SciFi scholars, fans to meet in Lawrence

By Carolyn Kaberline
SPECIAL TO THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Science fiction enthusiasts will have the chance to delve into their favorite genre as the Science Fiction Research Association has its meeting in Lawrence for the first time in 25 years today through Sunday.

This meeting, held in conjunction with the annual Campbell Conference, brings together science fiction and fantasy authors, scholars and fans from across the nation. It will be at the Lawrence Holidome.

Many of the sessions will discuss science fiction as seen in paperback novels, short stories, popular films, comic books and games, while others will look at the impact of science fiction and technology on today's world.

Teachers and librarians will have sessions about teaching science fiction from elementary school through college, and those attending the Campbell Conference will receive materials for classroom use.

"The average science fiction fan will find academics discussing popular topics," said James Gunn, director of the Center for the Study of Science Fiction at The University of Kansas, adding that some will be accessible to everyone while others will be more scholarly.

Special guests will include Karen Joy Fowler, best-selling author of "The Jane Austen Book Club," and British scholars Maureen Kincaid Spiller, past administrator of the British Science Fiction Association; and her husband, Paul Kincaid, author of "How to Read Science Fiction."

Readings by such authors as Fowler, David Moles, Kij Johnson, Lane Robbin, James Van Pelt and Kathleen Ann Goonan will be Saturday at the Oread Book Store in the KU Student Union. There also will be an open book signing featuring the above authors, as well as Robin Wayne Bailey, Gunn, Chris McKitterick, Eric Reynolds and Joan Slonczewski from 12:45 to 1:45 p.m.

Members of the SFRA and the Campbell Conference will combine their awards ceremonies on Friday evening at the Lawrence Holidome. The association presents its awards for scholarship in science fiction, while the Campbell Conference recognizes the best science fiction novel and short story of the year.

The readings and books signings are free, and on-site registration for other events will be available as space permits. A complete schedule and information can be found on the SFRA Web site at sfra.org.

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If Boeing prevails in bid for new military aircraft, Topeka is well-positioned to help

Thanks to the Department of Defense’s decision Wednesday to rebid a $35 billion air refueler contract, there’s never been a better time to promote Topeka to the aviation industry.

Granted, there’s no guarantee this week’s development will result in the overturning of the Air Force’s controversial decision to reject Boeing’s bid for the contract, but it might. And given that possibility, there’s a prime opportunity to market Topeka in hopes of landing work that would spin off of a Boeing deal.

For a subcontractor looking for a prime business site, Topeka would be hard to beat.

After all, Topekans know the tanker business. As the home of the 190th Air Refueling Wing of the Kansas National Guard, the city has outstanding facilities and decades of know-how.

The runways at Forbes Field are top-notch, the hangars are spacious, and the location isn’t far from Boeing’s facilities in Wichita.

The city boasts an educated workforce as well as abundant research and development opportunities thanks to its location along a corridor that features Washburn University, The University of Kansas and Kansas State University. The cost of living is low, and travel for business and pleasure is convenient because of Topeka’s proximity to Kansas City International Airport via the Kansas Turnpike and relatively uncongested highways.

And those are just a few of the city’s assets.

Again, it’s unclear whether Boeing will ultimately win the contract. But the Department of Defense made the right call in reconsidering the bidding process, which, according to the Government Accountability Office, was deeply flawed.

Among the problems, according to GAO investigators, the Air Force didn’t follow its contracting guidelines and incorrectly determined the European Aeronautic and Defence and Space Co. plane was cheaper to operate than Boeing’s.

We would have added that the Air Force blundered in awarding the contract to a partnership featuring an overseas manufacturer instead of choosing Boeing and keeping our defense dollars at home.

The decision to go with the Northrop Grumman and EADS, the parent company of French manufacturer Airbus, was an outrage. Granted, Boeing was coming off a procurement scandal involving a tanker deal five years ago, but justice had been served in that case through a record $615 million fine and prison sentences for key figures involved in the fiasco.

It’s time to start anew.

And if Topeka can find a way to tap into the billions of dollars and thousands of jobs that would stem from Boeing landing the contract, all the better.
Topeka has expertise in air refueling with the 190th Air Refueling Wing based at Forbes Field. Another plus for aviation contractors is Forbes' runways, which are long enough to accommodate jumbo jets.
De Soto students make KU honor roll

Thirteen De Soto students or De Soto High School graduates were among 4,900 undergraduates on the Kansas University spring honor roll released this week.

