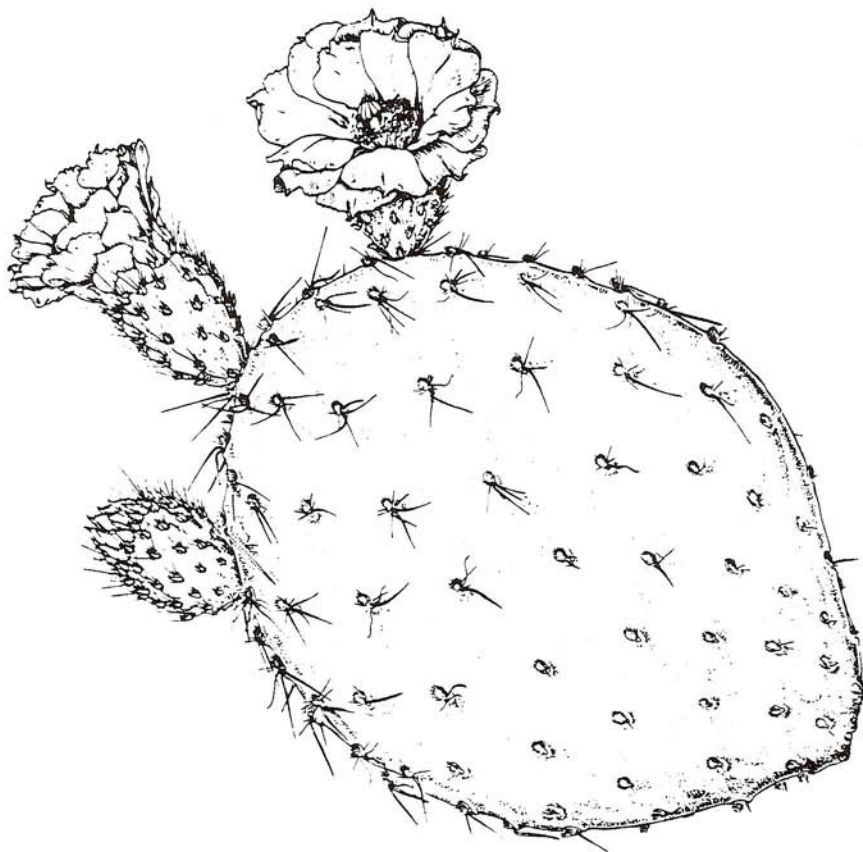


OPUNTIA #6



OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It can be had for \$1 per issue, letter of comment, or trade for your zine. Some back issues are still available but write first as I have run out of several and others are going fast. Complete sets are no longer available.

ART CREDITS: The cover was done by Lucretia Breazeale Hamilton for the 1968 book "The Native Cacti Of California", and depicts Opuntia chlorotica. The page 12 fillo is by Pamela R. Lane, out of the book "Herbaceous Garden Flora" (1957) and shows O. vulgaris. The page 15 fillo does NOT depict an opuntia and was done by Ken Clarke, originally appearing in the December 5, 1991, GAUNTLET, the student newspaper at the University of Calgary.

EDITORIAL: This ish concludes Spencer's Edmonton fan-history. He finishes up with some observations on why fandom keeps making the same dumb mistakes lol, these many years. Unfortunately, the future holds more of the same; fandom will never collectively learn.

I've got the next whole-numbered OPUNTIA well in hand, a general survey of the Art Strike, Art Lockout, Art Sabotage, and other labour-management difficulties. There'll be a reviews issue or two, probably with a new fractional numbering. I'm out of Canadian fanhistories, so by all means send me something and get your side of the story on record.

Latest euphemism: 'unwaged', seen on a theatre sign off-

ering a discount to unemployed persons. I note with pleasure that although a few used-car dealers still have 'pre-owned' cars for sale, the term really has not caught on very well.

I can now skim through the front page of our local newspapers in about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a second. Ukraine and Croatia have mostly dropped off the front page, to be replaced by the Canadian constitutional debate, which reminds me of Nolacon. Our own premier, Don Getty, made a remark about abolishing bilingualism and then immediately left on a two-week golfing vacation. The Alberta Tory caucus was left holding the bag; they weren't too thrilled at taking the heat for him. Even worse, Getty's ill-timed remark destroyed any hope Alberta had of getting an elected Senate. A federal Tory, Don Mazankowski, suggested that Getty be dropped in the deep end of a lake, but later said he was misunderstood. The federal Tories are now fourth in popularity. The Reform party has switched its attention to the Liberals, who are the new frontrunners. A great advantage to the Reformers is Liberal M.P. Shiela Copps, a motormouth who called Reform leader Preston Manning a neo-Nazi, thereby winning him sympathy and losing the Grits substantial votes. Meanwhile, a New Democratic Party author called Manning a fundamentalist Christian because Manning is a regular churchgoer. To understand the humour behind this, you have to know that the NDP was founded by the Rev. Tommy Douglas, and its house leader in the Commons for many years was the Rev. Stanley Knowles. Elsewhere, Unity Minister Joe Clark is running a series of constitutional conventions across Canada. There have been so many committees on national unity that it has become a major industry. Clark used to be External Affairs Minister and before that he was Prime Minister. A too-faithful servitor, he doesn't seem to get the idea from P.M. Mulroney that he should be seeking new career opportunities. Mulroney is too polite to boot Clark, so he is stuck with him like a houseguest who won't leave.

