

# Lester del Rey

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## Lester del Rey



Judy-Lynn and Lester Del Rey at Minicon 8 in 1974

**Pseudonym:** John Alvarez, Marion Henry, Philip James, Philip St. John, Charles Satterfield, Erik van Lhin

**Born:** June 2, 1915  
Saratoga, Minnesota

**Died:** May 10, 1993  
New York City

**Occupation:** Novelist, Short Story writer

**Nationality:** United States

**Genres:** Fantasy, Science Fiction

**Debut works:** "The Faithful" (short story), *Marooned on Mars* (novel)

**Lester del Rey (Ramon Felipe Alvarez-del Rey)** (June 2, 1915 - May 10, 1993) was an American science fiction author and editor. According to Lawrence Watt-Evans, his birth name may have been Leonard Knapp or Lester Stamm<sup>[1][2]</sup>.

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## Career

Del Rey first started publishing stories in pulp magazines in the late 1930s, at the dawn of the Golden Age of Science Fiction. He was closely associated with the leading science fiction magazine of the era, *Astounding Science Fiction*, and its editor, John W. Campbell, Jr. In the 1950s,

del Rey was one of the three leading science fiction writers writing for adolescents along with Robert A. Heinlein and Andre Norton. During this time some of his fiction was published under the name Erik van Lhin.

During a period in which del Rey wasn't selling, he took a job as a short order cook at White Tower Restaurant in New York. After marrying his first wife, Helen Schlaz, in 1945, he quit that job to write full time. After meeting Scott Meredith at the 1947 Worldcon, he began working as a reader at Scott Meredith's literary agency, where he also served as office manager.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup>

He later made his way into editing for several pulp magazines and then for book publishers. In 1952 and 1953, del Rey edited *Space SF*, *Fantasy Fiction*, *Science Fiction Adventures* (as Philip St. John), *Rocket Stories* (as Wade Kampfaert), and *Fantasy Fiction* (as Cameron Hall).<sup>[6]</sup> He was most successful editing for Ballantine Books with his fourth wife, Judy-Lynn del Rey, and founded a popular science fiction imprint with her at Ballantine, Del Rey Books, in 1977.<sup>[7]</sup>

In 1957, del Rey and Damon Knight co-edited a small amateur magazine called *Science Fiction*

*Forum*. In response to a debate about symbolism within the magazine, del Rey accepted Knight's challenge to write an analysis of James Blish's story "Common Time" that would show that the story was about a man eating an ham sandwich.<sup>[8]</sup>

As science fiction gained respectability and began to be taught in the classroom, del Rey fought against its appropriation. He stated that academics interested in the genre should "get out of my Ghetto."<sup>[9][10]</sup> del Rey stated that "to develop science fiction had to remove itself from the usual critics who viewed it from the perspective of [the] mainstream, and who judged its worth largely on its mainstream values. As part of that mainstream, it would never have had the freedom to make the choices it did-many of them quite possibly wrong, but necessary for its development."<sup>[11]</sup>

Del Rey was a member of the all-male literary banqueting club the Trap Door Spiders, which served as the basis of Isaac Asimov's fictional group of mystery solvers the Black Widowers. Del Rey himself was the model for the *Emmanuel Rubin* character.

He was awarded the 1990 Grand Master Award by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of

America for lifetime achievement in science fiction and/or fantasy.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Name

Del Rey often told people that his real name was **Ramon Felipe Alvarez-del Rey**; however, the lawyers for his estate have made it clear that his real name was Leonard Knapp.

## Selected works

### Fiction

#### Novels

- *Rocket Jockey* (1952)
- *Attack from Atlantis* (1953)
- *Step to the Stars* (1954)
- *Preferred Risk* (1955) with Frederik Pohl [as by Edson McCann ]
  - **Magazine/Anthology Appearances:**
  - Preferred Risk (Part 1 of 4) (1955) with Frederik Pohl
  - Preferred Risk (Part 2 of 4) (1955) with Frederik Pohl
  - Preferred Risk (Part 3 of 4) (1955)

- with Frederik Pohl
  - Preferred Risk (Part 4 of 4) (1955)
  - with Frederik Pohl
- *Nerves* (1956)
- *Day of the Giants* (1959)
- *Marooned on Mars* (1962)
- (*The Runaway Robot* (1965) was published with del Rey's byline, but was actually ghost-written by Paul W. Fairman based on an outline by del Rey.)
- *Siege Perilous* (1966)
- *Tunnel Through Time* (1966)
- *Rocket from Infinity* (1967)
- *Pstalemate* (1971)
- *The Sky Is Falling* (1973)
- *Badge of Infamy* (1973)
- *Weeping May Tarry* (1978) with Raymond F. Jones
- *Police Your Planet* (1981)
- *Moon of Mutiny* (1982)
- *Outpost of Jupiter* (1982)
- *The Mysterious Planet* (1982)

## Collections

- *...And Some Were Human* (1948)
- *Robots and Changelings* (1957)
- *Mortals and Monsters* (1965)
- *Gods and Golems* (1973)

- *The Early del Rey* (1975)
- *The Early Del Rey: Vol 1* (1976)
- *The Early Del Rey: Vol 2* (1976)
- *The Best of Lester del Rey* (1978)

## Nonfiction

- *Space Flight*, Golden Press, 1959
- *The Mysterious Earth* (1960)
- *The Mysterious Sky* (1964)
- *The World of Science Fiction, 1926-1976: the History of a Subculture* (1980)

## Edited

- *Best Science Ficton of the Year #1-#5* (1972-1976)

## References

1. ^ Watt-Evans, Lawrence.  
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2. ^ Prucher, Jeff (2007), *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction*, Oxford University Press, ISBN 9780195305678, at 279
3. ^ Moskowitz, Sam (1966). *Seekers of Tomorrow*. World Publishing Company,

181.

4. ^ Knight, Damon (1977). *The Futurians*. John Day, 180. ISBN 0381982882.
5. ^ Davin, Eric Leif (1999), "From Wisconsin to Mars: A Conversation with Raymond F. Gallun", *Pioneers of Wonder*: 216
6. ^ Ashley, Michael (1975). *The History of the Science Fiction Magazine, Vol. 3: 1946-1955*. CBI, 331. ISBN 0809278413.
7. ^ Davin, Eric Leif (1999). *Pioneers of Wonder*. Prometheus Books, 226. ISBN 1573927023.
8. ^ Knight, Damon (1996). *In Search of Wonder*. Advent:Publishers, 284. ISBN 0911682317.
9. ^ Letson, Russell (1994), "Contributions to the Critical Dialogue: As an Academic Sees It", *Science Fiction Fandom*: 230-232
10. ^ Ashley, Michael (2007). *Gateways to Forever: The Story of the Science Fiction Magazines from 1970-1980*. Liverpool University Press, 295. ISBN 9781846310034.
11. ^ Davin, Eric Leif (1999). *Pioneers of Wonder*. Prometheus Books, 14-15. ISBN 1573927023.
12. ^ SFWA. Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master. Retrieved on 2007-05-23.

## External links

- Works by Lester del Rey at Project Gutenberg
- Lester del Rey at the Internet Speculative Fiction Database
- Review of del Rey's *The Runaway Robot*

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