

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

When Rick Wilber and I co-founded the Dell Magazines Award (then called the Asimov Award) in 1993 we hoped it would help us discover, encourage, and nurture new writers. The award, which is sponsored by the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts and Dell Magazines, recognizes the best science fiction or fantasy story by a full-time undergraduate college student. This spring at the 35th International Conference for the Fantastic (ICFA) in Florida, Rick and I will celebrate with the winner and many of the finalists for the twentieth time.

To commemorate so many years of fine storytelling, I thought I'd find out where some of our past finalists are today. The very first award winner was Eric Choi, aerospace engineer, writer, and editor, living in Toronto, Canada. He worked on the meteorology payload on the 2008 *Phoenix* Mars Lander. In the 2009, he was also one of the Canadian Space Agency's final forty candidates (out of 5,353 applicants) in their astronaut recruitment drive. This career path may come as no surprise to those who read "Dedication" (*Asimov's*, November 1994), his award-winning story about astronauts on Mars. Eric co-edited the Aurora Award winning anthology *The Dragon and the Stars* (DAW), and he has a story forthcoming from *Analog*.

Although Eric's is the only story, so far, to be published in *Asimov's*, we have been able to run the winning tale online since about 2000. *Asimov's* has also published subsequent stories by Marissa Lingen (winner 1999) and Lena DeTar (winner 2002). A few of the finalists have also appeared in our pages. Well known science fiction author, Creative Commons expert, and Internet blogger Cory Doctorow (honorable mention 1994) has been published in *Asimov's* numerous times. Alice Sola Kim's (second runner-up 2005) beautiful tale about "The Other Graces" appeared in our July 2010 issue, and only after our February 2014 issue with Maurice Broaddus's engaging story about "Steppin' Razor" was delivered to our printer did I realize that this successful author had received an honorable mention from us in 1996.

Our finalists have collected some other impressive awards in the intervening years. E. Lily Yu was a finalist for the Dell Award in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Her 2011 story submission, "The Cartographer Wasps and the Anarchist Bees" was published by *Clarkesworld* and was a finalist for the Hugo, Nebula, and World Fantasy Awards. In 2012, Lily won the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer. Matthew J. Kirby was the first runner-up in 2003. He is now the author of three middle grade novels. Among other honors, Matt has won the Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery and the PEN Center USA award for Children's Literature. Cory Doctorow won his own Campbell Award for best new writer in 2000, and has since added to his trophy shelf several Locus and Sunburst Awards as well as the Prometheus and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award.

In addition to her *Asimov's* tale, Marissa Lingen has sold over ninety short stories. Bryn Neuenschwader, who won the award in 2003, has since become well known under her nom de plume. The latest of her eight novels as "Marie Brennan" is *A Natural History of Dragons*. Bryn has more than forty short stories in print as well. Amelia Beamer, who was our second runner up in 2004 has since written the best selling zombie novel, *The Loving Dead*.

Many other finalists, such as Lara Donnelly (winner 2013), Rich Larson (second-runner-up 2013), Seth Dickinson (winner 2011), Rahul Kanakia (first runner-up 2007), Catherine Krahe (second runner-up 2006), Karina Sumner-Smith (honorable mention 2003), Thomas Seay (first runner-up 2002), Beth Adele Long (winner 2000),

and David Barr Kirtley (winner 1997), have also amassed a number of impressive publications.

I hear from finalists all the time. Many have followed interesting career trajectories outside writing SF—Mark Jacobsen (winner 2001) is a C-17 air force pilot while his ICFA roommate Elan Ruskin (second runner-up 2001) works in the game industry as a senior engine programmer. Monica Eiland (first runner-up 1995) is a medical writer and Emily Thornbury (winner 1998) is an assistant professor of English at UC Berkeley. In addition to a flourishing writing career, Brit Mandelo (third runner-up 2012) is a senior fiction editor at *Strange Horizons*.

Alas, there isn't room to cover all the accomplishments or to even mention all of our gifted finalists. I apologize to everyone for the omissions.

The penultimate word in this editorial belongs to my co-judge Rick Wilber.

The award has always been a labor of love for me. There's a great deal of organizational work that goes on behind the scenes, and every year there's some worrisome problem or another that has to be dealt with. Then, once the stories are in, there's that intense few weeks of reading the submissions and struggling to narrow down the many good stories to the shorter list of truly excellent ones. That's never an easy job.

But the payoff comes after Sheila and I discuss the finalists and pick the winner, runners-up, and honorable mentions. It's my happy task to email or call those talented writers and let them know they're invited to ICFA where they'll meet many of the finest professionals in the field. Hearing the excitement on the other end of the line, or seeing all the exclamation points in their emails makes all the work absolutely worth the labor. And, heck, following the careers of the finalists as they go on to find their own professional success is a wonderful capstone on the whole process.

Rick and I set out to nurture a bunch of new writers and ended up enriching our own lives because of the wonderful people we've met along the way.