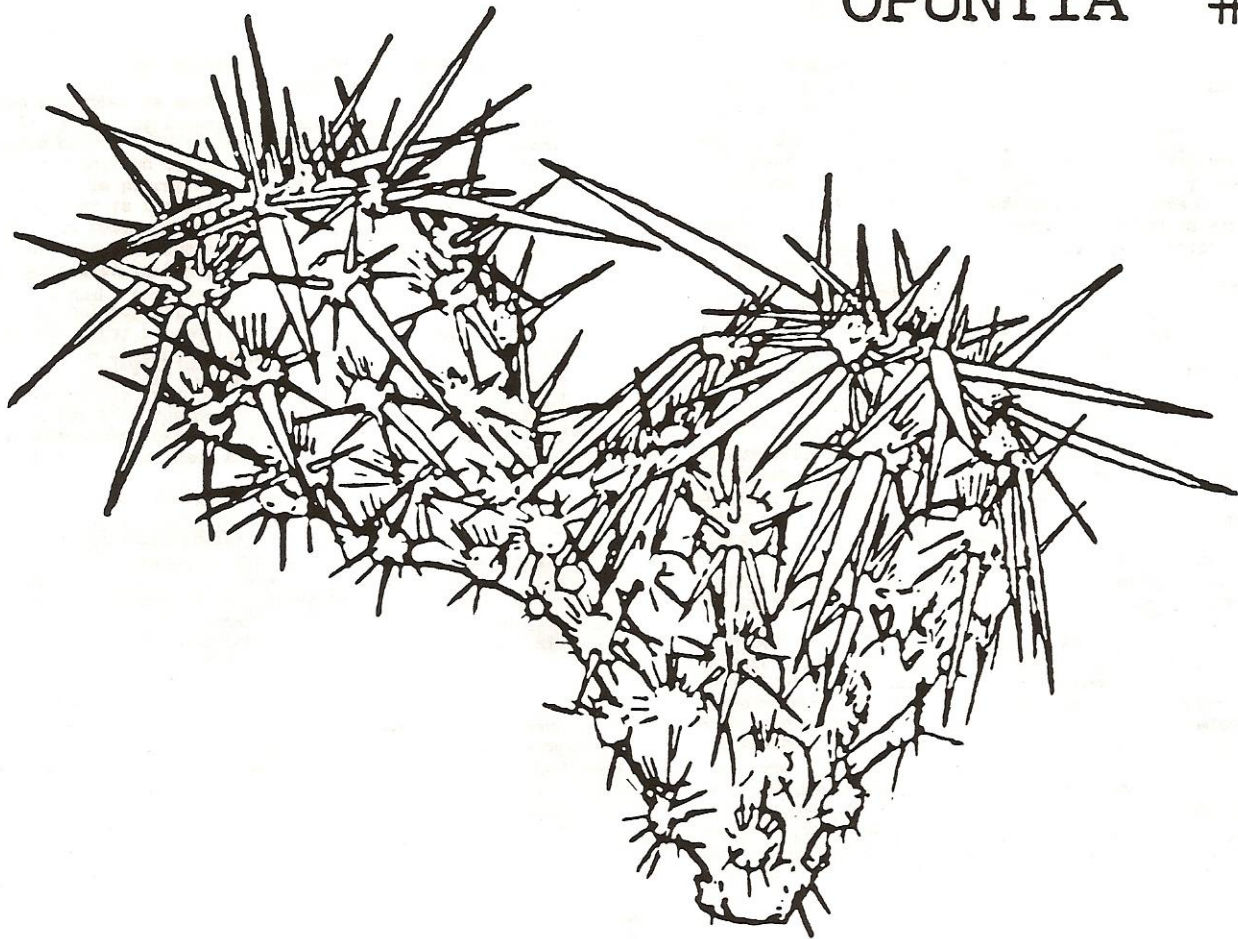


OPUNTIA #5



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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It can be had for \$1 cash, a letter of comment, or zine trade. Back issues are all available at \$1 each.

ART CREDITS: The cover depicts Opuntia clavata, and was done in 1920 by an unknown artist for the book "The Cactaceae. Descriptions and illustrations of plants of the cactus family.". The page 12 fillo was done in 1962 by M. Walter Pesman for his book "Meet Flora Mexicana", and shows O. leptocaulis.

EDITORIAL: This issue starts off Part One of a fanhistory on Edmonton by Garth Spencer. I've also got an Art Strike issue on the backburner waiting for a contributor to send in his article. In the more distant future, a reviews issue will appear (but don't send me any, they will all be my own) in which I hope to cover more than just the usual bestsellers. All in all, OPUNTIA will have a busy schedule, my bank account willing.

My philosophy in publishing OPUNTIA has been to aim for frequency rather than size. I can't afford to publish a FOSFAX or Lan's Lantern style zine, but sixteen pages in this format is relatively cheap. It does mean that most locs will be brutally edited to save space. If it seems that I'm cutting off debates abruptly or chopping great chunks out of your letters, please don't take it personally. I try not to wafh too many loccers but that will have to happen as well.

I've had a number of people asking if I know anything about XENOFIL, that is, where is it? I'm not involved in Calgary fandom, so I don't hear the news about town. I have asked around and I'm told that XENOFIL is not defunct, just in a Real-Soon-Now mode.

ConVersion is still humming along. It will be the only major Alberta con next year, since NonCon moved to Lotusland. It appears that 1992 will be a fairly quiet year for Alberta fandom. I suspect that all of western Canada will have its energies diverted to the Winnipeg 1994 con over the next three years.

In the absence of a Canadian newszine, which is what XENOFIL was supposed to be, I can only suggest that hot items be sent to BCSFAzine. Although I'll print the odd bit of news in my editorials or as fillers, I don't want to make OPUNTIA into a newszine. My view of OPUNTIA is that it will take the long view, hence the Spencerian histories and emphasis on trends and events that might not make other zines.

Canadian newspapers have made fascinating reading in the last couple of weeks. The front-page news seems to consist mostly of headlines about Ukraine independence or Quebec independence. Croatia has made Brian Mulroney an uncomfortable man, seeing that his wife is Serbian. All those SF stories predicting a world government, usually the U.N. or a USA-USSR coalition, appear to be off the target. What we seem to be aiming at is greater economic unification but more political and cultural autonomy. The trends are all over the chart; Canada and USSR are fragmenting while Europe is merging.

