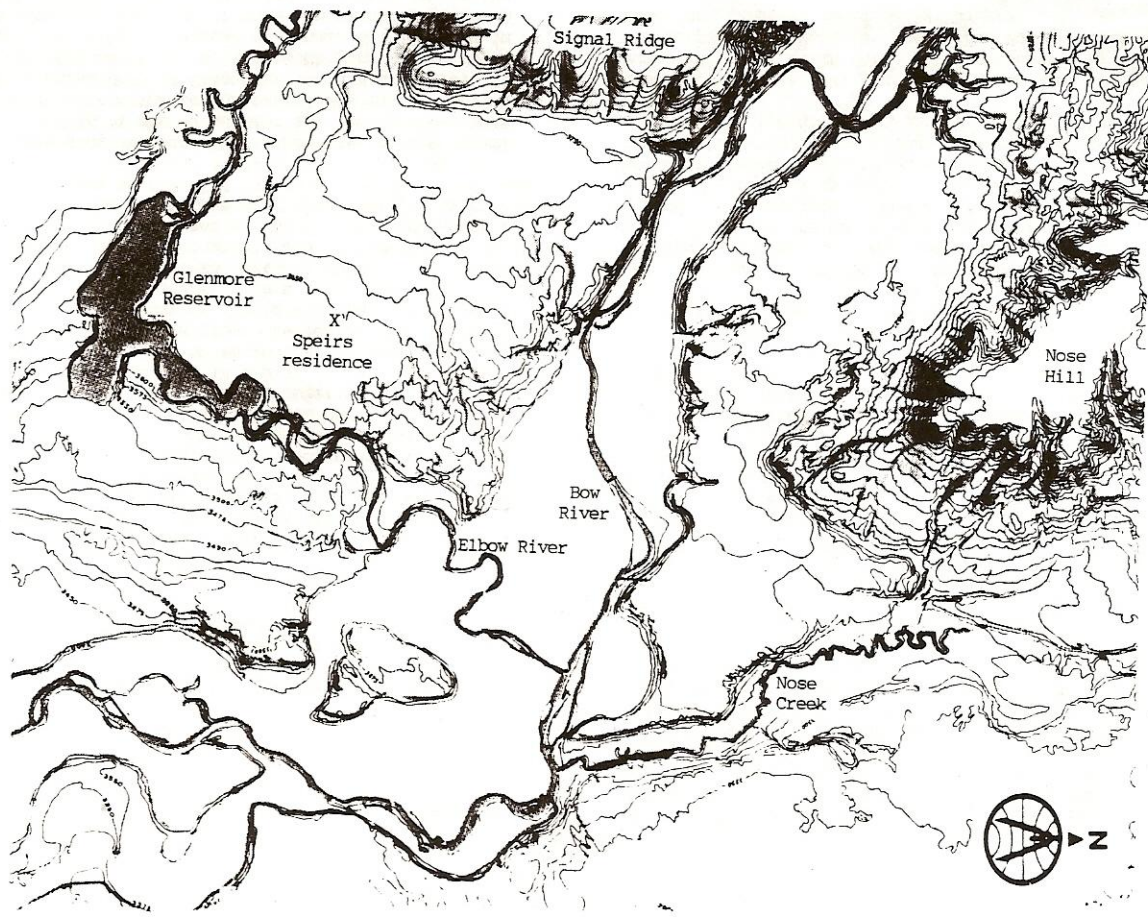


# Dpuntia 8.1



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.

ART CREDIT: Or, more accurately, map credits. From various atlases; I didn't keep track. And yes I know some of the maps scattered throughout this ish are outdated, but there isn't much in local libraries on current maps of Indiana or whatever. It was an interesting little project, which helped my knowledge of geography improve. I had thought RFT came out of upstate New York but now know it is a product of Long Island. And I had no idea that Indiana and Kentucky were so close together.

The idea of the maps came to me indirectly from A CHILD'S GARDEN OF OLAF, an English zine. The editor, Ken Cheslin, runs fanfiction, parodies on Sherlock Holmes set in the English countryside, together with a fact article on the prominent landmarks mentioned in the parody. I thought this was a good idea, but couldn't use it directly since a) I don't print fiction, and b) Calgary is only about a century old and has few Norman churches or Druid menhirs on which to base a story.

Since I'm exposing everyone else's hometown to the readership of OPUNTIA, I should be fair and let you see what Calgary looks like. The topographical map on the cover shows the central part of Calgary, the 'old town' as it were, albeit the old town defined as Calgary before 1965. The present day city has spread to double the distance in any direction from the edge of this map except SSW, where the tribal reserve stops urban sprawl. (North is to the

right of the map.) Calgary was founded by the North West Mounted Police at the junction of the Bow River and Elbow River. The Bow River meanders through a glacial meltwater channel far wider than the river, but the Elbow River is in a narrow valley, part of which has been dammed to form the Glenmore Reservoir. Nose Creek is a typical-looking creek. Nose Hill (at right of map) and Signal Ridge (top) are the two westernmost foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the Calgary area. For many decades they constituted the north and west boundaries of the city, but now urbanization has gone up and over them, and is starting to creep down the far sides of the hills. Between Nose Hill and the Bow River is a large terrace completely built over; the escarpment of the terrace overlooks downtown Calgary and houses lined along the edge command a premium because of the view. To the left of the Bow and Elbow River junction is an isolated hill in the middle of the glacial channel. It is Scotsman's Hill, so called because it overlooks the Stampede grounds racetrack; during events all the cheapskates sit on the hill and watch the rodeo without having to pay admission.

