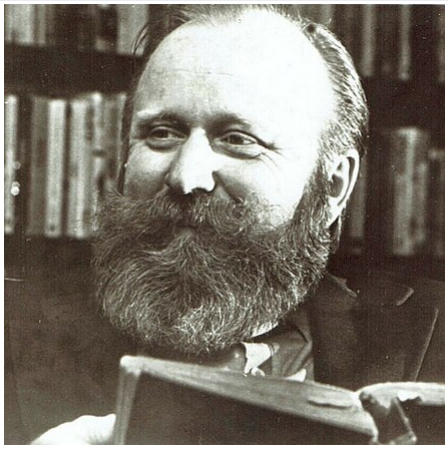
Frank Herbert

Franklin Patrick Herbert Jr. (October 8, 1920 – February 11, 1986) was an American science-fiction author, best known for his 1965 novel *Dune* and its five sequels. He also wrote short stories and worked as a newspaper journalist, photographer, book reviewer, ecological consultant, and lecturer.

Dune is the best-selling science fiction novel of all time,[3] and the series is a classic of the science-fiction genre.[4] The *Dune* saga, set in the distant future and taking place over millennia, explores complex themes, such as the long-term survival of the human species, human evolution, planetary science and ecology, and the intersection of religion, politics, economics, sex, and power in a future where humanity has long since developed interstellar travel and colonized many thousands of worlds.

The series has been adapted numerous times, including the feature film *Dune* (1984), the miniseries *Frank Herbert's Dune* and *Children of Dune*, and a motion picture trilogy currently in production, with *Dune* (2021) and *Dune: Part Two* (2024) having been released.[5][6]

Frank Herbert



Herbert in 1984

Born	Franklin Patrick Herbert Jr. October 8, 1920 Tacoma, Washington, U.S.
Died	February 11, 1986 (aged 65) Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.
Occupation	Novelist
Alma mater	University of Washington (no degree)
Period	1945–1986
Genre	Science fiction
Literary movement	New Wave
Spouse	Flora Lillian Parkinson (m. 1941; div. 1943)[1] Beverly Ann Stuart (m. 1946; died 1984)[2] Theresa Diane Shackelford (m. 1985)
Children	3; including Brian

Signature

Biography

Early life

Frank Patrick Herbert Jr. was born on October 8, 1920, in Tacoma, Washington,[7][8] to Frank Patrick Herbert Sr. and Eileen (née McCarthy) Herbert.[9] His upbringing included spending a lot of time on the rural Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas.[10] He was fascinated by books, could read much of the newspaper before the age of five, had an excellent memory, and learned quickly.[11] He had an early interest in photography, buying a Kodak box camera at age ten, a new folding camera in his early teens, and a color film camera in the mid-1930s.[11] Due to an impoverished home

environment, largely due to the Great Depression, he left home in 1938 to live with an aunt and uncle in Salem, Oregon.[12]

Herbert's novella *The Priests of Psi* was the cover story for the February 1960 issue of *Fantastic*.

Education

He enrolled in high school at Salem High School (now North Salem High School), where he graduated the next year.[12] In 1939, he lied about his age to get his first newspaper job at the *Glendale Star*.[13] Herbert then returned to Salem in 1940 where he worked for the *Oregon Statesman* newspaper (now *Statesman Journal*) in a variety of positions, including photographer.[12]

Herbert married Flora Lillian Parkinson in San Pedro, California, in 1941. They had one daughter, Penelope (b. February 16, 1942), and divorced in 1943.[1] During 1942, after the U.S. entry into World War II, he served in the U.S. Navy's Seabees for six months as a photographer, but suffered a head injury and was given a medical discharge. Herbert subsequently moved to Portland, Oregon where he reported for *The Oregon Journal*.[14]

