

126

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## NIAGARA CLASS

TYPE: CRUISER

LAUNCHED: 24th C

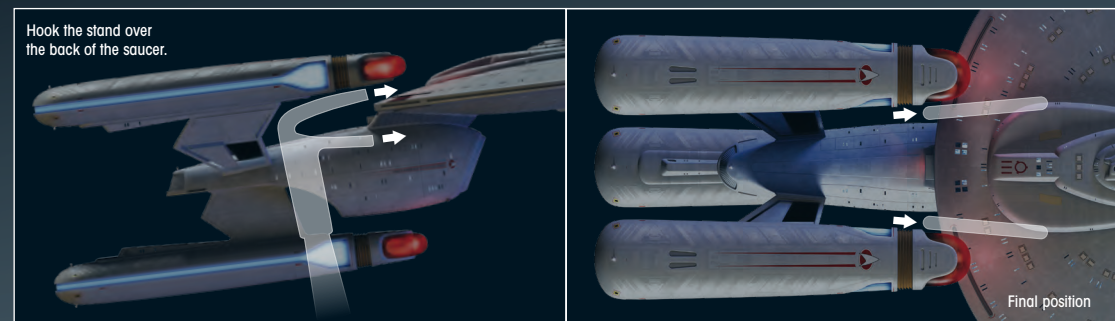
LENGTH: 565 METERS

MAX SPEED: WARP 9.6

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## Stand assembly:



# NIAGARA CLASS SPECIFICATION



CLASS:	NIAGARA
AFFILIATION:	STARFLEET
LAUNCHED:	24th CENTURY
LENGTH:	565 METERS (APPROX.)
CREW:	530 (APPROX.)
TOP SPEED:	WARP 9.6
WEAPONRY:	PHASER EMITTERS, PHOTON TORPEDOES

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◀ The *Niagara* class was one of the most distinctive looking Starfleet ships of the 24th century as it featured a third nacelle. Despite this unusual configuration, nearly all of the rest of the components were taken from proven designs.

The *Niagara* class was a type of Starfleet starship that was in service in the 24th century. It was highly unusual in that it was the only known Starfleet starship to feature three warp nacelles. Examples of the *Niagara* class included the *U.S.S. Princeton* NCC-59804 and the *U.S.S. Wellington* NCC-28473.

The *Niagara* class was approximately 565 meters in length, and its crew complement was around 530. It comprised of a fairly rare saucer design that featured an elongated bridge module, and an engineering hull that was identical to that found on *Ambassador*-class ships such as the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-C. The *Niagara* class was equipped with warp nacelles that were the same as those found on *Galaxy*-class ships like the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-D, but the shape of the *Niagara*'s nacelle pylons were unique.

#### PRIMARY DUTIES

The *Niagara* class's primary roles were ones of exploration and diplomacy. It was equipped with numerous sensor arrays and scientific laboratories to aid in the study of planets and stellar phenomena. It also featured extensive diplomatic facilities, which ensured it was capable of handling multi-species conferences.

Nearly all Starfleet ships featured an even number of warp nacelles, with most featuring a two-nacelle configuration as Federation propulsion experts determined that this was the ideal layout for optimal warp field efficiency and vessel control. This did not stop Starfleet experimenting with alternative nacelle configurations, however, and there were one-nacelle designs, such as the *Freedom* class, and the three-nacelle layout of the *Niagara* class.