IF YOU'RE NOT ENJOYING YOURSELF, IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM

(This version: November 19, 1991)

by Garth Spencer

In trying to complete these notes on Alberta fanhistory, I was forced to realize that the truth is what we make it. Events and their meanings shifted and altered in the memories of participants so much that I had to make up my own mind -- pretty arbitrarily -- what, or whom, to believe, if I wanted to make any sense of anything.

Most of the fans who participated in, and have commented upon, Edmonton fandom have differed on one or two issues: how much one is responsible for the state of his fan community, and what to expect of the other members. The most unproductive part of this continuing difference of opinion is that I don't think it ever gets thrashed out in so many words.

Fragments

Perhaps the earliest mention of any single fan in Canada is a brief note about one Allis Vilette of Alberta, who wrote to *Fantasy Magazine* in 1934. (Harry Warner, *All Our Yesterdays*)

Jack Bowie-Reed's History of the Canadian SF Association mentions a Calgary club, among the groups comprising the CSFA between 1948 and 1951. (J. B.-W., *History of the CSFA*)

From 1956 to the early 60's, Georgina Ellis of Calgary edited fanzines and traded writings and drawings with Harry Calnek, of Granville Ferry, N.S. In the early 60's, she moved to Ottawa and became Mrs. Norm Clarke; the Clarkes edited zines together not quite ever after.

It would be nice to get some more information about Calgary fandom in the early 70's. Marianne Neilsen (of Edmonton) says that in 1973, Calgary had a club called Alberta Scientifrication; at the few meetings she attended, she met fans of UFOs, time travel, antigravity devices ... she got the clear impression that their elevators didn't quite go all the way to the top floor.

In January 1975, the University of Calgary held an official SF week (featuring Leonard Nimoy, Harlan Ellison, A.E. van Vogt, and a NASA display), which attracted 3000 people.

Michael Hall adds: "Tara! has a couple of fanzines from the 'Alberta SF Society' of the early 70's. The only earlier stuff than that is a reference to a number of Edmonton & Calgary fans in the list done by Chester Cuthbert in the 50's for the C.S.F.A. ... I couldn't track any of them, so I gave up."

Growing Pains

The Edmonton SF and Comic Art Society was founded by January 1976; the president was one Ian Fraser; its membership dues at that time were \$5, and the members ranged in age from 9 to over 30 years old.

Robert Runte writes: "Originally, the club had a deal with Cinema 16 (pre-repertory theatre) and co-sponsored an SF series. The Cinema 16 team realized they could make more cash on their own and gave ESFCAS the boot, leaving the club high and dry, without meeting space, and (with) bills. (ESFCAS had met in the theatre after the movie.)" Some of the films were popular items like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and were drawing cards. (Michael Hall clears up one point -- these were Student Union film showings, not ESFCAS film showings.)

King Log (I)

Now, a dispute arose, early on, when the club seemed to be drifting. As Dave Vereschagin later put it in the *ESFCAS Newsletter*, not only were club activities not being done, they were being undone by the exec's inactivity. ESFCAS had planned a number of activities in 1976: a picnic in July, a writers' workshop, movie showings, a lecture, a fanzine, even a con; but publicity was nonexistent (the Wee Book Inns received no membership forms), no August executive meeting was held, neither was a planned 'trade-a-con', and preparations for the picnic just sort of disappeared.

Dave Vereschagin, Bob Thompson and Andrew Thompson sent an open letter to members, outlining their dissatisfaction with the lack of activity, and with the unrealistic expenses which the executive were contemplating. Vereschagin, Bob Thompson and Eugene Plawiuk later ran with others as a slate for the executive; they promised to get activities organized, to inform the members of what was going on, and to stop the drifting.

The September newsletter explained that Ian Fraser had left town in the middle of elections, and the vice-president couldn't be found; so the Plawiuk slate were forced to take charge in August, and act as an interim executive. Other pieces of paper in E.B. Klassen's fanzine library indicate that Ian Fraser's communications to ESFCAS actually existed, but evidently they weren't reaching all the members. The Plawiuk slate promised proper elections in December, got the newsletter on the road, and made themselves accessible.

(Think about this. Robert Runte writes that "Ian moved to Calgary for personal [school] reasons about this time"; but that doesn't explain why he didn't get club activities so organized as to carry on, before he left; or why he left without sufficiently communicating with his club.)

By the end of the Plawiuk executive's term, ESFCAS was out of debt; book and poster discounts for members had been arranged at several stores; and membership lists had been printed, so people could meet and identify each other. Assistance was being solicited for various club activities. The Wee Book Inns had continued to support ESFCAS in this period, and the exec. had effectively redirected the club.

The 1977 exec. included John McBain (president "at his second meeting"), David Stuart (VP), and Robert Runté (sec/treas). By this time, meetings were being held in the Student Union Building at the University of Alberta. ESFCAS had invested \$\$ in a group called Paranoid Publishing (Vereschagin, Plawiuk and Bob Thompson), who put out some semiprozines. *Antares* was devoted to SF criticism, and included art by Vereschagin; the other (*Quest*) was devoted to comic art criticism. Robert Runté indicates that only two SF and one comic zine were published. Paranoid Publishing also sold Red Sonya T-shirts and John Byrne art at the first Open House and Book Exchange in March, an event which turned out to be a great way to advertise. (OHBE -- "Oh-bee (one)" -- get it?) The March newsletter, like the one before it, was reproduced by ditto, and was evidently expanding its coverage of local, SF, film and comics news. Robert Runté was culling most of this material for the *ESFCAS Newsletter* from *Karass* (then North America's main fan newszine). Fannish news from abroad included notes on Minicon 12, and Westercon XXX in Vancouver.

A Little Romance

By this time, many if not most ESFCAS members were 20- to 25-year-old males, undergraduates or graduate students at the U of A. The release of *Star Wars* about this time seems to have propelled a new influx of SF fans into fandom; memberships in ESFCAS, at any rate, went up; so did the percentage of female membership. (Robert Runté writes that this is "not strictly accurate; ESFCAS was always about 50/50 male/female after the first six months, but it is true that it ran as a huge singles club for the first couple of years.")

