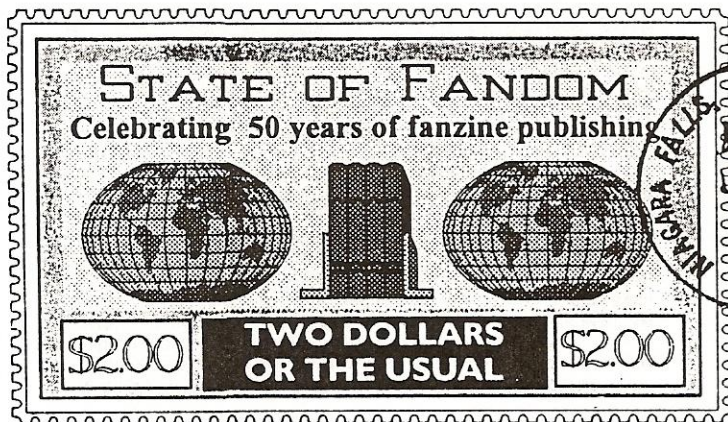


Opuntia 9.1

JUNE 1, 1992: FIRST DAY OF ISSUE



ISSUED AT NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK
OPUNTIA-ASTROMANCER QUARTERLY
COOPERATIVE INTERNATIONAL
FANZINE TRADE AGREEMENT
COMMEMORATIVE



TO:

DALE SPEIRS
BOX 6830
CALGARY ALBERTA
CANADA T2P 2E7

OPUNTIA #9.1

Early August 1992

CO-OP BOOK EXCHANGE

ISSN 1183-2703

OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. Available for \$1 per issue, letter of comment, or trade for your zine.

ART CREDIT: The cover depicts a cover, which is what we philatelists refer to an envelope as. It was sent to me by Joe Maraglino, editor of ASTROMANCER QUARTERLY. I question the bit about fifty years of fanzines (sixty is closer to it) but the cinderella label, to use a philatelic term, occupies a place in my collection.

EDITORIAL: I attended ConVersion 9 here in Calgary on the July 17 to 19 weekend, and had a good time. I took along a substantial stack of OPUNTIA back issues and put them on the freebie table. 95% of them were gone by the end of the day, and the rest by the following morning. I don't expect to get any new loccers, subscribers, or trades, as in past years nothing has ever resulted from this. I don't see any copies discarded in garbage cans, so I assume con attendees are actually reading and keeping them.

But what depresses me is that I am apparently the only one left in this area distributing them. People complain that fanzine fandom is dying, and no new blood is coming in. Well naturally, because neofans have never seen a fanzine and have no idea that such things exist. The best advertisement for this subculture is to get those zines out there on the freebie table where neos can discover them. I may not get immediate response, but if enough zines keep showing up, then something will happen. Coca-Cola and McDonald's keep advertising; so should we.

You'll see mention in my reviews about the Co-op Book Exchange. As I've picked up a number of new readers since I last explained it, let me repeat the information.

The Calgary Co-op is the largest co-op in North America, with 400,000 members. It has about fifteen or so stores, which are combination supermarket/department store/home improvement centres. Calgary Co-op has about half the department store and supermarket share in this city. Other chains such as Safeway and Real Canadian Superstore have never been able to dominate the retail market the way they do in other cities.

Co-op has been successful partly because they have a rebate scheme for members (about 4% of member's purchases are refunded at the end of the year) and partly because they offer many services that other stores don't. Co-op has carry-out clerks, a free child care while parents are shopping, recycling programs, and the Book Exchange.

The Book Exchange is simply a bookshelf in the store, located next to the child care. Members can drop off their unwanted books or magazines and take others in trade. Or, which is what I normally do, one can take books and leave a donation in the poor box. Proceeds from the poor box are donated to charity.