Along the bottom of the map, and in the upper left between Signal Ridge and Glenmore Reservoir, is the plateau of the Great Plains. Calgary straddles the contact between the prairie and the mountains; its eastern suburbs spread out onto the prairie plateau and the western suburbs go up into the mountain foothills. I live on the plateau to the right of Glenmore Reservoir. The plateau is higher than the river terrace I spoke of a moment ago. Calgary is thus on four levels ranging from the valley bottom, the terrace, the plateau, and the top of the foothills.

Elsewhere in this ish, you'll see a map of Calgary, Scotland, after which this city was named. My town was originally Bow Valley Post, then Fort Brisebois, then Fort Calgary, and finally Calgary.



## RADIO FREE FOSFAX

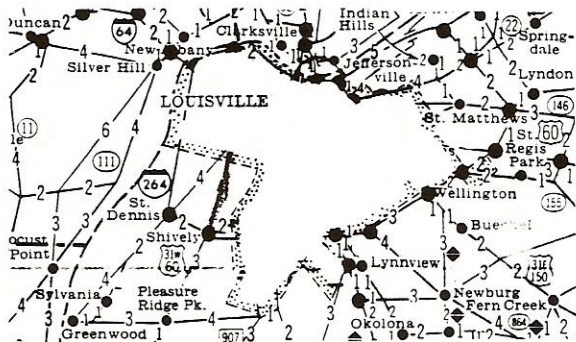
Two zines of a feather are RADIO FREE THULCANDRA and FOSFAX, although the former is a perzine and the latter is a clubzine. They both have a substantial letters column, both have articles and reviews at the front end, and both demonstrate conclusively that indeed All Knowledge Is Found In Zines. FOSFAX has a bit more in the front section than RFT because of the prolific Joseph Major, whose book reviews are lengthy and detailed. RFT has a milder tone than FOSFAX, mainly the difference in the manners of the loccers. Marty Helgesen, RFT editor, insists on decorum from loccers. FOSFAX loccers are unedited either by tone or length, which results in a lot of "I never said that, read my last loc whydoncha, don't put words in my mouth", etcetera. Intemperate actions have resulted in some FOSFAX loccers expelled or quitting in a huff. There are too many circular debates in FOSFAX going issue after issue on abortion or the death penalty, topics that generate more heat than light and on which few people change their minds. Joseph Major's reviews are mini-courses in a multitude of subjects; he not only reviews but educates the reader. RFT leans more toward esoteric discussions, but does not bury the reader under jargon. The Robin Hood movies, for example, are currently being discussed as the alternate histories they really are.

Each zine is an evening's reading by itself, not a quick skim. When FOSFAX or RFT arrives in the mail, I clear two or three hours in my schedule. RFT can be considered as FOSFAX with theology, or conversely, FOSFAX is RFT without. Both are recommended reading.

RADIO FREE THULCANDRA is available from Marty Helgesen at 11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, N.Y. 11565-1406, USA. It is available for The Usual but you might start off by sending \$3 for a sample issue (cheques payable to Helgesen, not RFT).



\$3 will also get you a sample copy of FOSFAX, from the Falls of the Ohio SF and Fantasy Association, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281, USA. It also can be had for The Usual, subject to editorial whim.



## GIMMIE THAT OLD-TIME MIMOE

Back when the world was young and Harry Warner had yet to loc a zine, the mimeograph was state-of-the-art, and SF fanzine editors were on the cutting edge of technology. Today the photocopier rules O.K., many a zine editor uses computers to prepare camera-ready copy, and still a few zines putter along with trusty mimeos, albeit with an increasing difficulty in finding supplies of twiltone paper and ink. And for some, mimeo is cheaper than photocopy. They don't mind spending time fussing with a fussy machine, and printing the zine is part of the fun of pubbing. All well and good; what annoys me are the dwindling few who insist that something has gone out of the hobby since mimeo was displaced. Tied up with this complaint is the lament that faanish life is dead. (More about that later) The nostalgic way of life, with locs from BOFs, SMOFs, and the recently ungafiated, is carried on in some zines.



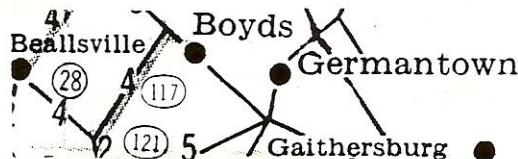
Consider STET, which recently jammed my mailbox with a thick 96-page issue. A staggering amount of work, filled with a staggering amount of material, most of which is on the end of fandom as we know it, or why zines aren't what they used to be. Well printed, with good fillos, includ-

ing a series poking fun at the Just-Say-No campaign (substituting zine pubbing for drugs). We are advised that the zine grew like Topsy and future issues will be thinner. Subtracting 54 pages of locs still leaves an impressive amount of material. Dwight Decker writes on "The Rise and Fall of The Comics Zine", a useful comparison with the SF hobby. I've written on philately and aquarium-keeping, comparing them with SF, and it is interesting to note that while the details of a hobby vary, the general behaviour seems roughly the same.

A one-time sample of STET is US\$2 or The Usual, subject as always to editorial whim, although fillo artists are desperately wanted. Let me rephrase that, fillos are wanted; the artists can stay at home and just mail the product in. Send your cash or fillos to Leah Zeldes Smith, 17 Kerry Lane, Wheeling, Illinois 60090-6415.

