

The Heinlein Society

February 2003

The Heinlein Society, a non-profit corporation, is an educational charity.
<http://www.heinleinsociety.org>
PO Box 1254
Venice, Calif., 90294 USA

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newsletter

Virginia Heinlein dies at 86



Virginia and Robert A. Heinlein

Obituary

Heaven is where Ginny is

Virginia Heinlein passed away peacefully in her sleep in the early morning of Jan. 18, 2003. She was 86 years old.

Mrs. Heinlein was the widow of famed science fiction writer, Robert A. Heinlein, author of "Stranger In a Strange Land" and 55 other books, who died in 1988. Her death followed a prolonged bout of respiratory illness, including pneumonia, as well as a broken hip sustained on Thanksgiving Day, 2002, requiring surgery and a long recovery. The couple had no children, but countless readers around the world refer to themselves as "Heinlein's Children."

Virginia Gerstenfeld Heinlein was born April 22, 1916, in Brooklyn, N.Y., the daughter of a dentist. She went to the Packer Collegiate Institute, a college preparatory high school, where she finished in three-and-a-half years, always on the honor roll. She attended New York University, majoring in chemistry. She lettered in swimming, diving, basketball, and field hockey. She also reached national competitive levels in figure skating, the sport that became her lifelong passion. In the late 1950's, she served on the U.S. Olympic Committee for Skating. In time, she came to speak over seven languages, including French, Latin, Italian, and Russian.

Graduating in 1937, she worked for Quality Bakers as a chemist until 1943, when the WAVE Corps was formed. She enlisted immediately and was offered a commission as a WAVE lieutenant, serving first at the Bureau of Aeronautics, then at the Naval Air Experimental



Ginny Heinlein with her cat Snowy in their Florida home.

Station in Philadelphia in 1944 and 1945. She met Robert Heinlein there, working as a civilian aviation engineer because the Navy would not overlook his medical discharge due to tuberculosis in 1934. She served as his assistant on several classified development projects as a chemist and aviation test engineer.

After World War II, she came to Los Angeles to study for an unfinished doctorate in biochemistry at UCLA. She married Robert Heinlein in Raton, N.M., in October 1948. Thereafter, the two were inseparable; those who knew them spoke often of their intense and abiding love for each other. She became his closest companion, aiding him in his writing, and traveling the world with him. Virginia shepherded Robert through two severe near-

death illnesses in the seventies through constant care and love. She took over the business aspects of his writing career, freeing him to focus on his writing. Together, they made a special project of organizing local and national blood drives and facilitating cooperation among all the blood collecting organizations in the world.

Shortly after his death in 1988, she moved to Florida. She gathered a selection of her husband's letters in "Grumbles from the Grave," printed for the first time his travel memoir *Tramp Royale* and political handbook "Take Back Your Government" (originally titled "How to Be a Politician"), and oversaw the restoration of several texts she felt had been badly edited, including "Red Planet," "Puppet

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Letters

Spider Robinson remembers Ginny

Today a total stranger on the other side of the continent phoned while I was out to tell me that he'd been camped out at the hospital for the last few weeks, and wanted me to know that Ginny had mentioned my wife and me several times with great fondness. Probably as well the machine got it. My response was to burst into tears.

She was the toughest, smartest, fiercest, KINDEST woman I've ever known. I only met her face to face twice in my life, never set foot inside any of her homes (although my wife was luckier; Ginny once brought her home to the Carmel place, and showed her Robert's word processor, and the famous cannon); we knew each

other by mail, phone and e-mail. But I'll never forget her, and I miss her already. I can't decide whether I prefer to picture her and Robert ice-skating together again, like they used to — or at the rail of another cruise ship, about to "Sail Beyond the Sunset" — or reunited and crowned at the head of the Grand Parade, about to resume *Traveling in Elephants*.

One of those.

Spider Robinson

Editor's note: *Science fiction author and long-time friend of Robert and Virginia Heinlein was asked to comment on the loss of Ginny for the Heinlein Society Newsletter.*

Students pray for Ginny

For what it's worth, 600 Catholic boys prayed for the repose of the soul of Virginia Heinlein today at Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, CA, where I teach. I'm not Catholic, but I've been teaching Heinlein novels there for eight years, so it was a moment many of the boys felt meaningful.

Robert James

Heaven

from page 2

Masters" and "Stranger in a Strange Land."

