

INTERVIEW

The Real, Live Bear

NISI SHAWL (CW 92)

*Elizabeth Bear returns to Seattle this summer for her second tour as a Clarion West Writers Workshop teacher and a celebratory reading at University Book Store on July 5. A powerhouse storyteller with honors ranging from a John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 2005 through three-and-counting Hugos, Bear beautifully illustrates the intersection of excellence and prolific production. Best known for a wicked sense of humor and several novel series that include the recent *Eternal Sky* trilogy (Range of Ghosts, Shattered Pillars, and Steles of the Sky), she also appears regularly on the podcast *SF Squeecast*. And she climbs rocks. And she has a dog. And a boyfriend. But she found enough free time to submit to an interview.*

Nisi Shawl: Is there an alternate Elizabeth Bear out there pursuing a career other than writing? If so, what can you tell us about her life?

Elizabeth Bear: I often threaten to go back to pharmacy school. It's a good job; very stable!

On the other hand, if I screw up a story, nobody dies.

The problem for me with imagining an alternate Bear who pursued forensic anthropology, say (which was one of the things I was interested in), is that due to some complex family and financial circumstances, I didn't finish college—and then when I was in a position to go back, I made the poor life choice to move



across the continent and get married instead. (Kids, stay in school!) And I've had a number of technical writing gigs of one sort or another, usually with some administrative or customer service work rolled in, and the problem is that with one exception, I rather hated all of them. They were all things I was doing basically to make ends meet.

I'm afraid I'm just not suited to any other careers.

NS: What's fun for you about writing? How do you get yourself to do the parts that aren't fun, and what are they?

EB: This is something that I've been struggling with recently. My schedule has gotten to be such that not very much of

writing has seemed fun for some time. It's seemed like a job, although a job I love, and I have been dealing with that largely through discipline and structure. I come from a working class background, and one of the things that gets inculcated in one culturally is that you soldier on even when things are hard or work isn't fun, because if you don't, everybody in the family suffers.

There are some writers who liken writing to digging ditches and say things such as, "Nobody gets ditch digger's block." I think that's, frankly, nonsense. Digging ditches isn't creative, though it's not actually all that easy to plan and structure a good drainage system. Ask anybody who lives in a house with flooding issues! There's a craft to it, and a science.

But when one is stuck, when the creativity isn't happening, the leaps of intuition—which are, for me, the fun part: those synthesis moments when a whole bunch of disparate elements suddenly make sense and then I figure out how to give the reader the clues to make the same jumps—then what I do is fall back on the craft of writing. Those are the parts that work reliably and reliably create a strong story even when the writer isn't flying high on inspiration.

Finishing a long work, like a novel, really is—for me—a matter of discipline. "Just keep typing until you get to the denouement."

NS: What else can you tell us about your writing process?

EB: I have a useful, pithy answer that I tell my students: The smartest thing I ever did was not get wedded to a particular process or set of rituals. I believe strongly that there are no rules. There are only tactics and techniques that work or do not work in any given circumstance.

▶ My motto is: whatever gets the job done. If I have an outline and it's not working, I send in a man with a gun. If I am going by intuition and that dries up, I outline. I write on the computer and in longhand and by dictating to my phone in bed at night when I have a brilliant idea while drifting off. I write on 3x5 cards and in fancy notebooks and on scrap paper and on a laptop and on a desktop. I write on planes and in coffee shops and in my office at home. I write by following my headlights.

NS: Are public appearances easy or hard?

EB: The appearances are actually a lot of fun, but they are disruptive and draining. I'm an introvert, and it takes me days or weeks to bounce back from going out there. Also, the travel is hard on my work schedule! But at this point I'm pretty good at showing up and being charming. All the horror stories have already happened to me—my first signing at San Diego Comic-Con was between George R.R. Martin and R.A. Salvatore!—so I'm happy at this point if one person who isn't a bookstore employee shows up.

NS: Was there ever a moment when you thought to yourself, "Screw this. I'm never going to make it as a writer, and I was stupid to even try." If so, how did you get past that moment of discouragement?

EB: Hah! I quit writing for four years is what I did. I didn't get started again until I got laid off from my (miserable) job during an economic crash, couldn't find temp work, and had nothing better to do.

