



*Sylvia
Kelso,
editor*



The WisCon Chronicles

*Volume 4
Voices of WisCon*



THE WISCON CHRONICLES 4

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VOLUME 4

WisCon Voices

Edited by
Sylvia Kelso



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The WisCon Chronicles, Volume 4
WisCon Voices

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INTRODUCTION

Sylvia Kelso

To be invited to edit the fourth volume of the WisCon Chronicles, back in November of 2008, was a somewhat daunting if flattering challenge. On the one side, redoubtable women had edited the previous three issues, starting with Timmi Duchamp herself, going on to Eileen Gunn and Liz Henry. On the other loomed WisCon proper — a kaleidoscope of activities, interactions, luminaries, notables, and Amazing Annual Events, such as the Tiptree Auction, to name only the most obvious. I was not an annual attendee. I didn't know that many people. Supposing I missed out events, conversations, people that Really Mattered in the final view of WisCon 33?

Gratefully, my pragmatic internal writing team then asserted themselves. So you're not going to see more than a quarter of WisCon personally? Well, neither is anybody else. In fact, WisCon, like most cons and conferences, will be, for most people, whether they realize it or not, largely a virtual event. Even one of those simultaneous matter transfer machines so dear to our sf hearts is not going to get any one person to every event, conversation, panel, reading, paper, party at one and the same time.

OK, I said. Nobody got everything real time, but everyone did experience *A* WisCon. Their own personal WisCon, running over the same four days as everyone else's. Let's gather the records of as many such Cons as we can, and assemble them. There will be places where someone's WisCon fills the hole in someone else's; there will be differing perspectives on the Con as a whole; there may hopefully be differing perspectives on the same event(s). And where other Chronicles have collected the thoughts of notables, along with the papers and panel reports, this time, let's try to find as many reports as possible from "ordinary" attendees — so far as any WisCon attendee is ordinary, that is.

A large number of such extra-ordinary ordinary people answered my call. I had originally intended to sub-title the entire volume “My WisCon,” with an ironic side glance at the “My Space,” “My Account,” “My Documents” usage, and most of the personal WisCon reports are titled “My WisCon,” because this is precisely what they are—one person’s version of the Con.

And as I hoped, they are widely diverse, not only in what events the writer attended, what he or she saw and felt, but in the writers themselves. There are first-timers and long-termers, there are women and men, there are POC and Whites: there are reports in prose and reports in verse, reports from people who went to panels and reports from those who ran parties, including Elise Matthesen’s long term Earring Haiku party, complete with a bouquet of haikus from past events. There’s a report set up as an alphabet from Julie Andrews. There are reports that rhapsodize about WisCon 33, and reports that critique it, or indicate that it is not always a coming-home and recognizing-the-tribe experience.

In the volume proper, these personal records appear among what are now traditional Chronicle elements: papers from the academic track, and, of course, panel reports. This year we have two party reports among them, from Elise and from Brittany Flokstra, who ran the Doctor Horrible party. We also have academic meditations on WisCon, as a site of community discourse, in Meg Turville-Heitz’ demography, and as a site of feminist practice, in MJ Hardman’s paper.

We have somewhat fewer panel transcripts than previously, not least because, in the wake of the Troll incident at WisCon 32, people were much charier of recording panels either in sound or pix. Nor do we have as many overlapping views of the same panel or event as I hoped. We do have a strong representation for POC, from Nisi Shawl’s reprise of the Cultural Appropriation Workshop, early on Friday, to the transcript of a post-WisCon net discussion from Julia. We are further privileged to have an exchange of letters between Nisi and her mother June, a first-timer but definitely luminary of WisCon 33.

We also have some fiction, from people who read at WisCon, and in one case, a short story inspired by an actual panel, Bev Friend’s very witty and strongly feminist “The Pause that Refreshes.” Matching that we have Jennifer Pelland’s excerpt from her story “Ghosts of New York” and the “tail,” which describes the process of writing the story.

Two notable continuities emerged for me from this mosaic of WisCon 33. First, the strong presence in this volume of POC: as some of the My WisCons make clear, WisCon is still not the optimal rhapsodic experience for POC. But the volume opens and closes with reports from first-timers who are POC, LaShawn Wanak's Friday-only report, and Robin Small-McCarthy's retrospective poem "Before We Remember," which at once returns us to the mundane world and leaves behind a brief, shining shiny vision of what WisCon 33 could be.

The second interesting aspect was the prevalence of media rather than print topics on the academic front. Of the six people who responded to my requests for papers and/or presentations actually given at WisCon, Andrea Hairston, Allison Morris, Zach Welhouse, and Valerie Guyant and Kate Freund all chose film or TV topics. Only Erin Ranft's paper dealt with a printed author. I consider this a significant straw in the wind for the future of both sf and fantasy both, and possibly a signal to Con organizers, that "media fans" as they are often called, or even media cons, are not merely a sub-section of the overall sf community, but may become its future majority.

After considering various thematic constellations, I decided to lay out the volume on a chronological basis, not least because a sequential, chronological frame is how we all do experience WisCon. Hence the volume runs roughly Friday to Monday, with some clusters, such as Nisi and June's letters and Nisi's workshop report, or the cluster of material from the Witches and Wizards' panel, and the cluster by topic around JoSelle Vanderhooft's essay on being (dis)abled, and Sandy Olson's panel report on "Disabling Metaphor." Panel reports, interspersed among My WisCons and papers, also run from Friday to Monday overall. I hope that as we read through this volume, now or later, the various elements will come together to present a shifting, variant, fill-in-the-holes viewpoint, that preserves something we can all recognize as WisCon 33.