Throughout her life, she loved reading, cooking, gardening, music, and politics. In recent years, declining eyesight and physical health curtailed some of her favorite activities, but she began and maintained an active presence on Internet venues devoted to study of her husband's works, pursuing this new hobby with much energy. She endowed the Robert Anson Heinlein Chair in Aerospace Engineering, established on Aug. 28, 2001, at Annapolis, by a gift of over \$2.6 million, in honor of her late husband, a graduate of the Naval Academy's Class of 1929. She also helped to found The Heinlein Society, an educational charity dedicated to paying forward to generations to come the many

Heinlein legacies. She also endowed the public library in Robert Heinlein's birthplace of Butler, Missouri.

Readers have often remarked on the strength, intelligence, and power of his female characters; his fictional women were often based on Virginia Heinlein. As science fiction writer Spider Robinson said, "several of Heinlein's women bear a striking resemblance to his wife Virginia." Many of Heinlein's books were dedicated to her. Virginia, or "Ginny" as she preferred to be called, was his sounding board and source of ideas; she originated the idea that became "Stranger in a Strange Land." She was his first reader and trusted critic. Robert Heinlein once said she was "smarter, better, and more sensible than I am."

In a 1961 letter, he said "She is what I feel to be a good person in the word's simplest and plainest meaning. Which includes lashing

out with her claws on some occasions when others may consider it improper. I don't give a damn whether Ginny is 'proper' or not; I like her. I like her values." At the end of one of his later books, "Job," the final sentence has been read by many as Robert Heinlein's own tribute to his beloved wife: "Heaven is where Margrethe is."

There will be no funeral. Her ashes will be scattered at sea in the Pacific, as were her husband's. Mourners are asked to make blood donations in her memory, and may make charitable donations to The Heinlein Society at www.heinleinsociety.org, or P.O. Box 1254, Venice, Calif., 90294-1254.

Fundraising

Robert and Ginny left behind a legacy

I never met Virginia face to face. I always meant to go and see her, but it never seemed to be the right time, and now the right time will never come to pass. All I knew about Virginia was what I gleaned from her letters and her participation in our online conversations. She was so absolutely dedicated to preserving Robert's legacy, in carrying out his wishes in all things, it seemed as though he had deputized her to be his representative to his readers after he passed on. She maintained the standard the Robert set, preserved the legacy, and when she knew that her time was coming, set various projects in motion to carry on after she was gone.

