Kirby McCauley, Howard Waldrop, Charles L. Grant, and Hugh B. Cave; "Sword and Sorcery" with Andrew Offutt, Lin Carter, C. J. Cherryh, and Karl Edward Wagner; "A Conversation with Harold Preece and Norris Chambers"—not a panel, but informal reminiscences by two people who personally knew Howard (that's when the air conditioning decided to give out with smoke instead of cold air); "The Writings of Robert E. Howard," a talk on Howard's style and influences by L. Sprague de Camp; a panel on *Weird Tales* with Robert Weinberg, Hugh B. Cave, H. Warner Munn, Francis Wellman, and Manly Wade Wellman; and readings by Manly Wade Wellman, Harlan Ellison, and Fritz Leiber. Plus the usual late night movies.

Taking place Sunday morning were a panel discussion on Lovecraft with Bill Wallace, Tom Collins, Dirk Mosig, and Stuart Schiff, and an art auction,



*Catherine and L. Sprague de Camp*

at which some pieces went for ridiculously low prices (and some of them deserved to).

The highlight of the convention came Sunday afternoon with the World Fantasy Awards banquet, presided over by David G. Hartwell, and officially closing the convention. I estimated roughly 300 people in attendance and the meal, for a change, was a pretty decent Texas-style barbecue. Guest of Honor Fritz Leiber's talk compared and contrasted the writings of H. P. Lovecraft and Charles Fort, examining some possible influences on Lovecraft's work. In two minutes or less, Artist Guest of Honor Alicia Austin told an appreciative audience of her fear of public speaking. Complimentary copies of the Del Rey paperback of Stephen Donaldson's *The Illearth War* were placed at each table by Lester and Judy-Lynn del Rey. (Along with complimentary copies of my own *Fantasy Newsletter*.)

Convention chairman Michael Templin presented a special World Fantasy Award to Glenn Lord "for achievement over the past 20 years." The special award, Templin noted, is authorized in the convention bylaws and this was the first time such an award has been presented by a World Fantasy Con chairman.

Best Novel was won by Fritz Leiber for *Our Lady of Darkness*, published by Berkley/Putnam and originally serialized as "The Pale



Harlan Ellison



David Hartwell, Charles L. Grant,  
Stuart Schiff

Brown Thing" in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. The other nominees were *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever* by Stephen Donaldson and *The Hour of the Oxrun Dead* by Charles L. Grant.

Best Short Fiction went to J. Ramsey Campbell for "The Chimney," from Stuart David Schiff's *Whispers* anthology, published by Doubleday; the award was accepted on Campbell's behalf by David Drake. Others nominated were: "Loveman's Comeback" by Ramsey Campbell, "Manatee Gal, Ain't Ya Comin' Out Tonight" by Avram Davidson, "Jeffy Is Five" by Harlan Ellison (which did win a Nebula and a Hugo), "When All the Children Call My Name" by Charles L. Grant, and "The Bagful of Dreams" by Jack Vance.

Best Collection/Anthology was awarded to Hugh B. Cave for *Murgunstrumm and Others*, published by Carcosa. The nominees included *Swords and Ice Magic* by Fritz Leiber, *The Year's Best Horror Stories, Series V* edited by Gerald W. Page, and *Whispers*, edited by Stuart Schiff.

Lee Brown Coye was selected Best Artist with Stuart Schiff accepting the award for Coye, who is seriously ill. The other nominees were Stephen Fabian, Tim Kirk, and Michael Whelan.

Special Award-Professional was won by Everett F. Bleiler. Charles L.

Grant accepted the award and read a brief letter of thanks from Bleiler. Other nominees included Edward L. Ferman, Donald A. Wollheim, and Ballantine Books (Judy-Lynn and Lester del Rey).

Special Award-Non Professional went to publisher Robert Weinberg. Others nominated were Jonathan Bacon (*Fantasy Crossroads*), W. Paul Ganley (*Weirdbook*), Gary Hoppenstand (*Midnight Sun*), Stephen Jones (*Fantasy Tales*), and Harry O. Morris (*Nyctalops*).

Frank Belknap Long received the Life Achievement Award over Jorge Luis Borges, John Collier, Roald Dahl, Richard Matheson, and Manly Wade Wellman.

Judges for this year's awards were Stephen King, Charles N. Brown, T. E. D. Klein, Carl Jacobi, and Karl Edward Wagner. The World Fantasy Awards, or 'Howards,' are busts of Howard Phillips Lovecraft, designed by Gahan Wilson. Although the award winners were determined by judges, the nominees were selected by fans. Members of the 1976-78 World Fantasy Conventions were eligible to nominate and the top two nominees in each category were placed on the ballot for selection by the judges.

The Fifth World Fantasy Convention will be held in Providence,



*David Hartwell, Frank Belknap Long*

Rhode Island in 1979, site of the first WFC in 1975. Stephen King and Frank Belknap Long will be co-Guests of Honor. The toastmaster will be Charles L. Grant. ∞

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