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In Memoriam: Richard Dale Mullen (1915-1998)

He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one;
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken, and persuading;
Lofty and sour to them that lov'd him not;
But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.

Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, 4.2: 51-54.

As editors, this is not what we anticipated when we decided to introduce the final issue of our 25th year of continuous publication with a rare collective editorial. We discussed many items and issues that we considered worthy of mention in what was to be a celebratory overview of *SFS*'s past, present, and future. Instead, we are devoting this collective editorial to the memory of the editor who was the first and the best among us.

R.D. Mullen died peacefully at 82 on August 8, 1998 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He founded *SFS* in 1973 and, since 1990 when he rejoined a newly revamped editorial collective, he has been our wisest counsel, our most incisive historical memory, and our most loved and respected colleague. It is with a deep sense of sadness that we mark his passing here, a quarter of a century after the founding of the journal for which he cared so passionately. We will always miss him.

Since 1990, when Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr, Arthur B. Evans, and Veronica Hollinger formed a new editorial board under Dale Mullen's guidance, *SFS* has undergone a series of transformations which, we like to believe, has kept it abreast of aesthetic, critical, political, and philosophical developments in the field. Dale, more than any other individual, helped to anchor these transformations in a firm sense of history, tradition, and committed scholarship.

In a note written the first time he retired from editing *SFS* (crustily citing "advancing age and declining energy" as long ago as 1978), he defined the editor's task as a minute inspection of all ideas, all sentences, to detect and extirpate faulty scholarship: "having in my time seen the publication of much too much bad scholarship, I was determined that each article for which I was responsible would be read not simply by editorial consultants but in each case by someone thoroughly familiar with the primary works being discussed. In most cases that someone turned out to be myself" (*SFS* 5 [November 1978]:

303). Dale checked every bibliographical entry and every quoted passage against the original edition cited for every essay he edited for *SFS*. He owned many of the necessary books himself, but one reason he retired last year as coeditor was that it was becoming too difficult for him to make the frequent trips to the library that his editorial conscience demanded. For him, literary scholarship was a shared search for truth. It required patience, insight, and above all intellectual rigor. But it also was a collective quest: each scholar was a valued member of a larger and mutually-supportive community. He expressed these views perhaps most succinctly in an editorial note in last year's November issue of *SFS*:

I have written on several occasions *that literary scholarship is an ongoing cooperative endeavor that provides not final answers but materials for and leads to further study, and that work that does not cite its sources, no matter how extensive and careful the research behind it, is not scholarship at all. ...* [L]iterary scholarship is an ongoing cooperative endeavor in which resources are shared... [It is not] a competition in which each competitor hoards his or her resources as a capital asset. (532)

If, as we believe, *SFS* remains the best journal in its field, it is largely because of its continuing commitment to these standards of scholarly integrity. Dale loved science fiction, but his love was not blind; love of the field made his critical edge sharper and finer. He did not tolerate fannishness or special pleading. Dale was tough on sf scholars because he knew that sf—with its network of tangled cultural roots in popular literature and technological angst, the pulp marketplace and the doubting (and hoping) human spirit—requires an especially disciplined critic. He hated our sf community's tendency to hype itself. In fact, he hated sentimentality, and we can only fear that he would view this collective homage to his memory with severe disapproval. But our sense of what we have lost demands expression.

Dale tended to send two types of e-mail message: the swift and tart critique and (rarely but intermittently) the stanza from lyric poetry, sometimes followed by a brief comment. When he returned home after being hospitalized early this year, we received one of that second type of message: "I strove with none, for none was worth my strife./Nature I loved, and next to nature, art./I warmed both hands before the fire of life;/It sinks, and I am ready to depart." But he then stoutly rejected the highminded resignation of Walter Savage Landor's lyric, adding: "That's a crock of course. I strove with some that were worth my strife, and I never cared much for 'nature,' preferring cities and air conditioning." It was characteristic of Dale that he signalled to us his latest recuperation by reassuming a hardheaded critical stance.

We have all learned much from him over the years and we are committed to maintaining the standards to which he held us during the course of our work together. No one was more terrifying to deal with when the work was shoddy; no one was more supportive when the work was difficult; no one was warmer with congratulations when the work was successful. Rob Latham and Carol McGuirk both joined our editorial collective within the past year and

now we are five. We are well positioned to carry on the work that Dale began in 1973.

