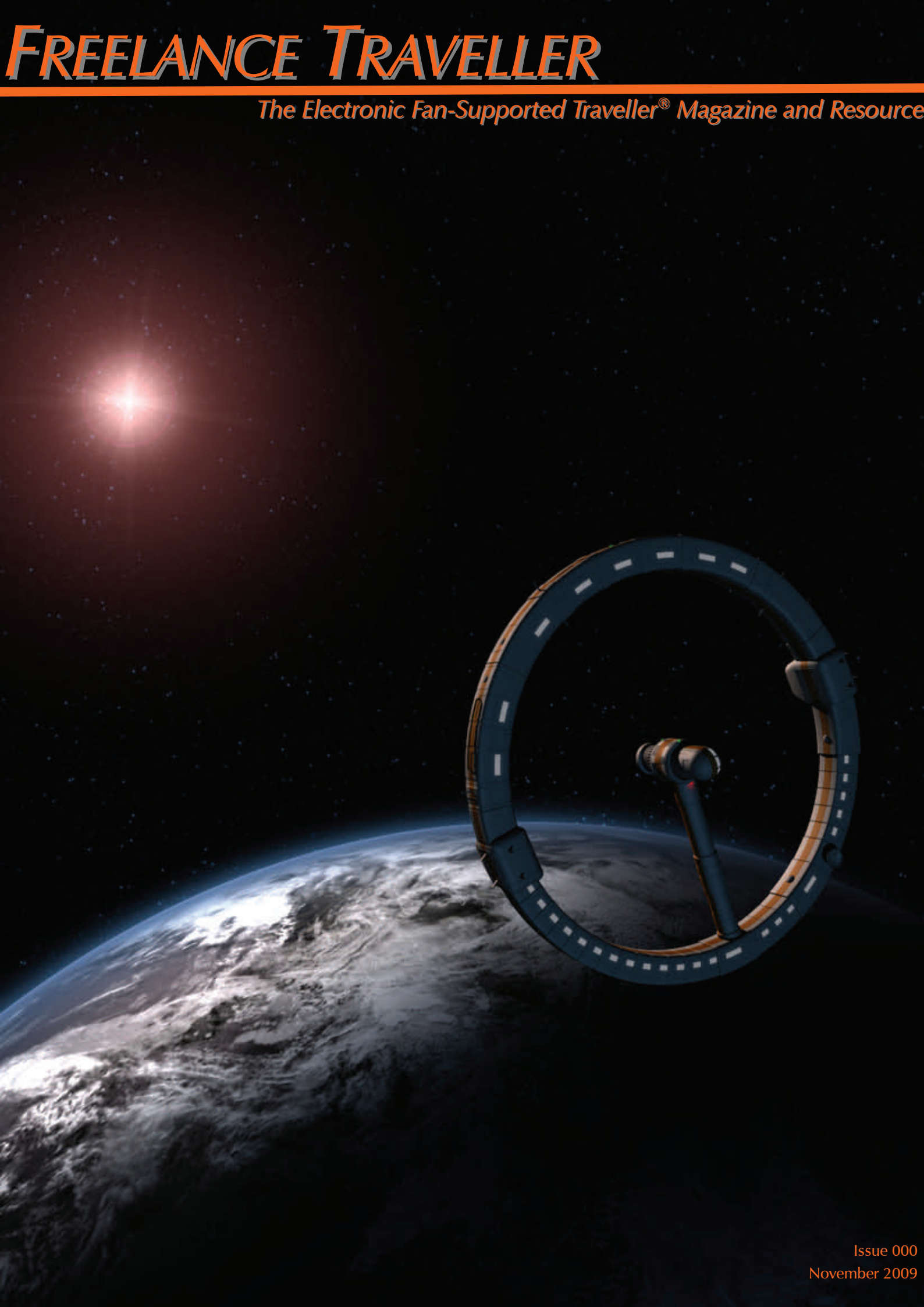


FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



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Contents

Freelance Traveller #000: Nov. 2009

Editor

Jeff Zeitlin

Contributors

Jeff Zeitlin, Shannon Appelcline, Frank Mikes, Dan Roseberry, Marc Grossman

Artwork

Cover: *Andrew Boulton*

From the Editor: *Jeff Zeitlin*, from the *Freelance Traveller* web site

Fifth Imperium: *Shannon Appelcline*, from the *Fifth Imperium* Column at *rpg.net*

