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Subject: What I Saw at the Bar 2021

Posted by [Toni Weisskopf](#) on Fri, 09 Apr 2021 15:38:29 GMT

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I've now had time to review the recent allegations made about Baen's Bar, both specific and general.

And I can say with confidence that not a one of them is justified. What I saw was a vibrant, international community of readers who enjoyed engaging with each other for civilized discourse about everything from slush to scampi, from swords to shamans. I've gone through hundreds of posts, though admittedly not all of the hundreds of thousands of posts that were made over the decades long history of the Bar.

Were there posts that I disagreed with? Yes, some quite strongly. But that's point of free speech. Were there posts which taken out of the context of the discussion they were in could be misconstrued? Yes. I did not see illegal speech even in the most heated discussions. And I did see long-time users step in to calm discussions down—which is what happens in healthy forums.

When I first shut the Bar down to investigate the allegations, I was overwhelmed by the support of past and present users for the Bar. It is now my privilege to be able to bring Baen's Bar back again, at [baensbar.net](#). The Bar will also now be the concern of the Barflies themselves, of whom I am one. A new company, SFF Forums, will be administering the Bar.

We did take the opportunity of the closure to make some updates and changes. We archived a few forums that weren't getting a lot of traffic. We took away the ability to add attachments to posts. (Links are still allowed.) We've clarified the description of some topics, most importantly the Slush family.

Slush is now properly identified as "Slush Practice" and the description makes it more clear that this is NOT read by Baen editors, but intended as a service to writers who want to see if their work will appeal to Baen readers before official submission by allowing actual Baen readers to give them input.

"Baen's Universe" is now identified as the "Baen's Universe Grantville Annex" and the description makes it clear that these forums are clearing houses for the non-Ring of Fire stories that are published by the Grantville Gazette editors.

Baen's Bar is a community. Moving forward, please understand that the moderators will not be some sort of posting police. Instead, to use a physics metaphor from one of our moderators, they are more like the moderating elements in a nuclear reactor, slowing down the reactions when they start getting too hot and energetic. Also, they will be helping to point people to the right places for their questions and discussions, and to the resources that are available to help them.

There are traditional rules of the Bar decreed by the God Emperor Himself, Jim Baen of Sainted Memory, the most important of which after "no illegal posts," are "no hitting" and "don't be a butthead." Which is to say, denigrate policy all day long, don't get into personalities, and once you've made your point, chill out. Again, we will aim to be fair, but err on the side of non-buttheads. This is not the place to "other" your fellow science fiction and

fantasy aficionados.

Oh, and it's Baen's Bar—it's being a butthead to put up links to other publishers, or charity efforts not previously approved by the moderators, and to run down Baen's authors. It's being a butthead to perpetually whine about ad hominem attacks if someone is just disagreeing with you. And give your fellow Barflies the benefit of the doubt. If someone has had a nickname for more than a decade, they are probably just fine with it, and don't need you to "defend" them. Note that these rules are behavioral, not semantic. We are not policing your ideas, only the way in which you express them.

If you have a problem, bring it to the moderators—whose ranks have been expanded, though the loss of James Cochrane in March and Deann "Silverdrake" Allen a few months ago were tremendous blows. Be easy on the new moderators. This is not a game to see what you can get away with. If they have a problem, they will bring it to me. My decisions are final.

In the original iteration of the Bar, all were welcome. This is not a policy that can continue. We know this to be true, because anywhere it's tried it's happened: if we open a tolerant public platform it will inevitably be used by voices of intolerance. But what is the solution to that?

First, we understand there are no perfect solutions. So, accepting that any solution will be a compromise, in what direction do we compromise? Do we say, public platforms will be used by some people for bad ends, therefore we cannot have platforms?

To me, that is wrong. It means that those who do use them to good and productive ends are deplatformed, too. So when I compromise, I compromise in the direction of freedom of choice.

Thus, the Bar is now not open to the public, but a privilege granted only to those who have made a purchase from Baen.com and who choose to exercise that privilege. Previous users active in the last 12 months will be grandfathered in. We have added a tipjar, so that you do not even need to buy a book, merely contribute something to the maintenance of the Bar.

You want to discuss the Ring of Fire, Freehold: Defiance, The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, the Honorverse (but not Shrikes), elves rescuing teens in trouble, your future history and time travel scenarios—go for it. Kratman is going to be discussing the past, present, and future of war, everywhere, involving everyone—and he has to abide by these rules, too. Don't get into a word-war with Flint; you will regret it. Politics is for politics, heated subjects go to Blazes. There are warnings so people don't stumble in unprepared. Ditto with Feelings. The extensive FAQs cover much of the history and shared culture of the Bar; I invite new users to peruse them before posting.

But let me put this very clearly: if you are seeking to plan imminent violence, from whatever political direction or none at all, that won't fly. Equally, if the mere existence of an opinion that differs from yours means that you want that opinion eradicated from the Bar: that won't fly either.

The Bar's moderators are all volunteers. If they find the task too onerous, if the level of discourse descends too low, we'll lose the Bar. Let's all work together to keep it going.

--Toni Weisskopf