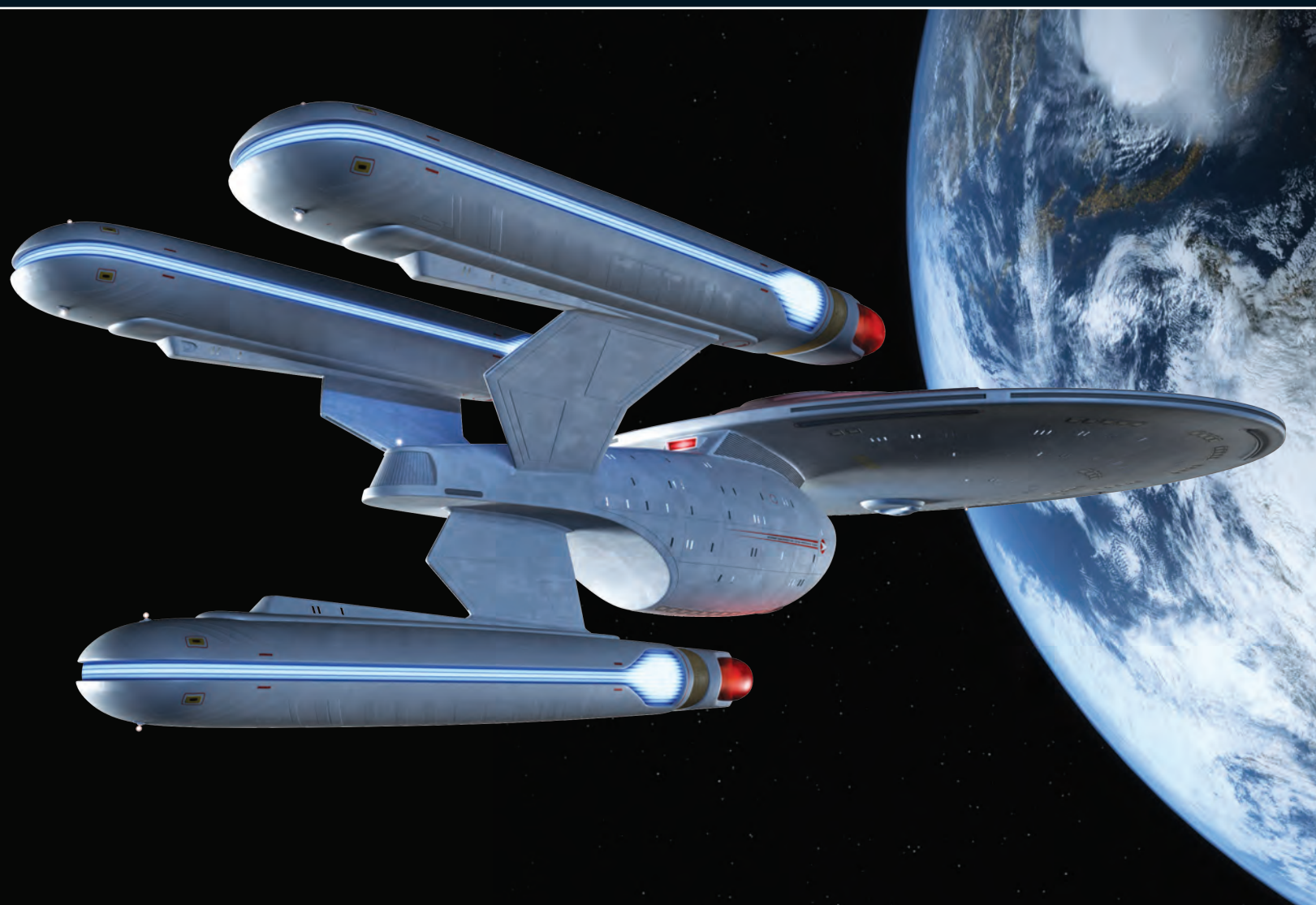
While there were some disadvantages to this

◀ The wreckage of the *U.S.S. Princeton* NCC-59804, a *Niagara*-class ship, filled the top right of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-D's viewscreen. The *Princeton* was part of the 39-strong ship fleet that had been assembled by Starfleet to stop an invading Borg cube at Wolf 359, but the entire armada was decimated in a matter of minutes.

# STARFLEET NIAGARA CLASS

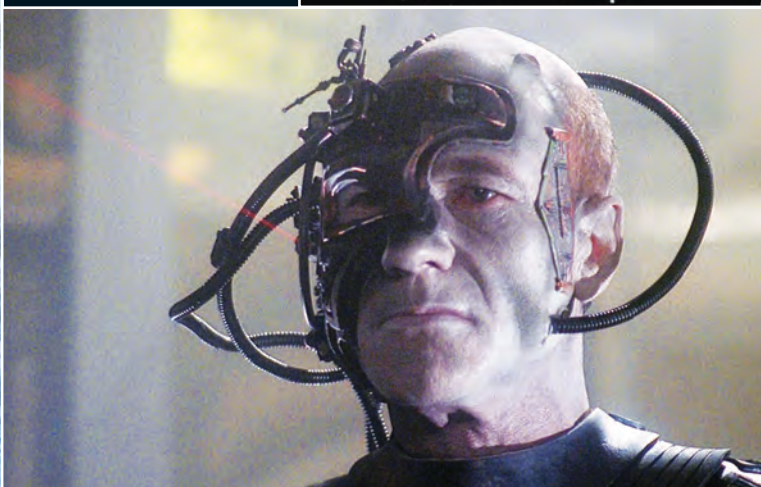
The *Niagara* class had three warp nacelles, and it shared parts found on both the *Galaxy* and *Ambassador* classes.





► The engineering hull of the *Niagara* class shared the same outward design as that found on *Ambassador*-class ships like the *U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701-C* seen here on the right.

▼ The Borg cube that wiped out the entire fleet at Wolf 359 was helped by Captain Picard, who had been partially assimilated. His tactical knowledge of Starfleet's battle strategy handed the Borg a huge advantage.



▲ The *Niagara* class would have looked like any conventional Starfleet ship of the 24th century without the third nacelle hanging below the engineering hull. The additional power created by the third nacelle increased the strength of its weapons, shield and sensor systems.

odd numbered design, there were certain benefits too. *Niagara*-class ships were able to operate on their upper nacelle pair only and keep the lower nacelle in reserve, or vice versa. This extended the life of the components, and added another layer of redundancy if a nacelle failed.

The *Niagara* class was therefore more suited to deep space missions when it would be far from any starbases or repair facilities, although it did not mean that it had a higher top speed. Like many Starfleet vessels of this era, the *Niagara* class had a maximum velocity of warp 9.6, but its cruising speed was higher than normal at warp 8.

The architecture of the *Niagara*'s saucer section was found on only one other Starfleet ship – the *Freedom* class. It was oval in shape and fairly thin compared to other Starfleet ships. The bridge module was located in the middle of the saucer section and it sat on top of a secondary

shuttlebay. The main shuttlebay was located in the more usual position at the rear of the secondary hull. The primary hull also featured numerous windows and lifeboat hatches, as well as several type-7 phaser arrays.