Most of the stuff in the Book Exchanges is the usual middle-class reading material. Old newsmagazines, romance paperbacks, Reader's Digests, and religious tracts make up the bulk. There are hidden gems, particularly in Co-ops located in older suburbs where there are more elderly who used to read back in the years before television. I regularly check four or five Co-ops in the older suburbs, where the good material shows up, but seldom visit the new suburbs.

The stagnation of SF&F is obvious. It is increasingly difficult to find original stories. The fantasy quest rules supreme, the umpteen-volume trilogy about a young woman/man in search of the Sacred Knickknack of Qwerty, which holds the key to overthrowing the evil king. Or someone is pursued by a megacorporation or government for foul purposes. And a princess must overthrow the usurpers so that she can take her place as leader of the people. (If I had been the producer of Star Wars, the final scene, where the massed crowds are praising Luke and Han and the princess, would have concluded with chants of Sieg Heil!) Cyberpunk isn't much of a variation; someone is pursued in the company of computers instead of swords, where the story is simply Merlin In Space.

I try to find stories with different points of view, and for fresher ways of writing. To do that, I am going back about fifteen years or so, looking for Strugatsky books in the secondhand stores, books that I missed when they were new because I was a university student more interested in botany than SF. The latest one I picked up from Off The Wall Books (1503 - 15 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta, T3C 0Y1) which carries a good selection of secondhand SF books and zines. This was a hardcover double of two short novels by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, comprising *ROADSIDE PICNIC* and *TALE OF THE TROIKA*.

The former is a theme that Arthur C. Clarke used in his first RAMA book, but then ruined with sequels. *ROADSIDE PICNIC* is set some time after *The Visitation*. Aliens made brief landings on Earth; they stopped at six locations, then went on their way after having had lunch. They left litter behind, remarkable litter to us, such as self-replicating batteries, but to them no more important than a safety match is to us. The aliens are not part of the story. They were completely indifferent to the humans, and paid no more attention than we do to a clump of grass growing by the wayside where we stopped for a picnic. The

story opens much later than *The Visitation*, when humans have set up research labs around the Visitation Zones. People, both authorized scientists and illegal smugglers, make trips into the Zones, hoping to come out alive and uncrippled. For the litter is dangerous. Just as the plastic wrapper from a six-pack can strangle unsuspecting wildlife today, so it is that the garbage of the aliens can be deadly. There is entirely too much drinking and smoking amongst the people who go into the Zones, the result of the stress of picking litter from a minefield. The descriptions of the litter are novel and well thought out. Only a couple items in the litter have obvious uses; the rest are mysteries puzzling to the humans, just as a squirrel is puzzled by a mysterious object set out by humans, an object that could be garbage or a deadfall trap.

TALE OF THE TROIKA is an hilarious encounter with the bureaucrats of a fantasy skyscraper. A skyscraper that is explored by building elevators as we would build rockets to go into space. But *TROIKA* deals only with one floor of that building, and the committee of four who run it. The Strugatskys excel in the descriptions of how the Troika operates. A dispute over closing curtains on a window is a minor argument between the bureaucrats. One wants the curtains closed, another wants them open, and the debate is not described as what it was, a brief argument, but rather: "An extremely unpleasant incident ensued. ... they caught their breath, rolled down their sleeves, cleaned the bits of skin from under their nails, licked clean their bloody fangs and took their seats at the table and announced that they were ready for the morning session." The debates between officials are written as if they were struggles in the dark jungle between predator and prey. An official who falls out of favour with a higher-up "found himself at the bottom of the pit and followed with wild eyes the narrowing circles of the buzzard flying in the official skies now beyond his reach."

There is also a neat turnabout when the real world is described in political terms. Caught in a mosquito-infested swamp, the Troika does not swat them, they were "busy indulging in furious self-criticism" as they madly slapped away.

There is the humanizer device, which had my particular interest because I collect postage stamps. The humanizer "repressed primitive urges in the person subjected to its rays and brought to the surface and directed outward all that was rational, good, and eternal. With the aid of this experimental humanizer, Eddie managed to cure a philatelist, return two out-of-control hockey fans to the bosoms of their families, and bring a chronic slanderer under control."