\*\*\*\*\*

There is a difference between moaning about the good old days and writing about the history of the good old days. History serves a useful purpose; it reminds us who built the road we travel on and why and how. Tradition for its own sake is useless, but tradition as an aid to memory is very useful. I have no patience with the idea that faanish legends of old should still be perpetuated at today's cons and in today's zines, but I do agree that it is useful to document those legends. It is nice to read about the past and know what went on before, even if we do things differently today and never pay homage to Saint Fantony. And so to MIMOSA, not so much a legume as it is a depository for American fanhistory.





MIMOSA has established itself as the historical record of SFDom. Not entirely obsessed with the past mind, as con reports abound. One sees, however, bylines such as Dave Kyle and Julius Schwartz. Locs, of course. All for a \$2 sample cost, via Dick and Nicki Lynch, Box 1350, Germantown, Maryland 20875.



A CHILD'S GARDEN OF OLAF is no more alas. The zine of Ken Cheslin, Stourbridge, England, it featured fillos of a rather-badly drawn Viking named Olaf, who kept showing up at just about every time and place in this continuum. The covers are hand-coloured and very prettily so. ACGOO was stapled back-to-back with another zine (much like an Ace Double) called OUTHOUSE, which was simply the locs to ACGOO carefully segregated. The fanfiction was different in one way. Cheslin wrote a series of Sherlock Holmes parodies, using two characters called Soames and Flotsam. The narration was reversed though; Soames told the story and his faithful assistant Flotsam actually solved the puzzle. The difference in all this was that each parody was accompanied by a fact article about the English district it was set in. The background is explained about Ye Stately Hall or The Olde Vicarage, as the case may be,

and the reader can thus have a better appreciation of the story.

But ACGOO is no more alas. Partly because of the cost of publishing it, and partly because, as Cheslin puts it, "there is no getting away from the fact that there are differences between fandom of the 60s and the 90s". He laments the expansion of SFDom into other fields beyond zines. While this is very true, and no one can deny that RPGers and Trekkies have swamped the fanzine publishers, I have to wonder why it matters. One is not forced to associate with Trekkies at a con. It may be a painful sight to see a blimpish teenager dressed up as a Klingon, but one need not speak to the poor wretch; simply pass on by and seek the company of zine pubbers. Cheslin concludes "Maybe SF fandom will end up by being absorbed completely into the larger fandom. Then again maybe SF fans will separate off, take to the lifeboats and try to found their own colony." I think they already have separated; cons are a collection of many special interests, all of whom happen to be in the same hotel that weekend but none of whom are forced to associate if they really don't want to. But such cons do provide the opportunity to meet others of unlike interests and learn something new. It is more comfortable to associate with old friends, but friends must be renewed constantly or else one ends up as do so many elderly people, alone and bitter that things are not as they used to be. The impudent young Scot by name of James Boswell was sometimes an annoyance to the great Johnson, but Johnson himself admitted that Boswell renewed his interest in life. The project of a trip through the Highlands was one that Johnson had fond memories of, but he never would have undertaken it without young Boswell. So it is with BOFs; they can sit back in a consuite and lament the times, or they can renew and refresh themselves by forcing their way into younger company. One is not obliged to renew him/herself this way, and can avoid the next generation, but if so, then please don't be moaning.

## AND SPEAKING OF BOSWELL ...

Here is a bit of doggerel he wrote in his diary October 26, 1763, which I think is appropriate for longtime SF readers.

"The farther up the hill of life we rise  
The less we feel the passion of surprise.  
Our wonder deaden'd by successive change,  
We come at last to reckon nothing strange."

This is as good a description as any of what happens to many SF readers who find that they've read it all before, or at least think they have. There is some justification to this. I've tried to get around this by reading other countries' SF, countries which have not been swamped by the anglophone conformity. For this reason, Strugatsky stories have become part of my reading fare; Lem is, I've found, not quite as interesting. It is hard to criticize Slavic authors directly though, for a poor story may be the fault of the translator.

Besides trying the different countries, another way past boredom is to seek out the new authors. Not the ones who churn out fantasy quests or jackboot SF, but rather the ones who must appear in the alternative press because Analog only takes happy endings. PULPHOUSE and ON SPEC are two zines which try for the different on purpose. But I propose to speak instead of amazines, not prozines. Fan fiction has a bad reputation, and deservedly so. Faneads will often print anything to hand just to fill the blank pages. There is no excuse for it; since a fanzine is put out as a hobby and not a business, one cannot claim that the mass reader must be catered to. It costs just as much to print bad fiction as it does good fiction. There is, of course, another factor. An author will submit to the best-paying markets first, and only contribute to a zine what could not be unloaded elsewhere.

While many fanzines only print without discrimination any

writing that comes through the letterslot, there is one that has a definite purpose and can justify its reason for existing. NEOPHYTE was founded by Jeff Behrnes to encourage newwriters to try out on the small stage and learn from loccers before revising and going on to the big time. The locs are expected to be useful to neos, not just killer reviews that crush hopes while failing to help, however little. Some of the stories are quite beyond help, but some are quite good.