The De Soto students were Kathryn Beaver, fine arts, sophomore; Stacy Carter, liberal arts, junior; Brianna Cooper, fine arts, junior; Emily Garza, nursing, junior; Christie Jones, liberal arts, senior; Justina Jones, engineering and architectural engineering, senior; Ryan Kuster, liberal arts, senior; Tyler Maniez, business, senior; Ashley Morse, liberal arts, sophomore; Stefani Rahardja, liberal arts, junior; Bryan Roddy, liberal arts, senior; and Chen Zhao, education, senior.
Artists draw inspiration from the Flint Hills

Bazaar, Kan. (AP) — Dale Hartley bends over her wet oil painting lying in the tall grass at the side of a gravel road southeast of Bazaar. She adds streaks of colors to the canvas to recreate the motion of the grass as it bends in the wind and the sunlight reflecting off the deep-green blades.

Hartley, a painter-potter who grew up in Wichita and now lives in Saffordville, has grown to love the rolling Kansas prairie and joins other plein air artists nearly every week in setting up their portable easels and paint boxes in an attempt to capture the horizon-filling landscape.

"It takes your mind off everything else," she said.

Judith Mackey began painting the Flint Hills on location in 1966. That year she moved to Topeka with her husband, Kenneth, who was stationed with the military in the capital city. By 1972, they had purchased land near Cottonwood Falls and four years later built a home on that property.

"I can look out my front door and see prairie fires at night," she said, adding wildflowers grow outside her front door and creeks cut through their land. "I rarely go outside of Chase County (to paint). I don't need to."

Mackey recalls one day, during a snow shower at sunset, she watched five eagles playing in the wind currents over the Cottonwood River. She translated what she had seen into an oil painting that hangs in her Flint Hills Gallery, which opened in 1987 in downtown Cottonwood Falls.

"When you're out there and hear the birds, smell the flowers and feel the heat, and hear the wind blowing through the grasses, it's more inspirational," she said.

Dana Hassett, of Auburn, met Mackey at a ranch near Burns a few years ago and began joining her on plein air excursions in the Flint Hills.

Hassett and her husband showed quarterhorses throughout the United States for 38 years. After suffering a head injury, Hassett, who earned a degree in design from The University of Kansas, switched her interests to painting.

"Being on location "teaches you to see," Hassett said. The panoramic view of the prairie must be edited to a segment that will fit a canvas. Colors must be analyzed to determine their subtleties, and the light must be documented before it changes.

"It's never the same day to day," she said. "You have no luck coming back the next day to re-capture the scene you were painting."

Hassett said the greatest challenge to a plein air painter in the Flint Hills is the environment. It's your glory and your albatross at the same time," she said.

In addition to the heat, the wind can tip over the tripods holding the easels. Varmints—snakes, bugs and reptiles—can be unnerving.

"When you come to paint, it's extremely intellectual and takes a lot of energy," she said. "You have to stay hydrated and be healthy."

Debbie Schroer, of Strong City, hauls her portable paint box, packed with brushes and oil paints, and tripod easel to the Flint Hills up to four times a week. If the temperature is too cold, she'll paint from the cab of her truck.

During a plein air trip, the artists will paint from 7:30 a.m. to about 6 p.m., with about an hour to 1 1/2-hour break for lunch.

"The light is perfect in the morning and evening - that's the best time to paint," she said.

Schroer's favorite thing to paint is prairie fires. This spring, she rode on the hood of a truck so she'd have a close look at the flames and smoke as ranchers burned the old vegetation off their pasture land.

"It was so hot and sparks were flying," she said. "I love the play of color and the shapes it gets and how it takes on a life of its own. I love to paint the smoke because there's so many colors in it."

Mackey said she can tell the difference between a plein air painting of the Flint Hills and one that's based on a photograph of the landscape because a plein air painting's color values are more correct.

She also sees a difference in paintings finished on location and those started there but then brought indoors to finish. Those painted indoors end up "darker than they should be," she said.

Mackey says painting the Flint Hills is a "spiritual thing" for her.