#### SECONDARY HULL

The short 'neck' section that joined the saucer to the rest of the ship was unique to the *Niagara* class, but the engineering hull was the same shape as that found on *Ambassador*-class ships. This was a substantial structure and looked almost round when seen from the front. The warp core ran the entire height of the secondary hull, and it could be ejected in the event of a catastrophic matter/antimatter containment failure.

As has been said, the *Niagara* class was mainly used for deep space exploration missions, but its multiple phaser arrays, as well as fore and aft

photon torpedo launchers, meant it possessed significant firepower. Add in its robust defensive shields combined with the extra power generated by its third warp nacelle and the *Niagara* class was well up to the task of performing combat and defensive duties.

This was certainly true against familiar enemies in the Alpha and Beta Quadrants that Starfleet found itself up against, but in 2367 it was heavily outmatched by an invading Borg cube. The *Niagara*-class *U.S.S. Princeton* lined up with 38 other Starfleet ships to engage the Borg. It was swatted aside with ease as almost half its saucer section was torn off by the Borg cube's cutting beam, and all three of its nacelles suffered heavy damage. Most of the crew perished in the attack, and the ship was damaged beyond repair. Its lifeless hull was later towed to the starship junkyard at Surplus Depot Z15 located in orbit of Quolor II.

The *U.S.S. Wellington*, the other known *Niagara*-class ship, had its computers upgraded in 2364 at Starbase 74 by Bynar technicians. The then-Lieutenant Ro also served on the *Wellington*. She provoked an incident on Garon II that resulted in the death of eight fellow officers. She was court-martialed for her actions, demoted to the rank of ensign and sentenced to imprisonment on Jaros II.

▲ The wreckage of the *Princeton* was later towed to the Surplus Depot Z15 in orbit of Quolor II. The ship could be seen in a vertical orientation as the *Enterprise-D* passed it on the way to the salvage yard.



#### DATA FEED

Ro Laren served aboard the *Niagara*-class *U.S.S. Wellington*, where she attained the rank of lieutenant. In the mid-2360s, she took part in a fateful away mission to Garon II. The specifics of the assignment were vague, but she disobeyed direct orders and as a direct consequence eight members of the away team lost their lives. Ro refused to speak in her own defense at the trial, leaving the court to find her guilty and sentencing her to prison on Jaros II.

**NACELLE OPERATION**

The warp nacelles were the most important part of a Starfleet ship's propulsion system. They were even given their own series of internal ship coordinates to help the engineering staff pinpoint any potential problems, and their operation and maintenance was overseen from a warp nacelle control room.

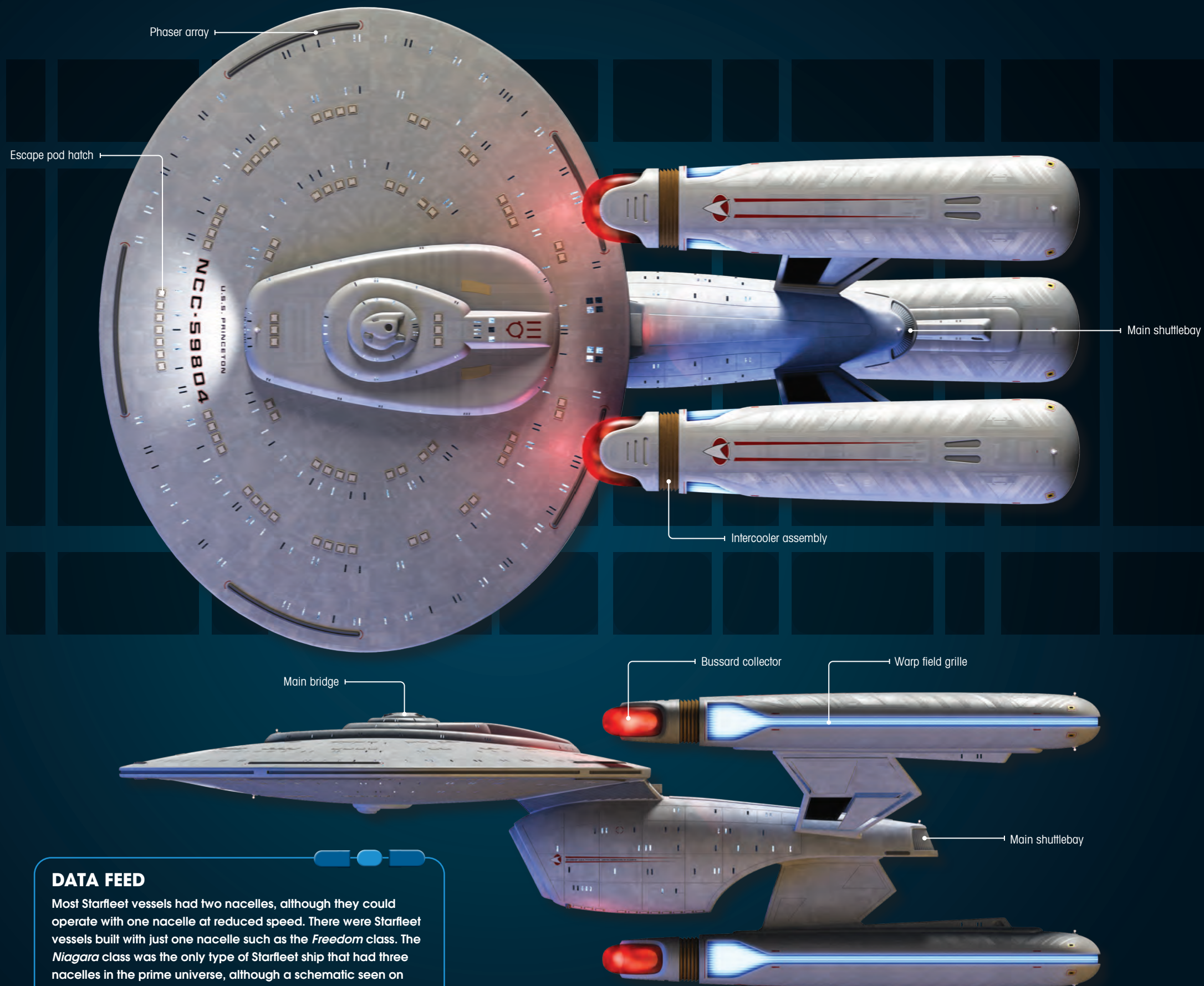
Like the rest of the ship, the nacelles were constructed from duranium, and overlaid with gamma-welded tritanium that was 2.5 meters thick. The pressures exerted on the nacelles were extreme, and this was countered by three levels of cobalt cortenide that lined the structure's inner hulls. The power contained within the nacelles was so potent that they could be extremely dangerous if they malfunctioned, so safety features were incorporated that allowed them to be jettisoned in an emergency; explosive structural latches could be fired, driving the nacelles away from a ship at a rate of 30 meters per second.