Cyberpunk is not one of my favourites; the last one I liked was VACUUM FLOWERS, and only then because I work in pest control, and the space weeds were fascinating. But in the July/August 1991 NEOPHYTE is J. Walker Bell with his cyberspace story "The Net". The strong point of this story is Bell's ability to describe computer programs and codes in visual terms that even a non-user such as I can understand. A conflict between two programs: "A densely packed rod of binary code pierced the veil, impaling me." The computer network: "There is no sound and there is nothing to see but the palest of pastels interwoven like the casual strokes of an artist's brush, the whole mass moving languidly in indecipherable patterns. ... The Stream; the blood of the Net; the touch of clouds."

NEOPHYTE sample copy for \$2 or The Usual, via Jeff Behrnes, 11220 Hooper Road, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70818-3803, USA.

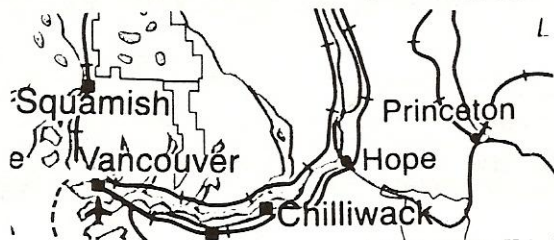




## REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

There is nothing like a good feud to enliven a clubzine and a few have obliged in recent times. DASFAX, as one example, apparently had a ménage à trois going, if I read the locs from Barbara, Claude, Ray, and Vinnie correctly. (Linda was also mentioned but didn't write herself). Then there is the Westercon blowout that put BCSFA in the hole about \$14,000. That one isn't so funny because the result was higher membership fees, reduced trades, and a rather shaky status for BCSFAzine. Not so much a feud as a particularly good batch of schadenfreude is WARP, out of Montreal, reporting on the disastrous Creation Cons.

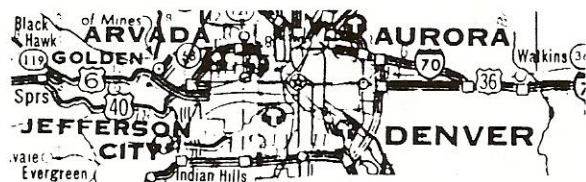
Of the various clubzines I receive, BCSFAzine is one of the best. I don't include FOSFAX as a clubzine, even if it technically is, because it has little of the feel of a clubzine. BCSFA is a general club, and as a consequence its articles range from model kits to Z-grade movies to astounding-but-true accounts of technology gone wild or developed a century too early. There is the club gossip and minutes-of-the-last-meeting; one can't help but be fascinated by goings-on behind the scenes. Especially if the goings-on include a debt that makes Paul Valcour's a minor blip on his credit card statement. (Maybe he should start a fund for them.) Lots of meaty reading; I don't think you'll be too disappointed if you drop \$20 to them for a year's subscription to this well-printed monthly. Write to BCSFA, Box 35577, Vancouver, B.C., V6M 4G9.



The May 1992 WARP showed up out of Montreal with a beautiful colour cover; I'm guessing it was done on a colour copier. Inside the emphasis is on the Creation Cons, and the excessively-commercial attitude that has given Trekdom a bad name. More shame yet is the Canadian club Star Trek Canada, which left people without anything for the money they paid out. \$\$\$ cloud minds like nothing else. I suspect though, that Creation Cons will not have a major effect on new recruits, who must be active types, not the passive Make Us Happy types who shell out for Creation Con. I've seen similar events in other hobbies, where the emphasis is put on high membership totals even if 99% are drones, instead of ensuring the recruits will be a credit to the club instead of a deadweight. Forget about the numbers. Calgary Aquarium Society had 700 members back in 1972 because it ran a wholesale fish store that no retail store could match. The CAS store collapsed for lack of volunteers, and the club today has 120 members but far better activities and bulletins because of the higher percentage of doers.

MonSFFA is nominally a general club, but the emphasis is on media, particularly ST. Subscription is \$12 but they will trade. Drop a line to Montreal SF&F Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 2P4.

DASFax is a digest-sized monthly out of Denver. Reliable albeit thin in content, mostly club news, book and film reviews, locs from the ubiquitous Harry Warner Jr, and artwork. Available for the usual trade or contribution and even \$10 annually if you have the money. DASFax can be reached c/o Fred Cleaver, 153 W. Ellsworth Ave., Denver, Colorado 80248-1105.



Considerably thicker but with the same sort of content is a clubzine ETHEL THE AARDVARK, out of sunny Australia. I could never figure out how they got the title to that but one day I happened to hear a Monty Python sketch on radio in which the bookstore owner mentioned the title "Ethel the Aardvark Goes Quantity Surveying" and all was clear. The Melbourne SF Club puts it out bimonthly for AUS\$15 or The Usual.



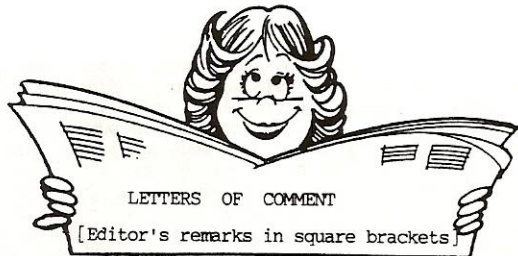
One clubzine I look forward to is PROBE, a very nicely produced 64-page digest with card cover, done via DTP. Published by SFSA at Johannesburg, it emphasizes fiction by South Africans but has the usual features such as club news, reviews, locs, and a somewhat anomalous preponderance of Canucks. They are as restricted in what SF they can get as any Slavic republic, not because of currency shortages or language barriers, but a censorship system keeps them safe from unhealthy influences such as SF.