We thank Dale Mullen for starting us up, for keeping us going, and for helping to shape our sense of the future. We thank him for providing a model of scholarship that would be impossible to imagine if he had not himself demonstrated it for us. We hope to make the next 25 years of *SFS* a fitting tribute to his memory.—**The Editors**

Remembrances

Childhood memories can be sharp and clear, and at the same time, vague. My early memories of Uncle Dale are of a gentle, kind man who lived in a pink house with many books. Teenage memories are of a gentle, kind man who lived in a third floor apartment with many more books. Later, my relationship with Uncle Dale was limited to Christmas cards and visits at family funerals. In the last year, I was blessed with the opportunity to know my uncle on a deeper level. As Mother and I visited with him, our conversations jumped from his childhood memories to his service in World War II, from literature to movies, and from politics to history.

Dale Mullen spent his childhood in Blue Mound and Topeka, Kansas as the second son of a newspaper editor and commercial printer. His favorite relative was his grandmother, Bethana Mullen, who “always wore black with skirts long to the floor and was a great baker.” He loved her cinnamon and Parker House rolls.

As a youth, he was bored with Boy Scouts, Sunday school and church. But reading was encouraged in his home and was his favorite pastime. The first science fiction he remembered reading was *The Gods of Mars*, which he found in the Blue Mound Library at age ten. In 1927, for 50-cents, Dale purchased his first copy of *Amazing Stories*, which he had seen in a Topeka drugstore window. After starting to work in 1928, he spent most of his money on magazines and books—a life-long trait. Dale read little science fiction, however, between 1933 and the end of World War II. During those years, he lived with his family in Oxford, Mississippi, where his father owned the local newspaper, *The Oxford Eagle*.

In the fall of 1933, Dale entered the University of Mississippi and became interested in publishing a literary magazine. There were many young writers in the area, and in 1934 he published their work and his in three issues of *The Oxford Magazine*. Those issues included an article by Phil Stone on William Faulkner and five poems by Shelby Foote. Dale left “Ole Miss” after two years, to work full time as bookkeeper for *The Oxford Eagle*. In 1937, he published three issues of another little magazine entitled *River*, which included short stories by Eudora Welty and Peter Taylor’s first published work. Dale’s work in this area is well documented in “Dale Mullen and Modern Mississippi Literature” by Frank Smith, published in the November 1986 issue of *The Journal of Mississippi History*.

While attending business school in Memphis in 1938, Dale met and married Laoma Burmmett. He returned to his bookkeeper position at *The Oxford Eagle* and remained there until he joined the Army in 1942. An

artillery forward observer in the Third Infantry Division, he was in heavy combat at Anzio and in France and Germany. He was awarded the Silver Star and Bronze Star for heroism.

After the war Dale completed his degree in English and History at the University of Alabama, his Masters at the University of Mississippi where he held a teaching assistantship, and his Doctorate in Elizabethan Drama at the University of Chicago. The fall of 1956 found him at Indiana State University (ISU) where he remained until his retirement in 1980. During his ISU years, he returned to his early love of science fiction and founded the journal *Science-Fiction Studies*.

In the past year I have learned that my Uncle Dale idolized his older brother, had compassion for his younger brother, and was his sister's big brother, not just her older brother. He had a difficult time asking for help but loved to be waited on. Of the three brothers, I feel he was the most like his father. He loved his mother's coconut cream pie and Mounds candy bars, and like a child, wanted to play with his "Happy Meal" toy first.

While delaying medical tests and surgery, so he could attend his "last hurrah" [our first *SFS* editorial "summit" at DePauw on July 23-25—ed.], he called his sister to "hold my hand." His last two weeks gave him both of these and he was content. As was fitting, his was a gentle death.

This year Mother and I were able to touch the past with him and bid him farewell. At his death, my uncle was a gentle, kind man who lived in a small apartment filled with books, but, oh, how much sharper and richer are the memories.—**Thana White Cottrell**

[Dale once jokingly said to me that I might pronounce his laudation at the funeral. Alas, our viscous existentiality made any such thoughts impossible in August 1998; but I hope his shade will accept this surrogate, and smile at me from his poker party with Gene Debs and Sir Thomas More in Elysium.]