After the war, Herbert attended the University of Washington, where he met Beverly Ann Stuart at a creative writing class in 1946. They were the only students who had sold any work for publication; Herbert had sold two pulp adventure stories to magazines, the first to *Esquire* in 1945 titled "Survival of the Cunning", and Stuart had sold a story to *Modern Romance* magazine. They married in Seattle in 1946, and had two sons, Brian (b. 1947) and Bruce (1951–1993).[15][16] In 1949 Herbert and his wife moved to California to work on the Santa Rosa *Press-Democrat*. Here they befriended the psychologists Ralph and Irene Slattery. The Slatterys introduced Herbert to the work of several thinkers who would influence his writing, including Freud, Jung, Jaspers and Heidegger; they also familiarized Herbert with Zen Buddhism.[17]

Herbert never graduated from college. According to his son Brian, he wanted to study only what interested him and so did not complete the required curriculum. He returned to journalism and worked at the *Seattle Star* and the *Oregon Statesman*. He was a writer and editor for the *San Francisco Examiner*'s *California Living* magazine for a decade.

Early career

In a 1973 interview, Herbert stated that he had been reading science fiction "about ten years" before he began writing in the genre, and he listed his favorite authors as H. G. Wells, Robert A. Heinlein, Poul Anderson and Jack Vance.[18]

Herbert's first science fiction story, "Looking for Something", was published in the April 1952 issue of *Startling Stories*, then a monthly edited by Samuel Mines. Three more of his stories appeared in 1954 issues of *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Amazing Stories*.[19] His career as a novelist began in 1955 with the serial publication of *Under Pressure* in *Astounding* from November 1955; afterward it was issued as a book by Doubleday titled *The Dragon in the Sea*.[19] The story explored sanity and

madness in the environment of a 21st-century submarine and predicted worldwide conflicts over oil consumption and production.[20] It was a critical success but not a major commercial one. During this time Herbert also worked as a speechwriter for Republican senator Guy Cordon.[21]

Dune

Herbert began researching *Dune* in 1959. He was able to devote himself wholeheartedly to his writing career because his wife returned to work full-time as an advertising writer for department stores, becoming their breadwinner during the 1960s. The novel *Dune* was published in 1965, which spearheaded the *Dune* franchise. He later told Willis E. McNelly that the novel originated when he was assigned to write a magazine article about sand dunes in the Oregon Dunes near Florence, Oregon. He got overinvolved and ended up with far more raw material than needed for an article. The article was never written, but it planted the seed that led to *Dune*. Another significant source of inspiration for *Dune* was Herbert's experiences with psilocybin, according to mycologist Paul Stamets's account, which also describes his hobby of cultivating chanterelles.[22] The biography of Frank Herbert, *Dreamer of Dune*, written by his son Brian, confirms that the author was passionate about culinary mushrooms, but doesn't confirm Frank's use of psilocybin mushrooms.[11]

The Oregon Dunes near Florence, Oregon, served as an inspiration for the *Dune* saga.

Dune took six years of research and writing to complete and was much longer than other commercial science fiction of the time. *Analog* (the renamed *Astounding*, still edited by John W. Campbell) published it in two parts comprising eight installments, "Dune World" from December 1963 and "Prophet of Dune" in 1965.[19] It was then rejected by nearly twenty book publishers. One editor prophetically wrote, "I might be making the mistake of the decade, but..."[23]

Sterling E. Lanier, an editor of Chilton Book Company (known mainly for its auto-repair manuals), had read the Dune serials and offered a $7,500 advance plus future royalties for the rights to publish them as a hardcover book.[24] Herbert rewrote much of his text.[25] *Dune* was soon a critical success.[23] It won the Nebula Award for Best Novel in 1965 and shared the Hugo Award in 1966 with *...And Call Me Conrad* by Roger Zelazny.[26]

Dune was not an immediate bestseller. By 1968 Herbert had made $20,000 from it, far more than most science fiction novels of the time were generating, but not enough to let him take up full-time writing. However, the publication of *Dune* did open doors for him. He was the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*'s education writer from 1969 to 1972 and lecturer in general studies and interdisciplinary studies at the University of Washington (1970–1972). He worked in Vietnam and Pakistan as a social and ecological consultant in 1972. In 1973 he was director-photographer of the television show *The Tillers*.[27]