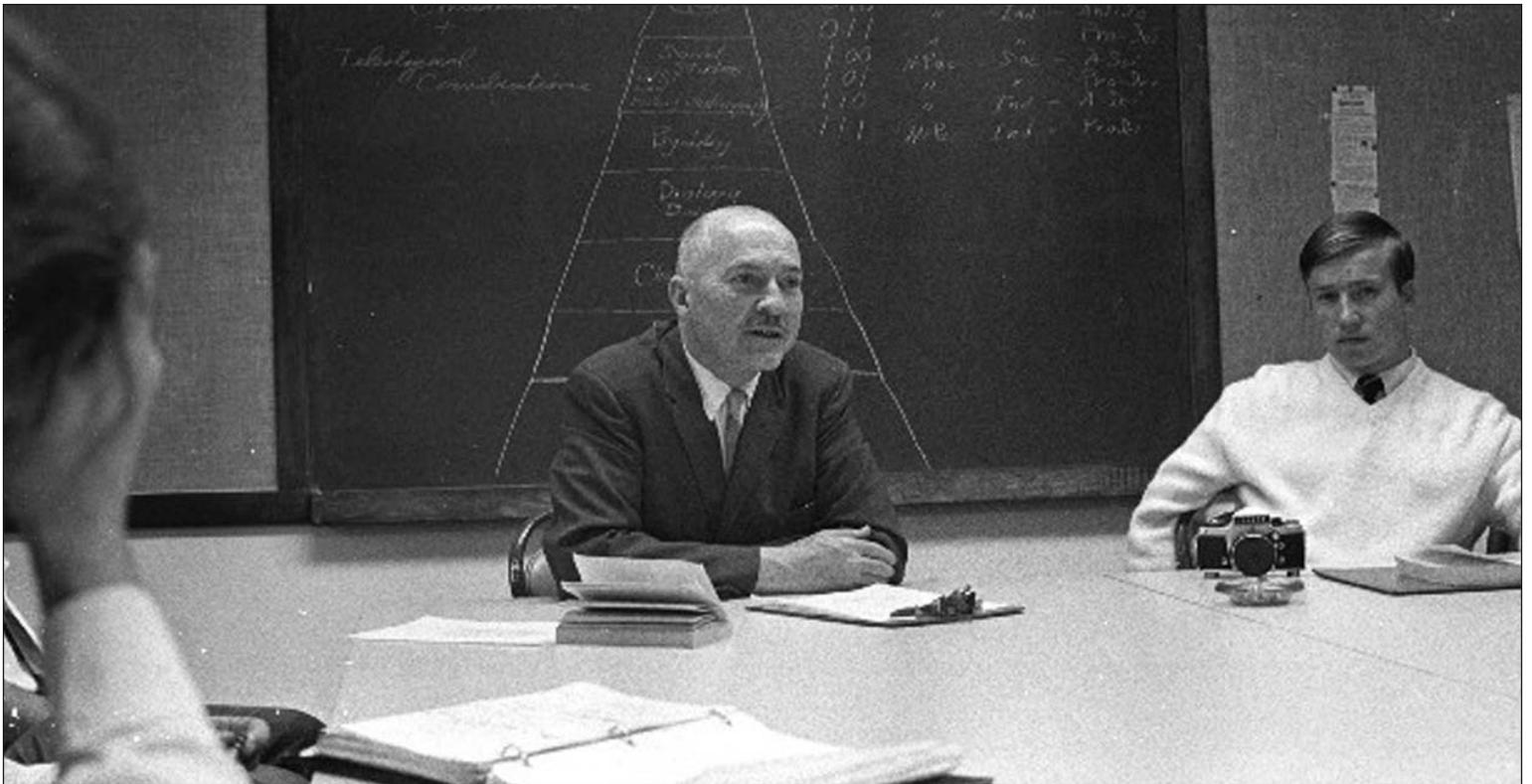
So, I never met Ginny, and I am the poorer for that, but I was unwilling to impose on her at the end of her life, and must content myself with the knowledge that she and I were friends who never met, an increasing phenomenon.

And now that they are both gone, Robert and Virginia, we who remain have a legacy, a responsibility, and a challenge. The legacy is Robert's written words, millions of them, in hundreds of stories. The responsibility, as we all know, is to pay forward the boons we received from this man, this writer of fiction, by bringing his ideas into the real world of present time. The challenge is to educate ourselves to advocate for, to proselytize, to cajole and bully

the world into accepting a broader vision of the future than the one that presently limits us.

With Ginny's passing, we can just feel bad, and continue doing whatever we were doing before we heard that she had moved along this mortal coil to something else, or we can take this as the starting point, not the end, of an even better adventure. The planets are still out there, without our reach, but not yet within in our grasp. The stars lay beyond, seductively beckoning. All that stops us is the lack of vision, the lack of will, and economics. Robert supplied the vision. It is up to us to provide the will and the economics.

*Alan Milner
Fundraising chair*



Robert A. Heinlein speaks at Crown College, University of California at Santa Cruz in the Spring 1969.

-- photo courtesy of Michael Broschat

Blood drives

Robert and Ginny left behind a legacy

When you joined the Heinlein Society each of you listed Society activities that were of interest to you personally. Many of you included blood drives. Those who did have heard from me already and I thank you for your time.

I want to speak now to all the membership, and to anyone else who may be reading this. We have set a quite a goal for ourselves, and we will need a great deal of help to achieve it. By Robert's centennial we intend to be holding blood drives in cities all across the U.S., possibly around the world. This year we are striving to run at least 10 to 12, mostly at conventions, and to begin expanding into workplaces and the community at large. To do this we need PEOPLE. Not only people who donate blood, but also those who are willing to organize and work the blood drives.

Some of you may not be able to donate blood, but you probably know someone who can. Some of you may choose not to donate. That is a personal decision and I do not fault you for it, but I will respectfully ask you to take a hard look at your reasons. Some of you do not have the time to become involved in running blood drives, but you might be able to suggest to someone who does that they contact us.