**IF YOU'RE NOT ENJOYING YOURSELF,
IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM
(Part II)**

(This version: November 19, 1991)

by Garth Spencer

After reading the various conflicting stories about early 80's Edmonton fandom, one might think that many fans in Edmonton -- not all in the Third World -- were, without realizing it, assuming that there was only one game in town: NonCon. As if, if you wanted to do any fanac, it had to be conac, in the setting of ESFCAS, and as if only that one interest group got to set the terms.

In the fall of 1983 (Michael Skeet relates), myself, Cooki Lumsden (now in Winnipeg), Brett MacDonald and one or two others who were relatively new to ESFCAS found ourselves with one foot in each of two camps. Most of us were friends with older club members who were no longer attending meetings, while at the same time we identified with many of the eager young ESFACKians. ...

In the summer of 1983, Doug Edgington of Spell Bound Books (Calgary) talked Cliff Samuels into another con, with Katherine Jeppson, Leslie Williams and Steve Johnson. Thus began Conversion, about which more later.

NonCon 6 was held October 1983, in Calgary, at the Palliser Hotel. GoHs were Orson Scott Card and Robert L. Forward, and scientist GoH Janis Sviltis (University of Calgary English prof., source of pulp magazine cover slides and SF history, and one of the Short Story Workshop judging panel. To hear Cliff Samuels tell it, the dealers room, artshow, and program were just sad to see. There were no costume prizes. The video room consisted of a hotel suite with a video machine and you sat on the bed to watch. The con lost money, though it attracted probably just under 300 people. There was

practically no advertising. Cliff Samuels reports that only five or six people were running this NonCon: Eric Tilbrook, Bonnie Liesemer, an Arlene somebody, and Bonnie's boyfriend. Other Calgarians were in the SCA, which they found more fun, or were burnt out. Although Eric did a hilarious progress report, Bonnie Liesemer put a really nasty letter in the NonCon 6 program book, about the "Black Sheep" who had wandered astray. Fallout from this kaffuffle has since died down; but Mr. Card, for one, was pissed at the tacky editorial.

After NonCon 6, in 1983, some kind of political division split up Calgary fandom: those who left the existing club started Conversion, a con to be held in July 1984 (despite Runte's attempts to persuade them to bid for the next NonCon. He didn't think the Northwest could support another con. This turned out not to be the case, however). In fact, two new cons started up in Calgary -- Conversion, and ONOCon, associated with the online "Calgary SF Forum". The way Robert reported on Conversion in *The Maple Leaf Rag*, it seemed as if faction fighting over NonCon had gotten Calgarians fed up. The way Cliff Samuels of Calgary (Conversion) tells it, friction developed between Bonnie Liesemer and some of her concom, when she wouldn't negotiate or compromise on some policy positions. The way some other Northwest fans tell it, Liesemer was going through some medical problems that screwed up her judgment and patience.

Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes that:

There is no indication that Conversion started because the people were tired of being controlled by Edmonton NonCon moguls. The way we know it, it was an internal struggle in which attempts at new ideas in programming or conrunning were shot down by some power people in the Calgary NonCon group. So there was a natural breakoff to form a new con, which has turned out to be an unqualified success, and we have enjoyed both Conversions thoroughly. The only hassle was at Conversion I, when we realized that the motel hosting the con was run by Mormons, and the management-staff relationship was not the best.

By 1984, DEC had split, or folded, or turned into other fan groups. The Lethbridge Star Trek club had a branch in Calgary. A remnant of DEC formed a Multics computer billboard, the Calgary SF Forum, and the ST branch got tired of taking directions from Lethbridge and eventually became independent.

King Log II

The 1984 executive of ESFCAS were Michael Skeet (pres), Brett MacDonald (VP), Kathleen Moore (sec/treas), and Jeff Lewis (house director). Membership stood at 48. Michael Skeet was claiming in *Neology* that the Old Guard's enthusiasm was gone. Skeet writes:

I ... promised that I would do nothing more than seek to have a good time, in the honoured tradition of ESFACKian presidents gone by. Having gone on the record like that, it surprises me that the so-called Third World could be upset when a good time was all that was had. If they wanted more, they should have taken steps to provide it themselves.

Perhaps Third Worlders were not in on this controversy; or vaguely felt that their interests were not being satisfied, without knowing what they would be, or who should take the initiative.

By March or April 1984, the news from *Neology* was that the five or six people who put on NonCon were burned out. At any rate, the University group in Calgary were no longer associated with this fragment of DEC (or was that the other way around?).

I don't know if the NonCon 6 group were burned out (Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes), but a relaxicon is obviously less work than a fullscale con. They may yet hold another NonCon. ... We have to contend with the fact that in 1988, the Calgary Winter Olympics will make a con in February all but impossible, so Edmonton could conceivably hold ONOCon and the Calgary people hold NonCon in the fall. Speculation only, nothing official.

THE JEFF LEWIS ERA

By May 1984, Jeff Lewis was threatening to revamp TV-4, the ESFCAS TV show. The new format was to cover the interface of science and technology in the home. He also started SCAPA as a revival of his abortive Society for Creative Alienation. *Neology* (Georges Giguere now ed.) reported on displays by the L5 society, which were to be held twice that summer, and on fanac in Red Deer and Grande Prairie. As far as anyone knows, plans for both TV-4 and SCAPA sort of dried up and blew away.