Critics' Corner: *Mongoose Publishing*, from their web site

From the Editor

Jeff Zeitlin 1

Critics' Corner

Mongoose Traveller: Scoundrel reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin..... 2

Fifth Imperium

#1: Setting a Campaign: Eras of the Imperium by Shannon Appelcline 3

Active Measures

Patronage by Frank Mikes 5

Up Close and Personal

Judith Shreipm profiled by Dan Roseberry 6

Doing It My Way

Skill Advancement by Marc Grossman 8

Freelance Traveller is published monthly in PDF form by the editor. The current issue is available from the Freelance Traveller web site, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com>.

From the Editor



Welcome to the new Freelance Traveller magazine! Beginning with this issue – which we *used* to call an update – we’re going to a new format, with new sections and (hopefully) enhanced content. All of our previously published material will remain available, and may even be re-published if appropriate, so there’s no need to worry about favorite articles disappearing.

But what *is* the new format?

If you’re reading this, you’ve already seen the biggest change: we’re now a downloadable PDF magazine. All of the material will be in one convenient bundle, rather than scattered about our site. The site’s not going away; its role will ultimately be a grouped-by-subject archive for the magazine. But there are other changes as well...

We’re going to have some regular contributors, with regular columns. The columnist will decide what topic to write on, but the column will always appear under the same heading, and generally in the same place in the magazine each issue.

We’re hoping to have more graphics to go with the articles, whether they’re modified photographs, scans of hand-to-paper art, or generated-from-scratch renderings.

We’re hoping to have *theme issues*, where all of the articles will relate to the declared theme of the issue, whether that theme is a specific world in the setting, a specific kind of campaign, a specific rule or rulebook, a specific alternate setting (e.g., Babylon 5, Judge Dredd, Strontium Dog, or whatever a licensee comes up with), or whatever.

As always, we can use your help – tell us what you’d *like* to see in Freelance Traveller, tell us what you think about what you *do* see in Freelance Traveller, and write stuff for us to put *in* Freelance Traveller. If you do artwork, offer to be an artist (and tell us what sort of art you’d specialize in) and we’ll be happy to send you copies of specific relevant articles for you to do the artwork for, as we need it. Like to write? Don’t think you necessarily have enough to say to make a full article? You’re probably wrong, but that’s OK; even short articles have a place – you can become a regular columnist for us, writing what you want on a regular basis.

We also hope to expand on the types of articles that we carry – in addition to the article types that you’re familiar with from our past fifteen years (yeah, it surprised us that we’d been around and active that long, too!), we’d love to see other types of articles – notes from referees on preparing campaigns, favorite recipes for home-made snacks from folks who host game sessions regularly, notes on managing play-by-mail/email/forum post campaigns – it’s all fair game. Or metagame. Or whatever you want to call it. If it’d be of interest to the Traveller player or referee, it’s of interest to Freelance Traveller.

That’s what we’d like to see. But ultimately, what’s in Freelance Traveller is going to be up to you, just like what has been on the site has been up to you, and for the same reason. We don’t exist without fan support. You’ve supported us for fifteen years, and we thank you for that. Now, we’re asking you to support us a little differently. Please come through for us now, as you have up to now.

Mongoose Traveller—Scoundrel

Reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Traveller Scoundrel. Gareth Hanrahan

Mongoose Publishing: <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>

136pp, softcover

UK£15.00/US\$24.95

Mongoose Publishing's series of books for their Traveller line is extended to the sixth career supplement with this book, covering some of the less-savory possibilities for characters' prior careers.

On the Shelf

As usual for expanded career books, the green Traveller logo is prominently displayed in the center of the black cover. The tag line for this book is "Honesty's a Fool".