My first vivid memory of Dale is sitting one afternoon in 1972 in a crepuscular bar on or near the campus of Drake University in Des Moines, where the SFRA was having one of its early yearly meetings. It was if not the heyday then the last fling of the Tolkien craze; it was before the wide spread of sf teaching in academia; and the papers we had heard for the last couple of days seemed to have none of the excitement of early fandom (which Dale knew better from having followed it at first hand than I knew it from the gosh-wow books by its early chroniclers and the hints by Fred Pohl in Trieste and Red Bank); and they also lacked the precision and proper critical distance of what we both thought of as scholarship. So we had fled to that dim bar for conso-lation and were commiserating with each other about these standards. We thought this mainly extended to the extant issues of *Extrapolation* too, which had all kinds of missionary merits perhaps but mostly sounded like a gang of overaged fans attempting to keep up the glow of their teenage illusions, what Dave Samuelson would, in the first article of *Science-Fiction Studies* and punning on Clarke's *Childhood's End*, call "A Median Stage of Adolescence." At some point Dale broke the gloom by announcing that he felt that he should set up another, more serious journal for sf studies, that he had

some money saved up, and that he was prepared to devote a portion of it to financing that journal. I immediately rippled with enthusiasm and said I'd like to help and participate in whatever way I could; my imagination caught fire, and I started spinning out loud proposals for possible types of contributions. Probably they included working not only on the post-1945 moment but also on pre-1945 and non-English sf and sf criticism as well as going through all the extant Ph.D.s on it, since that's what I proceeded to do (and Samuelson's work, for one, resulted from soliciting him to turn a part of his Ph.D. into that article), but I really forget. The discussion ended in Dale's appointing me there and then as associate editor of what came to be—after further consultations in Des Moines and later—called, precisely, *Science-Fiction Studies* (Dale was great on precise things such as the hyphen making the difference between adjectival and nominal forms of “sf”). The name was, I'm confident, his invention, I would have probably picked something more flamboyant and Greek-sounding. I'm not sure of many similar details: unfortunately there seems to be little record of letters between us in those pre-computer days, I tended to use the phone an awful lot and charge it to the abundant grants I received in those blessed Welfare-State days. I do clearly remember that I then started bombarding Dale with suggestions and materials. At some point before the first issue he told me, with his characteristic acute sense for fairness, that I had already done so much he'd install me as co-editor. And that is how the *SFS* team got formed. I never contributed a cent to it (except maybe indirectly, by using my research assistants), until his resignation announced in the last 1978 *SFS* issue.

Of course this was not the first time I had met Dale. I was at the time in the throes of a crazy (but not yet totally impossible) encyclopedic ambition to read *all* that was ever and anywhere written about sf, so that I had read with appreciation his three major early essays, the *Riverside Quarterly* ones on E.R. Burroughs and on “Blish, Van Vogt, and the Uses of Spengler,” as well as the *Extrapolation* one on Wells and V.R. Emmanuel. I had particularly liked the Spengler essay: here was a critic who was not only a philologist of the old-fashioned precise kind—which I liked—but had also the interest in theory of history so rare on a continent that seemed to run, not excluding my New Left friends and hippie students, on Henry Ford's slogan “History is bunk.” (Jim Blish, whom I'd met in 1966 and visited almost each year after that in England, no mean critic himself, told me he was so impressed by that essay that he changed some dates in his Okie series to fit Dale's critique.) I surely also met Dale before 1972 at some previous SFRA or MLA meeting, but memory fails me.

At any rate, we were exchanging materials about our common interests in Thomas More and H.G. Wells much before Des Moines: I sent him for example some roneotyped pages on analyzing *Utopia*, multiplied for class use, and his comments were detailed, most knowledgeable, precise, and to the point. Thus it was logical to invite him to an international symposium on Wells and sf at McGill in October 1971. It was the only time I had the pleasure of seeing Dale, already heavy on his feet (which would later trouble

him a lot and practically confine him to Terre Haute), at the place I lived. And conversely, it was only once, risking limb and life amid Reaganite deregulation in the little propeller plane from Chicago and the hurricane season, that I visited Dale and his wife in Terre Haute and beheld the impressive rows of prewar sf journals waiting for the definitive overview which he'll now not give us.