One would like to see some of the regulations mentioned in passing, such as the Appendix on Expunging Social Vestiges. There is the proposed State Committee on Propaganda for Vegetarianism Among Bloodsuckers, which has no connection with the mosquito incident; rather instead one of the Troika had been suffering from bedbugs.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SCHWARTZ?

About a year or so ago, I discovered quite by accident a late-night radio show called NETWORK REPLAY, coming on after the 11 p.m. news. It features all the old programs from the heyday of radio and plays one or two each night of the week. Since I have to get up early in the morning for work, I only catch it on weekends, and only if not otherwise occupied by other things. NETWORK REPLAY runs in random order such things as Jack Benny, suspense, comedy, and variety. I began to tape the comedy and SF programs on cassette, and even though I may only tape one or two programs a month, I have built up a nice collection of Jack Benny, OUR MISS BROOKS, DIMENSION X, X-1, SHADOW, and INNER SANCTUM, just to name a few.

One would have thought that SF would have been more frequent on radio than it was. Like the printed word, no set construction is required, just a few actors and a microphone. DIMENSION X didn't show up until radio was starting to decline, running on NBC from April 8, 1950, to September 29, 1951. There are some excellent dramatizations, such as Bradbury's "Mars is Heaven". A few of the programs were space opera, outdated even then by events. DIMENSION X began by announcing that the show was presented "in co-operation with Street & Smith", publishers of ASTOUNDING. Credit was given to actors, production crew, the announcer, and occasionally the author of the story.

So it was one night when the program was PEBBLE IN THE SKY. As I set the tape rolling, I figured that this novel would probably be serialized in two parts, as a 25-minute episode could hardly cram it in. But it was run complete in one episode, or so I thought. This nagged at the back of my mind. It had been some time since I had read the novel, so I decided to sit down and compare the two versions to see where the difference lay. And there was a difference, which I've shown on the next page, comparing the two side by side. DIMENSION X did not credit Asimov in the radio play.

PEBBLE IN THE SKY began under the title GROW OLD ALONG WITH ME, and was started by Asimov as a novel for the pulpazine STARTLING STORIES. It was rejected and wound up as a Doubleday hardcover, being Asimov's first book. It never was serialized, but DIMENSION X still gave a credit line to Street & Smith. I checked Asimov's two volume autobiography but couldn't find any reference to a radio sale.

Side by side on the next page is a comparison of the two story versions. Although broadcast networks can be accused of often butchering adaptations, in this case they removed a non-essential story element with the weakest plausibility.

[continued next page]

1) Joseph Schwartz, a retired tailor aged 62, is walking down a Chicago street in 1949 when he is suddenly transported into the far future by a time warp. On his arrival he notices that everything has a faint blue glow to it (Cerenkov radiation?).

2) Loa Maren, her husband Arbin, and her father Grew are in their farmhouse. Grew reads a newspaper account about the archaeologist Bel Arvardan coming to Earth. Grew is old, two years past compulsory euthenasia (The Sixty) and is being hidden from the authorities. Schwartz shows up, unable to speak Galactic. Arbin takes him to the city of Chica.

3) Bel Arvardan arrives, meets the Procurator of Earth, a representative of the Galactic Empire named Ennius. Arvardan thinks Earth may be the origin of the human race, now spread over millions of planets. Earth is the only radioactive planet in the galaxy with advanced life, and Arvardan thinks this is the result of a forgotten war. An ancient Earth text BOOK OF THE ANCIENTS says life originated before the war.

4) The Procurator arrives in Chica to meet with Affret Shekt, who has invented the Synapsifier, which improves the brain's intelligence, assuming the patient survives. Shekt has a daughter named Pola who acts as his assistant in the laboratory.

5) Arbin arrives at Shekt's lab. Schwartz is put through the Synapsifier, becomes a polymath, and promptly escapes from Shekt.