Most Starfleet ships had two warp nacelles and maneuvered in space by creating slight imbalances in the warp field produced by each nacelle; in simple terms, this was the same principle upon which a kayak is maneuvered, by paddling more quickly on one side than the other.

Complications arose when using a three-nacelle design, but a well-balanced warp field was made to work on the *Niagara* class. The idea did not catch on though, as the extra resources needed for an additional nacelle did not justify the slight increase in power.



▲ The interior components of the warp nacelles on the *Niagara* class were the same as those used on *Galaxy*-class ships. This meant that there were 18 warp field coils, arranged in pairs, on the inside.

**DATA FEED**

Most Starfleet vessels had two nacelles, although they could operate with one nacelle at reduced speed. There were Starfleet vessels built with just one nacelle such as the *Freedom* class. The *Niagara* class was the only type of Starfleet ship that had three nacelles in the prime universe, although a schematic seen on a display monitor aboard the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701 appeared to show the *Freedom* class as having three nacelles.

**ALTERNATE FUTURE**

The only other Starfleet vessel seen equipped with three nacelles, apart from the *Niagara* class, was the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-D from an alternative future in the episode 'All Good Things...'

**WELLINGTON CAPTAIN**

Captain Thomas Pucer was the commanding officer of the *Niagara*-class *U.S.S. Wellington* in 2365. According to a computer readout screen at Starbase 173, the *Wellington* was assigned to patrol the Neutral Zone in Sector 130.

**SAFETY FEATURE**

According to the 'STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION Technical Manual,' *Galaxy*-class ships were able to jettison nacelles in the event of an emergency. As *Niagara*-class ships used the same nacelle design as the *Galaxy* class, they probably had this facility too.



BUILDING THE

# NIAGARA CLASS

Master model maker Greg Jein came to the rescue when battle-damaged Starfleet ships were needed for 'The Best of Both Worlds.'

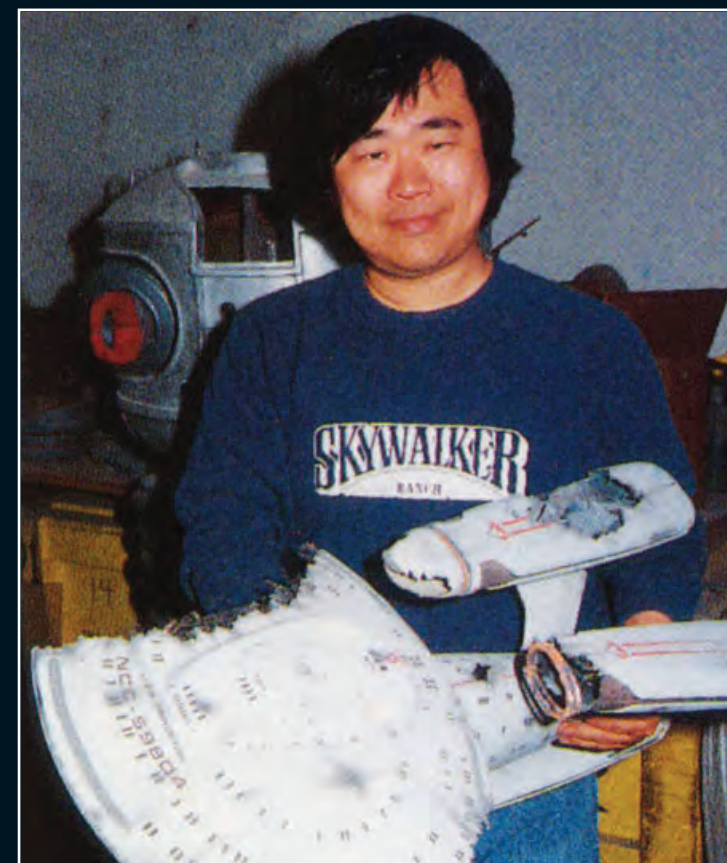
It had been hoped to show the actual Battle of Wolf 359, with the Starfleet armada taking on the Borg cube, in 'The Best of Both Worlds, Part II,' but visual effects supervisor Gary Hutzel soon realized it would prove much too