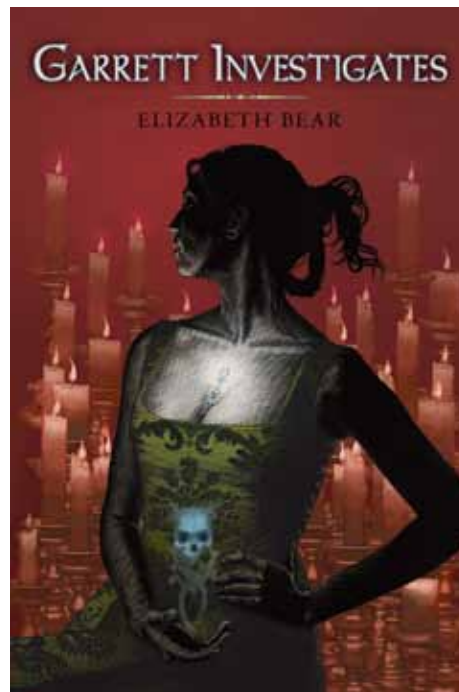
The good news is that I improved during the time off. I think my brain finished myelinating or something.

NS: Has anyone ever shown you something in your own writing you didn't think you'd put there? Were they right about what they saw, or wrong?

EB: Oh, that goes on constantly. Stories are like icebergs: so much of them is underwater. There's subtext you mean to put in, and subtext that just gets in there because it's part of who you are and you can't help it, and then there's the fact that 50 percent of any story comes from the reader. So sometimes, readers are like,

"Hey, you're thematically talking about parent-child relationships in this book!" and I'm like, "I thought I was talking about heroism and whether it's a real thing, but yeah, I see what you mean;" and sometimes they're like, "These two characters are totally doing it!" and I'm like, "You do you, my friend." The thing is, they're not wrong, in those cases. They're just doing the reader thing and bringing their own story in there, and they get to do that.

Though it's sometimes a little uncomfortable when they get mad at me for not writing what they thought would happen. I feel like that's where fanfic comes into the picture.



NS: Are there any resonances or connections between your New Amsterdam series and Sherlock Holmes? For instance, is the name of Lady Abigail Irene Garrett an homage to Conan Doyle's Irene Adler character?

EB: It absolutely is. She's named for Irene Adler, and for Randall Garrett, who wrote the Lord Darcy stories, which gave me the idea to write something featuring a forensic sorcerer.

NS: Are there any other influences on your life or work because of your interest in Holmes?

EB: I'm a huge fan of the Grenada Holmes series with Brett and Hardwick, and Holmes pastiche will almost always get my attention, especially if it's good (Lyndsey Faye's *Dust and Shadows* and Mitch Cullins' *A Slight Trick of the Mind* stand out among recent attempts). And I've very much been influenced by Conan Doyle in terms of pacing and structure. He wrote some really gripping stories with unexpected depths, and created characters who—obviously—have a strong grasp on the human imagination many years later.

NS: What kind of presents do you like? (But beware of being showered by jellybeans as were the Beatles.)

EB: I love tea! Especially green tea, such as Sencha and gen mai cha. Also, fountain pen ink. ♦



Workshop Report

Quietly Busy Bees

NEILE GRAHAM (CW 96)
HUW EVANS (CW 12)
KATIE SPARROW (CW 05)



Workshop Director Neile Graham



Workshop Administrator Huw Evans



Program Specialist Katie Sparrow

As we write this, things seem quiet. But under the surface, everything is bubbling. Prospective students are preparing their applications; our reading team is busy reading and assessing them. We're compiling the readers' data as it arrives and talking to the house (we'll be in the same lovely "new" place as last year), the summer staff, and this year's wonderful instructors. By the time this newsletter appears, student selection will be well underway, and we will be making those magical calls that prompt writers to rearrange their lives. As you can imagine, we do especially love that part of the job.

**...under the
surface,
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is bubbling**

The Workshop Committee has had its first meeting to prepare for the summer and start the early work necessary for 2017 (yes, already!). We're also working on a secret project that we will announce as loudly as we can should it come to fruition.

The Clarion West One-Day Workshops—held monthly at the University Book Store—continue to be bright events, bursting with energy. Our students at the One-Days are a brilliant and eclectic bunch, ranging from CW alumni to published authors to writers who are just beginning. We've had students travel from as far as Florida to take part in our workshops. Wow!