6) Arvardan takes aircraft flight to Chica. Talking with passengers, he upsets them by his lack of knowledge of The Sixty. He draws the attention of Creen, a spy for the Brotherhood of the Ancients.

A) Schwartz is deleted entirely from the story.

B) So is the Maren family.

C) Arvardan arrives, meets Procurator, etc. Arvardan is the narrator of the radio play.

D) No sign of Procurator here.

E) Arvardan takes flight, upsets passengers. Creed is not mentioned by name but can be recognized in the dialogue if one has previously read the novel.

THE NOVEL

7) Two cabbies in a Foodomat show Schwartz how to work the food machines. Arvardan stops in to have a bite to eat. Pola comes looking for Schwartz, meets Arvardan. A consultation with the cabbies. They think Schwartz must have Radiation Fever. Natter, a Brotherhood spy, talks to the cabbies after Pola and Arvardan have left. P. and A. locate Schwartz in a department store. A loudspeaker announcement orders the store emptied, Brotherhood spy discovers them in store.

8) Lt. Claudy of Imperial garrison called out to riot. Natter offers to get Schwartz out of store. Arvardan, in the meantime, has been stopped by Claudy, fights with him and breaks Claudy's arm. Arvardan is stunned with neurononic whip, and with Pola is taken to garrison. C.O. releases both. Pola upset to discover Arvardan is not an Earthman but an Outsider.

9) High Minister of Earth and Secretary Balkis (Society of Ancients, and the power behind the throne) discuss Shekt's treatment of Schwartz, and conclude Schwartz is an Outsider spy.

10) Schwartz back on Maren farm, learning language, etc., develops Mind Touch (telepathy and telekinesis), plays chess with Grew, asks him questions about Galactic Empire and Earth, learns about Sixty.

11) Schwartz leaves farm for Chica, feels hostile mind watching him on the road, turns out to be Natter. Kills Natter with Mind Touch. In Chica, Schwartz applies for a textile job, is suspected, flees, but hit by neurononic whip.

12) Arvardan meets High Minister, is stalled on permission to archaeologize in radioactive areas, and asks for permission to visit Shekt about Synapsifier.

[continued next page]

THE RADIO PLAY

F) Arvardan arrives in Chica, decides to observe Earthlings in a department store. Pola meets him, asks if he has seen elderly man, her father. Store is evacuated for Radiation Fever. They are stopped by guards.

G) Lt. Claudy shows up. The fight, etc. Pola upset to learn Arvardan is Outsider.

H) Arvardan looks up Pola in Imperial garrison files. He learns her father was condemned for evasion of The Sixty.

[continued next page]

THE NOVEL

13) Arvardan visits Shekt, gets into an argument, and leaves. On his way out he is slipped a note by Pola, requesting him to be at the Great Playhouse that evening. He meets her there, and she tells him that Earth is a threat to the galaxy.

14) Arvardan and Shekt meet again. Shekt tells him Common Fever virus has been concentrated for biowar against Galactic Empire. Common Fever only mildly sickens Earthlings but kills Outsiders. Secretary Balkis arrives and arrests them.

15) Schwartz, Arvardan, Shekt, Pola are all prisoners together, scheduled to die. They talk, Arvardan becomes convinced Schwartz is from the past. Arguments. Schwartz says he is Earthman and will not prevent biowar.

16) Arvardan and the others talk Schwartz into fighting for their side. Balkis returns, threatens death to them. Schwartz exerts mind control over Balkis to allow Arvardan to disarm him. Schwartz takes over Balkis' mind, uses him as a puppet to escape.

17) They arrive at Imperial garrison. Arvardan sees C.O.. Earth mob, incited by Brotherhood, arrives at garrison.

18) A trick is used to get Balkis to reveal plot to Procurator. But while he was gloating, Schwartz got Claudy under mind control to bomb the virus missiles. Plot is foiled.

19) Arvardan and Pola marry. The Empire agrees to replace all radioactive soil on Earth, a multi-generation task. All's well that ends well.