Unfortunately, ... one lesson we "Old Guard" learned from giving the younger members of the club a chance to see what they could do with ... responsibility (was that) they repaid the favour by being totally irresponsible, and we had no reason to trust anybody else, including Jeff Lewis, who had never accomplished more than making noise in his time as an ESFCAS member. He was unreliable on our NonCon V committee, and his relationships with the local SCA were equally nonproductive. TV-4 failed because of lack of support from club members (even Jeff's "own" people -- the ones he claimed would help him out with a NonCon, and who, supposedly, are working with him now) and how much of that was due to his attempts to lord it over everyone with "his" ideas, instead of asking for input from everyone? (Anon.)

Jeff Lewis is widely regarded as the centrepiece of ESFCAS's second generation. He is also, unfortunately, not very well-liked by many first-generation fans. He has a reputation both as a shrill criticiser and as one who promises much but delivers little ... 70's the first generation fans were very active. Jeff made some injudicious comments, in particular about the TV series, Orbit SF. He claimed he could do a much better job -- and in 1984, while I was president, he announced that he was, in fact, going to do a TV series on the local community cable channel (QCTV-10) that would put the earlier show in the shade. That was about as far as it

got, though. Jeff and his crew did maybe one episode and then packed it in. He later claimed that he dropped the project when he realized it would take all his time and money to do a "professional" job. At about the same time, he announced that he was going to do a fanzine (the implication being that *Neology* just wasn't up to snuff, and that his would be better). This particular project seems to have amounted to even less than the TV series.

These examples show why it is that first generation fans ... were suspicious of his claims regarding NonCon. (Michael Skeet)

The suspicion can grow on you that maybe Jeff Lewis didn't represent the Third World. Still, he stood for the younger fans, in the minds of some Old Guard fans. And in fact, AnnDel writes, "he stood far more for his clique -- the bunch of adolescents who gathered around him at meetings, going over his comics and drawings."

By all reports, Conversion in 1984 was a success. DEC, or what became the Calgary SF forum, appeared to be incommunicado.

We have enjoyed both Conversions thoroughly. The only hassle was at Conversion I, when we realized that the motel hosting the con was run by Mormons, I and the management-staff relationship was not the best. (DWL)

Cliff Samuels figures Doug Edgington was good at the startup of the con, but that he (Cliff) and Leslie Williams did 80% of the work on Conversion, especially promotion, i.e. at NonCon 6. The de Camps were incredible guests. Tim Hammell was only confirmed very late in the planning of Conversion, so there was not much chance to work him into the programming (a point about which Robert Runte complained). Samuels was working the artshow again, but although he announced, at the time, when the artshow was closing, Robert Runte complained about several people losing their bids. The con attracted 241 members; the atmosphere was good, small and friendly; and due to strict budgeting, made some \$600 in profit.

Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes:

There were a few incidents of parties being closed and the pool area being cleared (they frowned on skinnydipping), but the daytime activities were well-run. I gather there was some disagreement over the artshow policies, and closing time on written bids was vague, so some people lost out on art they wanted. The programming has been excellent at both cons, and the second motel was much friendlier to fans, although parties were closed early because of other guests staying in the motel. Next time, I hope the motel will be able to understand why we need block booking.

NonCon 7 was held Oct. 5 - 8 that year, at the Regency Motor Inn in Edmonton, with GoH Alan Dean Foster, FanGoH Betty Bigelow, and TM John Mullock (former ESFCAS president). The chair was Marianne Neilsen. There were two artshows, featuring Jane Starr and Tim Hammell, a tour of the Space Sciences Centre, the Moonspinners' writers' workshop, led by AnnDel O'Brien, and a general party atmosphere. The con was fairly successful; attendance was around 370, with many out-ofowners. Bonnie Liesemer was voted president of the NonCon SF Society of Alberta at this year's business meeting ("in fact, as well as in name," Cliff Samuels reports). She moved that "ONOCon" be a Calgary relaxicon in February, held under Society auspices.

... It was about then that the younger members of the club started to make noises about how we "Old Guard" never asked for their help, or invited them to be a part of the committee. May I point out that one of the club's young members, Cathy Jackel, was that year's treasurer? She had no trouble in being accepted, because she was always willing to work and made herself known as a reliable worker. Brett MacDonald is another such person, as are Kathleen Moore and Phil Freeman. About the only ones who aren't are the intimates of the Leff Lewis faction, who have never done anything productive as far as I know. (DWL)

AnnDel O'Brien indicates that the new fans who weren't accepted "also weren't involved with the Third world -- very neo."

By this time Robert Runte and Michael Hall had hooked up with a fan on the West Coast, who was trying to carry on from *New Canadian Fandom*, and they were publishing cooperatively. Rob & Derek McCulloch of Grande Prairie had appeared, with their apa fanpublishing empire rapidly infecting the Dominion and casting covetous eyes on the rich lands to the South: by early 1985, NCF reported that Derek McCulloch was interested in reviving CANADAPA, which had folded.

The 1985 ESFCAS executive consisted of Cathy Jackel (pres), again defeating Jeff Lewis for the position: Jeff Lewis as VP (at first -- soon succeeded by Chris Jackel), Phil Freeman (sec), Kathleen Moore (treas), Marc Holmes (program director), and Albert S. Frank (house committee director). All of these execs. were second-generation fans, but not to be confused with the Creativity Group. The Creativity group "is Jeff Lewis' corporation/club, and represents Jeff's faction, with some overlap with Lords of Limbo ~ Ilr the president) are members of Creativity; but Creativity is its own official organization, with its own meetings, etc. ... just overlaps with ESFCAS." Georges Giguere)