ESFCAS seems to have gone through a number of distinct phases, and Marianne Neilsen calls what now happened the "romance phase." During the "romance" phase, according to Diane Walton-LeBlanc, Edmonton fandom would party at the drop of a hat, and for a few months meetings were held not just weekly, but twice a week. Neilsen sees the "romance" phase itself as going through a few stages. First, members met other members to, well, totally identify with. Then, little faults, appeared, and built up ... and finally any mutual abrasiveness became super-wounding. Great, stormy split-ups followed, about the time of NonCon 1, which tangled personal, political and administrative issues. Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes:

... It's like a hasty marriage following a whirlwind courtship. Most members of ESFCAS at that time were swept away by the simple fact that, finally, after (usually) a crummy childhood and lonely adolescence, they had found a group of people who spoke the same language and shared the same interests.

Instant infatuation was a natural thing, and thus followed the period of the partying and growing closer together with members of the opposite (or the same) gender. The mutual trust and comfort level among fans is, I think, a unique thing which should be treasured and enjoyed.

(Not everybody, it turned out later, had the same background before coming to ESFCAS. We will return to this when covering AnnDel Savelle's term as president.)

Unfortunately, when any love affair goes sour because the shining armour gets a little tarnished, people tend to want to place blame, rather than accept the fact that things just didn't work out, and try to remain friends. We took sides in the conflict ... (Unfortunately some of us are of the opinion that dredging up these memories is rather painful; but as you say, it may help other young organizations to realize that their problems are nothing new. Life does go on, and amazingly enough, some of us do mature with age.)

By summer 1977, ESFCAS membership had grown to 122 ("22 active members -- lots more we never saw." Robert Runté) Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes that ESFCAS meetings were primarily social; members and executives seemed to be more interested in socializing at them than in any programmed activities. All business was done at ONE Annual General Meeting each year. (This might be a good tip for clubs which have trouble getting any decisions taken, or any business done.) By this time, Dave Vereschagin had introduced John Durno to ESFCAS. Vereschagin and Durno both became personalzine publishers and well-represented fanartists in ESFCAS. Over the summer of 1977, fanac increased rather than slacking off; among other activities members came up with were a writing workshop and a second Open House and Book Exchange. The University of Alberta SF & Comic Art Society was reactivated in the fall (essentially a subsidiary of ESFCAS, run by Andrew Thompson, for dealing with the University). The second Open House and Book Exchange featured five bookstore tables, films, a club display, refreshments, speakers, and the release of *Quest* from Paranoid Publishing. 750 - 800 people came; after this, ESFACKians decided to hold NonCon in 1978. The summer 1977 newsletter (the first to be mimeo'd) featured a Suncon report, and referred to a collection of Westercon XXX reports in Nootka/Revetawa, available from Robert Runté: good, informative, instructional material for the fledgling NonCon SF Society of Alberta. This Society was started "so that planning for NonCon I could commence," Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes:

We needed some credibility when dealing with hotels for contracts and so forth, as well as the financial protection for the executive in case the con lost money ...

A side note: NonCon was always meant to be held in places other than Edmonton. We accepted the fact that local organizers would eventually burn out, and it was only a matter of time before clubs in other cities grew large enough and organized enough to handle a con of that size. Calgary was an obvious choice, and Rick (LeBlanc) did a lot of lobbying to get a Calgary executive for NonCon IV.

We didn't make it an Alberta Society for nothing. And when some active Edmonton fans moved to Red Deer, it was an obvious choice to have the con in a central location.

October 1977 is the first mention of the all-woman Lysistrata Corps Ladies' Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society. This was one of several small interest groups that sprang up when ESFCAS grew big enough; members met new people at the door, introduced them to likeminded fans, and helped convivialize the meetings.

... the Lysistrata Corps was actually "born" when the crew went to Westercon XXX in Vancouver in 1977. The women wanted to do something that would be unique to Edmonton fandom, so they had L.C. T-shirts made up, and I believe ... the men were the 'men's auxiliary.'

The Corps was good, mainly because ESFCAS females were all of the same age (23 - 25), and we enjoyed each other's company. So we arranged evenings for 'the girls,' and when Yvonne Anderson and Tony Higgins got married, we established the tradition of the stag party for LC only. The guest of honor is treated to a lavish supper at a good (usually Chinese) restaurant, followed by an all-night party at which she is presented with something slinky ... (As we get older, the parties get shorter! Few all-nighters these

days). If nobody is due to get hitched, we find another excuse for a party. I suppose we are rather smug about the whole thing, because of the disparaging remarks about women not being able to get along in any organization. It's traditional that the women in Old Guard ESFCAS have been a positive driving force in all club events, and we don't seem to have any problems with cooperation. ...

The Lysistrata Corps are also responsible for the infamous male harem application form. Harlan Ellison is honorary Chief Concubine. ...

By Dec. '77, John McBain could write a fairly satisfied retrospective on his exec.'s effect on the club; he also described some future plans. Robert Runte gave a treasurer's report (which had not been attended to before his term). Among other new activities were preparations for *The Brand New Symbolic Peach Pit*, ESFCAS' planned clubzine (which unfortunately never appeared), and the appearance of DADAPA, the fun-and-nonsense apa (founded by Dave Vereschagin, "the only one who understood real Dada" -- Robert Runte; the apa and Vereschagin's perzine absorbed most of Vereschagin's energies). ESFCAS was also showing its own film program around this time.