THE RADIO PLAY

I) Arvardan sends note to Pola to meet him in a park. She tells him Earth will revolt and Shekt knows the details.

J) Pola takes Arvardan to meet Shekt, who tells him the weapon is Common Fever virus. High Minister Balkis [he got promoted in the radio version] shows up and arrests everybody.

K) As they go to prison, they pass an Imperial patrol. Arvardan attacks Sgt. of the patrol so that they will be taken out of Balkis' custody and into Imperial custody, which has precedence.

L) They arrive at Imperial garrison. Arvardan sees the C.O., and then the Procurator.

M) Unsuccessful in convincing Imperial authorities of plot. Virus is released.

N) Sic transit gloria Imperator.

NOT AS FUNNY AS IT USED TO BE

I read a brief newspaper paragraph, buried in the back of the classified adverts next to the apologies ("We would like to acknowledge that our front-page story claiming Mr Smith was a child molester was in error, and we apologize for any embarrassment this may have caused him."). Like the apologies, it was a two-line para advising that the British humour magazine PUNCH was no more, much like John Cleese's parrot. Since British magazines are sold at the Canadian newsagents about a month late, I had to wait until May to obtain the final issue of PUNCH. The cover date is April 8, but the tagline on the bottom of each page said DOOMSDAY 1992.

I have a run of PUNCH from the 1970s, and collect PICK OF PUNCH, a series of hardcover annuals compiling the best of each year. I haven't bought many recent issues, and as it transpired, neither did many other people, at least not enough to keep it alive. My reason was financial and lacking the time to read it at the library I got out of the habit of looking for it. Feeling guilty, I bought a few of the final issues. But having done so, there was no reason to feel guilty, for PUNCH had degenerated into publishing scatological matter. Matter, not jokes, for there was no humour in them. One can see why PUNCH was a doomed magazine.

For a humour magazine, there was a lot of bitterness at PUNCH's demise. The April 20 issue of TIME had a full page by former editor Alan Coren on why the defunct was defunct. Part of the cause was a disastrous attempt to reposition itself in the market. PUNCH abandoned its old readership of middle-aged middle-class and went haring after young readers. It lost the former and never snared the latter. It also went against a trend towards the big newspapers and magazines, where humourists could get more money and a bigger audience.

The final editor, David Thomas, had a bitter editorial in

the Doomsday issue explaining why it was not his fault that PUNCH died. Other columnists in that issue likewise did not go gentle into the night. The cartoons were sarcastic, aimed at the readers for failing to keep PUNCH going in the style to which it had become accustomed. There was no pretense at putting a good face on events. Everyone raged, raged, at the dying of the light.

And so, after 151 years of publishing, this parrot was no more.

DECODING THE BOX

1992-3-19

I stopped at Co-op to buy a few things and, as always, checked the Book Exchange. The usual masses of romance paperbacks and old Reader's Digests. There was a cardboard box filled with old magazines, obviously from one household, not a mixture. Nothing much in it, but as I looked through the magazines I realized I could make a good guess about the life and times of whoever left it there.

The wife was British, judging by the copies of PEOPLES FRIEND, a British women's magazine. I suspect she was a war bride since there were several issues of LEGION, published by the Royal Canadian Legion. The issues of MACLEAN'S newsmagazine didn't tell me much, but issues of ATLANTIC ADVOCATE indicates one or both had lived in the Maritime provinces. The UNITED CHURCH OBSERVER identified their religion. She also read CHATELAINE. He had gone into the motor trade after the war, seen by TODAY'S TRUCKING. They were well-to-do and retired, as per a copy of FORD'S INTERNATIONAL CRUISE GUIDE, and battered copies of children's books. No grandchildren yet, otherwise the books would have gone elsewhere instead of being discarded.

For those of you who never saw it, FACTSHEET FIVE was a thick magazine listing thousands of zines, audio or video cassettes, comics, and other emissions from the alternative press. It suffered the same fate as other zines which grew like Topsy; it collapsed under its own weight. There was a change in publishers. The new one had grand ideas but could not carry them forth. And so FF fizzled out in ignominious fashion.

