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Ex-Manassas Resident Popular Sci-Fi Writer

By RANDI DEIOTTE

A science fiction book by a man who attended school in Manassas 34 years ago made the New York Times Best Sellers List the first week it was released and has now climbed into the top ten, his publicist says. And two movies derived from the book are due to start production later this year.

L. Ron Hubbard's 800-page science fiction epic, *Battlefield Earth*, is also at the top of B. Dalton's national science fiction list, topping Asimov's 2010 and George Orwell's 1984, the publicist continued.

Hubbard, now 73, attended the Swaveley School during the 1929-30 term at the request of his father, a career naval officer, had recently returned from the Far East, his publicist, Mariyse Brock said.

While at Swaveley, Hubbard got an early start on his future writing career as associate editor of the *Swaveley Sentinel*, the school newspaper. He began writing science fiction in 1938,

some eight years after he left Manassas, according to his publicist.

Formerly known as Eastern College, Swaveley School for Boys was located on the site of what is now Baldwin Park in the City of Manassas. The college vacated its buildings in 1924. And shortly thereafter, Ell Swaveley of Washington, D.C. started the school bearing his name.

The school operated from 1924 through the 1929 school year, and was primarily a preparatory institution for boys studying for the entrance examinations to West Point and Annapolis, according to Don Wilson at the Prince William Central Library.

Prince William County Schools took the property over with the idea of using it for a vocational school, but it was not suited for that purpose, and the county abandoned it in 1935.

After a series of fires, the buildings of the former Swaveley School were torn down in 1960.

Hubbard found science fiction writing as the field in which to express his many ideas and observations, according to his publicist. "Science fiction does not come after the fact of a scientific discovery or development. It is the beard of possibility. It is the plea that someone should work on the future. Yet it is not prophecy. It is the dream that precedes the dawn when the inventor or scientist awakens and goes to his books or lab saying, 'I wonder whether I could make the dream come true in the world of real science,'" Hubbard said last year in explaining his concept of science fiction writing.

Battlefield Earth, according to Brock, has been sold to a Hollywood movie producer, Bill Immerman of Salem Productions. It is to be produced as two separate films, *Battle Field Earth I* and *Battlefield Earth II*.

Both are to be directed by the Englishman Ken Annakin who is best known for his direction of *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*. Production is scheduled to start in November, she said.

Hubbard's whereabouts are unknown, according to Brock, who nevertheless was able to quickly supply *The Journal Messenger* with additional information requested about Hubbard's activities and times in Manassas while at Swaveley School for Boys. She said he was very busy and liked his privacy.

"All mail addressed to me shall be received by me. I am always willing to help. By my own creed, a being is only as valuable as he can serve others...Any message addressed to me and sent to the address of the nearest Scientology Church...will be forwarded to me directly," however, Hubbard states in his publicity.