

## *Alpha Newsletter* *A Little History*

It was a dark and stormy night (really, it was) and, if I remember correctly, a Tuesday. I waited with cautious anticipation for a new British Sci-Fi TV series called **Space: 1999** to premiere that evening on the local WCVB Channel 5 network. A neighbor and I, both diehard **Star Trek** fans, were just ready to dismiss this fledgling entry into the genre world. After all, nothing could ever replace **Star Trek**, right?

Although **Space: 1999** did not replace **Star Trek**, my neighbor and I agreed that this new show was not bad at all. As the weeks went on and I watched more and more, I soon fell in love with **1999**. Again, it was something new and after 79 episodes of **Star Trek**, which I had watched and watched and watched, I could certainly appreciate a new twist on things.

I came to enjoy **1999** so much that I decided to start publishing a newsletter devoted to the show. At the time I was 14, and while I had always enjoyed writing, I didn't know quite how to go about doing this. However, I did my research, looked at other newsletters, and had soon planned out my first couple of issues. *Alpha Newsletter* was born! I advertised in **Star Trek** newsletters and other fan club-type publications, and eventually began to receive inquiries from interested parties.

Initially a relative of mine took the newsletters to work and Xeroxed copies for me to send out to people. As time went on, the newsletter became so popular that I had to have it professionally printed. Either my father or grandfather would drive me into Harvard Square in Cambridge where I went to Gnomon Copies (I think that's the correct spelling) to have the newsletter professionally printed (and now even on different colored paper each month!). I figured out how much I would need for printing, supplies and postage and charged a yearly subscription rate.

I ended up with over 500 subscribers from around the world, including Asia, Europe and Australia. During the second season of **1999** I was both proud and flattered to receive honorary membership acceptances to *Alpha Newsletter* from Nick Tate (Alan Carter), Prentis Hancock (Paul Morrow), Zienia Merton (Sandra Benes), Anton Phillips (Dr. Bob Mathias), John Hug (Bill Fraser), Peter Porteous (Petrov), Alibe Parsons (Alibe), Sarah Bullen (Operative Kate), Sam Dastor (Dr. Ed Spencer) and Clifton Jones (David Kano).

*Alpha Newsletter* ran for eight years, and during that time I made a number of friends that I'm still thrilled to have 30 years later! **1999** opened up a whole new world for me, especially when it came to my professional life. On one of my early trips to the UK I had lunch in London with John Hug, his longtime partner Dee Hart, and Sarah Bullen. The conversation eventually turned to my newsletter and John, Dee and Sarah all agreed that if I loved writing that much, then I should pursue it in some fashion. It took me a little while, but I'm happy to say that this summer (2011) I'll be celebrating 25 years as a professional entertainment journalist. Thank you **Space: 1999**. Who knows what I might be doing today if way back when I had dismissed it as just another **Star Trek** wanna be, not to mention all the long-standing friendships as well as fun and laughs that I would have missed out on as well.

**Steve Eramo**