Our approach or stance as editors was obviously different but it proved complementary. I very dimly remember that Dale told me he served in the Second World War, because we discovered we may have been in Italy at the same time. But he didn't expatiate upon it, and he had not undergone the life-and-death political radicalization of the European intelligentsia in the pressure-cooker of Fascism and war. Therefore, Dale had much more the demeanour of a tolerant gentleman than I did at the time—though I trust both of us conducted *S-FS* affairs with maximum philological openness available to us. He didn't suffer fools any more gladly but his stoicism and reticence foregrounded it less. Yet I may disappoint some acidulous poormouths of this "High Modernist" moment in sf criticism by saying that, having been clear at the outset about what we wanted to avoid (which included Fantasy "except for purposes of comparison and contrast"), there was extremely little discussion of overt ideological or political nature between us. So far as I could gather from his laconic self-references (I think he held to Pascal's theory of "the hateful I" in criticism, as refracted through the Positivist scholarship of his formative years), Dale was a "Midwest atheist" not too far from—though much less strident than—the Colonel Ingersoll stamp, and indeed a Debsian, that is a very anti-elitist or populist socialist. Debs's great maxim "I want to rise with the ranks, not from the ranks" seems to me to have been an overriding maxim for Dale's professional life too. Thus we were both to the Left of the professional "mainstream" in academia and certainly (with a few exceptions such as Bruce Franklin, in those years having just been kicked out of Stanford) in sf studies so far, and I think we had similar reactions of practical solidarity but also theoretical skepticism in relation to the Marcusean campus New Left. And I surely must have learned from Dale ideologically or politically too, though I can remember only one instance clearly. At some point, I think in drafting my essay on Philip Dick, I slipped in some disparaging adjective (most likely "petty bourgeois") about shopkeepers to which Dale objected—what's wrong with shopkeepers, he asked me? Reflecting on this, I recalled that my favourite grandfather was a shopkeeper of "colonial goods" (I still remember the yummy smell of the jute bagfuls of raisins and other nuts and fruits in the corners of his small shop), and that my family has always been proud of the probity which led his guild to appoint him the fire-damage appraiser for the whole city (I guess it had circa 20-30,000 inhabitants then). Modifying the quasi-Leninist cliché I'd unthinkingly used, I decided then and there that indeed nothing was wrong with shopkeepers who fulfilled their proper distributory function without exploiting workers. This example may sound faintly ridiculous in today's subsumption of small shop-keepers under big chain-store conglomerates rather

than under socialist co-operation, but I give it here as a chronicler of how Dale's apparently commonsense queries could bring critics striving for overarching views, who nonetheless also had ambitions to fuse this with precise interpretation, down to earth; and I'm sure I wasn't the only one to profit.

Thus, I find an inner logic in Dale's publication record, those wonderfully precise and thorough surveys of both primary and secondary literature (on Wells, Haggard, various sf reprint series, etc.). When I was writing my book on Victorian sf in 1980/81, one of the principal critical sources I used were his pithy but pitilessly precise annotations to some of those series. I tried to convey the importance of such work to various SFRA award-giving committees through the years but obviously failed. If I'm not forgetting somebody, he may be the only major name among the Great Ancestors of sf criticism missing from the list of Pilgrim or similar awards, leaving the SFRA with a blot on its escutcheon. This was due to an unfortunate reinforcement between the unquestioned norm of the younger colleagues making up those committees that nobody without a major book is worth a glance, and this (how shall I call it?) modest pseudo-inductivity of Dale's, which hid the light of his general critical positions—for of course he had them—under the bushel of the seemingly pedestrian work; for example, of annotating sf fiction and criticism mainly from the 19th and the first half of 20th Century.