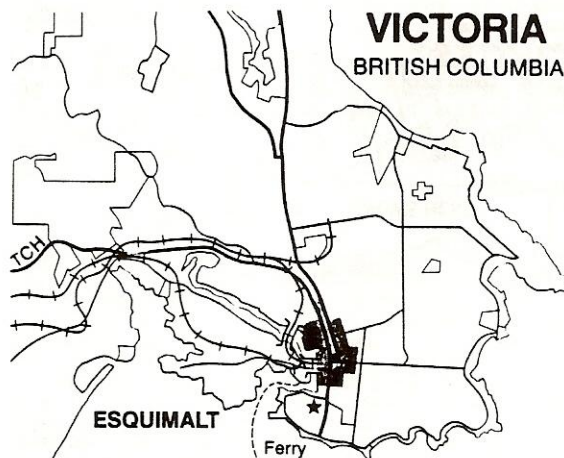
A shame though, because it listed anything and everything from the underground. Not just the avant-gardé art zines, or the unreadable poetry chapbooks, but publications of the dark side of the human race, such as neo-Nazis and S&M purveyors. Advocacy zines covered the usual topics and many unusual ones as well. There was always a title to catch the eye of the reader. Remember when you were a young child and used to send off for those cereal promotions? The decoder ring? The set of trading cards? With FF, the same sense of excitement was there, mailing off a banknote or two to a new zine, waiting to see what it was like.

But alas, it is gone, and nothing to take its place. I have found a couple zines though. Much smaller, but with a listing of weird and wonderful underground zines is one called OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS AND VIDEO. It covers titles like WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP (published in England by a chap fascinated by murderers), THE URINE NATION NEWS (the War On Drugs), and THE SABOT TIMES (disgruntled journalists attacking their own newspapers).

OBSCURE can be had for \$1 per issue via Box 1334, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201. Basically a six-page FF.

For those only interested in SF zines (and a shame if you refuse to look at others, because that's where the vitality is), there is TRASH BARREL, an irregular reviewzine that claims to be bimonthly. The format is nothing to get

excited about. Straightforward listings of SF zines. Gamble a dollar or a trade copy by writing to Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Avenue, North Hollywood, California 91606.



THE CITY THAT CANADA FORGOT

Victoria is the capital of British Columbia. Located on the end of Vancouver Island, it is conveniently cut off from the mainland except by ferry or aircraft. It holds a place in Canadian tradition as the last outpost of the Empire, the place where Englishmen go to retire. A city whose major fame rests on the Empress Hotel, where tea is still served as it was when the sun never sat on George V. In short, a living museum.

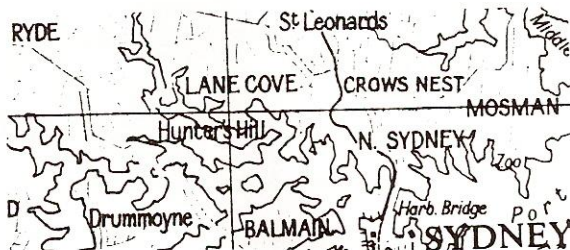
The last time I saw Victoria mentioned in the newspaper was a few years ago when Queen Elizabeth visited. They had to dredge the harbour so HMS Britannia could get in. So in the face of all this clichéd wimpy pomishness, it was a bit startling to receive a piece of high weirdness a while ago. The handwritten copyright symbol on the back of RASPBERRY DRINKZINE says 1991. I kept the envelope it came in but unfortunately the stamps were not cancelled with a date stamp but rather by what is known to philatelists as a blind roller cancel. (During WW2, Victoria used 'nude' and 'blackout' cancels; who says it is boring to collect stamps?). The envelope had a sticker on it supporting Worldcon at Myles' house, which is why I kept it, so that years from now, when my estate is probated and my philatelic collections auctioned off for the benefit of my heirs and National Revenue Taxation, a stamp collector will be wondering what all that was.