Initial Impressions

Scoundrel breaks from past career supplements, in what this reviewer feels is a positive way: the body text for the book, instead of being in FF Scala Sans, as has been the standard in the past, is in Helvetica, and is somewhat easier to read. Organization and artwork are consistent with past career books; it appears that a majority of the artwork is of the photo-realistic type - but is not excessively dark. Scoundrel concentrates on characters on the fringes of society, not all of whom will be criminals - beltors and scavengers are included. Beyond the character generation section, there are section on criminal organizations, piracy, intrusion, smuggling, fencing and illegal goods, equipment., tramps and thieves, belt mining, odd jobs, scavenging, gambling and con games, and lost worlds. It should be noted that there was a significant editing/proofing failure; the page heads at the top of eight pages of the Piracy section are instead headed "Intrusion". Mongoose Publishing has so far maintained a policy of making good on issues of this nature if the customer so desires, providing an exchange policy when a corrected edition is released. This reviewer hopes

(and believes) that the policy will continue.

On Closer Inspection

The Career section offers twenty-one career paths covering seven general career areas. These include perfectly legal, if poorly-thought-of, pursuits such as Barbarian, Wanderer (gypsy/hobo/hitchhiker, as well as the shadier bandit or tramp), or Scavenger (salvage as well as tomb robber), in addition to a cross section of more unsavory types, ranging from the Intruder (burglary and computer hacking) through Organized Crime and Smuggling to Piracy. New skills and benefits are also included. As Mercenary stood as an expansion of the Army and Marine careers, and High Guard of Navy, this book stands as an expansion of both the Rogue and Drifter careers of the core rulebook.

The sections on Piracy, Smuggling, and Intrusion should need no explanation; they provide good detailed information and rules for using those careers in play. As characters from

them are likely to come into possession of goods not immediately useful to themselves, but of value to others, they may find it worthwhile to seek out a Fence; the section on Fencing and Illegal Goods provides rules for the Referee to manage this activity (and starts out by acknowledging that some players may not want to bother with the details, so just declare that they got a certain percentage of the value of the goods).

The section on Scavenging is little more than an overview, but more than what is provided really isn't needed. The section on Criminal Organizations gives only the basics of defining the structure of one; the majority of the section is profiles of five different (and presumably "representative") criminal organizations.

The "Tramps and Thieves" section is perhaps misleadingly named; this section consists of ship profiles and plans, focussing on ships that would be used by scavengers, pirates, or beltors,

(Continued on page 3)

TRAVELLER

Book 6: Scoundrel

Honesty's a Fool



This column is intended to be a referee's guide to Mongoose's Traveller, the fifth incarnation of the Traveller game system. Often it'll talk about the many printed resources out there and available to the game-master, supplementing my own reviews on those topics, but sometimes it'll offer more specific advice for GMing the game.

Critics' Corner

(Continued from page 2)

or that a drifter/Wanderer might take passage on. There are also designs for two different types of Customs ship, and one "Q-ship" based on the Type R (Subsidized Merchant) design. Some of the ships have associated small craft; it should be noted that these craft are priced in accordance with the rules for craft construction in High Guard, rather than those in the core rules.

Most campaigns will not address what the characters do between adventures, when they are at loose ends (and perhaps with empty pockets); the section on Odd Jobs provides descriptions of 36 appropriate activities, numbered to allow selection by rolling d66, in the form of "Adventure Seeds", similar to those in Freelance Traveller's "Getting Off The Ground" section.

The section on Belt Mining is a summary description and rule set for the Belter (Asteroid Miner) career, which is really outside the scope of this book, but would overlap with scavenging and possibly smuggling. Adventure 1: Beltstrike is a better source for information on the Belter (Asteroid Miner) career, as it is fully detailed there.

The equipment section lists equipment ranging from toolkits and electronics to armor and clothing to robots and drones to ship components, any of which might be useful to a character pursuing one of the careers in this book, and some of which might well be useful to characters acting strictly on the up-and-up. Equipment that would reasonably be expected to cause offi-

cial suspicion of the character's intentions is indicated.

Finally, the section on Gambling and Con Games provides some useful "color", describing a number of such activities. These may provide inspiration for the referee to part the player-characters from some of their hard-earned (for various values of 'earned') credits, or similar inspiration for the player-characters to earn (again, for various values of 'earn') those same credits.

Barbarians have to come from somewhere; the section on Lost Worlds answers that question. This short section provides descriptions of a few types of worlds that Barbarians may come from, and also provides rules for (a) adventuring on lost worlds, and (b) bringing a barbarian character into the more familiar Traveller milieu. This section also discusses the idea of Technological Familiarity

Summary

Scoundrel maintains the standards previously set by Mongoose Publishing, and is worth its price. The expanded and detailed careers, along with the relevant supporting information, provides a much richer set of options for play even if the player-characters are not themselves 'scoundrels', but may need to interact with some.