The ultimate goal of all this is not just to sponsor a worldwide blood drive, but to help remind society at large of their civic duty. People can generally be counted on to help out in times of disaster. After the World Trade Center tragedy the U.S. experienced a huge glut in the blood supply for the first time in decades, but enthusiasm soon

waned and we are once again suffering a critical shortage. It's all too easy to become wrapped up in our daily lives and forget that help is still needed.

We came together to form the

Heinlein Society because we believe it is our duty to Pay It Forward. This is an ideal way to do just that, and to honor the legacy of a man who inspired us all.



Top photo: Grace Scott, David Jennings, Brad Linaweaver (hidden), Jeri Rivera, Robert James, Bill Patterson, David Silver and Sachiko Yamada dine after the final panel at LosCon in Burbank, Calif., in late November 2002. **Bottom photo:** Brad Linaweaver (in foreground) helped lead a LosCon Heinlein panel discussion to a standing-room-only audience.

-- Photos by Peter Scott

Secretary-treasurer's report

Paying dues just became more urgent

Paying your dues suddenly became more urgent than ever last Saturday morning.

It didn't take any of us more than a second or two to conclude that when Virginia kept asking some Heinlein aficionados over the years to create and build a Heinlein society to honor Robert, his works and his principals, that she intended as long as she lived to support any society that acted in accord with his values.

And she did. She provided the inspiration, the leadership, the guidance as to her views of his values and, knowing what any business knows, she provided a little seed money, when needed. Over the past three years, that money has always been there — or its potential. It wasn't used to finance trips to conventions. That came out of our officers' own bank accounts. No one draws a salary, wages, and no one who is a society member benefits one dime from providing goods or services to this Society. Her donated money went to pay for publicity, pay for advertising, pay for printing and mailing newsletters distributed, paid for all the humdrum needs to recruit, to encourage conventions to hold blood drives, all that stuff.

All that stopped Saturday morning. Ain't gonna be no more Heinlein Society. *Unless you pay your dues.* We've been light on pressure to pay dues up to now. If you forgot, or didn't make the effort, you still you got the mailings and the newsletter. You had the opportunity to attend events, volunteer your services for the Society, observe from the inside. You didn't get your membership card and didn't get the CD-ROM of the 1941 speech at DenCon III; but we kept you on the rolls.

All that stops after this issue of this Newsletter. *Unless you pay your dues.* This isn't a fan club. It's a charitable corporation. It has to run like a business. It cannot run otherwise; and it won't run at all. *Unless you pay your dues.*

Dues are payable on Jan. 1, each year. They are modest in amount. You cannot dine comfortably in an average chop house on \$35, unless you've discovered a time warp to maybe the year 1970. We've tried to keep them modest. We've tried to make it easier this year. We've installed PayPal as well as PayByCheck on the website. If you have a checking account or a credit card, that should be all you should need. And, if it isn't,

there's the postal mail box, P.O. Box 1254, Venice, CA 90294-1254. I would really like to see it become necessary for me to visit it more frequently than I do. This year we're going to incur additional expense and go to the effort of the reminders you'll be receiving in the postal mail and by e-mail. Remember when Maureen tried to help her father collect accounts? Try to make the effort a little more effective than hers was, please.

There was a reason you registered to join and support The Heinlein Society. If you want to Pay It Forward, if you want to see it come true, then pay your dues. Every year since this Society was founded, the first check I received was signed Virginia Heinlein. That's the way it should have been. Why wasn't yours the second? I won't be receiving any checks from Virginia Heinlein anymore. Please, let's see if I can expect to receive yours, timely and regularly.

"The Lieutenant expects your name to shine!"

*David M. Silver
Secretary-Treasurer
The Heinlein Society*

The
Heinlein
Society

**Visit the Web site:
<http://www.heinleinsociety.org>**

Join today!

Sign up your friends tomorrow!

In memoriam:

Columbia and crew of STS-107

The monument where the proud Luna once stood is pictured in every schoolroom. Many trips followed, some tragic, some not, before space transportation reached it's present safe operation. The spaceways are paved with the bodies and glorious hopes of pioneers. With accomplishment of their dream some of the romance has gone out of space."

-- Farquharson, History of Transportation, III: 414

This and other excerpts from a fictional history book were a part of "Destination Moon," Heinlein's short story based on the movie of the same name.

The seven-member crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia could have been the heroes of any Heinlein story. They were brave, smart and fearless.

When Columbia broke up on reentry on February 1, 2003, critics of space travel used this tragedy to argue against manned space flight. Unnamed rockets can do the job, they say.