This past fall we've had some superlative instructors. A few highlights include Hiromi Goto giving a crash course in immersive writing, in which she guided the students—in one day—through the curriculum she gives to her university class over a whole semester; Patricia Briggs giving tips and tricks in writing characters for urban fantasy; and Kij Johnson generally astounding and inspiring with every word—as she does. We look forward to more great classes in the winter and spring. Check the website often for course listings and sign up early; they're quick to fill. ♦

Clarion West Writers Workshop

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Forging New and Diverse Voices

CAROLINE BOBANICK



"...in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."
Maya Angelou

When I was growing up, we had pen pals from other countries; it took weeks to get letters back and forth. International phone calls were prohibitively expensive. Today, with a few keystrokes, we can carry on conversations with people on the other side of the planet. Technology is rapidly transforming our world.

Because of the ease with which we can connect with others regardless of where they are on the planet, I think many of us feel more like citizens of the world than of any particular country. After listening to months of U.S. presidential campaign rhetoric, I suspect I am not alone in finding this concept appealing.

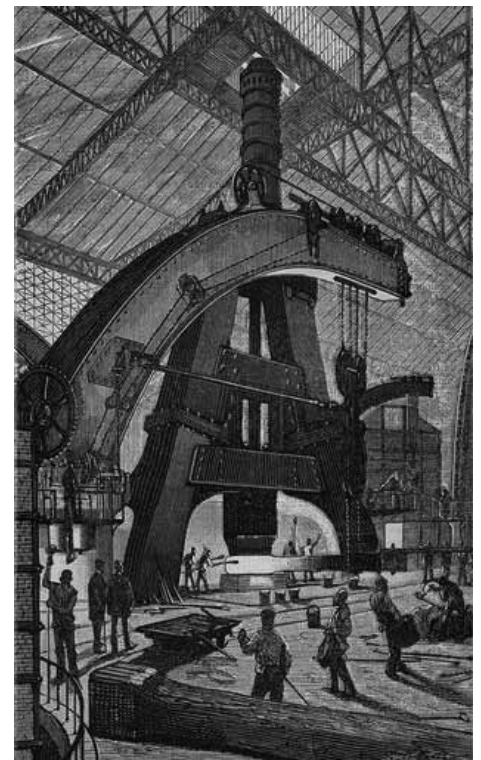
Many of us live in some of the most diverse societies the world has ever seen. Seattle lies on the Pacific Rim and is home to numerous international companies that draw people from all over the globe—especially from Asia and the Indian subcontinent. This diversity makes Seattle a rich, vibrant, and delicious place to live.

Some interesting studies have been conducted on the dynamics of diversity in driving creativity and innovation. We've discovered that having women in top management teams leads to better performance and more innovation for companies. (Was it really less than 100 years ago that women were considered unfit to vote?) The reason is that exposure to disparate ideas can change the way we think. People who are different from one another bring unique information and experiences to share. This exchange stimulates the consideration of different perspectives, inspires new ideas, and can lead to dynamic breakthroughs of understanding and problem solving.

Though our societies are becoming more diverse, that diversity is not always reflected in the art that is produced or those who are producing it. From its inception, Clarion West has sought to create an inclusive environment for writers regardless of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, faith, disability, or socioeconomic status. For more than 30 years, the Six-Week Workshop has brought together diverse students to create a catalyst for creativity and bring new voices to speculative fiction. We are passionately committed to carrying on this tradition of inclusivity and to promoting diversity that better reflects our society as a whole.

You may notice a new tagline in some

of Clarion West's materials: Forging New and Diverse Voices, expressing our conviction that diversity makes us stronger as writers and as a community. When we understand and celebrate our differences, everyone is enriched. ♦



New Clarion West Giving Circle Supports Women in Speculative Fiction

VICKI SAUNDERS (CW 09)



Board Chair Vicki Saunders

"I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me."
—*Frankenstein*, 1818, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

"The writer of it is, we understand, a female; this is an aggravation of that which is the prevailing fault of the novel; but if our authoress can forget the gentleness of her sex, it is no reason why we should; and we shall therefore dismiss the novel without further comment"
—*The British Critic*, April 1818

But that was two centuries ago...Now we celebrate, rather than denigrate, racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity, right? In fact, Mary Shelley's seminal (or ovarian) masterpiece of science fiction led the way, exploring the plight of "the Other." In the twentieth century, writers like Octavia E. Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin, Marge Piercy, and Joanna Russ continued to critique (as Butler put it) "simple peck-order bullying."¹ However, genre publications have continued to receive more submissions from men than from women², and Niall Harrison's latest *Strange Horizons*' "SF count" of bias in reviewing shows that "as in previous years, in the majority of the SF review venues surveyed, review coverage disproportionately focused on men and books by white writers."³ It's still harder for female and minority voices to be heard. At least Mary Shelley got reviewed — the slurs came after her critic wrote 3,000 words.