> I don't worry about inspiration or anything like that.... later, coming back and reading what I have produced, I am unable to detect the difference between what came easily and when I had to sit down and say, "Well, now it's writing time and now I'll write."[28]
>
> —Frank Herbert

By the end of 1972, Herbert had retired from newspaper writing and became a full-time fiction writer. During the 1970s and 1980s, he enjoyed considerable commercial success as an author. He divided his time between homes in Hawaii and Washington's Olympic Peninsula; his home in Port Townsend on the peninsula was intended to be an "ecological demonstration project".[29] During this time he wrote numerous books and pushed ecological and philosophical ideas. He continued his *Dune* saga with *Dune Messiah* (1969), *Children of Dune* (1976), *God Emperor of Dune* (1981), *Heretics of Dune* (1984) and *Chapterhouse: Dune* (1985). Herbert planned to write a seventh novel to conclude the series, but his death in 1986 left storylines unresolved.[30]

Other works by Herbert include *The Godmakers* (1972), *The Dosadi Experiment* (1977), *The White Plague* (1982) and the books he wrote in partnership with Bill Ransom: *The Jesus Incident* (1979), *The Lazarus Effect* (1983) and *The Ascension Factor* (1988), which were sequels to Herbert's 1966 novel *Destination: Void*. He also helped launch the career of Terry Brooks with a very positive review of Brooks' first novel, *The Sword of Shannara*, in 1977.[31]

Success, family changes, and death

Herbert's change in fortune was shadowed by tragedy. In 1974, his wife Beverly underwent treatment for lung cancer. She lived ten more years, but her health was adversely affected by the treatment.[32] In October 1978, Herbert was the featured speaker at the Octocon II science fiction convention held at the El Rancho Tropicana in Santa Rosa, California.[33] In 1979, he met anthropologist Jim Funaro with whom he conceived the Contact Conference.[34] Beverly Herbert died on February 7, 1984.[2] Herbert completed and published *Heretics of Dune* that year. In his afterword to 1985's *Chapterhouse: Dune*, Herbert included a dedication to Beverly.

The year 1984 was a tumultuous year in Herbert's life. During this same year of his wife's death, his career took off with the release of David Lynch's film version of *Dune*. Despite high expectations, a big-budget production design and an A-list cast, the movie drew mostly poor reviews in the United States. However, despite a disappointing response in the US, the film was a critical and commercial success in Europe and Japan.[25]

In 1985, after Beverly's death, Herbert married his former Putnam representative Theresa Shackleford.[35] The same year he published *Chapterhouse: Dune*, which tied up many of the saga's story threads. This would be Herbert's final single work (the collection *Eye* was published that year, and *Man of Two Worlds* was published in 1986). He died of a massive pulmonary embolism while recovering from surgery for pancreatic cancer on February 11, 1986, in Madison, Wisconsin, aged 65.[29][36]

Criticism of government

Herbert was a critic of the Soviet Union. He was a distant relative of the Republican senator Joseph McCarthy, whom he referred to as "Cousin Joe". However, he was appalled to learn of McCarthy's blacklisting of suspected communists from working in certain careers and believed that he was endangering essential freedoms of citizens of the United States.[37] Herbert believed that governments lie to protect themselves and that, following the Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon had unwittingly taught an important lesson in not trusting government.[38][39] Herbert also opposed American involvement in the war in Vietnam.[40]

In *Chapterhouse: Dune*, he wrote:

> All governments suffer a recurring problem: Power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible. Such people have a tendency to become drunk on violence, a condition to which they are quickly addicted.
>
> —Frank Herbert, *Chapterhouse: Dune*[32]:59

Frank Herbert believed civil service to be "one of the most serious errors we made as a democracy" and that bureaucracy negatively impacts the lives of people in all forms of government. He stated that "every such bureaucracy eventually becomes an aristocracy" and uses preferential treatment and nepotism in favor of bureaucrats as his main arguments.[41]

Ideas and themes

Frank Herbert used his science fiction novels to explore complex[42] ideas involving philosophy, religion, psychology, politics and ecology. The underlying thrust of his work was a fascination with the question of human survival and evolution. Herbert has attracted a dedicated fan base, many of whom have attempted to read everything he wrote (fiction or non-fiction); indeed, such was the devotion of some of his readers that Herbert was at times asked if he was founding a cult,[43] a proposition which he very much rejected.