Setting a Campaign: Eras of the Imperium

This column is intended to be a referee's guide to Mongoose's Traveller, the fifth incarnation of the Traveller game system. Often it'll talk about the many printed resources out there and available to the gamemaster, supplementing my own reviews on those topics, but sometimes it'll offer more specific advice for GMing the game.

When you're ready to start GMing a game of Traveller, the first question you have to ask is where and when will you be setting your campaign. The most obvious answers are "in the year 1105" and "in the Spinward Marches of the Third Imperium" as those choices are the basis of Mongoose's version of the game.

However, Traveller's Third Imperium is a very rich background that has been expanded upon for over 30 years, and as a result you have many other possibilities. In this article, I'm going to look at the major time periods for Traveller's Third Imperium, spotlighting the books you'd want to pick up for each. I'll follow it up in the next article by looking at the major places that you can run Traveller universe games in.

Traveller Eras

Though the late Third Imperium period is by far the best documented period of Traveller history, you can play in games over a 4000-year span, going all the way back to the dying days of the First Imperium.

Here's your options, if you want to stay with eras that have received at least some development from various publishers. Besides the listing of top books for each era, you can also see a listing of everything tagged for the era by clicking on the tag icon; this is based on the gaming index, and much of the categorization is still in progress.

Interstellar Wars (-2404 to -2215): This is the most Earth-centric

(Continued on page 4)

Fifth Imperium

(Continued from page 3)

era for Traveller, as it covers the emergence of Terrans into the galaxy in the early 2100s AD, their meeting with the corrupt and decadent First Imperium, and the wars that follow.

This era is the basis for the GURPS Traveller: Interstellar Wars RPG, which is also the prime source on the era. It's the default Traveller setting for GURPS Fourth Edition.

Milieu 0 (0+): As the name suggests, Milieu 0 was the time of the foundation of the Third Imperium, as it crawled slowly out of the Long Night to once again spread civilization among the stars.

This era is the basis for Marc Miller's Traveller ("T4"), with the most specific sources for the era being the books First Survey (which is sadly all but worthless) and Milieu 0 (which is better).

Gateway Era / Milieu 1000 (993-1000): About a hundred years before the standard Traveller campaign, this era is one of conflict to the rimward side of the Imperium, as the Solomani Rim War has just kicked off.

It's called the "Gateway Era" because it's closely tied with a location, the Gateway Domain, which is not too far from the Solomani Rim. It's the basis of the T20 set of rules with Gateway to Destiny being the main sourcebook.

Classic Golden Age (1100-1116): This is the default setting for Traveller, where things are relatively calm across the Imperium, though the Fifth Frontier War intervenes in the Spinward Marches from 1107-1110.

There is no specific book highlighting this period, though all of GDW's Classic Traveller books and all of Mongoose's "Third Imperium" Traveller books are set in it. If I were going to suggest a pair of books for background, they'd be Library Data: A-M and Library Data: N-Z, from GDW. Mongoose's The Spinward Marches also has a long section providing an

overview of the Imperium in the period.

Alternate/Extended Golden Age (1117+): In the Original Traveller Universe, bad things start happening at the end of 1116, as we'll see. Steve Jackson Games didn't want to focus on this increasingly chaotic setting, and so when they came out with the GURPS third edition version of GURPS Traveller they envisioned an alternate Golden Age extending from 1117 onward that was bad-stuff-free.

Of all the eras, I find this one the least interesting for a new Mongoose Traveller player because it's so similar to the Classic Golden Age that you might as well use the era that perfectly links with Mongoose Traveller instead of this one. Of course, the advantage of the Alternate Golden Age is that SJG put out a number of hefty books to support it. (However, those are still 80% usable in a Classic Golden Age game.)

There are numerous books highlighting this era, including pretty much every GURPS Traveller book, except the GURPS Traveller: Interstellar Wars release.

The Rebellion (1116-1124): In 1116, the Emperor of the Imperium is apparently assassinated and everything quickly falls apart as conflicts develop between several warring factions. The fighting is largely ended by the end of 1124, though the Imperium remains shattered thereafter.