Ottawa, a.k.a. Coma City or Potemkinville-On-The-Ride-au, that is to say, our nation's capital, is home to the OSFS. No prizes for guessing what OSFS stands for. STATEMENT is their clubzine, again with the usual but also carrying news from across Canada.

Both PROBE and OSFS for the usual, the former from Box 2538, Primrose 1416, Republic of South Africa, and the latter from Box 6636, Ottawa, Ontario, K2A 3Y7.







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

1992-3-30

You made a boo-boo in your comment that "Tartans themselves are an ersatz culture, as they date back only to the 19th century ...". Tartans are well documented back to the 15th century. Hundreds of old paintings show them. The Proscriptions of 1748 included tartan as being forbidden wear, simply because the whole concept of tartans was so much a part of Highland identity. Now what you could have written was that the concept of "clan tartans" was developed early in the 19th century. Yes indeed. Although there is some talk of uniformity in tartans before 1748, that was mostly in the military outfits. A weaver would sit down at his loom and create a new tartan on the spot.

About Highland Gatherings and Games. Perhaps I should have made it clear that I do enjoy some aspects of them, and do attend them for those pleasurable aspects. But my attitude about Highland Gatherings is very much like my attitude towards SF conventions; FIJAGH not FIAWOL. Two parts of most Gatherings I would like to see gone forever are, first, the cute cute little girls in their cute cute little kilts trying to do the Highland Fling. Second, the pipe bands that insist on playing modern tunes such as "Amazing Grace". If some day you open the newspaper and read that some fanatic machine-gunned down an entire pipe band that was playing "Amazing Grace", you will know

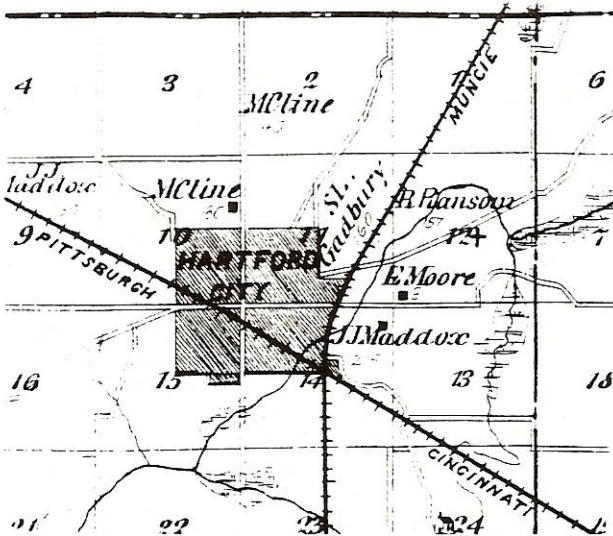
without reading on just who did it.

[Actually I rather like "Amazing Grace" on the pipes. The song was meant for pipes, and a piper who can't play it is like an organist who doesn't do the Toccata and Fugue in D-Minor. But I also enjoy rousing marches on the bagpipes, "Magersfontein" being a particular favourite.]

You know how irritating it is when a television crew comes to an SF con, and the only thing that is broadcast on the evening news is a 30-second segment of costumes, with snickers from the TV announcers? Totally ignoring anything else going on at the con? Highland Gatherings have the same problem. It doesn't really matter what else is going on, and quite a lot can be going on. That evening, the 30-second spot will be about cute little girls, and maybe also the troop in "authentic" 17th century military garb going around playing soldier.

[Aquarium shows have similar difficulties. Invariably the reporter's first question is "Got any piranhas?". And most stamp shows have stopped inviting the media because they only want to know "What's the most valuable stamp here? You guys must be rich, eh?".]





10

McCrum's second SF murder mystery, *ZOMBIES OF THE GENE POOL*, is a big improvement over *BIMBOS*. As a mystery it isn't all that much, but it's an excellent commentary on fandom, particularly the fandom of earlier times. The problem with *BIMBOS* is partly that she did not know a lot about fandom then, and didn't differentiate between SF book fans and media fans. Conventions put them all together, and *BIMBOS* was about conventions. But they don't interact all that much, even at cons. I gather that she's considered one of the better new mystery writers.

SARAH BINKS sounds lovely. But the verse isn't nearly as bad as some real poets manage. I give you Violet Peaches Watkins, author of *MY DREAM WORLD OF POETRY*, Exposition Press, 1955:

"The former Prince of Wales, and the ex-King of England,  
Did not care to sail, nor did he wait to remain single;  
He sincerely informed and shocked the whole world  
With his declaration of affection for the woman he loved.

Wallace Warfield Simpson was the lucky girl;  
She captivated the king - she was his valued pearl;  
Such a wonderful love can only be true  
When draped in ecstasy that is sincere and secure."

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

1992-3-31

I marked some passages in *OPUNTIA* #7.1 to comment on. I always thought writing reviews was easy. Being a critic may well be hard, and a college course on literary classics might not be amiss before one starts, but for reviewing you just write whatever you think. For professional reviews I use two drafts, one to say what I think and a second to find the best way to say it, but for fanzines I just typed the reviews directly on stencil, whatever came to mind. I figured I was telling friends about good books they might otherwise miss, and warning them about bad ones, and it didn't have to be polished.