Jeff Lewis resigned by March or April: Georges Giguere put it that Lewis was protesting ESFCAS' refusal to pass some bylaw amendments, but the succeeding issue of *Neology* said a) Lewis was pointing out constitutional loopholes by legal but questionable means, b) Georges had not used a full account he had demanded and gotten from Lewis, c) in fact, the amendments mostly were made. Yet d) an Edmonton fan commented that Lewis had quit the SCA for the same reason --he had "always made it clear fans were to play by his rules or not at all." Giguere said Lewis was prone to lose his tact and/or forget these were social groups, here. Diane Walton-LeBlanc comments on the resignation:

Jeff Lewis does have a reputation for taking all his marbles and going home if he doesn't get his own way. I attended the constitution meeting, as a rep of the "Old Guard"; there were very few of us there, and we kept our mouths shut unless the demands made by Jeff were really

outrageous, like the institution of an attendance requirement for members to maintain their voting privilege. This last item was blatantly against the Old Guard, who pay their memberships, but only show up at the annual elections. We have been accused of trying to influence the club by voting for our own people, and then not doing anything. I suppose the election of Mike Skeet was a case in point, and I'm resentful of his ... performance, but Jeff has never done anything to inspire our confidence ... (DWL)

In February 1985, Calgary held ONOCon I, a relaxicon put on by the Calgary SF Forum group (a former Calgary NonCon committee), including Eric Tilbrook, Bonnie Liesemer, et al. This was a good, laidback con, by all reports. Cliff Samuels reports that 75 people attended, and the con didn't make any money, but that doesn't seem to have stopped more ONOCons from being held.

ONOCon (Diane Walton-LeBlanc writes) was started for two reasons: one, because Rain folded after several successful years, and something was needed to fill the gap (in the con circuit, in February every year); two, the NonCon that year (8) was awarded to Red Deer, and Rick encouraged Eric Tilbrook and Bonnie Liesemer to fulfill the NonCon society's mandate and run another con in Alberta as an offshoot of the society.

Rick was pres. that year, and ONOCon, though small, was a lot of fun for those of us who attended. The dances make the weekend worthwhile, and now that they hold the con at a motel with a pool, and lower room rates, there should be a great deal more interest. ... (As much as we'd like to see a con in Lethbridge, we are told that the Mormon influence on the city is far too strong to tolerate something as weird as an SF con. Too bad.)

Diane Walton-LeBlanc observed in *The Maple Leaf Rag* that the SF Forum/ONOCon committee are still an official NonCon society, and

ONOCs can be described as official NonCon society functions. The policy was, "We are willing to provide references and moral (not to mention financial) support for any viable convention bid in Alberta."

At the same time, a note from Robert Runte says, "ONOC was careful not to take (NonCon SF Society) cash or the strings that implicitly went with it." I suspect that is what Robert Runte imagines that the Calgarians thought that NonCon \$\$ might imply.

More different versions of reality. *Sigh*

By April 1985 John Durno, now studying art in Vancouver, came out with the *You Can't Get to Heaven on Roller Skates Infrequently*. Mike Hall came out with the *Canadian Fanzine Bibliography* (worked up by Taral and he). A new comic appeared, put out by the McCullochs and Paul Stockton of Toronto: *To Be Announced*, drawn by Mike Bannon.

In July 1985, Conversion II, at the Carriage House Inn, Calgary, got over 500 people to attend. The con was fun, had good programming, and made a profit; Lexie Pakulak won the short story contest for the second time. There was little out-of-province attendance. The hotel didn't understand about room parties and closed them down at 11. Cliff Samuels reports that this con enjoyed better advertising, a different and better hotel (better location as well as prices), a free large-screen projection TV, permits from a film distributor for movies, a good dealers room again, and Aerospace Museum display, a Twilight Zone demo, incredible freebies ... This Conversion gave away bookmarks instead of T-shirts to over 520 members.

NonCon 8 was held in Red Deer for the first time in 1985, the 12th to 14th of October. The hotel was the North Hill Inn. The GoH was John Varley; the FanGoH was Steve Forty, and the TM was Lorna Toolis.

NonCon 8's site selection for NonCon 9

At the '85 business meeting, for the first time, some competition between NonCon bids emerged for the following year. One bid was led by Yvonne and Tony Higgins; the other was led by ... Jeff Lewis and his Creativity group, who proposed to bring in a Comics GoH.

Some items of Alberta fanhistory (mostly, what people haven't been willing to put on paper) cover the strange behaviour people have engaged in

to win NonCon bids; as witness the bits of Calgary fanhistory that have appeared here. You know how tedious and destructive fan politicking can be?

When I ran into Tony Higgins at Banffcon, Tony told me how Jeff Lewis started out on the NonCon bid committee headed by the Higginses. While still on this committee, and without informing the chair of differences of opinion, he started setting up a competing bid. When the Higginses finally got wind of this, Tony responded in force.

As Lexie remembers it:

"... Jeff's bid was enthusiastic, full of ideas, but unsophisticated in its approach to politics.

"The business meeting of NonCon 8 was held early Sunday morning, in a much too small and un-air-conditioned room. (Past NonCon business meetings typically drew about a dozen people; this one pulled in about 100.) Normal procedure at NonCon business meetings is to vote, not on the bids, but on the new executive; each team of candidates normally represents one bid. The vote was split so closely (and some people were voting on personalities, some on the bids they represented) that at one point it fell to the chair, Bonnie Liesemer, to cast the deciding vote. Unwilling to do so, she called for a new vote.

"The executive finally voted in was a split ticket -- two from each bid -- so finally Bonnie took the unorthodox but necessary step of calling for a vote on the bids themselves. Tony won -- again by a hair.