The 1978 executive included Marianne Neilsen (president), John Durno (VP), Robert Runte (sec./treas.), Yvonne Anderson (house committee director), Mary-Karen Reid (program committee director). David Vereschagin became newsletter editor; his personalzine first class was already going, and he started *White Space*, his genzine, the same year. By this point ESFCAS was the largest club in Canada, with over 150 members. Marianne Neilsen noted that a great number of fringe groups had formed in ESFCAS, with their own activities; she named the Lysistrata Corps, which held a "benefit orgy" (should I ask?); the Permanent Floating Riot Club, which held all-night parties ("The PFRC included virtually all the active members -- active in the soci-a-l social side of things": Michael Hall); a noisy Chivalry & Sorcery group (quickly tossed out); the DADAPists, and a "conspicuous" Trekker group. Marianne Neilsen and Diane Walton-LeBlanc attest to a short-lived Darkovan Council, started two months before NonCon 1, which later became

the Council of the Black Tower; published *Idriel Rising* (Joyce Rubin ed.), and faded out after the con. Some of the Darkovans showed up at V-Con 6 in May 1978.

JIANTS IN THE EARTH, AND MIGHTY FEN OF OLD

Fanzine activity kept rising in Edmonton from 1978 to 1980. ESFCAS' newsletter was rechristened *Neology* in 1978. John Durno entered the fray, uh, field by producing *The Old Zing Letterzine*. Ron Gillies threatened to come out with *Dragonscales*, the fantasy fanzine he was compiling. To add to the confusion, the club mimeo was made available to the members for reproducing their own zines (e.g. *Weird Tails*). In 1979, Georges Giguère started *Compound Fracture: Dreamscapes* (formerly Keith Fenske's DADAPazine) appeared, and so did the new *ESFCAS Guide to SF & Fandom*.

Dave Vereschagin, John Durno, Robert Runte and Christine Kulyk started a highly active group called the Gang of Four (later including Randy Reichardt and Michael Hall), "because they agreed so well on the intellectual outlook on life", Michael Hall writes. "Later I was added, along with Rosanne Charest when I started seeing her, and Bob Weir because 'he was Robert's friend'. Randy Reichardt was an ex-officio member, sorta like Steve George in DWF. We were also always the fanzine fans in the club, with the exception of Georges Giguère ... " And they put out *The Monthly Monthly*.

You might want to make a note of what the Gang of Four did: they took it in turn to put out a quality genzine, with contributions mostly from within the group. Each member took a course in downtown Edmonton in quality mimeography. Unfortunately the Gang didn't manage to keep each other from burning out --TMM became *The Bimonthly Monthly* and then, eventually, disappeared. Some but not all of the group were *Neology* editors, earlier or later. Georges Giguère writes that the early Gang of Four held high positions on the concom of NonCon 1.

(This was also around the time when Mike Hall and Randy Reichardt, of Decadent Winnipeg Fandom, moved to Edmonton. Mike Hall had written wistfully about the lack of activity in Winnipeg fandom; Randy Reichardt would write that Decadent Winnipeg Fandom didn't die -- it just moved to

Edmonton, "temporarily." Other parts moved to Kitchener, Ontario, or to Minneapolis.)

Hexagram 23: Breaking Apart

The first NonCon was held Oct. 7 - 9, 1978, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Edmonton. GoH was Marion Zimmer Bradley; FanGoH was Grant Canfield. Dave Vereschagin (the chair), Robert Runte, Ron Gillies and the rest of the concom were organized far in advance (according to Neology), but showed signs of rising nervous tension as the event approached.

Attendance was around 400 to 450. The Four Seasons was not very satisfactory to the concom ("the nicest by any order of magnitude in the city, and not a real good place for a con this size": Michael Hall), so they determined to hold the con elsewhere in subsequent years. \$800 was advanced from the Alberta government for the writers' workshop (which Diane Walton-LeBlanc says was returned, because it turned out not to be needed).

There are unclear references to political blowups after NonCon I ("As a result of NonCon -- people who were great to socialize with turned out to be a pain to work with." Robert Runte). Georges Giguere writes that "small important legal and business details were attended to at the very last minute (incorporation papers for the Alberta Culture grant were sworn in by Ron Gillies' mother, a J of the P, shortly before Vereschagin joined me, Lorna Toolis, Mary-Karen and Larry Reid in our mad caravan to Iguanacon)." Michael Skeet indicates that criticisms of the handling of NonCon I (before, during and after the event) brought responses in kind, directed at NonCon II. But almost all the steam had been let off by NonCon III.

Some people really downplay this. Marianne Neilsen, on the other hand, has expressed an opinion that NonCon I nearly blew up ESFCAS, or that personal problems had turned into political problems; perhaps too many differences were not worked out between people, but exposed in print: perhaps, when people met and socialized, there was too much purely social talking. I gather that this was when ESFCAS really started to divide up into different interest groups: "By this time (it was) fanzine fans vs. con fans vs. club fans, etc." (Robert Runte) Georges Giguere writes that it was about this time that the Gang of Four started labelling some other members "Them". Birds of a feather tended to group around strong personalities in the club; some cliques were open, others were not; new people who didn't fit in

immediately were not really welcomed. Already, says AnnDel O'Brien, the Old Guard and Gang of Four were talking about "the good old days."

1979 was a successful year, to tell from *Neology* #5:1's editorial. The club had a new constitution, a 750-volume SF/fantasy library, and was in the black (to three figures). Regular meetings were held in the best location to date (the Henry Marshall Tory building), various (if fewer) parties occurred, and several marriages took place. On the out-of-town front, the "Cattlefarm Galactica" tape (produced by Eric Tilbrook of DEC in Calgary) was popular everywhere that fans heard it.

NonCon II was held in the Edmonton Inn that October, and featured GoH Gordon R. Dickson, and FanGoH Eli Cohen. (The chair was Lorna Toolis, secretary was Diane Walton-LeBlanc, and treasurer was Rosanne Charest.) NonCon II was a successful con in several senses, drawing 340 people, making a 3-figure profit, and getting reasonably good media coverage.

A strong Calgary contingent lobbied to hold NonCon 4 in their city. Michael Hall claims that Robert Runte decided a long time before that Calgarians should hold a NonCon, and pushed them.

ESFCAS was supposed to start a weekly TV show on the local cable 10/community station, in 1980. Plans were underway for NonCon III. The new executive of ESFCAS were Bert van den Boogaard (president), Rick LeBlanc (VP), Diane Walton (treas), AnnDel Savelle (sec), Brad Grier (program committee director), and Jim Ferris (house committee director). Three of these execs. worked on NonCons -- Rick and Diane on NonCon II; Brad Grier was to work on NonCon III.