expensive – not to mention time consuming. It was clear that they would have to come up with another plan.

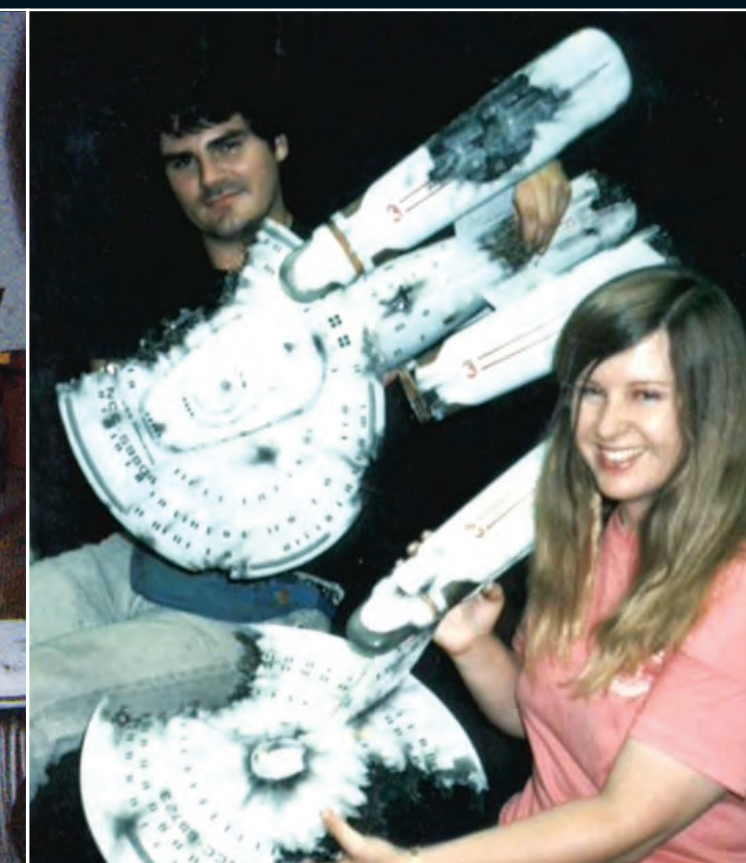
It was Judy Elkins, who at that time was employed by Boss Film Studios and would later work as a visual effects

coordinator on *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*, came up with the inspired idea of using parts from commercially available model kits to build wrecked starships.

This way they could film the aftermath of the battle and show numerous



▲ Greg Jein holds up the finished battle-damaged model of the *Niagara*-class starship, with its twisted nacelles, and a huge chunk of its saucer section missing.



▲ Two of Jein's model-making employees pose with the finished *Niagara* class and *Freedom*-class studio models that were made for 'The Best of Both Worlds, Part II.'

battle-damaged ships for minimal effort and money.

While many of the ships that featured in the 'graveyard' scene were 'kitbashed' from different classes of Starfleet model ships, there were a couple that were built specially for the episode by Greg Jein, Inc.

#### STAR TREK VETERAN

Greg Jein is, of course, a master model maker, who first worked for the franchise on *STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE*. He was working for Industrial Light & Magic when he was the lead modeler on *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*'s pilot episode 'Encounter at Farpoint,' where under his leadership they built the Farpoint station maquette, plus two studio models of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-D.

Jein's model work was so good and so detailed that the company he

created, Greg Jein, Inc, became the primary supplier of studio models throughout *THE NEXT GENERATION*'s entire run. One of the many models his company supplied was the *Niagara*-class starship featured in 'The Best of Both Worlds, Part II.'

This ship, which Jein's workshop labeled as the *U.S.S. Princeton* NCC-59804, was made from molds that had been created for other classes of Starfleet ship, plus a few custom parts. In Season Three, Jein's workshop had built the *Ambassador*-class *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-C for 'Yesterday's Enterprise,' and the mold of its engineering hull was used for the *Princeton*. The nacelles of the *Niagara* class, however, came from the four-foot *Galaxy*-class studio model that he had originally built for the pilot.

The other parts of the *Niagara*-class model were built from scratch, including the saucer section and the nacelle

pylons. These elements came from Jein's own production assets and no part of the ship was derived from commercially available model kits.