There are a number of key themes found in Herbert's work:

- A concern with leadership: Herbert explored the human tendency to slavishly submit itself to charismatic leaders. He delved into both the flaws and potentials of bureaucracy and government.[20]
- Herbert was among the first science fiction authors to popularize ideas about ecology[44] and systems thinking. He stressed the need for humans to think both holistically and with regards to the long-term.[45]
- The relationship between religion, politics and power.[46]
- Human survival and evolution: Herbert writes of the Fremen, the Sardaukar, and the Dosadi, who are molded by their terrible living conditions into dangerous super races.[47]
- Human possibilities and potential: Herbert offered Mentats, the Bene Gesserit and the Bene Tleilax as different visions of human potential.
- The nature of sanity and madness. Frank Herbert was interested in the work of Thomas Szasz and the anti-psychiatry movement. Often, Herbert poses the question, "*What is sane?*", and while there are clearly examples of insane behavior and psychopathy to be found in his works (as evinced by characters such as Piter De Vries), it is often suggested that normal and abnormal are

relative terms which humans are sometimes ill-equipped to apply to one another, especially on the basis of statistical regularity.[20]

- The possible effects and consequences of consciousness-altering chemicals, such as the spice in the *Dune* saga, as well as the 'Jaspers' fungus in *The Santaroga Barrier*, and the Kelp in the Destination: Void sequence.[20]
- How language shapes thought. More specifically, Herbert was influenced by Alfred Korzybski's *General Semantics*.[48] Algis Budrys wrote that Herbert's knowledge of language and linguistics was 'worth at least one PhD and the Chair of Philology at a good New England college'.[49]
- Learning, teaching, and thinking.[20]

Frank Herbert refrained from offering his readers formulaic answers to many of the questions he explored.[20]

Status and influence on science fiction

Dune and the *Dune* saga constitute one of the world's best-selling science fiction series and novels; *Dune* in particular has received widespread critical acclaim, winning the Nebula Award in 1965 and sharing the Hugo Award in 1966, and is frequently considered one of the best science fiction novels ever, if not the best.[50] *Locus* subscribers voted it the all-time best SF novel in 1975, again in 1987, and the best "before 1990" in 1998.[51]

The Dune Peninsula at Point Defiance Park in Tacoma, Washington, with the volcano Mount Rainier in the distance

Dune is considered a landmark novel for a number of reasons:

- *Dune* is a landmark of soft science fiction. Herbert deliberately suppressed technology in his *Dune* universe so that he could address the future of humanity, rather than the future of humanity's technology. *Dune* considers the way humans and their institutions might change over time.[52][53]
- Frank Herbert was a great popularizer of scientific ideas. In *Dune*, he helped popularize the term *ecology*. Gerald Jonas explains in *The New York Times Book Review*: "So completely did Mr. Herbert work out the interactions of man and beast and geography and climate that *Dune* became the standard for an emerging subgenre of 'ecological' science fiction."
- *Dune* is considered an example of literary world-building. *The Library Journal* reports that "*Dune* is to science fiction what *The Lord of the Rings* is to fantasy". Arthur C. Clarke is quoted as making a similar statement on the back cover of a paper edition of *Dune*.[54] Frank Herbert imagined every facet of his creation. He included glossaries, quotes, documents, and histories, to bring his universe alive to his readers. No science fiction novel before it had so vividly realized life on another world.[20]