Two writers' workshops were started in Edmonton, one in preparation for NonCon: another (Mandala, overseen by AnnDel Savelle) patterned after the Clarions. (AnnDel keeps protesting that Mandala was never an ESFCAS project: they did, however, come up with prize money for the NonCon short story contest, and AnnDel did run the contest twice.)

(Note: AnnDel [now O'Brien] says that she entered ESFCAS in 1979, hoping to find a market for her art. What she found, instead, was a general misapprehension that she was a fan, to start with, who was interested/could

be induced to contribute art for free to fanzines, as a regular practice: that she was another lonely, alienated, ill-adjusted person ["There, there, little fan, you're home and safe now"]; and somehow she wound up getting more and more involved in ESFCAS activities.)

Robert Runte, editing *Neology* that year, began his "Canadian Fandom" column, which he and Michael Hall eventually spun off into *New Canadian Fandom*, "the flagship of Canadian fandom": his aims were to get good ideas for ESFCAS from other clubs, or to overcome local isolation, as well as to encourage the exchange of information between fan groups in Canada. Other fanzines: Marianne Neilsen also put out *Stir Wars II* in 1980, a collection of fannish recipes. In Calgary, Eric Tilbrook put out *DuoDec 1*.

NonCon III was held Oct. 10 - 12 at the Edmonton Inn, with GoH Vonda McIntyre and FanGoH Jim Young. (Randy Reichardt was chair, Bert van den Boogaard was vice-chair, and Audrey Pope was sec.-treas.). The program featured a short story contest, and a film program for which the concomm bought, rather than rented films (they had had much trouble with film distributors). Memberships started at \$8 and went up to \$12; as before, a separate box number was used for the convention address.

In 1981 Lorna Toolis commented (in *Neology* #6:3/4) that with a membership of over 130, and meeting attendances of 20 - 40 people, just about 10 members were actively involved in ongoing fanac at any one time. There was a need for more active members, and she urged people to get involved in the club's activities. Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes:

By 1981, it was becoming apparent that ESFCAS meetings were taking on a different flavour. Previous NonCon chairs tended to gafiate for a year or two, due to burnout, and older members were starting to develop interests outside fandom. The younger members were not interested in doing more than playing D&D in corners of the room, or watching videos when Jeff (Lewis) brought his VCR. Few were willing to work on fundraising efforts or membership drives, and Robert Runte was the main recruiter for the

young fans who admired him and saw him as a BNF. The punks were beginning to take over ESFCAS, because it was a safe place to be weird. Unfortunately, their philosophy was to consume and not to contribute.

Michael Skeet seems to corroborate this; although he joined ESFCAS about this time, he speculates that 1981 was when a number of actifans were burning out, and/or becoming more career-oriented.

Neology #6:3/4 began some interesting features. One was the "Famous ESFACKians" series, an excellent way of introducing interesting personalities to new and uninstructed members. (AnnDel O'Brien noticed, however, that the people writing the columns and the people written about were largely the same people.) Another was a listing of the fringe groups, not only in Edmonton, but across the continent. Another was the "Granny Filk" series, instructing neos on the finer points of fannish common knowledge; this was coedited by Marianne Neilsen and Michael Skeet, and ran (Neilsen says) intermittently for about two years. (Some of these articles may be lost; they should be recovered!) *Neology* also featured extensive SF & comic news, book reviews, the "Gourmet's Guide to the Galaxy", and fanzine reviews.

This was also the year Robert Runte started *New Canadian Fandom*. Along with Canadian club and con listings, Canadian SF reviews and fanzine reviews, Robert had short pieces about book releases and fan activities across the country.

In 1981, NonCon IV was held in Calgary, at the Palliser Hotel in October. GoHs were Larry Niven and Grant Thiessen; TM was Orson Scott Card. This was the first NonCon outside Edmonton, and New Canadian Fandom #4 reported that Edmonton fans were reluctant to let it go -- it would also be the first con in Calgary (to anyone's knowledge). Despite wild rumors, the con was reasonably good: though few outof-province fans showed up, attendance was around 520.

... I recall that we had rumblings of rifts in the Calgary concomm, which made some of us nervous about the

outcome of the convention (Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes). Chair Dave Moloney had a run-in with Steve Pikov and Lexie Pakulak (Treasurer and Sec.) and, from what I understand, dismissed them from the committee at the last minute, and brought Bonnie Liesemer in to fix up the books ... However, from S&L's point of view, Dave wasn't too reliable, as he buggered off to Europe for a month-long holiday less than two months before the con, and left very little direction for the rest of the con. Steve and Lexie are good friends of ours (through BCAPA, among other things) but they were ostracized from Calgary (and Edmonton) fandom for a number of years after this.

The con enjoyed the "first Sci Fi con in our city" type of success, and introduced a lot of locals to fandom. As you say, out-of-towners were limited, because of some misplaced loyalty to Edmonton NonCons, and some Edmonton fans found convenient excuses to be absent.

The Palliser was a so-so choice for a con. For a "snob" hotel, we were treated with respect and friendliness by the staff, and have no complaints. However, with no pool or jacuzzi, a lot of us who had been spoiled at other cons were unhappy.

The only bad vibrations I got were about the female who ran the art show and auction. She was very disorganized and not at all helpful to the artists. There were complaints about not receiving payment for works sold at auction until several MONTHS after the con. This is inexcusable, but that lady was not asked to run another art show. ... ("She was, in fact, obstructive" --AnnDel O'Brien) There is a general impression that Calgarians fumbled the ball when it came to NonCon; went overboard on expenses, and barely came up even. Cliff Samuels reports that he was given only one or two months' notice to handle the dealers' room, and a few glitches and misunderstandings left some people disgruntled in Calgary until NonCon VI. A number ("many" says Samuels) of members resigned both from the DEC and

NonCon concomm groups in February of 1983. The executive began to seem untrustworthy or unfair, a number of other disputes arose, and the whole shebang didn't seem fun anymore.

On the Edmonton fanzine front, *New Canadian Fandom* #2/3 reported as of December that *The Bimonthly Monthly* was being suspended. The decision was made in May 1981, after TBM missed its first deadline. NCF inherited the remainder of TBM's materials, which appeared in NC- issues #5 and later.