But the crew of STS-107 knew that the benefits of space travel outweighs the risks.

Several on-line memorials to the crew of Columbia borrowed these lines from "The Green Hills of Earth."

We pray for one last landing
On the globe that gave us birth;
Let us rest our eyes on the friendly skies
And the cool, green hills of Earth.

-- Robert A. Heinlein

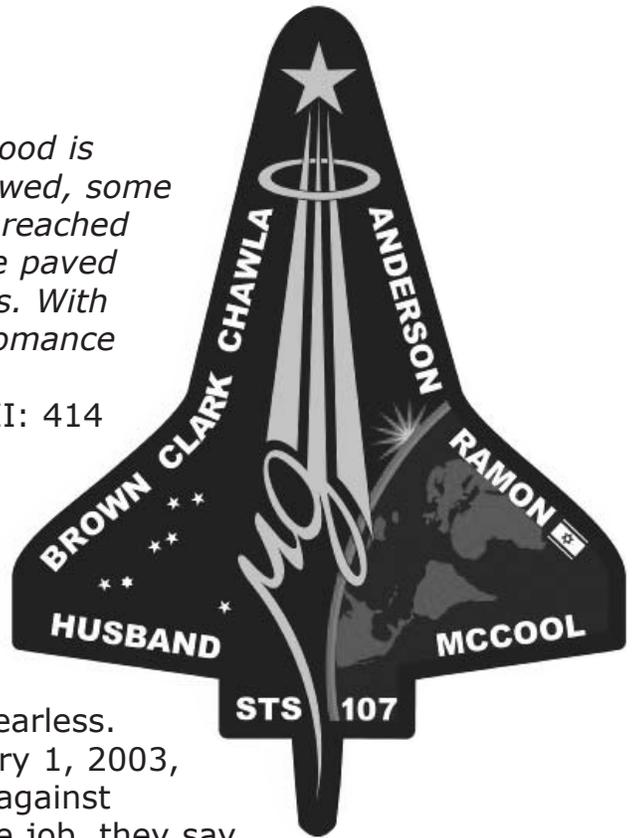


Photo and artwork courtesy of NASA

Top and middle: LosCon Heinlein Society panel discussion participants included, from left to right, Daffyd ab Hugh, Robert "Doc" James, Bill Patterson, David Jennings, Brad Linaweaver.

Bottom left: Bill Patterson, chair of The Heinlein Society and editor of *The Heinlein Journal*.

Bottom right: Bill Patterson and David Silver man The Heinlein Society table at the convention.

-- Photos by Peter Scott





I WILL FEAR NO EVIL...

I originally planned to begin using original artwork on the cover of The Heinlein Society Newsletter. Michael Woodhead submitted this line drawing of Johann/Eunice and I planned to use it. Because of events, the photo of Robert and Ginny skating was used instead.

-- Bill Dennis

As a memorial to Ginny Heinlein, sign up a new member

Please tell us how to contact you. Most information is optional, of course, but it will help us serve your interests better. The few fields we must have in order to enter you in our membership rolls are marked with *.

First name: * _____

Middle initial: _____

Last name: * _____

Title: _____ Organization: _____

Street address: * _____

Address (cont.): _____

City: * _____ State/Province: * _____

Zip/Post code * _____ Country: * _____

Work Phone _____ Home Phone: _____

E-mail * _____ Website: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: Male ___ Female ___

For which membership are you applying?

- \$35.00 Regular
 \$15.00 Supporting
(non-voting student or senior citizen)

Please check any or all of the following area which interest you:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic | <input type="checkbox"/> Literary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blood Drives | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund-Raising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-English Out-Reach | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centennial | |

Mail to:

The Heinlein Society
c/o Secretary-Treasurer
PO Box 1254
Venice, California 90294 USA

Centennial committee

RAH's 100th birthday approaches

The Heinlein Centennial Project is looking for a few good people ... make that a *lot* of good people. We're accumulating fantastic ideas (Heinlein on a US stamp — terrific suggestion, thanks!), and we need people to carry them out (if you play golf with the Postmaster General, now's the time to speak up).

We've acquired the domains heinlein100.com, heinlein100.net, and heinlein100.org, all of which

will point to our web server. We'll shortly be holding regular committee meetings on line and populating the content of that web server, which will serve as the rallying point for all our efforts.