In fact, with the modesty characteristic not only of him but also of his scholarly cohort before the "publish-or-perish" years, I suspect a major part of Dale Mullen's submerged huge influence in sf studies was the correspondence he kept up with dozens of people in the field. The cohort—people who studied in the 1930s, in the whirlpool of the New Deal—must have been an interesting one: Dale had learned at the university not only French (and he knew his Aristotle well) but also German! There was a stubborn, pre-admass independence to Dale, which one could also call lack of political realism but then one would in the same breath have to add imperviousness to modish sycophancy: our only major clash came when I urged him to apply for a State grant and even supplied the proper papers, and he replied I could resign forthwith if I meant to insist on it... (I didn't.) I have not met anybody more emancipated from our quantitative reification, necessary for fame in the cruel nowadays of accelerated circulation (I was told in Paris you're nobody if you don't produce one book per year: there's a Derrida or Kristeva 1989, 1990, etc., as there is a Ford 1989, 1990, etc.). I have also met very few people more resistant, in his courtly and exemplary rather than proclamatory way, to the ultra-Formalism dominant in critical studies since the 1920s-30s, from New Criticism and the belatedly digested Russian Formalists through the Structuralists to the various self-referential schools of the present.

In that sense, risking again risibility, and begging the reader's indulgence for comparing small matters to large (which is allowable if we take the large matters as illuminating exemplars), I've always thought of Dale Mullen's position in sf criticism as analogous to Socrates' in Hellenic philosophy.

Socrates left even fewer writings, to be precise none. All that we know about him is what a few admiring pupils left on record; he had luck, for one of them was a great poetic narrator and myth-spinner called Plato. But through such pupils, and then the pupils of his pupils (he had luck again, for one of them was Aristotle), his limning of concepts and dialectics of inquiry became all-pervasive in this tradition of “loving wisdom” (*philosophiein*). The analogy with the pupils is not to be sustained: strictly speaking, in these impious and narcissistic days, very few of us have pupils—so much the worse for us and them. But inescapably, some wise people—and my memory of Dale is one of a thoughtful, soft-spoken, often wryly chuckling sage—continue (as Brecht put it) thinking on in other people’s minds.

In the last communication I had with Dale, by e-mail, I asked his opinion— as I used to about so many things—about the title I had excogitated for my forthcoming book on sf and utopianism (where the “Deluge” is meant to represent our present ruling dispensation of Post-Fordist systematic anti-utopianism). Dale’s answer of July 13 ran: “Darko. *Arguing with the Deluge* is a brilliant title.” I like to think this possibly overgenerous judgment defines (as always) the judge, and that the title is what finally his work, persuasive in its quiet brilliance, actually amounts to. And that this has much to do with the reason he will go on thinking in our minds.—**Darko Suvin**

I first met Dale Mullen at a symposium on H.G. Wells that Darko Suvin put together in 1971. We subsequently conversed face to face on only two or three occasions, the last of them more than 20 years ago. Like most of my—and, I believe, his—*SFS* friendships in those days, ours relied on the typewriter (later, the word processor) and the telephone; also, on our respective publications.

Given the nature of our friendship, I can’t offer much by way of purely factual biography. I know, for example, from what he told me at the first or second SFRA Conference (at Penn State, in 1972, if recollection serves) that he was contemporary with J. O. Bailey in his academic interest in sf; but I’ve forgotten whatever details Dale may have given me on that subject. What I can, perhaps, testify to, however, are certain features of his psychological makeup, albeit at the risk of repeating what others will say.

What most impressed me about Dale, virtually from the start, was a kind of magnanimity that exceeded his physical bulk. Even if generosity were in long supply among academics (which it isn’t these days), Dale would stand out as extraordinarily generous. Beyond his unstinting encouragement of others, he not only shared information with them (often taking the pains to write several thousand words often better than what they were responsive to), he even lent books from his extensive library—by mail, no less. And he had plenty of information to share, being among the most knowledgeable of people about English-language sf from the late 19th century through the pulp era.

That he was a workaholic’s workaholic I didn’t fully realize until sometime into my editorship of *SFS*. Even before my back rebelled at the demands of the job, I often found myself wondering how Dale had managed in the first five years of *SFS*’s existence. After all, I had a part-time assistant to help

prepare copy for the printer, keep track of subscribers, etc. Dale, on the other hand, did all that labor himself—and in those days, without a computer. And while Darko Suvin did much of the work of rounding up publishable contributions, Dale (at least in my experience) did much of the copy-editing (while also serving as managing and book-review editor). And did it meticulously. I take his thank-you “for the rescue job you did on my little essay” (letter of Dec. 19, 1973) as high praise indeed. Also revealing of his attitude toward his editorship is his remark in his previous letter to me: “I have wept all I can weep about the typos in [SFS] #2.”