1982 seemed to be a year of apathy for Edmonton. One sign of this is that ESFCAS had to dragoon Ian McKeer, a Britfan who was just passing through, into editing two issues of *Neology*. What they got seemed to me to be a strange, facetious, punk product, not simply a club newsletter (I was editing a Victoria clubzine and trading with *Neology* at the time). Not everybody was prepared to appreciate it. His two issues excited much comment, to say the least: AnnDel O'Brien indicates that was what was intended -- "I was Pres. that year, and we wanted to do something with the money available to *Neology*, not recipes and mutual back-patting. Ian used the European fan form, which tends to be far more sercon. Ian is to be commended for taking on *Neology* at a time when no one would even attempt it."

AnnDel O'Brien writes: "Robert and I have never agreed as to whether the club was aging at this point. (During my Pres. tenure), I was aware that things were obviously slowing -- maybe I excuse myself, but I was quite busy with club activities, trying to make a place for new folks, (and) don't think all the activity made much difference, since you 'get out of fandom what you put into it.'"

I suspect this is a foreign concept to a great many fans.

... It also didn't help that the treasurer who was elected during AnnDel O'Brien's tenure as club president did the club serious harm. He lost people's cheques, pocketed

some of the cash for memberships, lost addresses and names of members who had paid in good faith, and lost a lot of support from longtime members of the club. The *Neology* editor was not much better, and to my recollection, we went several months before the newsletter was salvaged by Georges Giguere.

AnnDel replies that no-one more competent would take the treasurer's position, so she had to take what she could get; that she knew what would happen but the treasurer in question was not dishonest, just not capable of (or inclined to) keeping track of receipts, income, expenses, addition and subtraction ... does this sound familiar? ... and "I had to wait until things were obviously in trouble before I could replace him." Kathleen Moore tracked down most of the missing money.

NonCon V was held Oct. 8 - 10 that year at the Regency Motor Hotel, in Edmonton. GoH was C.J. Cherry: FanGoH was Steve Fahnestalk. (Cochairs were Rick & Diane Walton-LeBlanc). NonCon V was also the third Convention; the winner of that year's Canadian SF & Fantasy Award was Phyllis Gotlieb, for *Judgment of Dragons*. As usual, the concomm made its own decision what trophy to give the winner, and Phyllis Gotlieb received a sculpture from a local, Edmonton artist.

NonCon V was co-chaired by Rick and myself (Diane writes), mainly because we were a good compromise politically speaking. Both Robert Runte and Ron Gillies wanted to protect the con from the influence of each other, so they ASKED us to chair V as an agreement that they would be willing to cooperate with us on the project. We moved to the Regency because the Edmonton Inn got an offer they couldn't refuse for that weekend (booking the entire hotel), and gave us a glowing recommendation to their sister hotel, the Regency, who treated us like royalty. It turned out to be a much better place for the con. The location makes access by local fans difficult (awkward bus routes for the kids) but since we can book all guest rooms with

out-of-town fans, the hotel is virtually ours for the three days, except for the pub and public restaurants, which we never go to anyhow. It allows for activities such as after-hours skinny-dipping in the pool, which we all know is a natural fannish activity, right???

The Regency is also cheaper than other Edmonton hotels, and charges reasonable room rates for guest. There have been complaints about hotel food, but I bet you will never find a reasonably priced hotel with food of the standard expected by some of our food snobs, and nobody is forced to eat there. They have learned, with experience, that when we say "prepare a brunch for 100 people", we mean "anticipate that EVERYONE will go for seconds." Hence the promise of "unlimited croissants" for NonCon IX, which will be written in stone in the contract. Besides, I've heard some horror stories about V-Con brunches and banquets.

Robert Runte, Bob Weir and Lorna Toolis were on the NonCon V/Convention 3 award subcommittee, and Robert was perhaps singlehandedly responsible for organizing the print and distribution of ballots. For his pains, he got into shit with Spider Robinson for "changing" CSFFA eligibility rules, which were never properly conveyed to NonCon in the first place. The matter was straightened out two or three years later, but NonCon V had no more luck with obtaining or passing on CSFFA information than other Conventions did, up to 1986.

Trouble and Strife?

It is at about this point that the differing viewpoints and versions of Edmonton fanhistory start to diverge radically. The following is intended to specify who was who and who said which about what. At least the way I know it; you'll make up your own minds.

Allan Brockmen and Robert Runte presented their versions of events in *Neology* #10:4/5. Most of the club, and NonCon workers, up to 1982, constituted an Old Guard, according to Runte. They sought to control NonCon ever after NonCon 1, he says. Later, this split into the "Gang of

Four" (who believed in recruiting and indoctrinating neos) and "Them" (who avoided doing so and were sometimes obstructionists), according to brockmen. "Them" opposed NonCon's move to Calgary, until they relearned the use of proxy votes in order to control this NonCon's programming policy, says Runte. Both Runte and brockmen write that Them and the Old Guard made up the club executives in alternate years. The newer members, rarely accepted by the Old Guard or represented in activities and decision-making, became known as the Third World, and objected to getting the same old bland routine, and felt opposed.

(On the other hand, members of the Old Guard felt frustrated that none of the Third World (well, hardly any) seemed prepared to take any initiative.)

Runte and brockmen present the foregoing version of events. Already you can see it conflicting over several facts with Diane Walton-LeBlanc's version of events (which came to me after I'd repeated allan brockmen at length in *Maple Leaf Rag*).

What seems to have happened is that at least two versions of reality were current, in what should have been a fun, leisure interest group. This sort of thing has happened before and will happen again, and gets taken rather too seriously.

Had members of various emerging factions bothered to sort out some facts, get each other's viewpoints, could some later divisiveness in ESFCAS have been averted?

By 1983 Edmonton fandom seemed to be slowing down. This may have been due to many factors but partly due to old fans getting tired, to feuds, or to low morale in ESFCAS.

Robert Runte's *New Canadian Fandom*, increasingly erratic since 1981, dated its sixth issue Jan. '83, and came to places like Victoria no earlier than May.