RASPBERRY DRINKZINE, at least the copy I have, is from Karl Johanson (4129 Carey Road, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 4G5), probably for \$2 or The Usual. It is a collagezine, with handmade layouts consisting of photos cut out from magazines and pasted in. Never mind the argument about mimeo versus photocopy, here all the text is handwritten. Lots of Star Trek bashing, stickers (Karl makes them at work if I understand it correctly), and rubber stamps. Strange lists such as: Ducks 7, pies 12, dirt 3 kg, trees 7 or 8, titanium-lots, etc. [Reminds me of when I used to be in charge of Confederation Park district. The park has a duck pond, so each year when I did the annual inventory, I would write in Ducks, mallard 27, Geese, Canada 6. I did this for several years before anyone noticed.] There is a sketch of Mr. Fandom reminding us "Eat an elf for lunch."

WE REGRET NO MAP IS AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

Vancouver, aka Lotusland, the place where it rains almost as much as what Calgary has been getting this year, is

to Canada what Los Angeles is to the USA, except that they have overcast skies instead of smog. Just out of Vancouver is Garth Spencer's new zine SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG. In the same size as OPUNTIA, with the taped edges I abandoned at the same time Garth started using them, but with the text up-and-down instead of sideways. This first issue, dated Spring 1992, mostly comprises Garth's thoughts on conrunning and the more philosophical aspects thereof. A long article details his beliefs on where cons are headed and why. Worth reading. The Usual will get it for you from Garth via Box 15335, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 5B1.

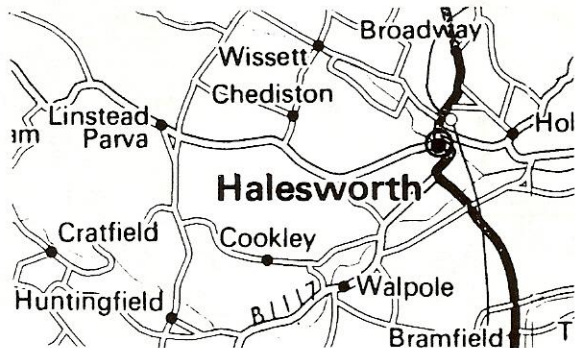


COUNTERSHINE

From Australia, Eric Lindsay emits GEGENSCHN. He is a computer programmer, so we read about life in the silicon lane. But issues 63 and 64 (April and May) do mention other things, mainly a report on his trip to USA fandom and cons. And we learn that fandom in Australia is also going through difficult times. Lots of book reviews. The Usual via Eric at 7 Nicoll Avenue, Ryde, NSW 2112, Australia.

... is Harry Andruschak, who issues perzines under a wide variety of titles. He certainly gets around around, having rafted down a Chilean river, hiked through the Grand Canyon, danced his way through Los Angeles (as a Scottish Country dancer), and endured exile in Norman, Oklahoma, where the USPS keeps sending him on training courses. I can relate to that; I've been on pesticide courses at Olds, Alberta, the Canadian equivalent of Norman. A place where he attends a mediacon because "After five weeks in Norman, even a mediacon is a welcome break."

Harry publishes his zines with a spirit-duplicator, that purple-inked device which reminds me of my school days in the era before photocopiers, when all our exam papers were in purple. Send him a dollar or two at Box 5309, Torrance, California 90510-5309, or try The Usual.