#### QUALITY DAMAGE

The *Niagara* class was also constructed as being pre-damaged from the get-go, with burn marks and a large chunk taken out of the saucer section, rather than being built intact and then damaged later. This meant that the model was of a higher standard than those that were 'kitbashed.'

The only problem with the model was that it had three nacelles, and as scenic art supervisor Mike Okuda reminded Jein, Gene Roddenberry did not approve of odd-numbered nacelles. By this point, it was too late to change it, and the three-nacelled *Niagara* class was filmed in a such a way that it was hoped would not be too obvious.



## IRA STEVEN BEHR ON *THE NEXT GENERATION*

Writer and producer Ira Steven Behr looks back on his experiences of working on *THE NEXT GENERATION* and the challenges he faced.

▲ Ira Steven Behr is best known as the guiding light behind *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*, but he first worked for the franchise a few years earlier when he wrote for *THE NEXT GENERATION* in the third season.

Sometimes history looks very different to the people who were there. According to legend, everything came right for *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* in its third year. This was when the ratings started to climb and the show consistently produced high-quality episodes. Any objective analysis holds it up as a year of transition and achievement.

Ira Steven Behr was there, and he'd tell you that was not how it seemed at the time. "I love it every time I read about the third season; when everything came together," he laughed. "At the time, we (the writing staff) were deranged. We thought we were all going to get fired. We thought Paramount was going to come with a giant suitcase and put us all inside – along with

the sets – and float us out to sea. It was not whether the cup was half empty or half full; we just saw a massive, devastated wasteland with many smashed cups."

### TALENTED PEOPLE

Of course, things looked very different in hindsight, and Behr was amazed that such good results came out of one of the most difficult times in his life. "I'd like to explain it by the fact that there was a talented writing staff despite itself," said Behr. "I think credit must be given to Michael Piller and Rick Berman, who somehow made the scripts better, and Ron (Ronald D. Moore), who came in and found his yellow brick road and walked confidently on it from the first."

Behr joined the *TNG* staff on 'The Defector,' the ninth show of the third season. Paramount had originally talked to him about coming on to the team in the second season under Maurice Hurley, but at the time he'd turned them down. "Maurice was a really nice guy," said Behr. "He was putting a very positive spin on it, but he was saying a lot of things that made me hesitate, so I decided against it. Then, the next year, the situation changed. Michael Piller, who I had known for a few years, was on the show, and Hans Beimler and Ricky Manning, who had worked for me on *Fame*, were there as well. Even though I still had some hesitation, I decided to accept. It made my sister smile when I told her that I was doing it, since we had watched *THE ORIGINAL SERIES* as kids."

When Behr arrived Michael Piller was desperately looking for stories and needed someone who could help rewrite the scripts the way he wanted. Behr recalled that he had barely caught up on watching the old episodes when Piller walked into his office and asked him to write some scenes for 'The Defector.' "I did a bunch of things on that episode," said Behr. "I wrote some of the stuff Jarok said about being alone when he was on the holodeck. I remember I thought, 'How am I going to get through this? I don't know what I'm doing!' I remember writing those first scenes and giving them to Richard Danus, who was a story editor. I didn't know him; I just walked into his office and said, 'Read this and tell me if it's any good.' He came back and said, 'Yeah, it reads like it was written by a writer.'"



▲ The first show Behr worked on after he joined *THE NEXT GENERATION* was 'The Defector,' which was written by the entire staff, but Behr contributed the pivotal scene of Jarok on the holodeck.



▲ 'Yesterday's Enterprise' was written over a Thanksgiving weekend under intense timescale pressure, but Behr said the writers were happy to tackle far darker themes than they had in the past.



► 'Sins of the Father' was co-written by Ron Moore. Behr visited the set with Moore when they were filming the episode and remembered just how excited Moore was to see the Klingon world he helped create.

◄ In 'A Matter of Perspective,' Riker was accused of murdering a prominent scientist, and the events were recreated on the holodeck. Behr said it was one of the hardest plots to work out and have the story make sense.



▲ Behr (seen here on the right) formed a great working relationship with both Ronald D. Moore (center) and executive producer Michael Piller (left). Together, they helped steer the series in the right direction.

▼ Behr rewrote a few scenes of 'The Hunted,' where a fugitive named Rogo Danar was chased aboard the *Enterprise-D*.

Exactly the same thing happened on the next script, 'The Hunted.' "Piller came into my office again," explained Behr. "There was a chase on the ship, and he just said, 'This section needs work; I'm not buying it. Take a pass at it.' I was thinking, 'What?! What am I doing here? Do we have a map? What am I looking at? How many decks?' This was a smaller pass than 'The Defector.' When I was finished I did the same thing; I went to Danus again. 'Does this make sense?' I remember feeling, 'What the hell have I accomplished?' But Michael came back and said, 'Much better.' I thought, 'Wow. OK.'"

Despite Behr's doubts about what he was doing, Michael Piller felt he always had the greatest faith in him. Behr fulfilled a very important function for Piller, who was determined to push *TNG* in new directions and develop the characters; he was effectively his deputy, who could break stories with the writing staff and make sure that the early drafts were ready for Piller to work on. "I thought Michael just liked my writing," said Behr. "He felt I knew structure. He just trusted me from the get-go, and that certainly helped my ego on the show and my confidence.