ESFCAS meetings seemed boring to some, or cliquish to new members; to some Third Worlders, the newer fans, the Old Guard seemed inclined to freeze them out. To club execs, it seemed that some of the Old Guard (e.g. from the NonCon 7 concom) had deserted them; and at the same

time, according to the cry of it, many Third Worlders just sat back, and waited for things to be done *for* them.

By Sept. 1983, ESFCAS was in an unrealized crisis. Robert Runte writes:

Basically, I found myself president of a club with fewer than ten active members and about another 80 - 90 non-attending fellow travellers. The old members wouldn't come to meetings because they had heard and done it all before, and there were no new recruits to enliven things. The newcomers wouldn't stay because there were not enough old-timers around to convince them there actually was an ESFCAS anymore. Since I didn't have a real newsletter editor, I invented one, and "he" put out an issue which gave the impression that ESFCAS was alive and well and worth coming back to.

I am happy to say that it worked. The week after *Neology* came out, I got 60 rather than 6 people out to the meeting: I put the issue out to coincide with the opening of University so we got quite a few new recruits that evening; and all the old-timers showed up to find out what the controversy in the newsletter was all about. The old guard wandered around asking all the new recruits, "Are you John Wellington?" and the new recruits kept saying, "Hey, what a big club you've got here!" The upcoming events in that issue actually came off as advertised, since the participants read about them and showed up, thinking they had forgotten an actual promise to do so!

Careful examination of issue #1 will reveal dozens of blatant hints that this was a hoax issue ... everyone disbelieved the second issue -- which is too bad since everything in it (aside from the editor's name) was real.

(*New Canadian Fandom* #7)

Diane Walton-LeBlanc comments:

... I feel it unfair to blame sagging interest on the part of newcomers on the fact that there weren't enough old

members to convince the young folks that there really was an ESFCAS anymore. If they had to depend on that sort of pep talk to "inspire" them (it's simply amazing how many of the new members feel left out because they weren't a part of the halcyon days of the PFRC) then perhaps a threat to dissolve the club was what they needed. Robert says that he invited the controversy in his hoax issue; but I had suggested a long time before that, perhaps, the ESFCAS exec. should vote to dissolve the society and donate the club assets to the Space Science Centre. Then if these young members really wanted a club, they'd form their own, instead of trying to ride on the past glories and bitch about why things weren't like they used to be. I was getting really tired of hearing that, and I was getting tired of going to Thursday night meetings and contending with a bunch of yahoos having water fights in the halls and getting University security guards on our backs because they were harassing the cleaning staff. This was a productive society? 'Nuff said.

Michael Skeet writes:

... I'm hard-pressed to come up with any other explanation for the fact that these people sat on their cans for at least four years, while Old Guard participation even in the elections fell, and did nothing to take command of the situation. By the way, the period widely regarded as the absolute nadir of ESFCASian fortunes was 1983. Between January, 1982 and January, 1984, a grand total of four issues of Neology were produced (two of them by Ian McKeer, who won an Elron Award for his efforts, and two in '83 by Robert Runte, who deserves credit for almost single-handedly trying to hold the club together while it was trying to fall apart). My point here is that all of the members of the "Third World" were around at that time. Robert Runte, who has never, ever come in for any criticism from 3W, was president. There was no input from the Old Guard to speak

of. Given those favourable (you might think) conditions, why was there no sudden renaissance of ESFCAS? Why did the 3W not take advantage of the opportunity to do all the wonderful things they claim they weren't able to do later? An interesting question, and one that, to my mind at least, can only be answered by the fact that, for all their talk, the Third Worlders simply weren't as ready as they claimed they were, to get out there and Be Active. (This year) should be very interesting, indeed. With most of the Old Guard having officially left the club, and with Jeff Lewis at last having achieved his goal of the club presidency, there should, by rights, be an absolute explosion of wonderful fanac from ESFCAS -- if the theory that it was the Old Guard that held the second generation fans back, turns out to be right. Stay tuned.

(to be continued)



LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: Harry Andruschak
Box 5309

1991-11-14

Torrance, California 90510-5309

Thanks for sending OPUNTIA #4. Unlike you, I don't buy SF magazines, not even ANALOG. Nor books. I occasionally check out a book from the library. I don't have room to store books, and I am a bit short of money anyway. And nowadays so much SF is just rehash. I think this is why Old Fans and tired-like-me sort of drift away from active reading of SF. We know all the plots, all the plot complications, all the surprise endings that no longer surprise, and all the themes that quickly get written into the ground.

One fan, who will be left nameless, told me that a few good books still are printed. So I challenged him to go into Crown Books and find me a book that was NOT part of a trilogy or series, was not blurbed to be "written in the style of", nor a shared-world story, a sequel, nor any and all derivatives. Original books only. He came out empty-handed.

As such, no, I am not all that astonished that a book rehashing The Yellow Peril is on the market. Given the average USA resentment at the economic power of the Japanese, I suspect a few more books along this line will be forthcoming, especially if YAMATO: A RAGE IN HEAVEN sells well, since imitation is the quickest way to quickie profits.

How the heck can the Canadian postal workers strike? I work for the US Postal Service and one of the terms of our being hired was to take an oath and sign a paper agreeing never to strike.

[Back in the 1960s, the then-Liberal government gave all

federal civil servants the right to strike, excepting essential workers. Posties are not considered essential, something that was disputable years ago, but is now rapidly becoming apparent in this age of fax and computer nets. Canada Post used to shut down the entire system during a strike, but now they make an attempt to keep a trickle going. It is the stated policy of Canada Post to eventually privatize the retail end of the business, such as selling stamps, renting box numbers, mailing registered letters, etc.. They are quite a ways along in this regard, and are gradually closing post offices and replacing them with Retail Postal Outlets (REPOs), which are located in a corner of a pharmacy or convenience store. Eventually the only thing Canada Post will do is sort the mail and deliver it. This latest postal strike was bitter and long because the posties were fighting REPOs and other types of contracting out. As one example, I pick up mail for the Calgary Aquarium Society from its box number at a 7-11 convenience store. I resent having mail handled by a \$6/hour clerk selling stamps along with Slurpees and Lotto tickets, but that is the future in Canada. Right now my own box number is in a post office, but they are no longer renting out new boxes, and I suspect that when they get down to a certain number, they'll forcibly move us all to some REPO.]

