Frederik Pohl Steps Down from Theodore Sturgeon Award Jury

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Earlier this year, Frederik Pohl announced his intentions to step down from his long-time service to the Award.

New Sturgeon Award juror Andy Duncan talks about being honored with the Award by Pohl:

One of the highlights of my life was being handed my Sturgeon Award trophy by Frederik Pohl, at the 2002 ceremony, as he's been one of my heroes since I was a kid. His stories, novels, and nonfiction, and the magazines and anthologies he has edited, have not only shaped the field of science fiction for me and everyone else, but have shaped my conception of what it means to be a professional writer. On the Sturgeon jury, in particular, his firsthand knowledge of the science-fiction short story is simply irreplaceable; the jury will have a Fred-shaped hole in it forever.

Center for the Study of Science Fiction Director Chris McKitterick recalls how Pohl changed his life:

I first came to the University of Kansas to take James Gunn’s SF Writing Workshop in the summer of 1992, and was both astounded and incredibly pleased to discover that we had the opportunity to work with not only Gunn but another master of the art - completely to ourselves! - Frederik Pohl. I first read his work in the form of Gateway, which still holds a central place in my heart and deeply influenced how I write. That workshop truly changed my life. I felt that I must do my absolute best to become a real SF writer so I could retroactively deserve such access and professional attention. Fred returned to the Workshop and Campbell Conference just about every year for the following two decades, sharing his time, intelligence, and gentle wisdom with other summer-program attendees. Fred is one of the reasons I fell in love with the Center. No one can be Fred, but he inspires us to be our absolute best.

James Gunn shares an excerpt of his essay, "Fred and Me," from the Gateways collection:

Fred told me once, "Conventions never end; they just adjourn to another venue." That’s the way it was for Fred and me. We met at a convention, the World Science Fiction Convention of 1952, held in the old Morrison Hotel in Chicago. It was my first convention, my first meeting with SF writers and editors, and even readers, of any kind, and it was a wonderful beginning.

I’d been writing science fiction since the spring of 1948 and having my stories published since the fall of 1949. During those two years I kept writing, among other things a novella, "Breaking Point," that I adapted from a three-act play I wrote as an Investigation and Conference project. I sent it to Horace Gold, editor of Galaxy, and one day I got a telephone call from this clipped
New York voice saying he liked "Breaking Point," but it was too long and would I let Ted Sturgeon cut it down.

Horace also suggested my name to Fred Pohl, who was running a literary agency called Dirk Wylie and, I later discovered, was close to Horace, and Fred became my agent. He was a good agent, and he sold a lot of stories for me—some to Horace (though not "Breaking Point," which he sold to Lester del Rey at the new *Space Science Fiction*), some to John Campbell, some to lesser markets, and one wondrous sale to *Argosy*—and a couple of novels.

When Orson Scott Card got too busy to organize the Sturgeon Award decision process, I asked Fred if we could do it. Together we recruited Judy Merril and later, after her resignation the year before her death, we got Kij Johnson, a previous winner, as a replacement. I haven't even mentioned Fred's distinguished service as president of the Science Fiction Writers of America (or the irony of his having criticized its value in earlier days), or as president of World SF, or his many invitations to speak as a futurist, or his lecturing on science fiction in Europe for the US Information Agency (he paved the way for my three later trips), or his Grand Master Award from SFWA, or his awards from other groups such as the Science Fiction Research Association, or the trends his stories and novels have anticipated. You can look it up.

We’ve all grown old together, Fred and me and science fiction, too. Conventions are not what they used to be (neither is the future). I wasn’t there at the beginning of the conventions, as Fred was, or of the Futurians, who were banned from the first World Convention but got their revenge by taking over a good part of science fiction in their day. But we’ve seen a lot of it—Fred for more than seventy years, me for only sixty. Maybe the next convention will convene in an alternate universe.

We will truly miss Fred's contribution to the Award.

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*The Center for the Study of Science Fiction is an educational, scholarly, and outreach organization housed at the University of Kansas. For more about the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award and prior winners, see the CSSF website: [http://www.sfcenter.ku.edu](http://www.sfcenter.ku.edu)*

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