Dale did have one large fault though: he was overly modest. I don’t, for example, remember precisely what “little essay” he was referring to in the snippet I quoted above; but it was probably the one that appeared in *H.G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction*—which remains a solid contribution (and also the earliest) to the understanding of “late” Wells. Nor can I think offhand of anything he published that was not a solid contribution, mostly to the literary history or bibliography of sf. But trying to reciprocate his encouragement was definitely uphill work: repeatedly, especially in the 1980s, he would say he wasn’t in the frame of mind to do anything; or if he did write something, he would subsequently jettison it.

It thus came as a surprise to me that he volunteered to join the team of editors I was recruiting to replace me. Especially inasmuch as a decade earlier—which also means when he was a decade younger, albeit in his late 60s—he had written to tell me that “I am simply not able to do the kind of sustained work required” (this in 1980, when I was contemplating resigning as editor after a mere two years on the job, though mostly because I didn’t relish having to devote an upcoming sabbatical to *SFS*). That from 1990 until almost the moment that death made his recent retirement the final one, he took on as much and worked as hard as he had in the 1970s, should perhaps not have come as a surprise to me. Being paired with Dale as co-recipient of the 1996 Milford Award for “Lifetime Achievement in Science Fiction ... Editing” does me proud. But then people like Dale do all of us proud.—**Robert M. Philmus**

I cannot claim to have known Dale well but we did meet on a number of occasions, and over a period of twenty-seven years we intermittently corresponded and telephoned one another about matters related to *Science-Fiction Studies*. Our exchanges were always most cordial and positive. I was saddened to hear of his sudden death.

One of my meetings with Dale was in October 1972 in Des Moines, Iowa. It was at the third (and last) Secondary Universe Conference (henceforth, with the formation at that conference of the Science Fiction Research Association, it would be known as the annual SFRA Conference) and *Science-Fiction Studies* was then a glint in Dale’s eye. I recall sitting with Dale over lunch or a drink (I’m not sure which) and listening to his argument that Tom Clareson’s *Extrapolation* need not be the only game in town. There was room for another rigorous—perhaps more rigorous—academic journal devoted to sf. He mentioned *Studies in Science Fiction* as a possible title. I remember

pointing out that such a title would share an acronym with *Studies in Short Fiction*; perhaps *Science-Fiction Studies* would be the best solution?

In February this year, Dale and I chatted for what, it is now apparent, was the last time. He had telephoned me and at the time I was still a little preoccupied by the fact that, during the catastrophic ice storm of the previous month, I had slipped on an ungritted, level, iced pavement and sprained my wrist. It's one of the perils of living through a Montreal winter. It took over thirty years for that routine accident to befall me, but much the same thing happened to the unlucky Dale during what, for all I know, was his first visit to Montreal. It was 1971 and Dale was attending a conference on H.G. Wells that Darko Suvin, then Dale's co-editor of *SFS*, had organized at McGill University. That was when I first met Dale. His contribution to the conference—a representative example of his solid scholarship—is preserved in the conference volume that Darko Suvin and Robert Philmus co-edited, *H.G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction* (1977). One evening after that conference day, Dale, Darko, and I (and perhaps others) were walking down a sloping, icy street. Dale, a big man, slipped and, although he made light of it at the time (to the best of my knowledge he never did burden anyone with his problems), he had in fact broken his ankle. I reminded Dale of this accident during our telephone conversation because of the common ground of my much less serious accident, one from which I seem now to have completely recovered. Dale, however, did not make so complete a recovery. He told me, characteristically without complaint, that he had suffered twinges ever since.

Dale was not a young man when he had that accident; he was more or less the age that I am this year. *Science-Fiction Studies*, now his legacy, was the creation of his later middle age. Since my last publication in *SFS*—one accepted by Dale who claimed to have liked it—was a note on Hillyer, hills, slants, and slopes in *The Time Machine*, I cannot help but relate that note, which is about the hill shape described by the rise and fall of life and human history, to the sloping street in Montreal and to Dale's death in August. At age 56, what is to me most inspiring about Dale's life are the sterling accomplishments of the downward slope of his later years—his foundation of *SFS* and his late taking-up again of *SFS* as an editor.

