

**Science Fiction Book Club**  
**Interview with Rashida Loya-Bova (Sept. 2021)**

*Dr. Rashida Loya-Bova got her MD from the Dow Medical College. She specializes in Anesthesiologist, Pulmonary Disease and Pain Medicine. She was married to Ben Bova, who passed away in Nov. of 2020.*

**Molly Smith: It has been said that Ben Bova was critical of aspects of religion, was this reflected in his writing?**

Like most scientists, Ben became an atheist. He brought up as a Catholic. Surprisingly he knew more about all religions, in detail, than anyone I know.

**Eva Sable: What are your favorites of your husband's works?**

My favorites of Ben's books are almost all of them. As Ben quoted "if someone asks you who is your favorite child? Answer is all. But truthfully, I loved Transhuman, Immortality Factor, Death Dream, Leviathans of Jupiter and all his short story collections to name a few.

**Eva Sable: What are your favorite memories of your husband?**

My favorite memories are numerous. Everything about Ben was fascinating. He was truly a loving husband, put me on a pedestal, a true gentleman, and extremely intelligent. Every minute with him was fun, mind boggling and the best was his sense of humor. I had not one moment of boredom. We pulled each other's leg constantly and laughing all the time. I was in heaven especially when I found out he liked my spicy cuisine. It was mostly Indian, but even Italian spicy pastas.

**Eva Sable: Any idea why Cyberbooks is not available as an e-book? I actually find that quite humorous since the plot centers around the traditional publishing industry trying to kill the device that has become nearly essential today.**

I honestly do not know the answers, but when I read that book I asked him the same question. If I recall correctly it was something to do with publishing companies. (It's just my guess!) Books are more expensive than eBooks.

**John Grayshaw: Who were some of the authors that had the biggest impact on Bova when he was growing up?**

Honestly, I cannot answer that. He mentioned Asimov, Arthur C Clarke, Gordon, Spider Robinson to name a few.

**John Grayshaw: What made him write novels? Was he a storyteller at heart? How did he become involved in writing science fiction?**

Ben was writing since he was a kid. He wrote articles in his school magazine, worked as a reporter for newspapers. Ben was a story teller, you ask his fans they heard many over the years. He was an ardent reader his whole life. He used to mention his father as a great story teller. I guess it runs in the family.

**John Grayshaw: What was it like living with your husband? Did he like to talk about his writing?**

Living with Ben was pure pleasure and a treat. He never ever talked about himself or what he was writing about. When I questioned him, he would tell a few things and then keep me in suspense saying “you can read it once its published.”

**John Grayshaw: What current science fiction authors did your husband enjoy reading?**

Ben read a lot of science fiction books. He never mentioned any particular writer. He was always reading heavy manuscripts for new writers and encouraging them to write better. So, I cannot really tell you who his favorite Sci Fi writer was.

**John Grayshaw: Bova had some jobs in the scientific field in the 50s and 60s such as researching lasers, fluid dynamics, and magnetohydrodynamics. How did this effect his SF writing?**

Ben worked with a lot of scientists and even doctors. He studied everything about the science of the project he was writing about. He was a self-educated scientist, even though his PhD was in education. I read a book that he completed regarding Lasers. (It was half written.) I read it and understood everything about Lasers. It’s amazing to me that with science not being his major in college he had acquired so much knowledge. I loved the stories he told me about Robert T. Jones a fluid dynamist with just high school education being instrumental in plane technology and balloon pump used to save lives with heart attacks. I was mesmerized that he knew this gentleman. Ben always quoted him as winning World War II with his technology. Also, his balloon pump technology is still saving lives. FASCINATING.

**John Grayshaw: Bova said about his science fiction, “I think of them as historical novels that haven’t happened yet.” Was Bova optimistic about the future of space travel/exploration?**

Ben was always optimistic about “The New Frontier” he called it. He wanted to live on the moon and visit Mars. His book Mars Inc. that mentions entrepreneurs getting into space travel is happening now. When we both watched the Dragon connect with the space station I had tears in my eyes. I said “you wrote about this in Mars Inc. and it’s HAPPENING, WOW.’ He said “told you so.”

**John Grayshaw: Did Bova talk about his days as an editor? Did he enjoy being an editor as much as being a writer? What was it like for him to step into John Campbell’s shoes at Analog?**

Ben loved every minute of being an editor for both Analog and Omni magazines. But it did not leave enough time for him to write. Writing was his passion. He even mentioned that he was totally surprised when they asked him to be editor of Analog. He frequently talked about John Campbell and his South African wife Kathy.

