

CascadiaCon 2005



"My First Con" — report & reflections by K.D.Kragen

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Thursday, 1:00 pm. Parked [Veronica](#) out front of the SeaTac Hilton Conference Center main entrance. Walked into the lobby and was greeted by Becky T. and David. No designated motorcycle parking at the hotel facilities, so found free street parking a block east. Need more sci-fi/fantasy bikers at Cons.

From day one to the last afternoon, the Con seemed to go from uncontrolled chaos to slightly, if delightfully, controlled chaos. Again, this was my first Con, so - I - was - overwhelmed! The whole event was tiring, enlightening, weird, educating. I've only recently become a published sci-fi writer, [The KillWare Chronicles](#), yet I think I learned more about the world of fandom and about the latest developments in the genre art industry and about my craft as a sci-fi/fantasy writer in those five days than in the last few years. I've been writing for nearly twenty years. Box full of rejections. Been to writers conferences, workshops, etc. Member of a writers group for fifteen years. Yet, never been to a Con before. Don't know why. Now, all's changed.

I made connections with wonderful and fascinating people, writers, fans, publishers, graphic artists! For example, I met and got to know graphics and three-dimensional artist, [Michael Duquette](#), who had a display table with a huge spaceship landing craft beside it; we talked of ideas for some illustrated novels that could be in our futures someday. This is the sort of thing I understand goes on quite commonly at Cons. For a quiet, somewhat reclusive person as myself, CascadiaCon--if a little bit scary for the crowds of mostly terrestrial homosapients--CascadiaCon was a safe place to be outgoing and just a wee bit crazy.

One of the first side trips I found myself on was to a large room, next to the NASA display center, which housed the traveling edition of [The Science Fiction Museum](#), where the proprietor greeted me with a warm handshake and the pride of one who has worked tirelessly for over a decade preserving sci-fi/fantasy history; within minutes I was thinking of what I might have in my attic I could donate to these wonderful public display cases! Not only were there general forums, panels and presentations relating to all aspects of sci-fi/fantasy, there were many presentations and panels that dealt in great detail with particular aspects of the industry, craft, and subject matter of sci-fi/fantasy. NASA folks were there teaching about close orbit space elevators and long range spaceship propulsion systems. Scientist [Stephen Gillett](#) of the Foresight Institute gave a fascinating and enlightening presentation on "Why Nanotech Makes Asteroid Mining Obsolete."

University of Washington professor of chemistry and oceanography and co-director of the "Program on the Environment" [Richard H. Gammon](#) presented an excellent discussion on global warming and climate change issues. Gammon's presentation was especially timely and important, given Michael Crichton's recent preachy novel *State Of Fear*, which tries to argue that there is no serious global warming problem or atmospheric degradation from "greenhouse gasses," that it's just public-policy

manipulation by dangerous, greedy environmental interest groups to keep the masses in a state of fear. Articulating well the concerns of the general scientific community and legitimate, hard-working scientists both in the U.S. and abroad, Gammon was clearly amazed and saddened by Crichton's ill-conceived tirade against the overwhelming evidence for the dire situation of global atmospheric degradation. Hopefully Crichton will get back to writing fun sci-fi adventures and stay away from serious science for which he seems to have little intellectual capacity. Now for some references: for an excellent scientific blog on Crichton's book, see "[Michael Crichton's State of Confusion](#)"; for a gritty review, see [grist.org](#); another good review can be found at the NRDC, "[They Don't Call It Science Fiction for Nothing](#)"; some great first-person stories from [Open Source Radio](#) ("Global Warming In The Artic," 4 Jan. 2006); finally, for those theists and xian sapients, related information can be found by visiting my "[justice links](#)" at [kdkragen.com](#), especially [EEN's CreationCare & Sir John Houghton Documents](#). [*Rant ends here; back to CascadiaCon report.*]

There were panels on the art of re-writing, specifically the gracious contributions from Larry Niven and [Jerry Pournelle](#) concerning how Heinlein helped them edit and polish their early work, *A Mote In God's Eye*. An hilarious as well as highly informative panel on the [L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future Contest](#) was moderated by [Jay Lake](#), with [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), Ken Scholes, [Eric James Stone](#), and special guest graphic con artist [Frank Wu](#). (Note: see my review of Jay Lake's novel [Rocket Science](#).)

Jay Lake also moderated a terrific panel discussion on the topic of "Breaking In Through The Small Press," with [Lawrence M. Schoen](#), [Jak Koke](#), and [Nina Munteanu](#). Another excellent panel discussion considered "Martial Arts in Science Fiction," and afforded me some specific questions concerning samurai sword technique against carnivorous dinosaurs. As a writer, I especially benefited from a panel discussion on POV (point of view), as well as a panel discussing the idea of collaboration in writing, which has been floating about in the back of my mind for years; there were two panels that considered the topic at length, one ably moderated by Ellen Guon, with [Jacquelin Lichtenberg](#), Julia Mandala, and Harold Gross; I sat next to Ms. Lichtenberg's delightfully fascinating husband Solomon during the panel, and we all had a most marvelous time.

And then there was the "kaffeeklatsch," an intimate gathering where fans and aspiring writers/artists could chat FTF with Con presenters. I especially enjoyed my kaffeeklatsch with author [Thomas P. Hopp](#)—see my review of his novel [Dinosaur Wars](#).

I want to also mention the great "dealers room" where publishers and booksellers and swordsmiths and costume and jewelry sellers had their displays. [Lady Jayne's Books](#) was especially gracious and helpful, selling on consignment my novel's *KillWare* and *The Wastes*. The folks at [Galaxy Press](#) were friendly and informative—thanks Sarah! Last but not least, thanks to all those volunteering in "hospitality" who welcomed and offered for everyone, throughout the five days of the Con, a constant supply of free coffee, sodas, juices, muffins, marvolous vegetable platters, fresh hot chicken wings, and a hospitality room where one could go and sit for awhile and chat with other hungry Conizens.

Whether one is a hardcore fan, a seasoned writer, a newly published writer, or someone just beginning to entertain the idea of writing or doing graphic art, an event like CascadiaCon is an absolute must experience. Thanks especially to all the [countless volunteers who make Cons possible](#), who keep the "Con-torches" burning throughout the year in preparations for the ever-next-upcoming local, national or international sci-fi/fantasy conventions. Cons are primarily volunteer events. I have now been to my first Con (late in life for me, over 50). The next one I can afford to attend I will know how to join the ranks of volunteers. Thank you everyone at [CascadiaCon](#) for your gracious hospitality and for showing me *The Way*.

Looking to the future, [NorwesCon Seattle](#), [WorldCon L.A.](#).

Sincerely,
K. D. Kragen, [KaveDragen. Ink.](#)