The women who founded Clarion West were dedicated to upending "peck-order bullying." Inspired by our founding mothers, CW is establishing the Women in Speculative Fiction Giving Circle — bringing together a community of donors to support airfares and offset daily costs for our women instructors, as well as provide scholarships for emerging women writers. Costs limit who can teach and who can attend our workshops: contributions to the Giving Circle help us seek far and wide for the most inspired teachers and students. We pass the inspiration on in events such as our public readings.⁴ To learn more about the Speculative Fiction Giving Circle, visit our Women in Speculative Fiction Web page.⁵ We hope you'll join us!



Frankenstein's Monster, woodcut by Lynd Ward

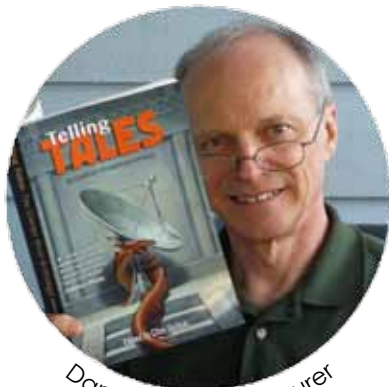
"Once raised [Frankenstein] will not sleep again, for his pain will not let him sleep, the unanswered moral questions that woke with him will not let him rest in peace."
—Ursula K. Le Guin, "Things not Actually Present" *The Wave in the Mind*, 2004 ♦

Links to Sources Cited

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3. <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2015/20150330/sfcount-a.shtml>
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5. <http://www.clarionwest.org/donate/women-in-speculative-fiction/>

All That Glitters

DAN TREFETHEN



Dan Trefethen, Treasurer

We had a curious combination of unexpected ups and downs in our finances for 2015. As you can see from the accompanying table, we finished the year with a small deficit. However, I'm pretty happy about where we finished, because we weathered some pretty heavy storms:

- One of our major grant donors restructured their program during 2015, and we did not get the opportunity to apply for funding until 2016. Consequently, the funding we expected to receive in 2015 will appear (fingers crossed) early this year. It blew a 5-figure hole in our income projections for 2015.
- We changed the workshop venue to a new sorority (due to remodeling) and our costs went up by about 20 percent.
- Student financial need was exceptionally high, and we added funding from our

reserves to meet that need above what was raised during the year (see the table).

We battened down the hatches and called for all hands on deck: That was you, our generous community of supporters. Thanks to the GiveBIG contributions, in-kind donations from our Amazon Wish List, the annual appeal, and more sponsors of instructorships, we were able to caulk the seams and keep the ship afloat.

All right, enough of the ship metaphors.

We expect that costs will continue to climb. This is Seattle, after all, and we are not immune to the rising costs of everything, especially facility rental. This is why we will continue our efforts in fundraising to include more house parties with special guest authors, and expand the publicity for other efforts such as the Write-a-thon. The next opportunity for giving will be GiveBIG on May 3.

There's more good news from 2015: Our indomitable staff and volunteer corps worked hard to contain costs, and brought our expenses down below the 2014 costs, despite the new workshop venue. Also, we recently completed a necessary upgrade of our Salesforce database, and Kate Schaefer kept the costs to a fraction of the early estimate. Thanks, Kate! You helped keep our balance sheet in balance.

Speaking of the balance sheet, I am happy to report that we still have a healthy amount of assets and no liabilities. As of December 31, 2015 we had \$177,305 in cash or investments. This is approximately one year of expenses and is a good position for a nonprofit. Susan Gossman continues as our Investment Manager, overseeing about 30 percent of our assets. Thank you, Susan.

To summarize, we were nervous coming into 2015, knowing we were facing increased costs with a new venue. However, everyone rallied when called upon and helped Clarion West have another successful year.