"Jeff, unwilling to accept this verdict, set up to do Controversy without Society backing -- and that was his downfall. Had he wanted and bid another year, he probably would have won; and if he'd worked within the Society, I think other people would have rallied round and made the con work, despite Jeff's personal failings. Instead, Controversy bombed."

The way Robert Runte wrote it up in his conreport (in *Maple Leaf Rag*), this was a case of the Ginger Group challenging the old Tory leadership

for the right to contribute to policy, and just shaking up the old fogies enough to let in some new ideas.

Michael Skeet writes,

The main point to remember is that, while they may have burned out in terms of week-to-week club activities, Edmonton's first-generation fans continued to have a strong interest in NonCon, and continued to volunteer for positions on the concons of NonCons after #3. The word "volunteer" is an important one, because as long as familiar/friendly faces could be found willing to take on the work, the NonCon chairpeople felt (I assume) no need to seek out newer club members to fill these positions. Certainly none of these second generation fans volunteered their time. (I distinctly recall Jeff Lewis telling the chair of NonCon 7 that he was in no way interested in helping out with Ops during the con. He was, he said, only interested in having a good time.)

Now, it is entirely possible that the self-declared "Third Worlders" could be hard and efficient workers. But I was always taught that the fannish way was to volunteer your help wherever it could be used, and to prove yourself worthy of responsibility (I handled promotions for NonCon V, and nobody has asked me to do anything ever again ...). Jon Gustafson, speaking to me of the way PESFA went about organizing the first MosCon, said the proto-concom, most members of which had never been to a con, much less worked on one, was sent around to the various Northwest cons to watch and take notes. New concom members, whenever possible, work with veterans until they understand the ropes. A similar attempt was made for NonCon 7: it was suggested that each member of the concom "adopt" a younger ESFACKian as a sort of "apprentice", with a view to training the next generation of concom members. The only second generation fan to get involved was Cathy Jackel (who may have volunteered on her own, or may have been recruited; I don't know). The overwhelming impression

gained was that the second generation fans weren't interested in getting involved except in a con which they controlled completely themselves.

Many first generation fans were, to be blunt, absolutely against anything like this. "NonCon is our con," Larry Reid once said to me. "We built it, we've run it for all these years, and it's our chance to get together with our friends. Why should we just turn it over to people with no experience?" This is, I believe, a fairly common view amongst ESFOGians. And here, unfortunately, we have to get into personalities a bit. Jeff Lewis ...

In November 1985, after *Neology* #10:4/5 came out, some ESFACKians decided to form a separate group. They were meeting in the Old Strathcona on Thursdays, which were ESFCAS meeting nights, so already they had formed a separate constituency. They declared themselves ESFOG, and took as their motto "Fandom Without Guilt."

I got into fandom looking for a good time (Skeet writes). I was told that's what most fans wanted, and most of the people I met my first year in were like that ... Imagine my surprise upon discovering, over the last two years, that not everybody felt that way, and that my friends and I were being criticized for not being Serious enough ...

... When the aforementioned number of *Neology* came out, Lorna (Toolis) and I just decided that enough was enough. ESFCAS was not doing anything for us any more, and many of our friends felt that way as well. So we just quit.

ESFOG is totally casual, and the only fannish things we do are drink and publish a newsletter. (Actually I'm told that ESFCAS at its peak wasn't a whole lot different.) There are about 25 of us ... of whom 15 - 20 attend regularly. The fact that, with two or three exceptions, no ESFOGian .. has attended an ESFCAS meeting for years (excepting the fun-and-games of Annual Meetings), but that the majority somehow find it in them to show up to ESFOG bar nights,

suggests that perhaps ESFCAS wasn't offering much to them, either.

... A number of us hold "dual citizenship": ESFOG has more former ESFCAS presidents in it right now than ESFCAS does ... But ESFOG isn't a serious club, for all that it's our members who form the core of the NonCon 9 committee. ... ESFOG has "succeeded" (as far as you can quantify this kind of success) by appealing to the more relaxed state of mind most often found in older fans.

(The fact that most ESFOGians are in the 28 - 35 range, while the average age of ESFCAS members seems to be around 19-21*, probably has a lot to do with the separation that is now a way of life in Edmonton fandom. It's a generation gap in the literal sense; most ESFOGians have little in common with the current generation of ESFACKians. If a separation is inevitable, though, it's unlikely to be a nasty one. ...)

* (or younger, according to Jerry Manweiler.)

In January 1986, Jeff Lewis became ESFCAS president by acclamation. The only ESFOGians present were Cathy Jackel, Bill Seney, and Michael Skeet as an observer.

... Only once in the past four years has ESFCAS had a president who could be said to have been placed in office by the Old Guard, and who was in any way connected with first-generation fandom. ... From at least 1983, the ESFCAS executive has been composed in the majority of second-generation fans, WHO COULD, HAD IT INTERESTED THEM, HAVE MADE WHATEVER CHANGES THEY WANTED TO CLUB ACTIVITIES.

In March 1986, Jeff Lewis held his own con, Controversy. Or tried to. This had received \$300 starting money from the NonCon SF Society by 1 March.

Only after V-Con 14/Convention 6 did any information appear on what happened to Jeff Lewis' bid. Apparently, a) Controversy was simply not advertised, in the time between NonCon (Oct. '85) and the target date (March '86); b) a significant number of Edmontonians stayed away in droves; c) Jeff Lewis, as usual, talked very big at first, which must have put off a lot of ESFACKians -- yet he tended to tailor his plans more to reality as the time approached; d) any tendency on his part to cut his suit to fit the cloth just didn't get across to any of the Old Guard.