We need organizers — people who can take on a task, recruit a hierarchy of helpers and delegate work to them, then feed the results back up to the committee. We need to build "spheres of

influence." Please let us know any special responsibilities you have that might be useful, as well as any important or influential people whose ear you have.

For now, you can reach me at Centennial@psdt.com. Thank you. Heinlein 2007 - Pay it forward for the next hundred years.

*Peter Scott
Centennial committee chair*

Message

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with the general public — and they will become the leading edge of our efforts to find the money to carry all the other projects forward, as well.

Your annual dues are calculated to pay the operating expenses of the Society and perhaps provide small amounts of seed capital for small, pilot projects. All the money needed to carry the several projects we have laid out forward must be raised from charitable donations. Large grants from public sources will help some — and we will look at those sources, too. But "pay it forward" is a very individual thing, a matter of each person, not limited to Heinlein's many readers. The collection of blood donations is, of necessity, a very individual matter — and anyone who comes to donate blood is already demonstrating our kind — Heinlein's kind — of social responsibility. It only makes sense that these are the people we should start with.

This gives each of us some action points:

* If you have not paid your dues, please do so — early and

often! The annual dues provide the lifeblood that makes everything else possible, and our collections have historically been less than 50 percent — not compatible with a group of people committed to paying it forward!

* Start making a list and gathering information: Who in your city handles the blood collection? What blood bank system are your local people associated with? When do they hold their major seasonal blood drives? Find out what charitable and social organizations are already helping out with blood drives — and which are not. What colleges and universities are in your area? Collecting this information is something you need to be doing, because you are the Heinlein Society where you are. Find out what your local resources are and e-mail the information to Mike Sheffield at blood@heinleinsociety.org

* Start another list, and put on it every person you know, however casually. Who do you know that should be donating blood? Who do you know who can't donate — for whatever reason — but could help out with a blood drive (some of the best recruiters

Heinlein ever found couldn't give blood themselves — but they could round up others and see that they made it to the collection point, and they could help people fill out the forms, and they could help in other ways— you get the picture). Now, who do you know who has money? Maybe you know someone who give for a special purpose. Maybe you don't know anyone directly who has lots of money — but maybe you know somebody who knows somebody. Charitable donations are tax deductible, and come in all sizes. And every bit helps.

* Do it now. Consider it a New Year's resolution, if that helps. Only you can make the difference that so desperately needs to be made.

Paying It Forward starts and ends with what you do now. This is the best way we have found to mobilize as a group effort resources we might not be able to mobilize individually.

That's why the Heinlein Society exists.

*Bill Patterson
Chair, The Heinlein Society*

Message from the chair

“In the absence of The Senior –”
Most of the work of the Heinlein Society’s Board of Directors is dull routine, but at the end of 2002, the Board made a policy decision that will (we hope) affect every member.

A few years ago, when we bent our thoughts to what we could do together that we might not be able to do individually, to “pay forward” Heinlein’s legacy, we came up with a program that worked with both literary and social aspects of Heinlein’s legacy, based on what you told us was personally important to you, individually. We would work with libraries, to keep his books on the shelves; we would sponsor a national high-school essay contest, to keep fresh the ideals of personal responsibility and public

duty he wrote about; we would perpetuate his interest in blood drives; we would sponsor a Space Studies conference in his name to keep his influence alive in the field as the engineers and scientists he brought into it begin to retire; and we would work toward new media for his works, into the digital age and, where practical, into film.

The most practical place for us to start, it seemed to us, was with blood drives at science fiction conventions, where Heinlein had been personally known during his lifetime. Dr. Barry Berman organized the first major blood drive in conjunction with the World Science Fiction Convention in Philadelphia at the end of August in 2001, and the 67 pints of blood we collected were sent to

New York City to help out after the destruction of the World Trade Center less than two weeks later — an immediate and practical demonstration of why we need to do this. Since then, Mike Sheffield has continued to direct our efforts, assisting conventions that already sponsor blood drives and organizing drives where they didn’t already exist — three in 2002, more planned for this year.

But Heinlein did not confine his efforts to science fiction conventions, and neither should we. Beginning in 2003, the Heinlein Society will carry Heinlein Memorial Blood Drives into the local communities. These blood drives will be the first and most enduring contact the Society has

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THE HEINLEIN SOCIETY
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