The 2016 budget in the accompanying table shows a break-even budget. No doubt Murphy's Law will erupt in some way in 2016, but I know our CW community will continue to support one of the best writer's programs in the world. ♦

Financial Report for 2015, Budget for 2016

	Actual 2015	Budget 2016
Income		
Unrestricted donations	22,383	13,500
Write-a-thon	16,277	20,000
Scholarships	34,725	34,200
Matching funds	2,306	1,800
Instructorships	17,500	17,000
Special Events/Readings	7,690	6,000
Grants	9,091	32,500
Workshop income	75,345	73,400
Tuition offset by scholarships	-37,600	-34,200
One-Day Workshops	10,880	14,795
Other	70	100
Total Income	158,667	179,095
Expenses		
Special Events/Readings	5,074	2,150
Seventh Week newsletter	1,779	550
Workshop	81,734	89,830
One-Day Workshops	6,511	9,320
Administration	67,749	71,420
Fundraising	2,294	5,550
Total Expenses	165,141	178,820
Surplus	-6,474	275

Women Hold Up Half the SF Sky

SHEILA WILLIAMS



Sheila Williams is the Hugo Award-winning editor of Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine and a cofounder, with Rick Wilber, of the Dell Magazines Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing. She'll teach this summer's Clarion West Six-Week Workshop students July 17 through July 22 and will appear publicly at University Book Store on July 19—proving once again the commitment to the field she writes about for us here.

I've loved science fiction as long as I can remember. I founded my high school and college SF clubs. As a teenager, I subscribed to SF magazines, read every book I could get my hands on, and dragged my family to SF conventions. With this passion for the field, it was easy to surround myself with likeminded aficionados. I sought out a career in SF as soon as I could. In New York, I found an incredible cadre of intelligent and supportive women who were working as SF editors, art and subsidiary rights directors, and agents. At conventions, many of my best friends were the women writing edgy and innovative SF and fantasy.

In the eighties, amid my friends and acquaintances Connie Willis, Octavia E.

Butler, Shawna McCarthy, Betsy Mitchell, Betsy Wolheim, Sheila Gilbert, Susan Allison, Alice Sheldon, Lisa Goldstein, Pat Murphy, Pat Cadigan, Merrilee Heifetz, Judy Moffett, Claire Eddy, Claire Wolfe, Ellen Kushner, Ellen Datlow, Ellen Asher, Cynthia Felice, Cynthia Manson, Anne Jordan, Terri Czczeko, Joan Vinge, Nancy Kress, and Tina Lee, it could have been easy to think that women dominated the field. I found a network of support in these women and initially believed that there was no disadvantage to being a woman working in the SF field.

Yet there was pushback. An essayist bemoaned that SF was being ruined by "green girls from Vassar;" Davis Publications' extensive readers' survey from the mid-eighties indicated that women made up no more than 21 percent of *Asimov's* audience; and acquaintances, including some SF writers, often asked me if I read science fiction—implying, I guess, that I'd simply fallen into the job and would be just as happy working at *People* magazine. Although I wasn't daunted, I was surprised by this pushback. Part of my surprise may have come from my own slightly skewed vision of reality. I'd thought that a higher percentage of our readers were women because I knew so many women who loved SF. I thought that SF professionals of either gender would be respected because I knew how hard they worked and how seriously they took the field.

As a young editor, I could have been wounded by the "green girl" comment. Instead, the resounding outcry, the groundswell of support from men and women for the professional women in the SF field, underscored what I already knew: that I'd chosen the right career. My personal drive was what had led to my job, but this network of support helped keep me afloat. I knew I was "green" in the sense that I was new to the field, but I also knew that I wasn't a "girl." Any young male editor's passion for SF might have equaled my own, but it couldn't have surpassed it.

For a couple of generations, Clarion West and other writing workshops have created the same sort of support network for young women and men. Another very effective workshop is Diane Turnshek's one-week Alpha program for sixteen to twenty year olds. These young writers also form lifetime friendships. They continue



Back of dust jacket by Alex Schomburg from *Space, Space, Space: Stories About the Time When Men Will Be Adventuring to the Stars* (1953)

to read each other's work and offer advice and emotional sustenance long after the workshop ends. The Dell Magazines' Award is bestowed each year on the best science fiction or fantasy story by a full-time undergraduate. It's given out annually at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, Florida. Most of the finalists attend. Authors like Ted Chiang, James Patrick Kelly, Kathleen Ann Goonan, John Kessel, Sandra McDonald, Joe Haldeman, and Kit Reed spend a lot of time encouraging the students. Again, the students seem to bond and are in communication after the conference is over. Although the decision is arrived at via a blind read, in recent years most of the finalists have been women.

If you're ever called on to help with a program such as one of these, do it. You'll contribute immeasurably to the field's depth and strength.

Over *Asimov's* long history, there have been a few occasions when an issue only contained fiction written by men. This happened by accident rather than design. With more men reading the magazine than women, we had more submissions from men than from women. This situation has never occurred under my aegis. There's no need for it to ever happen again.