**HELPING HAND**

"I broke stories the only way I knew how, and that was with as many of the staff as possible," continued Behr. "Michael was in the room a lot of times, and sometimes he wasn't. He was rewriting so much. He was under the gun in a lot of ways. Obviously, Rick Berman wanted the scripts to come up to the way he thought they should be, and who the hell was going to do it?"

"The funny thing was that because of the situation, Michael and I did not spend what I would call a lot of quality time together. But when we did have those moments – when it was just the two of us talking reality to one another – it stuck out in Michael's mind. I think he thought it

happened a lot more than it did! We were just too busy. He knew that I was always there for him and that I was always trying to get things done. I know that he appreciated that, and we became close that season."

**DIFFICULT TIMES**

Getting things done was a difficult proposition. At this point, *TNG* did not have a completely clear identity and many of the writing staff felt that the show should be more like *THE ORIGINAL SERIES*. The problem was that Gene Roddenberry had different ambitions for this series and often rejected the story ideas they put forward, even though they would have worked perfectly well with Kirk, Spock and McCoy. Inevitably, many freelance writers had great difficulty getting a handle on what was needed, and this forced the staff to rewrite more than they would have hoped.

"We'd get scripts in where the first draft was so bizarre that all you could do was laugh hysterically," recalled Behr. "There was a script by a writer who went off to have a quite stellar career in television. We read the draft and all we could do was sit there with tears rolling down our faces we were laughing so hard, but it was the laughter of doomed people, because we were going to have to rewrite this and make it work! He had

obviously given up and written things in there that were meant for laughs. It wasn't fun."

Behr had some sympathy with the belief that *TNG* should have been more like *THE ORIGINAL SERIES*, and said that he felt most of the show's characters were too perfect to be interesting. "I really don't mean this as a knock on the show, because it proved itself a million times over, but it never engaged me," said Behr. "To me, as I've said many a time and often, *THE NEXT GENERATION* was the Connecticut of *STAR TREK* series. It seemed very white and homogenized. I just felt it had no fire to it. I was told by Gene that human beings had no problems in the 24th century, but I really believe if you have no problems, you have no humanity."

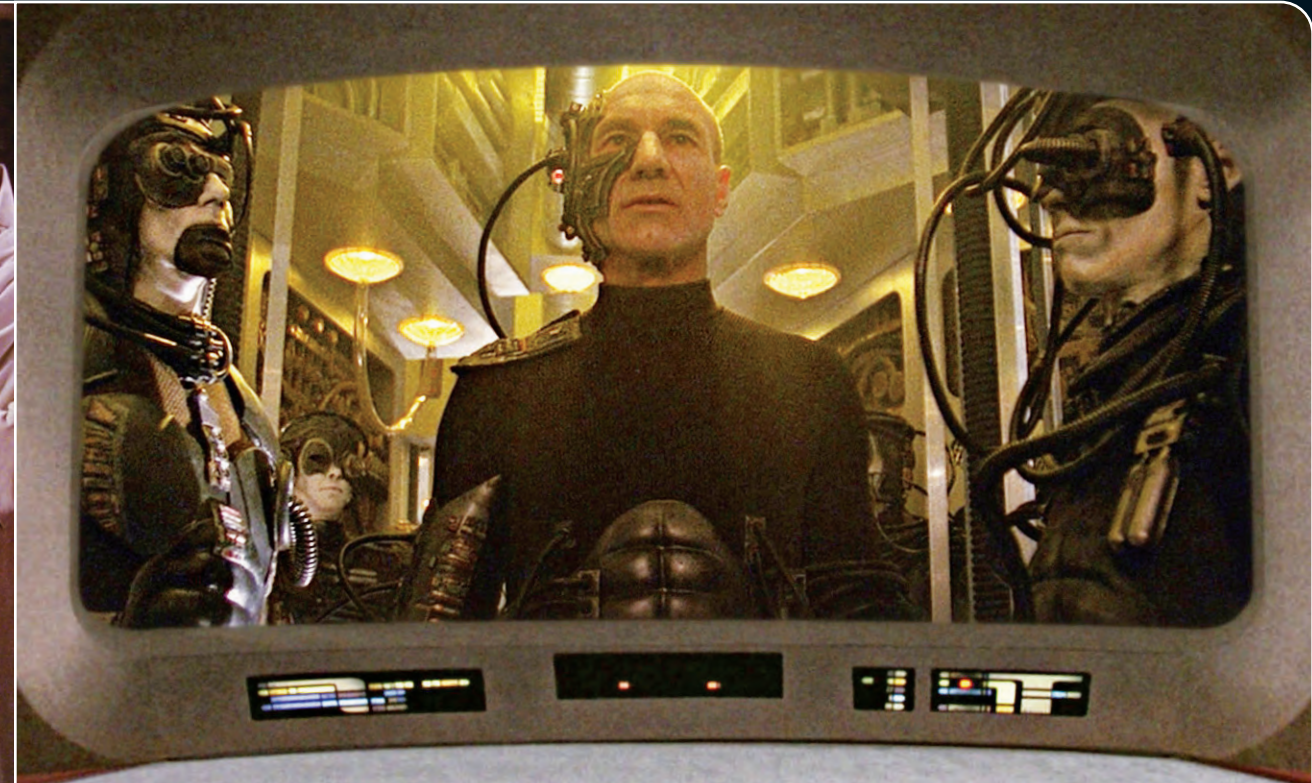
**ROUGH EDGES**

Given this, it was not surprising that Behr was keen to give Picard and his crew some rough edges. He recalled there were "heated discussions" about the scene at the end of 'The Most Toys,' where it was clear that Data had fired his gun at Fajo, but was transported away before the beam could emerge. "As drama taken on its own, that was interesting and it was good, but on *STAR TREK* it felt like you were reinventing the wheel," Behr explained. "You were taking these characters to