Jeff Lewis wrote in *Neology* #11:1 (March & 1/2):

"The ... four months (after Oct. 1985) were a madhouse of preparation, but we did it. James P. Hogan and Dave Sim were booked. We had paid the ... agreed to attend (*sic*). Things looked bright. There was only one thing missing. Memberships.

"As of March 19, we had only 50 prepaid memberships and only five rooms booked in the hotel. We were in trouble. With just ten days left we had to make a decision. At first, we had decided to go ahead, even with the potential losses, then a local business stepped in and offered to help us out.

"So, we will be running a much smaller comics-oriented convention during the Easter weekend ... The full Controversy will be held at a later time, possibly this July."

Blink. Hello? From this and Jeff Lewis' other remarks, you'd never know that most cons start planning a year in advance, not three months; or that, according to other Albertans, Lewis never bothered to advertise properly. According to the cry of it, Controversy was cancelled 10 days before its ostensible date; what remained was taken over by Starbase 12; \$\$ and artwork was returned; many Edmontonians didn't want to come; 80% of the dealers, as it turned out, were from computer shops; only the programming would have been ample for a decent-sized con.

By sheer luck I happened to meet Steve Pikov and Lexie Pakulak, at V-Con 14, and they gave me copies of their apazines. Steve wrote of Controversy;

"Easter weekend, to assuage our not being able to afford a comet chase, we decided at almost the last minute to attend Controversy in Edmonton. Alas, we were just about the last people to find out that the con had been canned for lack of interest. Perhaps it was because of the uncertainty over a new con, perhaps it was that the con was a bit of a political hot potato. Maybe it was just that it was Easter. In any event, what we found was a sign on the door of the Holiday Inn declaring that it had been cancelled, but that a minicon would be held Saturday and Sunday from 10 to 4, in a single program room. We came back to the hotel the next day, to find Cerebus creator Dave Sim holding court to a bunch of teens and pre-teens, while a few comics vendors plied a dismal trade at the fringes of the room."

"... The awkward date, plus many people's 'wait and see' attitude, killed Controversy. If he'd had enough cash flow, Jeff might or might not have been able to pull off a good con; without preregistration money, he didn't even get the chance to try."

Other reports, in *Neology* #11:2 (Apr-May 1986), indicated that one Jim Owens ran the comicon, Dave Sim enjoyed himself, and the second attempt, in July, was to be called ReCon. (I am still unaware of whether this con was held.)

The Banffcon/NonCon Society Business Meeting

As you may have heard, Quinn proposed a year ago that the NonCon SF Society be disbanded. It must be evident to you that the Society wasn't dissolved.

Bryan had heard a number of stories about how the Society works, or has worked (some of them the same kind of stories as I've heard). He took the view -- or at least, so stated in his notice of motion -- that the Society a) wasn't doing its stated job, and b) wasn't necessary, so let's have done with it. (There were at one count twelve cons in Alberta, if you count mediafans and comics fans and gamers.)

There were some errors in Quinn's opinions -- revealing that there has been continuing confusion as to what rules, if any, NonCon and its Society were run by. Diane Walton-LeBlanc finally pointed them out, and told the story behind the Society bylaws.

How come Quinn was allowed to think, for months and years, that there were several versions of constitutional rules, all being ignored? Because this story wasn't spelled out before.

Between V-Con 17 and Banffcon, Bryan did get to look at the original NonCon SF Society bylaws -- or the ones now in force, if there's a difference -- and at Banffcon I got some information from Tony Higgins, about his efforts to get something organized, about the time of NonCon 9.

Conclusions

"The Big Story in Edmonton is the number of women, the rapid growth, the break-up, and the apathy now in the club." (Michael Hall)

Mostly, the fans who participated in, and 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 continual difference is that it never gets thrashed out in so many words.

This fanhistory, like the articles in *Neology* ca. 1987, might change that. Or might simply worsen matters. Or, more likely, make no difference.

Edmonton/Alberta fandom started out isolated, but conquered distance very quickly. Borrowing ideas and fannish influences from east and west (notably from Westercon XXX), ESFCAS built itself up from a small and otiose group to an active and influential fannish centre.

ESFCAS did not get off to a good start, but recovered quickly, due to the disappearance of a do-nothing executive and the quick emergence of actfans (principally, Robert Runte claims, John McBain). Leadership helps.

You could argue that Edmonton fans were the most visibly active, influential (in fandom), and strongest community in Canada, for several years; and not insignificant in North American or even world fandom, given the reach and spread of their contacts.

ESFCAS and Calgary fandom have gone through some trials (on which I have incomplete information). What they seem to have done is

survive the challenges to keeping an entertaining group going. For a long time, ESFCAS maintained a mutually beneficial social environment for fans.

Michael Hall's theory is that Edmonton fans were too intensely absorbed in each other's fanish lives, "living in each other's pockets"; and eventually took each other's foibles entirely too seriously, showed signs of stress, and stopped working as a society.

At least, up to as late as 1985/86. By then, a core group of actifans were going on to other interests; a newer population of fans seemed to expect a club, by definition, to provide entertainment for them; the impression arose, since older fans showed up mainly at Annual General Meetings, that they were strangling ESFCAS in dead hands; and, to cap it all off, the self-proclaimed "leader of the Third World" exercised a talent for invalidating himself to the "Old Guard."