"I love being there. It's where I'm supposed to be," she said.
Jewish names lead KU Humanities lecture series

LAWRENCE - Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon tops a list of speakers—half of them Jewish—this coming year at the University of Kansas' Hall Center for the Humanities Lecture Series.

Each lecture is free, open to the public and begins at 7:30 p.m. Several speakers will take part in a public colloquium on the morning following their evening lectures. The series is partially supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

- Susan Estrich, one of the nation’s leading legal scholars, is the Robert Kingsley Professor of Law and Political Science at the University of Southern California. Known for her quick wit and humor as a commentator on Fox News (she’s Jewish), Estrich was one of the first women to run a national presidential campaign, the first female president of the Harvard Law Review and the youngest woman to be tenured at Harvard Law School. A senior adviser to four presidential campaigns, Estrich is a regular contributor to the Washington Post and Newsweek. She will speak Sept. 23 at Woodruff Auditorium in the Kansas Union.

- Michael Chabon, celebrated author of “The Mysteries of Pittsburgh” and life is a powerful and moving first-person testament to what it means to be poor.

Walls’ memoir has been a New York Times bestseller for more than 75 weeks, has sold more than 1.5 million copies, been translated into 16 languages and is currently being made into a movie by Paramount. Walls will speak Nov. 18 at Woodruff Auditorium.

- Anthony Corbeil, professor of classics at KU, will speak Feb. 5 at Alderson Auditorium in the Kansas Union. Corbeil has published two books, “Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic” and “Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome.” He also has published on ancient sexuality, education and Latin poetry. His current book-length project is titled “The Boundaries of Sex and Gender in Ancient Rome.” This lecture is supported by the Friends of the Hall Center.

- James McBride, who will speak Feb. 24 at Woodruff Auditorium, is an award-winning writer, composer and saxophonist. His landmark memoir, “The Color of Water,” was a New York Times bestseller for two years. The book is the moving account of his mother, a white Jewish woman from Poland who raised 12 black children in New York City and sent each to college. It has been translated into more than 17 languages.

His second book, “Miracle at St. Anna,” the story of a black American soldier who befriends an Italian boy during World War II, is being made into a film by Spike Lee.

A graduate of the Columbia School of Journalism, McBride has written for the Boston Globe, People and the Washington Post. This lecture is the Frances and Floyd Horowitz Lecture devoted to issues related to America’s multicultural society.

- Dipesh Chakrabarty is the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor in History, South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. A leading scholar of subaltern studies, his books include “ Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference.” Chakrabarty’s current work focuses on the development of history as a profession in South Asia and on changing forms of mass politics in the subcontinent. He is a founding editor of Post-colonial Studies. He will speak April 20 at Woodruff Auditorium.
Center’s S.M.A.R.T. Men to hear from head Jayhawk July 15

By Rick Heilman
Editor

Sam Gould and Lee Flappan have brought some of the Kansas City area’s top sports personalities to the Jewish Community Campus over the past couple of years to speak to their S.M.A.R.T. Men’s club.

But they’ve outdone themselves with the speaker on Tuesday morning, July 15. (See box for details) That’s when University of Kansas Athletics Director Lew Perkins, fresh off the Jayhawks’ NCAA men’s basketball championship and their football Orange Bowl victory, will address the group.

A former college basketball player himself, Perkins, who is Jewish, was the subject of a Spring 2006 Jewish Life magazine cover story.

S.M.A.R.T. stands for Sports-Minded Adults Reminiscing Together, and since late 2006, Gould and Flappan have mined their sporting contacts for speakers at the weekly breakfast. Flappan coached high school football here for decades, while Gould, a former parking lot operator, has baseball in his blood. Gould grew up at 22nd and Brooklyn, across the street from Muehlebach (later Municipal) Stadium, which was home to Kansas City’s Blues, A’s and Royals until the Truman Sports Complex opened in 1972.

Both Gould and Flappan are stalwart supporters and regular users of the Jewish Community Center, and they hatched S.M.A.R.T. Men while sitting around the Center one day a couple of years ago.

“We used to go up to the Heritage Center after we worked out downstairs, and Barbara Frager had just started the Juliets, and she wondered if we couldn’t get a men’s 65-plus group going,” Gould said. “Several of us agreed it might be a good idea, and we suggested confining the topics to sports. Thus, the name.”