My inventory is well stocked with stories by women and men. Although women are still only responsible for about ►►



25 percent of our submissions, about 30 to 35 percent of my selections come from this cohort. It is my hope that young writers of any gender know that their submissions are always welcome at *Asimov's*. Although Allen M. Steele

is a close second, Kristine Kathryn Rusch has won more Readers' Award Polls than any other author. Tales by newer writers like Aliette de Bodard, Sarah Pinsker, Fran Wilde, Dominica Phetteplace, Caroline Joachim, Leah Cypess, and Suzanne Palmer, continue to fill our pages and seem to show that the pool of writers who are women is growing. Their stories get positive feedback from subscribers, and it's my hope that our inventory and our readership will continue to move toward parity.

To this day, I still get questioned by people who are surprised to discover that I actually love the fiction that I work on. I believe these questions come from ignorance rather than hostility. A lot of people just don't seem to realize that women enjoy SF. It still seems to be true that fewer women than men actually do read science fiction. Women buy a lot more books than men do, but statistically they still shy away from our field. I see myself sometimes as an ambassador to the public—promoting the crossover appeal of many SF stories to anyone who will listen.

The field's gender imbalance is not an easy problem to fix. Entrenched biases still discourage young women from studying the sciences and math in high school. According to the Department of Commerce a 2011 study showed that women made up only 24 percent of "the STEM workforce." This dismal figure almost mirrors *Asimov's* 1983 subscription figures. Just because we are surrounded by vibrant women who read and write SF, doesn't mean that SF professionals can take a moment's rest. We must model what we want to see, and continue to act as ambassadors, encouraging and supporting young women and girls in their love of science and science fiction. ♦



The Hartwell Effect

PATRICK SWENSON (CW 86)

In January of this year, we lost a great one: David G. Hartwell. He was one of the most influential editors of science fiction ever. Get this: nominated for a Hugo Award 39 times over the span of a 45-year career. Talk about earning the respect of the SF community! He earned mine.

Once upon a time, I was a wide-eyed newbie writer with stars in my eyes and a galaxy of belief in my heart. I'd sent out a few stories, and they'd all come back with rejections. I'd been writing in a cave and had no connection to other writers. That changed after I attended my first convention: Norwescon.

In 1986, I saw a flyer for Clarion West on Norwescon's freebie table. Wait a minute. Six weeks? Six straight weeks of writing science fiction? The instructor names blazed out at me: Joan D. Vinge. Patricia McKillip. Norman Spinrad. Suzy McKee Charnas. Ed Bryant. There was also an editor's name on the list I didn't know: David Hartwell.

So here I was at Clarion West, the fifth week, which featured David Hartwell. He challenged us to edit a story we'd already written at the workshop. I chose the story

I'd written for my first week, a mess of a fantasy that went on way too long—7,000 words or so, if I remember right—and got a lot of tough criticism. The story dropped into the 4,000 word range after a rewrite, and David dubbed it the best rewrite of the workshop. (It eventually became my first professional sale.)

At our one-on-one conference, we talked so long that we were late for dinner. He saw potential in my writing. "You don't write by waiting for inspiration from above," he told me then. "You have to start it and you have to finish it, and you can't consider it done. You'll want other writers and editors to look at it and give you feedback."

He believed it would be a few years before I would sell my first short story. What was even more jaw dropping was his pronouncement that it would be a few years after that before I could make a living from my writing. My first short story sold almost exactly two years later. I'm still working on the whole "make a living off it" idea.

In 1995, I started *Talebones* magazine. In 2000, I started Fairwood Press. In 2002, I became a dad. I wasn't writing. When I closed the magazine and finally did get around to finishing another novel, it was David Hartwell who bought *The Ultra Thin Man* for Tor. It came out in 2014.

This is what he was all about, it seems to me. He was so willing to go out on a limb for writers he believed in, and many of them were new and unknown. He would often lament the fact that he didn't get enough work from new writers.

At the Spokane Worldcon, I had my last long talk with David. We had breakfast and talked for an hour and a half about life, family, and science fiction. We talked of our sons, their difficulties due to disabilities, and we marveled at how bright they both were. We talked about the challenges (and opportunities) of publishing today. We only spent the last ten minutes talking about how my book was doing. It seemed the most important part of the discussion at the time, but it was that last long talk about everything else that I'll always remember.

If you're a writer, new or old, whether you knew David Hartwell or not, you can safely thank him for all he did to promote writers. We won't see his like ever again. ♦