Sylvia Kelso lives in North Queensland, works part-time at James Cook University, and has been writing or telling stories for as long as she remembers. She is a contributing editor for *Paradoxa: Studies in World Literary Genres* and recently guest edited a special volume of *Paradoxa* on Ursula K. Le Guin. Her first fantasy novel, *Everran's Bane*, appeared in 2005, and two of her novels have been shortlisted in the Australian Aurealis genre fiction awards.

A Slice of WisCon (or how to do a con in one day)

My WisCon #1

LaShawn M. Wanak

I had never been to a science fiction convention.

It's not like I didn't know they existed. I knew about WindyCon and Duckcon and Anime Central, but I didn't go to them because they looked...weird. People walking around in costumes. People who jumped on you if you mentioned you actually liked *Enterprise*. And those were just the cons in Chicago. I vaguely knew about the convention that met in Madison, but that one was full of...well, feminists. I didn't think that it was for me.

Then my family moved to Madison, and WisCon33 was all I heard about from my new friends, who turned out to be (gasp!) feminists. They talked about it so much, and it sounded like so much fun, I thought, well, maybe I should check out. There was one slight problem: I had scheduled vacation in Michigan around WisCon weekend. There was no way I could get out of it. Not by tantrums. Not by sulking. Not by bribing. If I was to go to WisCon, I could only go on one day—that Friday.

So how can someone who has never experienced WisCon do so in one day?

1. Book readings

I decided to jump-start the festivities for me by attending the Geoff Ryman and Ellen Klages readings at Room of One's Own bookstore Thursday night. I had read some of Ryman's works before, but I only knew Klages from her story "In the House of the Seven Librarians." Listening to the both of them was a real treat, and I got to chat with them afterwards. What stuck with me was when Klages told me to feel free to pull her aside and we could talk more about writing over a beer. Sadly, I never got that chance, because, well, I had only one day to attend WisCon.

THE CHRONICLES OF WISCON COLLECT THEM ALL

The WisCon Chronicles: Vol. 3 Carnival of Feminist SF

Edited by Liz Henry

Enter the arcade of diverse conversations from WisCon 32 and beyond...

"The book is jam-packed, and worth reading from beginning to end. What I admire most about these WisCon Chronicles is not just the collection of intelligent thought, and the best example of documenting the convention experience I have ever seen, but the acknowledgement of the bad parts as well as the good..."

~ Tansy Rayner Roberts, *As If*, August 2009



The WisCon Chronicles: Vol 2

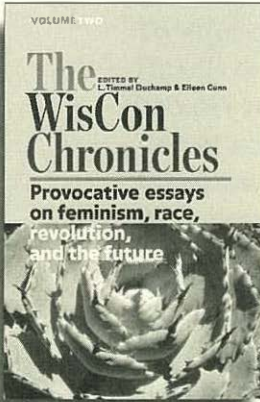
Edited by L. Timmel Duchamp
and Eileen Gunn

Remember WisCon 31? Wit flashed. Sparks flew.
Eagles carried off the guests of honor.

WisCon 31 lives! Enjoy it. (Eagles not included.)

"[A] fantastic feature of volume two was a collection of short responses collected from a variety of writers who were asked to answer the question of how to deal with racist and sexist material when faced with it in writing workshops..."

~ Tansy Rayner Roberts, *As If*, August 2009

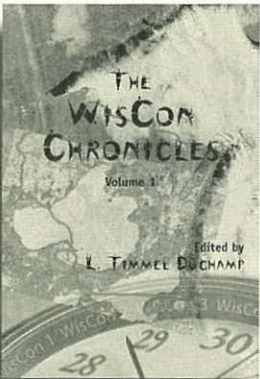


The WisCon Chronicles: Vol. 1

Edited by L. Timmel Duchamp

"[A] treasure trove of WisCon 2006 memorabilia, including a variety of panel transcripts, several academic papers, a number of other essays either read at the conference or written in response to it, several valuable interviews, a selection of brief Q&As with various convention attendees, and a short story..."

~ Michael Levy, *Science Fiction Studies*, vol 35(3), 2008.



Praise for The WisCon Chronicles

“What I admire most about these WisCon Chronicles is not just the collection of intelligent thought, and the best example of documenting the convention experience I have ever seen, but the acknowledgement of the bad parts as well as the good—the exposure of privilege, of negative as well as positive reactions to the discussions, and the willingness to shine a bright torch on all the grey areas, for the purpose of greater and more constructive conversation.”

—*Tansy Rayner Roberts, As If, August 2009*

The voices of WisCon sing out once again in this year’s chronicles of WisCon 33

“They are widely diverse, not only in what events the writer attended, what he or she saw and felt, but in the writers themselves. There are first-timers and long-termers, there are women and men, there are POC and Whites. There are reports in prose and reports in verse, reports from people who went to panels and reports from those who ran parties, reports that rhapsodize about WisCon 33 and reports that critique it, or indicate that it is not always a coming-home and

recognizing-the-tribe experience. These are strong, clear voices showing that the experience of WisCon is multi-hued and complex.”

—*from the Introduction by Sylvia Kelso*



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