Only part of this can be the older fans' general prejudice against mediafans of several stripes. Another part is what might or might not be "burnout" -- plenty of fan groups start out welcoming people in; ESFCAS actively welcomed people into several component interest groups, for a time; but eventually everyone gets tired and wants to see familiar faces, and not have to make new friends of strangers. The open circle becomes closed.

Another part is the perceived participation level of a newer generation.

Edmonton fandom seems to have come full circle. At the beginning it had a do-nothing founding president, who lost interest in the club he started, and did nothing, or even gafiated, after declaring all sorts of neat plans. Now ESFCAS has had at least one president who appeared to lose interest in the club he took over, and did nothing, or even gafiated ... Does this sound familiar? Perhaps we will see a reincarnation of the Plawiuk slate.

Or perhaps not ...

AnnDel O'Brien is confident that ESFCAS, or some Edmonton fan community, will carry on in some form.

Fandom is what you make it. You have to participate to get anything out of it. But that point, among others, doesn't always get across to new fans; and passive fans are then jundred and found wanting, for not actively creating the activity they are in.

There is a principle in fandom, often not seen, that we make our own entertainment. Since the rise of broadcast media and especially since media SF appeared, this obscure principle has been under attack. No wonder increasing numbers of fans have no least notion of taking individual action, creating their own fanzines, doing their own cons, etc., etc. Jeff Lewis' bid for NonCon seemed at first to be predicated on the notion that that con was the only game in town; or on an unwillingness, at first, to start his own. I think this Means Something. Fan groups tend very strongly to be please-yourself environments, and perhaps that is why the assumptions fan groups operate on are just not communicated -- directly resulting in prejudgments, fan feuds, and refusal to cooperate. Who is going to bother talking about it? Or demonstrating what they think a fanactivity is?

Who is receptive, anyway? The idea of active participation, the reason why older fans expect someone to "produce", seems to have been alien, never conveyed, to a new generation.

You know and I know that I can't really tell, distant as I am from Edmonton ... but, leaving himself less than six months to organize Controversy; failing to advertise effectively; and trying to organize another con in four months, does not sound like a plan for success.

Maybe Jeff Lewis needed Ron Gillies' "convention bible", or maybe he would have ignored it. Maybe he needed to sit down and reconsider his objectives. But would he?

This fanhistory wasn't begun with the intention of defaming or impugning anyone. Now, at the conclusion, I arrive at a few questions anyone could benefit from asking themselves.

"What are you trying to do, here?"

"How are you trying to do it?"

"Are your efforts working?"

Michael Skeet adds:

Y'know, it has just occurred to me that the split in Edmonton fandom could have been caused by the fact that first generation fans were so active in the late '70s. Because they burned out at what (for the second generation) was a

critical time, that all-important "passing-of-the-torch" period didn't happen. There was little or no opportunity for communication between the generations at a time when the second should have been taking over more responsibilities, and maybe this is part of the reason why the newer fans kept waiting for these legendary first-generation fans to return and take control of the club. I must say, though, that even if there had been a smooth changeover of control, I would still have found most of the second generation fans hard to talk to. Their primary interests seem to be computers and live-action role-playing games ("Assassin" and a live-action fantasy game called "Dreamquest"). ...

(Michael Skeet, Mar. 22, 1986)

A final issue: Some people felt Bryan Quinn's motion to dissolve was abusing the reputation of the NonCon SF Society. I got the feeling that we were missing the point.

What you have to realize is that Quinn based his conclusions on the information available to him. The Society executives, I conclude, could have made available a lot more accurate information about themselves than Quinn or any ESFCAS member had available.

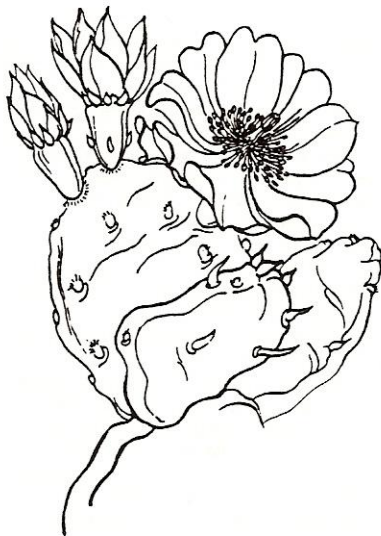
The point somebody missed — several someones — is that relying on word-of-mouth to explain the local con setup just doesn't cut it. No-one is really to blame; this is how many fan groups operate, by relying on word-of-mouth and not bothering to set out their procedure for everyone. Mind you, everyone may pay for the consequences of what you neglect to tell members.

So I consider the effort to inform people to be a universal obligation.

The fanhistories of Edmonton, Vancouver, and Toronto show some broad similarities: one fan generation's interest is not another's; mutual frustrations and feuds break out when different fan's minds really don't seem to have the same operating systems; what was once a glorious confusion of varied interests in one fan community is turning into many little isolated communities, with no interest in or patience for each other; the concept of making new friends is replaced by clannishness, sticking to the old ones.

We can recover civility and community, if enough people care to work at it. If we won't ... and don't miss having a community ... well, then it makes sense just to please ourselves.

FINIS



LETTERS OF COMMENT

[editor's remarks in square brackets]

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

1991-12-22

Just received OPUNTIA #5 ... The Winnipeg Worldcon will divert a lot of energy from fans this year, but please don't believe that this is just a western Canadian Worldcon, as some do. Winnipeg will be kept busy but creativity will come from across the country. I was a minor member of the bidcon, and my services are available to John Mansfield should he need them. I believe that John intends to involve people from coast to coast, because there's too much east-west alienation in Canfan-dom.