▲ The writers were able to show another side of Data's character when he was kidnapped by Kivas Fajo. Under extreme duress, Data finally decided that he had no choice other than to kill Fajo, but he was beamed out at the last second.







▲ Behr was attracted to characters who were not perfect, such as Miles O'Brien, who did not learn his lesson on the holodeck after dislocating his shoulder a few times.

▲ 'Sarek' was an episode that Behr worked on with Ron Moore. He was particularly pleased with the scene where Picard lost control after mind-melding with Sarek.

▲ To Behr's mind, turning Captain Picard into a Borg was a stroke of genius by Michael Piller, who wrote the episode. Behr felt that it broke down Picard's previous stoic character, making him more human, and it became one of the seminal moments in the show's history.

such a far place. That was true even in the *DEEP SPACE NINE* years when we did shows like 'In the Pale Moonlight,' which seemed so earth-shaking for the franchise."

#### INTERESTING CHARACTER

Data's decision to shoot Fajo could be explained in terms of his program, but pushing the other characters to the limit wasn't as easy. However, even at this early stage Behr found someone who he would later develop on *DEEP SPACE NINE*.

"I had big hopes for O'Brien," said Behr. "He was already somebody who seemed very human and interesting to me. I wrote this scene with Ron where O'Brien had been on the holodeck and he had dislocated his shoulder kayaking. I just loved the fact that Crusher was going 'Again? Change the program.' And he didn't want to. Then later on we called it back on *DEEP SPACE NINE*, he was doing it again with Bashir – he still hadn't cracked it!"

Behr was also very pleased with the way they were able to portray Sarek, when he appeared toward the end of the season. In 'Sarek,' Spock's father was suffering from a debilitating disease

that made it difficult for him to control his emotions. "I always liked that episode; I really did," said Behr. "It was one that caught my attention during the process of doing it. Basically, it was a character-oriented episode. Little did I know at that time that it would become part of my life as well. I had no idea that Alzheimer's would strike my own family and I would have to deal with my dad for three years."

#### LOSING CONTROL

One of the things that Behr thought made the episode work so well was the parallels between Sarek and Picard. He definitely felt that Picard was a character who repressed his emotions and kept himself under strict control, much like the disciplined Vulcans. He could see that the scene with the mind-meld would be an interesting opportunity to show the captain in a different light. "I was just so excited about this mind-meld," said Behr. "But it was a scene that Patrick (Stewart) really did not want to do at first, because he didn't want to show Picard losing control. Rick and I had to convince him it was going to be a really good scene."

Another highlight of the year was working with Ron Moore, who had just joined the staff in his first professional writing job. Behr acted as a mentor to him, looking over his scripts and teaching him everything he could.

"I never really set out to mentor people, but I have a way of working that is very intensive," said Behr. "Ron and I did 'Sarek' together. That was the one that we really had fun with. We did less work, but some work, on 'Transfigurations.'

#### WRITING FOR THE FANS

"Ron loved *THE ORIGINAL SERIES*, to him this was holy grail time. He took *THE ORIGINAL SERIES* very seriously. Ron is a real fan, and he wrote for the fans. I remember reading the script for 'Sins of the Father' and thinking it was good. I remember being down on the set with Ron in the Klingon Great Hall. Man, it was a big set, and there were a lot of extras, and that freakin' kid was vibrating out of his skin, he was so excited. God bless him."

By the end of the year, Behr was shattered. He started working with Michael Piller on the story for 'The Best of Both Worlds,' but was delighted when his boss offered to finish the script on his own.

"I remember working on the story with him," said Behr. "Then, he told me, 'You know, I'm going to just take a pass at this. I've got an idea how to make it work.' I was thinking, 'Well, this is the last episode. I had been working on 'Transfigurations,' and I was already going to Hawaii and thinking of not coming back."

#### MOMENT OF BRILLIANCE

Behr remembered just how impressed he was with Piller's script, but it was only when he looked back that he realized that he was witnessing an historic moment in television. "What Michael did was the most brilliant thing that happened," said Behr. "At the time I have to admit it didn't quite dawn on me; I knew it was a good episode, but I had no idea that it was going to be the seminal episode that changed everything around. By taking Picard, who I always felt was a cold fish, and making him a Borg, by making him a machine, Michael established his humanity. It was a brilliant move. I have to say I have experienced very few brilliant moments that I can look back on and say, 'Yeah, that's the moment.' But that truly was. That was really Michael."

# STAR TREK™