This is a pretty exciting time period if you can figure out how to reflect the big-scale movements of emperors and pretenders inside the small-scale of a campaign. GDW never did.

The Rebellion was the basis of the second edition of Traveller, MegaTraveller, with the Imperium Encyclopedia and the Rebellion Sourcebook being top references for the period.

Hard Times (1125-1128): The Rebellion ground to a halt because the warring forces had largely expended their resources not because the Imperium had been restored. What imme-

diately followed in the shattered Imperium was "Hard Times", a darker and grittier version of Traveller.

The Hard Times were the default setting for the very end of the Mega-Traveller period of the game. The nominal Hard Times book is the main reference.

The New Era (1200+): In 1130, a super technology Virus was released which ended up destroying most of the warring states. The New Era is the story of a galaxy 70 years later just crawling back from the brink. The Virus still runs rampant and the universe is a very, very dangerous place.

This setting was a very controversial one because GDW utterly annihilated the Imperium that they'd been building for 15 years. They hadn't just torn it down, but they also refused to refer to any of their continuity until just before the company went under.

This era was the official setting of the third Traveller game, Traveller: The New Era. That rulebook was probably the best background on the setting overall. Other books built up a couple of sectors as campaign bases.

TNE 1248 (1248+): The most recent setting is TNE 1248, which moved the timeline forward another 50 years to a point where interstellar society actually existed again, but only in small pockets, still surrounded by "Wilds."

Martin J. Dougherty, the author of 1248, states that he was trying to produce a setting that allowed the advantages of many different eras, including the exploration of the various expansion eras, the politics of the Rebellion era, and the central stable states of the Golden Age. He did a pretty good job of it.

This setting was released in system-free books by Comstar Games and Avenger Enterprises. The core book is 1248 Sourcebook 1: Out of the Darkness.

(Continued on page 5)

Patronage

By Frank Mikes

Patron Profile

Branit Shugulii is a well known reporter for the TAS, famous throughout the sector for his interviews and in-depth exposés of issues of concern.

Planetary governments have been forced to change because of some of his articles and he is now seeking passage on the PCs vessel.

Shugulii is of normal height with very dark skin. His hair is a close cropped afro and in regard to facial hair, he has a neatly trimmed beard, moustache combination. No grey has touched his hair yet but he must be nearly 45 and while there are a few crows-feet and laugh lines around his face he still appears handsome. While developing a bit of a paunch, Branit's clothes are tailored to hide this. He favours practical casual/business suits which are both fashionable and expen-

sive. He wears no jewelry.

Mission Requirements

PCs must have their own ship available with a high passage cabin to transport Branit Shugulii to a nearby system, usually one jump away. Shugulii will pay the PCs up front and provide any specific information before jump.

Possible directions for this adventure:

1. Shugulii will secretly write a review of how well/poorly he was treated during the trip as part of a series of reviews on transport in the sector. A few things should be asked of the players concerning how he is treated, such as food, cabin cleaning, recreation, etc. The GM then determines what Shugulii writes and this will reflect a modifier to rolls for gaining prospective passengers for the next year.

2. As 1, except Shugulii informs the PCs about the review and then demands luxurious treatment and/or his

some/all of his money back in return for a favourable review. Again, it is up to the GM to work out what the result of this review will be to passenger numbers.

3. Shugulii is on the run from almost rabid fans who demand autographs, photos, holos, interviews, etc and wants to sneak away from the system. Several of these fans hear about it and desperately seek passage on the player's ship, knowledge of Shugulii's destination and souvenirs.

4. Shugulii is on the run from agents of one of the governments that fell due to articles he wrote and they are seeking revenge. They will also try to seek passage and torture/kill him during the journey. As an alternative, Shugulii himself may not be aware that he has been targeted.

5. As 4 except that Shugulii is an impostor that looks very much like Shugulii and is hoping to draw out the attackers. This could be the work of the Ministry of Justice or a private group that Shugulii has hired.

6. Shugulii is an impostor who is a conman who has run up a great deal of credit on the world he is currently on and now wishes to escape this debt, he is likely to try 2 as a scam on the PCs now that he is on their ship.