One thing that interests me about Garth Spencer's fan-history of Edmonton is that the late 1970s saw an active fan named John Durno. There's a Torfan by that same name today, definitely not the same person but a coincidence nevertheless. The John Durno here ran one of the local Trek clubs for a few years, spent some years on the Ad Astra concon, has taught himself to work with latex for makeup prostheses for movie work, and is hard at work trying to make a career in comedy writing.

[Actually that's a useful tidbit of info, since a future historian might logically conclude that the two are the same man, an Edmonton fan who moved to Toronto and continued to be active in the hobby.]

ON SPEC is not the only Canadian SF magazine. BARDIC RUNES is a paying-market magazine produced fanzine style by Michael McKenny of Ottawa. I have seen once a magazine called VIEW FROM THE CUTTING EDGE, which I think is produced in Montréal.

FROM: Harry Andruschak
Box 5309
Torrance, California 90510-5309

1991-12-22

It was entertaining to read Garth Spencer's article. All my contact with ESFCAS has been through fanzines. And I certainly remember THE MONTHLY MONTHLY. One of its covers was a cartoon strip "How To Drown A Cat". It showed just that. Caused a bit of fuss, as I remember. I wrote to TMM asking if I could buy the artwork. No answer. I sometimes wonder what did happen to that artwork? I would like to use it again as the cover of one of my fanzines. Good art should be reprinted.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1992-1-2

I'm surprised no fanzine editor has yet made what to me seems the obvious observation about what has happened in the Soviet Union: it has been behaving just like fan clubs.

Georgina (Dutch) Ellis Clarke is mentioned by Garth in his fanhistory. I heard just recently that she is active in some apa or other, so apparently the spark of fannish life in the Clarkes is not totally flickered out. I haven't heard any word about Norm having been active, however.

In the material that followed, I was impressed by how big a part old fanzines continue to play as a source of information for fan historians. That leads me to suspect that fan historians will have an increasingly hard time in future years, as most fanac continues to take the form of cons and club meetings and such, most

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of which leaves little or no generally-circulated written words behind them. I suppose a few clubs have secretaries conscientious enough to preserve minutes, but on the other hand some clubs don't keep minutes at all. Progress reports and program books can be preserved for the larger cons but they don't necessarily have much relation to what happened at cons, just the things that the con committee hoped would happen. So maybe the audiotape recorder will be the fan historian's best resource in the future, used to preserve the spoken memories of fans of the past and present. When those spoken statements contradict one another, the historian will simply give two or more versions of the same event or choose whichever version seems to be most probable on the basis of mental health and reputation for truth or falsehood.

[Hear that everybody! Get those con reports written and send them to zines (not mine, I hasten to add) to preserve for posterity your side of the story. Club minutes are not much good unless written up in a zine or summarized in a history, since one basement flood, house fire, or spring cleaning could destroy them. I wrote up the history of the Calgary Philatelic Society for exactly this reason, as the club minutes and documents had come close to being lost once or twice. Every zine that publishes worthwhile material should have an ISSN and be deposited in the national library of its country. As an example, two copies of every issue of OPUNTIA go to the Legal Deposit Office of the National Library of Canada, to be preserved for future generations. The ISSN ensures that OPUNTIA is indexed in bibliographies. For American zines, the equivalent would be the Library of Congress.]

FROM: Leah Zeldes Smith
17 Kerry Lane
Wheeling, IL 60090-6415

1992-1-3

Small and frequent is just as valid a fanpubbing scheme as big and seldom, more so if one is behind the idea of

enhancing fannish communication. I'm trying for a middle course myself, but that's partly because of our mimeographed means of reproduction. I expect if I had access to free photocopying I'd be putting out zippy little Xerozzines. I do get a little tired of all the stark black-and-whiteness, though. Few faneds seem to be taking good advantage of photocopying's advantage over mimeo for making fancy layouts with good art, either. OPUNTIA is clean and attractive, but you could break up the text a little more. You can afford to cut down on the margins some if you use the extra space for art. Just don't make the text any smaller.

[OPUNTIA is prepared on 11 x 8½ pages, that is, 8½ x 11 turned sideways. On this full-sized layout, the margins are only about 1 cm on the sides. Because the text is then reduced, this automatically increases the size of the margins. I don't have access to a good photocopier that can reduce so I rely on the printer (Petro-Tech Printing) to do the job. They do a good job, considering that some of my layouts are coated so heavily with white-out fluid. Art to me is basically space filler where I had gaps in the text. Since this zine is done on a typewriter, I can't rearrange blocks of text or easily add/subtract if the length doesn't come out even. This explains why the fillos I use don't follow any logical pattern. Text is the primary purpose of OPUNTIA. After all, novels don't have illustrations.]

It strikes me as odd that my British mailing list is several times the size of my Canadian list. I get as many zines from the former Soviet Union as I do from Canada. I'd thought that Alan Rosenthal or Colin Hinz might be the new Boy Wonders of Canadian fandom, but I haven't seen a thing from either of them in ages. For that matter, the Old Wonder has scarcely been heard of for a long time either; the concept of a gafiated Glicksohn is too mind-boggling to believe,

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but he sure has slowed down a lot lately.

[I don't know Rosenthal but I understand that Hinz has veered off into mail art, alternative art, etcetera. As for why Canfandom is so small, I suspect it's just one of those cycles.]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Buck Coulson, Ned Brooks, Tim Jones, Beulah Wadsworth, and Henry Welch. I received Christmas cards from Alexander Vasilkovsky, Boris Sidyuk, and Kathleen Moore-Freeman.



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.