That's two stanzas out of thirty-one in the poem, all of them equally dreadful. The verse in the book does vary a bit, from bad to awful. One night a group of fans sat around in our living room reading this book, the rule being that you could read until you broke up, after which you had to pass the book to the next reader. At about 3:00 a.m., we decided enough was enough. Marion Bradley composed a letter of appreciation to the poet (mailed in care of the publisher), telling her how much we enjoyed her work, which was true enough; the nature of the enjoyment wasn't specified. We all signed it with pseudonyms and I mailed it the next morning. No return address was put on the envelope.



FROM: Henry Welch  
5538 N. Shasta Drive  
Glendale, Wisconsin 53209

1992-4-6

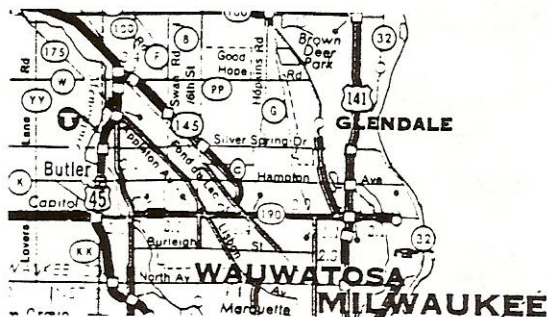
That's quite an interesting bit of Scottish anti-trivia that you present. It's enough to make me wonder what other bits of authentic German/Irish/Welsh (you supply the ethnic group) trivia or history are a total load of crap. Just think, there could be whole aspects of religions or even history that are complete fabrications. Perhaps it is ... Caesar's last words, the location where Maret was assassinated, did Hamilton and Burr really fight a duel; the whole fabric of society is probably built on lies.

[Somebody, probably G.B. Shaw, remarked that history is a set of fables mutually agreed upon. Every country or region is stereotyped one way or the other. I always laugh at movies that show Mounties in scarlet and stetson while on regular patrol; this is their dress uniform for ceremonial occasions, and normally they look like other city police. I've been to events which I've read about the next day and wondered if the reporter and I were at the same place, so different was the news account from what I saw. And a Newfoundlander I work with never, ever sings "I's the bye that builds the boats" or drinks screech.]

I agree with your convention budgeting notions. It does not take a genius to realize that the best way to stay in black ink is to spend less than you take in. This, of course, has serious problems in the application when someone makes too optimistic an estimate of the actual attendance. Often times it's the last twenty or so attendees through the door who balance the books. X-Con here in Milwaukee is using this budgeting philosophy, so everyone's budget is based on a virtual worst-case income estimate. the problem here is that my budget for the Con Suite has been whittled off at least a few fingers. If actual income does not increase or my attempts at sponsorship fall through, then it's going to be a sorry Con Suite at best. I guess I can't complain too much; this is the fiscal reality.

I'm not at all surprised by the results of Crad Kilodney's science quiz. I can go on and on about more scientific studies that found similar results. Middle school students (Grade 6 - 8) given computational problems and calculators that gave very wrong answers that the student dutifully copied down, or may all-time favourite ... if a ball rolls off a table, does it a) drop straight off, b) do a Willie Coyote and pause before dropping, or c) drop off in a curve. As you might expect, Willie was the overall most common answer. On the other hand, this isn't necessarily a new problem. Sherlock Holmes once remarked to Dr. Watson that he didn't care if the Earth revolved around the Sun or vice-versa; it was an irrelevant piece of data and had no bearing on the cases he solved.

[There is an article in the April 1983 issue of Scientific American called "Intuitive Physics", by Michael McCloskey, in which he deals with why people fail to understand the motion of objects.]



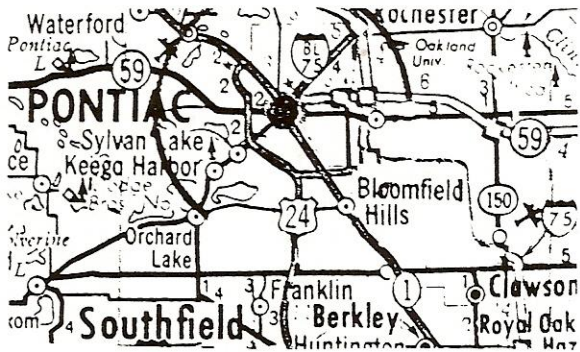
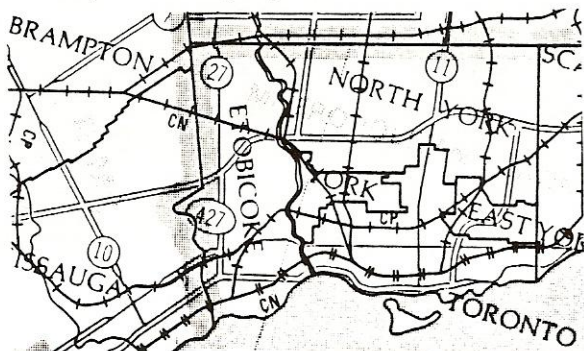
FROM: Lloyd Penney  
412 - 4 Lisa Street  
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

1992-3-24

12

I've had a quick look inside Sharyn McCrumb's **HIGHLAND LADDIE GONE**. Substitute Irish for Scottish in this book, and the flavour of authenticity would be greatly enhanced. Most inhabitants of Ireland hate the leprechaun-blarney-drunken-fat-singalong kind of Irishness that North America wallows in every St. Patrick's Day.