Fifth Imperium

(Continued from page 4)

Conclusion

Most refs are probably going to set their Traveller games in exactly the era you'd expect: the Classic Golden Age. However, as you can see, there are lots of other options that offer the possibilities of lots of different sorts of Traveller games. If you'd prefer the grittiness of Hard Times, the militarism of the Interstellar Wars, or the rebuilding of Milieu 0, I invite you to start hunting down the relevant books.

A lot of these campaign eras have implicit campaign sectors associated with them. In the Interstellar Wars, you'll be running near Terra. In the Milieu 0 era, you'll be exploring around Sylea. The Gateway Era is of course set in the Gateway domain. However for the campaign settings

nearer to the Golden Age in the timeline, there are a variety of options you could choose for where to put your game, and that's what I'll be talking about in the next article in this series.

Shannon Appelcline's series of Fifth Imperium columns can be found at <http://www.rpg.net/columns/list-column.php?colname=fifthimperium> as well as in the Freelance Traveller archives.

Judith Shreipm

Profiled by Dan Roseberry

Baroness Lady Judith Shreipm, Knight of Deneb, Knight of the Imperium, Capt. IN(ret)

Imperial Navy Technical

Stats- 9BCFFB-B Crimp 300,000
Age 41(31) Terms 5

Member, Travellers' Aid Society

Medals: PH x 2, MCFU x 1, SEH x 1

Possessions: Hand comp, Radio Communicator (FrOb), Laser pistol w/2 pwr packs, Softsuit w/PLSSA, Pencil and notepad,

Skills: Mathematics-5, Ship Tactics-3, Fleet Tactics-3, Navigation-3, Leader-2, Computer-2, Tactics-1, Pilot-1, Gambling-1, Vacc Suit-1, Admin-1, Commo-1, Small Water Craft-0, Combat Rifleman-0, Equestrian-0, Laser pistol-0

220cm, 90.6kg, Racial Solomani Negroid. Very dark skinned with plain features, wiry, heavily scarred on her torso, short black hair with a streak of white covering an old scar. Boisterous and aggressive. She is extremely loyal to her friends and the Imperium. She takes her Knighthood seriously and will often interject herself into matters of import. She is not at all shy about telling her social betters what she perceives their duties to be.

Judith likes to tell people she was born on a Generation ship. Technically she is telling the truth; Kaityl city in the Glisten belt has been on the move since it was established. As a Glistenite she has an inborn hatred of psionics and would not believe or admit to her own talents, a mind shield which appears as normal thoughts for the situation if probed with ESP and the ability to "spot" other psi's to a range of 100m. This talent caused the Kaityl city branch of Glistens Psionics Institute much trouble. From the time her talents manifested in her teens until she joined the navy she exposed dozens of

psionically endowed individuals. In addition to these talents Judith can add the brilliant mathematical mind which won her admission to the Naval Academy.

At the Academy Judith concentrated on academic pursuits. She received a secret Intelligence commendation in her senior year when she exposed a Zho sleeper that attempted to infiltrate as a colonial student to the academy.

Further training after graduation prepared her for the command of the close escort *Swiftgait* patrolling the coreward edge of the Aramis subsector. In 1102 she encountered two Zhodani scouts refueling in the interdicted system of Corfu, leading to a (presumed) posthumous medal and knighthood in the order of Deneb.

Judith and two shipmates were actually rescued by a third Zhodani scout. They were later exchanged to a group of Vargr to be ransomed back to the Imperial Navy. Her hatred of the Zhodani and psionics in general grew even greater in this period.

Following this, she was given command of a training facility at

Jewell, where she advanced to Lt. Commander. She was then offered command of the Type 1014 frigate *Deadly Missive*. As the junior captain in a flotilla of three ships, Judith participated in strikes against Vargr Corsairs in Gvurrdon Sector near the Zhodani border in 1107. As her flotilla returned to Imperial borders it was gathered up by a Task Group commerce raiding through Jewell and Chronor subsectors in the early days of the Fifth Frontier War. After a string of minor successes the Task Group was preparing to attack the Zhodani world of Asta when it was attacked itself, leading to her SEH.

Following the Armistice of 1110 Judith was repatriated and again received a training command. Ironically she was then ordered to command the MCFU-class frigate *Judith Shreipm* FF-11033, mistakenly named posthumously for her after the battle at Corfu. After a year of recriminations between BuPers and BuShips, and public outcry after plans to rename the vessel were announced, she was transferred to the City-class frigate *City of Assinobia*.