But that is not all. Dale was a low-key, modest, dogged, insightful, and courageous man. I never heard anyone speak ill of him. He was a true gentleman. He was a fine editor and a careful and judicious scholar. He was also a pillar of integrity. I, for one, shall miss him.—**David Ketterer**

In my usual manner of postponing until late in life what most people do as adolescents (Asimov's "Golden Age"), I happen to have been reading the older Dumas this summer as I learned sadly of Dale Mullen's final illness and death. So now that we must face the reality of his passing, I am reminded of the immense, almost Romantic, fecundity of his life. It occurs to me that there must be a common Victorian origin shared by benevolent individuals from Christians to Marxists that proclaims the truth of the old adage, "To whom much is given much is expected." Dale probably had a darker, more competitive side to his nature; but the face he always showed to me and that

shown through all the collaborative work, the “collective,” of *SFS* was the generous face of the reformer determined to shine down his light on the seedtime of a better world. He encouraged me. He helped me in my work, almost anonymously, as he did for countless would-be writers on sf. In the images of Dumas, Dale was a big man, wealthy in mysterious ways, and above all he was generous. He organized his own group of “musketeers” to defend the honor of his sovereign sf and inspired in them the collaborative spirit of “all for one, one for all.” Indeed, there certainly was something wounded, Byronic, and grand about Dale that has left us all richer. And I am equally certain that if he could write more backmatter for *SFS*, he would both scoff at my excessive romanticism and correct the imprecision of my history of ideas about his life. So Dale Mullen has left us late in this cynical century in the Byronic manner, richer for his reforms and marveling at the generosity of nature.—**D.M. Hassler**

I never met Dale Mullen in person, but I have known him as a presence since the first issue of *SFS* when he and Darko Suvin plucked a chapter from my dissertation to be revised as the lead article and my first publication. From our correspondence over the years, I gather that he never liked teaching in a formal structure and had little patience with sloppy writing and thinking, i.e., much of sf and sf scholarship, yesterday and today. Yet he taught for many years at Indiana State and I know from personal experience that he labored unstintingly for *SFS*, attending tirelessly to its broader, informal kind of education. In a gentlemanly way, he “kept us honest” as the managing editor, responsible for the overall package, its look and its accuracy. With the loss of Tom Clareson, Sam Moskowitz, and now Dale, the pioneering era of academic research and criticism in sf is over; making its professionalization an improvement is up to us as their heirs.—**David N. Samuelson**

I met Dale Mullen only once, in 1971, at the first of International Wells Symposia. When it was Dale’s turn to speak, he passed up notice of Wells’s literary fame and championed Wells’s wisecrack that manifestly his epitaph must be “I told you so!” Well, one had to enjoy this partisanship because the qualities Dale was admiring in Wells one could see were also his own: a surveyor’s eye, a sceptical brain, and in the end the belief that sweet reason is worth the trouble. Later, I would find in Dale’s reviews and articles proofs that he was a retentive lover of every book in his life that ever had set him to thinking.

Meanwhile, off-podium, *Science-Fiction Studies* was in gestation, though unhatchable had not Dale agreed to join in the editorship; and this mostly invisible, Herculean labor he performed twice. One can only imagine the invisible part of it, such as the holding of contributors to accountability and the standard matters of annotation and explication. What is plain is the result: *SFS* has been a forum and colloquy with Dale as referee and, in his unselfish way, instigator, often simply by proposing areas still awaiting research. For it was his hope, often realized in practice, that “gentle controversy rage unchecked” with the same facts and files open to everyone. And the doors,

too. It became the amazing policy of *Science-Fiction Studies* that unsolicited reviewing be no impossibility.

Dale truly dignified the field of science fiction. It was his love—his avowed mistress, at least when she wasn't commercial—and the equal of any other fiction. He favored the term “Anglophone” for English-language sf in order to emphasize its reach, but he believed really that sf is international and need only respect its double-barrelled name. It was also his belief that criticism of sf is on a par with any other criticism and should not be founded on sf alone, even assuming a comprehensive knowledge. So, setting the example, his own essay-reviews—printed as a rule in the most modest of type—are at home with parallels and sources far afield.