**John Grayshaw: Bova helped discover many writers, did he talk about this?**

Ben loved helping new authors including Sci Fi writers. Some names come to mind like Orson Scott Card, George R.R. Martin Spider Robinson, Vonda McIntyre, Joe Haldeman and many others. As I mentioned he read a lot of manuscripts for other authors to help them. He was generous and totally unselfish in my mind as some were his competitors.

**John Grayshaw: Bova said in an interview “The SF field has always changed, never been static. I think what has happened is that science fiction has invaded the rest of the world and conquered it. We've won. But nobody realizes that. It's like the plot of a science fiction story: the invaders have taken over the civilization but the**

civilization doesn't realize it. In a sense, most of the science fiction stuff people were writing about in the '50s and '60s has come to pass. We have computers in most every home. We have space travel of a sort. We have the prospect in medicine of elongating your life.” But I was wondering what he thought about how Science Fiction has also taken over culturally. How science fiction is more popular with the general public since there are so many sci-fi movies and tv shows?

From what little I know, he mentioned human element is necessary for existence. AI is what humans create, but it'll be a long time before the cultural and diverse ways we all exist in will ever change. He really did not care about some Sci Fi movies and TV shows as some seem too farfetched for him logically. He was thrilled that the general public liked Sci Fi especially that some of it is happening now.

**John Grayshaw- What other ways has the sci-fi publishing industry change over Bova's career?**

Ben like all of us was influenced by Sci Fi publishing industry. He did not really change much of his goals and career, He wrote about Cyberbooks before anyone was reading eBooks and wondered why it took so long to catch up to.

**John Grayshaw: Who within the writing profession did he correspond with? Any stories about those relationships?**

Ben corresponded with a lot of his fellow authors and his fans on a regular basis. When Ben and I went to Canada we met Spider Robinson and was delighted to meet him and happy that Ben kept his communication with him.

**John Grayshaw: Bova knew everyone in the SF publishing world. People like Campbell, Ellison, Bradbury, Heinlein, Clarke, Dickson. Did he ever work on a memoir? That would be a fantastic read.**

I am not aware of any memoirs. I still have to explore a lot of written stuff on his computer and would not be surprised to find something like that.

**John Grayshaw: Did you go with your husband to science fiction conventions? Any memories of these?**

I went to all the Sci Fi conventions Ben attended for the past 10 years and loved every minute of it. My first time was mind boggling, when I saw his fans come with suitcase of books for him to sign. I said to myself “Oh my God! Who is this man?” You see he never told me he was famous. I then started reading Sci Fi and have read 80 books so far. I still have to catch up.

**John Grayshaw: Any stories about your husband corresponding with/meeting his fans?**

We had a lot of fans, publishers, and other authors come visit and stay with us. I felt I was running” the Ben Bova hotel.” I enjoyed their company, no doubt. So yes, he communicated with a lot of fans. When we got married we had a publisher and his wife visit and spend our honeymoon with us.

**John Grayshaw: Are there unpublished works that will be published in the future?**

He had a few. Uranus that just got published and Sam Gunn Jr. coming out march 2022. He has written about all the planets and I found an unfinished book about Pluto (The Dark World). I'm in the process of finding a writer to complete the book.

**John Grayshaw: What were some of your husband's hobbies other than writing?**

Ben had a lot of hobbies. He played tennis, did crossword puzzles, watching baseball, tennis and football on T.V. to mention a few.

**John Grayshaw: Did your husband have a writing routine he stuck to?**

My husband was a much-disciplined writer. He wrote every single day from 8am -5pm even on our honeymoon and vacations. At home when he arose he used to get his cup of coffee, no breakfast and get to work in his office. He always reviewed what he writing and then started typing. If I talked to him in the morning it's like he never heard me. He was in what I called in an "Author Zone." Then he would emerge from his office and have a small cup of yogurt for lunch, peruse the newspaper, do his puzzle, and back in his office. Afternoon time he sat in his favorite chair and read books, did research, wrote some more and answered all his emails. He read at least one book a week that he ordered from Amazon. We had a collection of over 9000 books at our condo. Our walls were all like a library, shelved with books. At exactly five he would leave the office and say "Cocktail hour!" I would prepare some hors d'oeuvres and after cocktails we ate mostly spicy dinner in front of the TV watching Jeopardy. I was thrilled when I found Ben liked spicy food. If we went out, he always dressed in one of his 50 + jackets and always looked suave.

**John Grayshaw: What is Ben Bova's legacy?**

I say his 150 books and his contribution to science and his love for ALL.