The *Judith Shreipm* retained the

For Meritorious Conduct under Fire. On 021-1102 Lt. Judith Shreipm, Commanding the INS Swiftgait CE-20784, encountered two Zhodani scouts refueling at Corfu/Aramis/SM. Immediately attacking the high guard, she shattered its tanks with concentrated fire from every battery, taking damage to her own power plant in the short exchange. Leaving the hulk in her wake she bore down on the second vessel, scoring on it. Taking heavy damage from the enemy's return fire, she opened the range while continuing to pour missile and laser fire into it.

Eventually the two ships were too damaged to fight or maneuver and coasted out of the gravity well. When it was discovered that some of the emergency low berths in the ship's boat had been damaged, the mortally wounded Shreipm refused evacuation to leave space for a wounded shipmate who was more likely to survive. She was last seen comforting another dying mate. Her actions were in accordance with the highest traditions of the Naval Service.

Up Close and Personal

name after quiet behind the scenes lobbying of the admiralty by the ship's former commanders and her crew, who consider the ship's name lucky. The ship has a less-than-stellar reputation with the admiralty due to the hard-partying nature of its crew, yet it privately has many supporters of high rank. The *Judith Shreipm* has received eight unit citations, with her crew being awarded 3 SEH's, 22 MCG's and 57 MCF's. Two SEH-class cruisers were given the names of the two posthumous awardees. Since finding out their patron was alive the ship's color scheme has been kept battle black at all times except in yard tests. Whenever she encounters her namesake a wild party is thrown by the ships crew in her honor.

Judith continued to patrol Lunion until she was awarded command of the destroyer *Marquis of Bendor* attached

to the 100th fleet. When she retired from Naval service she began traveling on the Glisten to Regina circuit giving lectures at Naval symposiums. She received a Barony on the Honors List the year after she retired. She travels simply as J. Shreipm.

As a retired Naval Officer Judith has bridge privileges on Imperial-flagged merchants. Although normally the Navy is disliked by merchant crews, Judith has won the hearts of many, with her easy going manner and willingness to lend a hand. Not to mention the fact that she has saved several merchants with her skills. It also caused Tukera lines to sponsor her in the TAS after a still-classified encounter with pirates while traveling from Rhylonor to Glisten on a fast liner. She has had access to anagathics since she was 31.

For Extreme Heroism. On 366-1107 LtCmdr Judith Shreipm, Commanding the INS Deadly Missive FF-19908, attached to TF-100-2, entered battle with a numerically superior enemy force at Atsa/Chronor/SM. Taking damage early in the battle, which knocked out the ship's power and fire control, the Deadly Missive drifted as the battle raged about her. Shreipm and her crew worked feverishly to restore power, occasionally suffering additional damage. By the time power was restored, Deadly Missive's offensive batteries had been destroyed and she was in the thick of the Zhodani fleet. Realizing that her ship was lost, she ordered the crew to abandon. Making sure her crew were as safe as possible, she drove Deadly Missive at best acceleration at a nearby enemy destroyer. Hurling clear at the last moment she suffered painful wounds and radiation burns when the Zhodani destroyer was disintegrated by the impact. Adrift in the middle of the enemy fleet she refused to quit fighting and contacted fleetnet over her suit communicator offering advice and information and taunting the enemy in their native tongue, until a Zhodani frigate picked her up. She was heard fighting her captors until she was taken aboard the ship which jumped prior to the Imperial victory. Her fearlessness in the face of certain destruction inspired all who heard her. Her valor and professionalism materially aided in the victory at Asta. Her actions were in accordance with the highest traditions of the Naval Service and bring Glory upon herself and the Naval Service.

Feedback

We'd like to hear what you think of the new Freelance Traveller!

We want to know what you think of the basic idea of Freelance Traveller as a magazine, not just a website; what you think of the articles we publish, and how we can make our magazine better and how we can make our website better.

We want to know what kind of articles you want to see, and what you *don't* want to see.

We want to know what you think of our look, and how we can make it better.

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:

You can send e-mail to feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

You can use our feedback form on our website, at

<http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ffbf.html>.