I must differ with your remarks that the con organizer rarely asks what the con goer wants. I've worked on various cons for eleven years now, and Ad Astra since AA2, and we do ask our attendees what they want, through the con bitch panels, a questionnaire in the registration packages, and by talking to fans. By and large, the response is pretty small and silent. Few questionnaires are turned in, and one or two have comments on programming and convention features. The bitch panel usually has comments on security and weapons policy, and little else. I would like to think we're providing what the attendees want, and I'm sure we do provide what some people want, but I suspect that the average attendee doesn't know what he wants, and is happy to see something interesting at the con. I believe this is the reason for the success of the insipid, star-dangling Creation Cons.



FROM: George "Lan" Laskowski  
55 Valley Way  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48304-2662

1992-4-10

The Sharyn McCrumb novel **BIMBOS OF THE DEATH SUN** was a bit too venomous in spots, but quite a decent and accurate portrayal of fans in most respects. I have seen pictures of Ms. McCrumb, and every photograph has been unflattering; she looks overweight (I believe this month's **LOCUS** has one of her), so your supposition that Marion Farley is her wish-fulfillment character may not be off the mark by much. But, as you say, your review was about **HIGHLAND LADDIE GONE** where she does for Scots' gatherings what she did for SF cons. Friends of mine who have read these two and her other works say that McCrumb doesn't seem to be a very happy person because she looks at a lot of the negative stuff in each case. That she won an Edgar for her writing indicates that some people like her stuff, but (like the Hugo) it doesn't mean that her work will appeal to everyone. I find it troublesome

[continued next page]



to read authors who are constantly negative, but those seem to be the ones that the literati and English majors like. And if the story ends on a tragic note, they like it all the better. Which makes me tend not to want to read anything else by McCrumb. Still, another friend has told me that her latest novel is a huge step up in quality from her previous ones, so maybe there is hope.

[I forgot to mention in my review that one thing that annoyed me about BOMBOS was that one of the characters was named Diefenbaker, a jarring note to Canadians as this was one of our Prime Ministers. If it were a reasonably common name, then it might have passed, but it is rare enough that one would immediately think of the P.M. only. But most reviewers seem to agree that McCrumb is learning and becoming a better writer as she goes along.]

Very few first-time conventions make a profit, but I do know of some that have, and those are the ones who have listened carefully to their friends who have run them before, and tried not to make mistakes, or overreach their facilities and the abilities of their staff. Yet, some cone organizers do not mind going into debt for two or three years because they enjoy putting on a specific kind of convention; it's their hobbyhorse and they get satisfaction from it other than money. After a certain amount of time however, many find it too depressing to keep losing money and quit. Most conventions manage to get into the black and stay there, but it does take a tight-fisted treasurer to ensure that the financial situation stays that way.

FROM: Ned Brooks  
713 Paul Street  
Newport News, Virginia 23605

1992-3-28

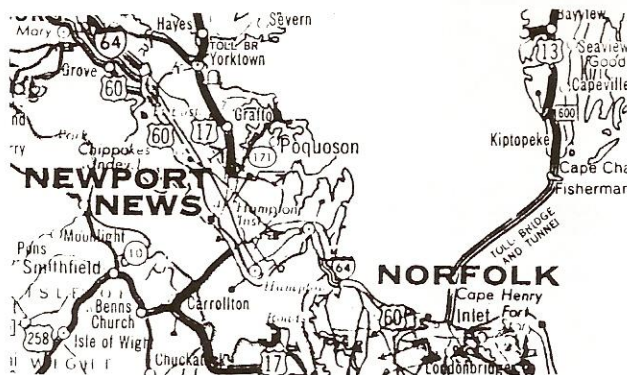
Thanks for OPUNTIA #7.1. I might have bought my Aunt Verma a copy of BLOOD-SUCKING MONKEYS FROM NORTH TONAWANDA but alas, she passed away a couple of years ago. She introduced me to fantasy at an early age. She used to read to us from THROUGH ALIMENTARY CANAL WITH GUN AND CAMERA

by George ?? (argh, the brain cells are dying ... ) I have a copy of the thing here but it is filed by author!

[I checked at the University of Calgary Library but couldn't find that title. Sounds interesting though.]

I never go to Danny Devito movies; I can't stand him. But it is certainly possible for a company to be worth more than its stock. There was a writeup in a fanzine some years ago claiming that the pulp magazines were wrecked by some smart operator who noticed that the nationwide distributor, the link between the publisher and the newstands, owned more in real estate for warehouses than the business was worth, so he bought a controlling interest and sold it all off at a profit.

[I can't find it in my library, but I know it's there, an article somewhere in a mag on how the American News Company was done to death this way, taking with it large numbers of magazines (not just SF).]





FROM: Alexander V. Vasilkovsky  
poste restante, General P.O.  
252001, Kiev-1, Ukraine

1992-4-17

I was much pleased with your appreciation of Arkady and Boris Strugatsky's THE SECOND INVASION FROM MARS. I also am very fond of this novella (or rather, short novel; almost all of their works are short novels). The Strugatskys in their satirical mood are excellent. Since their famous MONDAY BEGINS ON SATURDAY, A TALE OF TROIKA, and THE SNAIL ON A SLOPE satire appeared almost in every of their works, even in very dark and serious ones.