FROM: Paula Johanson
Box 7, Site 1, RRI
Legal, Alberta, T0G 1L0

1991-11-14

It was interesting to read your piece on NonCon 14, particularly since I saw so little of the con, just Sunday, and mostly the SF Canada meeting and the On Spec release party. Steve Fahnstalk and Lynne Taylor-Fahnstalk led some singing in the Hospitality (smoking) Room. There wasn't too much smoke, but

[continued next page]

Steve's got to borrow a better guitar in the future. He was disappointed in the one he played. Do all guitarists leave the good instrument at home and borrow someone's rec room special? I guess all those who don't buy a second plane ticket for the guitar.

Ned Brooks asked about how tights were made before stretch fabrics were invented. Before Spandex, tights were knitted by hand. Wool yarn is stretchy but knitted cotton thread has some give. Some linen was cut and sewn into tights with seams, but I think most tights were knitted. Itchier than Lycra, if you ask me.

FROM: Buck Coulson 1991-11-17
2677W - 500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

Frankly, I don't see any more harm in futuristic Japanese villains than I do in reincarnated Nazis, Communists or anyone else. If the only possible villains must be white Anglo-Saxons, then you will still have racism, if only in reverse.

Well, illiteracy is an economic problem because the illiterate don't contribute all that much to the GNP. Of course, I'm speaking of genuine illiteracy, not those people who can read but don't.

I was moderately appalled to be on a fan panel at Chicon V in which the panelists and audience sat in a circle of chairs; it meant that there was a damned small audience for fannish discussion. Fandom is becoming irrelevant to SF these days. It has no influence on the field; publishers and authors go where the money is, and who can blame them? Fans like to think they're the elite, but they aren't; one mark of the elite is that attention is paid to them.

What's the address of ON SPEC? I do a magazine review which includes INTERZONE, and I'm quite willing to put in some plugs for ON SPEC if I receive any issues. My editor doesn't allow me to do killer reviews; I can only be enthusiastic or noncommittal. The column is in COMIC BUYER'S GUIDE, and the idea is to turn a few comics fans into magazine SF.

[ON SPEC is a digest-sized prozine that can be reached at Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6E 5G6. I don't want to quote any prices in case they change by the time this note is published.]

I'll believe Lloyd Penney's comment that Canadian fandom doesn't have enough impartial historians, if only because no fandom has enough impartial historians. I'm not sure there is any such thing, for that matter, in or out of fandom.

FROM: Lloyd Penney 1991-11-16
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario, L6T 4B6

I can see the booksellers' complaints against GST. It will probably persuade people not to buy the book but borrow it from the local library, wait for it to be remaindered, or pick it up from a used-book store.

Advising people to bloc vote is probably the worst thing you can do. There's already been a disqualification or two from the final ballots of the 1989 Hugo because of the belief of bloc voting. The cheques sent in to vote confirmed it. Just nominate and vote Canadian, folks.

[I wasn't thinking about the incident with consecutively-numbered money orders, but rather MAD 3 PARTY

[continued next page]

winning the 1990 Fanzine Hugo. It was best zine???? Of course not, not in the face of Lan's Lantern, FOSFAX, or a multitude of others. But they were smart enough to vote separately, instead of buying a batch of money orders at one post office. And before anyone hollers that bloc voting is morally wrong, every democratic country with political parties has bloc voting. We vote for the Tories or the Grits or the NDP, and the parties spend a considerable amount of time rounding up their supporters and making certain they get to the polls.]

Ron Gillies' idea of ViaCon is a good one; some of the fans down here have also thought of a train trip from Toronto to Winnipeg. Perhaps we can compare notes.

[I certainly don't intend to drive to Winnipeg, which leaves trains and planes. Hopefully Via Rail will still be in business in 1994.]

FROM: Ned Brooks 1991-11-17
713 Paul Street
Newport News, Virginia 23605

Interesting discussion of the proper use of android and robot, but if, as you say was originally intended, we should use android for mechanical devices in the shape of a man, and robot for artificial organic creations, what word would we have left to apply to the nonhumanoid semisentient mechanisms we now call robots?

I never drove a VW Beetle, but although I have heard about wind problems, I've never noticed much effect on the small cars I have owned: the Chevrolet Corvair, the rather boxy Ford Cortina, the Honda Civic. I see no reason to expect greater wind effects on a small car. The area the wind can act on goes down as the square of the scale. If density were constant, the weight would go down as the cube, but I suspect small cars are a bit de-

nser than large ones, because I doubt that thickness of the sheet metal and structural members is reduced in proportion to the size of the car. The worst wind effects I have experienced were on a flat-sided van.

[My Nissan Micra has a low profile and is relatively streamlined on all sides. The Beetle, however, has high slab sides which make them susceptible to crosswinds. Although they are relatively streamlined in the front to back, the windscreen is almost vertical in most bugs.]

I quite agree that even an imperfect history is better than none at all. I have had other typewriter collectors tell me that the data in Beeching's "Century of the Typewriter" is not always correct, but for some types of data there is no other source. He is the only one who published extensive production data relating serial numbers and model to date of manufacture, for example.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Alexander Vasilkovsky, Robert Sabella, Mark Manning, R'ykandar Korra'ti, and Harry Warner Jr.

In particular, many thanks to Robert Runté, who sent me a copy of CANADIAN FANZINE BIBLIOGRAPHY, all 188 pages of it! It goes to July 1985 and is only a partial listing. Most impressive. It was compiled by Mike Hall, Taral, and Keith Fenske. I hadn't known so many zines had been published in Canada.

FROM: Dale Speirs
Box 6830
Calgary, Alberta
CANADA, T2P 2E7

WHY YOU GOT THIS ZINE

TO:

- ___ Noblesse oblige.
- ___ You contributed (this ish).
- ___ You contributed (next ish).
- ___ We trade.
- ___ We should trade. Interested?
- ___ You sent money. Thanks.
- ___ How about a letter of comment?
- ___ This is the last issue you'll receive unless you Do Something.