The S.M.A.R.T. Men meet on the third Tuesday morning of each month and sponsor a breakfast in the Heritage Center/Theater wing. It’s free and open to the public with an RSVP. The speakers usually talk for a while before taking questions from the attendees.

“We’ve had people like Steve Fehr, the attorney for the Major League Baseball Players Association; Dr. Andy Jacobs, the sports psychologist; Jason Whitlock of The Kansas City Star; Peyton Sher, the boxing guy,” Gould said. “We got Royals General Manager Dayton Moore right after he came.”

Gould thinks that perhaps the substantial donation the JCC made a few years ago to KU’s Williams Athletic Fund in order to ensure the participation of former Head Basketball Coach Roy Williams at its Sportsnite fundraiser banquet induced Perkins to address the S.M.A.R.T. Men.

AT A GLANCE

The next monthly S.M.A.R.T. Men meeting, featuring remarks by KU Athletic Director Lew Perkins, starts with breakfast at 9 a.m. Tuesday, July 15, in the Heritage Center wing of the Jewish Community Campus. There is no charge for the meal or the speech.

To RSVP, call Betsy Wilinsky at the Center, (913) 327-8044.

Lew Perkins
The School of Education at the University of Kansas has honored 797 teachers from 173 school districts statewide with certificates recognizing 25 years or more of service to education in Kansas.

"Strengthening education is among the more important public policy issues facing our country," said Rick Ginsberg, dean of the School of Education.

"Good teaching is at the core of any success that students achieve. As leaders debate the best ways to attract and retain high quality teachers across Kansas and the country, it is important to recognize those who have dedicated their professional lives to our Kansas classrooms. The time that these teachers have given to the students in our state is significant, and we are pleased to offer this small recognition for their work and dedication."

Local and area teachers honored from USD 480 in Liberal are:

Mitchell Rafe Begley, Liberal Assistant Principal, who has taught 25 years with 22 of those in Kansas.

Linda McCain, Liberal teacher of who lives in Tyrone, OK, has taught 25 years with 22 of those years in Kansas.

Kathryn L. Russell, Liberal teachers has taught 25 years and 22 of those years were in Kansas.

In USD 483 Kismet-Plains:

Pam Orth, teacher, who lives in Liberal, KS has taught 25 years and all of those were in Kansas.
LAWRENCE - More than 4,900 undergraduate students at the University of Kansas earned honor roll distinction for the spring 2008 semester.

The honor roll comprises undergraduates who met requirements in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and in the schools of allied health, architecture and urban planning, business, education, engineering, fine arts, journalism, nursing, and social welfare.

Honor roll criteria vary among the university's academic units. Some schools honor the top ten percent of students enrolled, some establish a minimum grade point average, and others raise the minimum grade point average for each year students are in school. Students must complete a minimum number of credit hours to be considered for the honor roll.

Matthew Scott Achenbach, son of Scott and Susan Achenbach, Senior in Social Welfare, Elena Anne Larson, daughter of Lee and Kim Larson, Senior in Education, Amber Nicole Pihl, daughter of Ron and Susan Pihl, Pharmacy Professional, and Chantz Palmer Thomas, son of Greg and Lorye Thomas, Sophomore in Liberal Arts, were named to the list.
LAWRENCE - More than 4,900 undergraduate students at the University of Kansas earned honor roll distinction for the spring 2008 semester.

These students, from the Lawrence campus and the schools of allied health and nursing at the KU Medical Center in Kansas City, KS, represent 101 of 105 Kansas counties, 42 other states and the District of Columbia, and 39 other countries.

The honor roll comprises undergraduates who met requirements in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and in the schools of allied health, architecture and urban planning, business, education, engineering, fine arts, journalism, nursing, and social welfare.

Honor roll criteria vary among the university’s academic units. Some schools honor the top ten percent of students enrolled, some establish a minimum grade point average, and others raise the minimum grade point average for each year students are in school. Students must complete a minimum number of credit hours to be considered for the honor roll.

Ashley Suzanne Unruh, daughter of Susan and Gene Unruh, Senior in Business, was named to the list.
Area students earn honors at KU

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Alexander Robert Earles, son of Robin Earles, Sophomore in Liberal Arts, was named to the list.