The significance of their works to Russian SF is immense. They were first to make a breakthrough beyond the genre ghetto, and their novels are good literature. Since the late 1960s, all of their books were bestsellers, and they were leaders in the foreign publishing rights selling for almost two decades. Some of their books were published in the USA as mass-market paperbacks, but they are rare now, alas. You may enjoy wonderful Kafkaesque THE SNAIL ON A SLOPE published in 1980 by Bantam Books. By the way, do you know that their most famous novel, ROADSIDE PICNIC,

was set in Canada? Recently their complete works were started to be published by very promising independent Text Publishers. The first volume came out in late 1991 after Arkady's death, alas. By now I have already received three. This edition, first planned to be published in ten volumes will be extended to twelve or thirteen volumes to include everything they wrote. Arkady was the tandem's engine, so I strongly doubt that Boris will write in solitary; he may only finish the started project.

FROM: Boris Sidyuk  
poste restante, General P.O.  
Kiev 252001, Ukraine

1992-5-10

I always enjoy when someone pretends to be someone else but the Finnish band Leningrad Cowboys is losing a little when I recall another band here. Imagine yourself that you go to see a concert of a popular African band and suddenly discover that all is good, tam-tam sounds good, voices sound good, dances look good, but the people of the band are white. It looks like an elephant who pretends to be a hippopotamus.

I thought a little about THE LIQUIDATORS. I really don't know what to say. All those are not actual to us. As far as I know there are no special liquidation businesses here. If a firm is going to be closed it simply is being closed. We are still waiting for privatization of State estates. Maybe then liquidators will come.

I wonder that you couldn't read FAR RAINBOW, Of course, translations. When I first read Robert Heinlein's DOOR TO THE SUMMER (in back translation) I did it overforcing myself. That was the translation of I. Barsov. I never thought that I would reread this novel. I did, but in another translation, by Leo Abramov, and enjoyed

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the novel a lot. I must say there is nothing of bad quality written by the Strugatsky brothers. I can read and reread their works and it doesn't matter when and where and what. Although I personally consider their THE SECOND INVASION FROM MARS their best work ever.

If someone today comes to me and offers me PRAVDA newspaper for free or even offers to pay me for reading it I'll kick his muzzle. However, a few days ago I was reading PRAVDA of November 14, 1984, and felt fun. I've never read MARXISM TODAY and I hope I won't, even if they will place on their zine a subtitle SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY MARXISM MAGAZINE.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Crad Kilodney, Chester Cuthbert, Lee Hoffman, Brian Earl Brown, Stephen R. George, Chuck Connor, and Bob Sabella.

COA: Arthur Hlavaty is now residing at 206 Valentine St, Yonkers, NY 10704.

#### THE DEAD ZONE

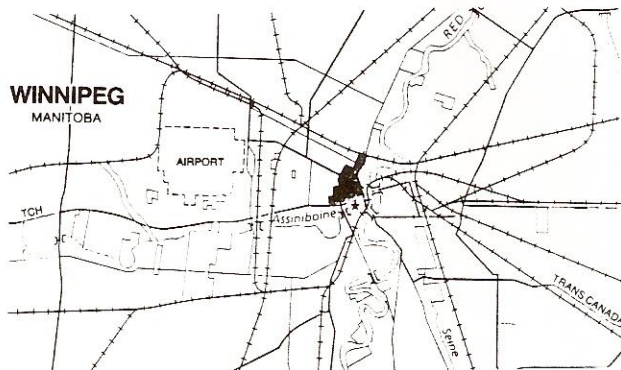
Zines going the way of all flesh are NEOLOGY and XENOF-FILE. The final issue of NEOLOGY appeared May 1992 and the Edmonton SFACAS has gone dormant. The cause appears to be partly gaffiation and partly schism; Edmonton still has their fandom but it is now split up into Trekdom, live role-playing, BOFs, and so forth. In the unlikely event that you still want to write, the club has changed addresses and is now at: ESFACAS, c/o Campus SF, Box 113 Student Union Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2J7.

XENOF-FILE #10 was the last ish, but the club itself still goes strong. Their major purpose has always been to

stage ConVersion, and XENOF-FILE was only a minor sideline that died when the editor gaffiated. ConVersion goes in Calgary July 17 to 19. Memberships are \$35 from Box 1088, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2K9.

#### AND IN OTHER NEWS ...

Convention will probably be over by the time you receive this issue, but it goes June 27 to 28. Conadian won't be over; in fact, you'll have to wait until 1994. Supporting memberships are US\$25/C\$30 and attending memberships are US\$75/C\$85. Write to Conadian at Box 2430, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 4A7.



## HOW CALGARY GOT ITS NAME

The Mounties arrived at the junction of the Bow and Elbow rivers in 1875. Lt. Brisebois, commanding 'F' Troop, built a fort briefly called Bow Valley Post before he ordered it named Fort Brisebois. He was unpopular with his troop and the high command of the North West Mounted Police, and the order was countermanded. The settlement was renamed Fort Calgary at the suggestion of Col. James Macleod, senior Mountie in southern Alberta.

He had been born and raised on the Isle of Mull, Scotland, and grew up at Calgary Bay. For decades it was thought that the name was Gaelic for 'clear, running water' and there is a district in downtown Calgary (Canada) called Eau Claire, based on this misunderstanding. But not that long ago it was established that the name translates as 'bay farm'.

Brisebois is today only remembered by Brisebois Drive, an ordinary road in an ordinary suburb. Macleod was a bit hypocritical; at the time he was at Fort Macleod, and the main road into Calgary from the south was Macleod Trail.

And how did your town get it's name?