If Dale shunned the “completist” school of sf criticism on principle, it was also in modesty. He knew sf in breadth and in depth. He grew up with it with Gernsback and Burroughs; he renewed it with Asimov and Heinlein; and he kept up with it. Nobody could spot a canned account of it more quickly. But if he never set out to be encyclopedic, as he easily could have, he did know the value of a personal anecdote. Whether the story was that he nearly forestalled the bombing of the Monte Cassino abbey that Walter Miller would carry out and recollect in writing *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, or that at age 14 he found, in a Gernsback magazine, a mysterious letter he never wrote printed over his name, or simply that he once solicited and received a tale from Lovecraft—such incidents woven into context bear a special authority, not to mention wry wittiness.

Finally, I most gratefully acknowledge that Dale was a stout friend to me professionally, as he was to so many others.—**David Hughes**

Early in my career at Indiana State University, Dale Mullen invited me to help him with *Science-Fiction Studies*. Although we both taught in the same English department, at that time we knew each other primarily because we played poker together. I was merely a substitute, playing only when one of the regulars couldn't make it, but I was generally appreciated because on any evening when I started out playing poorly, I would drink too much beer and play worse still. Dale, on the other hand, was one of the founding members of this monthly game that has now continued for over forty years; he lived to be the last original member still playing.

Even then, everyone at the game deferred to his opinion when an issue of rules or etiquette came up. One of his rules was that “a gentleman” would never check and raise—that is, not trap another player by, after first refusing the opportunity to initiate the betting, raising the bet that someone else had tossed into the pot. This particular rule was a matter of etiquette rather than Hoyle, but coming from someone who grew up in Mississippi, the idea of conducting yourself like a gentleman carried substantial force. Another rule, this time of the operational variety, was that “the cards call themselves.” It would make no difference what you announced you were holding; even if you managed to overlook a winning combination you laid on the table at the end of the hand, it counted for you: the cards call themselves.

Dale was a straightforward, old-fashioned player, calculating odds rather than worrying about his opponents' psychology. He liked to say, "I never bluff," but of course, like a lot of Dale's final pronouncements, that wasn't always true—just almost always. I assume that it is because of Dale that we play mostly five-card draw and five- and seven-card stud, and never allow any kind of poker that includes wild cards. Indeed, I suspect that split-pot games became allowed over his protests—but that would have been ten years before I joined the game.

Now that I have written it, the pattern of all this in Dale's life begins to come clear to me, like footprints in pond mud after you wade through it and the water settles: a dislike of slickness and deception, a feeling strong enough to deny some of the subtleties that might appear in other poker games. Dale had values and principles, and he left his imprint on the rest of us.

Dale was straightforward in other ways as well. He might have been described as abrupt; he was certainly bluff and gruff. If arguments about politics or anything else distracted us, he would protest, "I came here to play cards." Or between hands: "Cut the crap and deal the cards!" Occasionally he would reach the limit of his patience and get as close to cross as he ever let his temper get, grunting in the imperative: "Deal!" His phone calls were legendary—and not just about poker, but those will stand in for all the others. If the game was to be at his place, I would be one side of the following conversation:

"Charles, are you going to play?"

"Yes."

"All right." Click.

In thirty years I never saw Dale without a white shirt and undershirt. When he taught, he always wore a businessman's suit of gray or blue serge, stiff white shirt, dark tie, suspenders, black shoes. After he retired, the suitcoat and tie retired also; the rest remained (of course, he had always played poker in his shirtsleeves). Before retirement he had lived in an apartment close to campus, on the third floor; he walked to school and didn't own a car. But afterwards he moved away from the center of town, into a small house with a yard. This gave him a much larger study in which to edit *Science-Fiction Studies* and house his collection of old sf magazines, but this vague gesture toward suburban living seemed a curious choice; perhaps his wife Laoma's ill health made it imperative to dwell at ground level. When she died, he moved to another apartment, now on the top floor of a retirement complex. Aging eventually took its toll, and his recent decision to limit his participation in the journal must have been painful. But it was timely, and Dale was a gentleman. He wasn't going to stall around and slow down the game.—**Charles Nicol**