

Raymond Z. Gallun
2001 Outstanding Alumnus

As one of the three most influential pioneers in the genre of science fiction in the twentieth century, Gallun is considered one of the fathers of modern science fiction. His autobiography, *Star Climber*, tells about the beginnings of his career journey at the age of sixteen when he wrote a short story, *Crystal Ray*, for an English assignment at Beaver Dam High School. That story and another, *Space Dwellers*, written in his senior year, were both published in 1929. Over the next sixty years, Gallun published more than one hundred science fiction short stories, two Collier's (magazine) short stories, five novels, an autobiography, and countless reprints in anthology books."

Gallun was the first to envision common themes in current science fiction writings, e.g. nanotechnology, dynaspheres, and fractiles. His story, *Old Faithful*, was unique because it was the first story to depict an alien as a friendly being. Because that story had aliens interacting with humans, the author changed the perception of outer space as a place of foreboding and potential space battles. By transforming that perception, Gallun triggered a closer look at the possibilities of space exploration.

Gallun received a number of exceptional awards for his writings. In 1934, he received the respected Jules Verne Award for Best Story of the Year, *Old Faithful*. In 1977, he received one of the greatest tributes when Ballantine books published an entire anthology of his stories, *The Best of Raymond Z. Gallun*. The introduction reads, "Few realize he was one of three men - along with John W. Campbell and Stanley G. Weinbaum - who did the most to set in motion the evolution of science fiction from crude pulp fiction to a form increasingly imaginative and literate."

In 1985, Gallun's peers in the Science Fiction Forum presented him with a lifetime achievement award. Two years later, that award was renamed the Raymond Z. Gallun Award. In 1991, Borgo Press gave the author his final tribute by publishing his autobiography, *Star Climber: The Literary Adventures and Autobiography of Raymond Z. Gallun*.

Gallun's life took on international significance through two passions, his science fiction writing and his love of travel. During his years in his twenties, he led a "Hemingway-like" life, traveling to Mexico, England, France, Egypt, and other areas. One of his greatest adventures took place in 1938 when, while living in Paris, the young author taught English to Jewish refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe. After a time filled with many risks, Gallun escaped the imminent threat of Nazism and returned to the United States. Gallun's last adventure was in 1991 when he traveled to Antarctica and the South Pole at the age of 80. Ultimately, he traveled on all seven continents, in over 140 countries, and gained the knowledge of seven languages. Many of Gallun's later travels involved tributes connected to a resurgence in the popularity of his published works in foreign countries.

As impressive as Gallun's accomplishments as a science fiction writer are, his

autobiography, recounting turn-of-the-century Beaver Dam, could be enough to merit the Outstanding Alumni Award. The autobiography, *Star Climber*, provides an in-depth historical review of the people, places, and events in Beaver Dam in the early 1900's.

In his nomination letter, Roger Noll points out that the year 2001 is designated as *The Year of Science Fiction*. He reports, "The beginning of this year saw numerous programs comparing the current state of technology with how early scholars and writers envisioned it. Of course, this comparison is fueled by the epic novel and movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, by science fiction giant (and publisher of Gallun's autobiography), Arthur C. Clarke."