If you're a member of our forums, you can use the **Open Forum** section, at <http://forums.freelancetraveller.com/freetrav.chatter> (or, if you use a newsreader like Mozilla Thunderbird, you can post to the newsgroup freetrav.chatter).

If you're a member of the SFRPG Forums, we monitor them, so you can post comments in the **General Discussion** section, at <http://www.sfrpg.org.uk/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=45>.

Skill Advancement

by Marc Grossman

In Classic Traveller, the assumption was that characters would not change substantially during play, thus character advancement was a very slow process, and rather sketchy. Here's some rules to make character advancement a little nicer.

This article describes the use of points, called TICs (To Improve Character), to measure the incremental improvement in a skill until the improvement is sufficient to consider the skill level to be increased (e.g., from Computer-1 to Computer-2). There is a chart at the end of the article providing specific TIC values for skill or characteristic improvements. "Points" and "TICs" are used interchangeably.

There are three ways to improve one's skills during play: by using the skill (learning by doing), by practicing the skill (learning through practice), and by studying the skill (learning through study).

Learning by Doing

If you use a skill during a session to particularly good effect, then you should remember this; at the end of the situation. You would receive a TIC for that skill. Typically only one skill will get the TIC per situation, (player's choice if multiple skills were used). If you don't have a skill, you can be tutored by someone into an immediate

zero level for that skill. This requires a determination task on your part, and a tutor to show you "how to use that vacuum suit". Once the immediate situation passes, you lose the zero level; however, if you used the skill successfully, then you can gain an experience TIC for the skill. This does not apply to Jack-of-all-Trades skill.

Learning Through Practice

You can elect to practice a skill to improve it. You must back this up during role playing, by devoting time each game week to practice; this practice can be in any size increments from one hour up, and must total at least eight hours per week. At the end of a game month, you can have one TIC to assign to a skill that you're practicing, if you pass a Determination task

Learning Through Study

You can elect to study a skill to improve it. As with practice, you must back this up during role playing, and your allocations must again be in one-hour or greater increments to a minimum of eight hours per week. If you have an instructor to guide you, then you can earn one TIC per week. If you don't, then you can earn one TIC per game month for a studied skill, if you pass a Determination task. You may not apply practice or study to the Jack Of All Trades skill.

Intensive Practice or Study

If a character puts in at least sixteen hours per week for practice or

study, and passes a Difficult task of Endurance, an additional TIC may be earned in any month. Each month that an additional TIC is attempted adds an unfavorable DM of 1 to a similar Endurance roll for the next month, if intensive practice or study is undertaken during that next month. Failing the Endurance roll in any month forces the character to take the following week off (and thus not get a TIC for that month); extreme failure forces the character to give up attempting to better that skill entirely.

The Improvement Check

At any time you have TICs in a skill, but no more than once per session, you can elect to make an improvement check. An improvement check is of Formidable difficulty, and you can use your DM for one appropriate characteristic on the roll (which is most appropriate depends on the skill you're trying to improve); you also get to add the TICs you've accumulated for the skill as a positive DM to the check. If you have the number of TICs shown in the table below, gaining the skill will be essentially automatic.

If you make your check, your skill increases in level by one, and you then have zero TICs for that skill.

If you fail your check, then you lose half your TICs (round in your favor, so if you started with three you end up with two TICs) for that skill, and you get no increase.

Skill	TICs needed to achieve each level up to level...				
	1	2	3	4	5
Brawling, Cargo Handling, Carousing, Combat Engineering, Communications, Field Artillery Gunnery, Forward Observer, Ship's Weapons Gunnery, Hunting, Reconnaissance, Ship's Maintenance, Steward, Wilderness Survival	10				
Administration, Battle Dress, Blade Combat, Demolition, Disguise, Electronics, Engineering, Escape/Evasion, Gravitics, Gun Combat, Heavy Weapons, Leader, Mechanical, Medical, Navigation, Pilot, Ship's Boat, Tactics, Vacc Suit, Vehicle, Zero-G Combat	10			15	
Broker, Bribery, Computer, Forgery, Gambling, Instructor, Legal, Streetwise	10	15			
Assassination, Trader, Unarmed Combat, Jack-of-all-trades ¹	15	20			

¹ Jack-of-all-Trades skill may not be practiced or studied

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