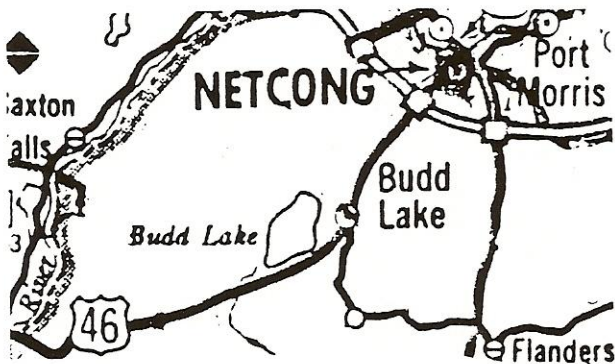
is Chuck Connor, who issues THINGUMYBOB out of England via Falkland Islands. The format is a stream of consciousness type with locs, articles, and comments all blurred in together. Issue #5 naturally caught my eye because of Harry Turner's article on how to teach your prayer plant to levitate. One trusts that dandelions will never have this secret. A bit of a fuss about British fandom, and some comments on the brave new world of video and e-mail fanzines. Lots of good reading, all for The Usual from Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF, England.

I GOT'S THE NEW PORT NEWS

Like Andruschak, Ned Brooks publishes a range of zines from IT GOES ON THE SHELF to THE NEW PORT NEWS and his Slanapa comments. I.G.O.T.S. is a reviewzine of short remarks on what books have come his way. NEW PORT NEWS is his SFPazine, and like most apas, it can be hard to pick up the thread of conversation if you don't see all the other contributions. Once more with The Usual from Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605.

APA BLACK HOLES

In an issue of THINGUMYBOB, Bernard Earp made an interesting point about fans vanishing into apas and closing the hole behind them. While not a certainty, there is enough truth to this to make one wonder. Apas could be considered as black holes. No one knows what goes on inside either a black hole or an apa.



THIS BUDD'S FOR YOU

Two of them actually, as Robert Sabella puts out VISIONS OF PARADISE (perzine) and GRADIENT (genzine). V.O.P. is divided into two sections. "The Passing Scene" is the diaryzine, and "The Jaundiced Eye" reviews books. A more philosophical approach is taken in GRADIENT, with recent articles on SF in the 1980s, what is wrong with ASIMOV'S, and selecting the SF All-Star Team. The Usual will get them for you from 2 Natalie Drive, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828.

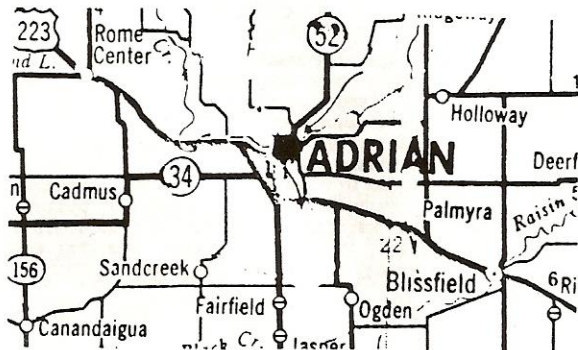
AND NOW THE NEWS ... (BUT NO MAP)

What LOCUS does for the professional SF scene, FILE 770 does for fandom. Lengthy reports on Worldcons, ongoing controversy about Creation Cons, and various other items suitable for this newzine. Generally not available for The Usual; some arranged trades with newzines and clubzines, or you might be able to become a stringer, or, if you can draw, a bit of artwork is not amiss. Subscription

is US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Avenue #2, Van Nuys, California 91401. Covers places LOCUS doesn't reach, and a suitable complement to that zine.

THE DIFFIDENT AMANUENSIS

Out of the heartland halfway between Cadmus and Holloway, not far from Blissfield, comes THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS, a zine that has steadily been evolving in quality to become a very nice production indeed. This genzine has a bit of everything, with a loc column of particular note. Sabella's "Jaundiced Eye" shows up here, and there is some fanfiction. A couple of \$\$ or The Usual will get you it from Thomas Sadler, 422 W. Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221.



HOW DID YOUR TOWN GET ITS NAME?

I asked this question in issue #8.1 when I explained how Calgary was named after a village in Scotland. Loccers have provided a few responses.

From Ned Brooks: "... the rather silly name Newport News was originally New Port Newes, created when the Newes brothers moved their trading post, Port Newes, to the tip of the peninsula. The 'Newport News' spelling arose from some PR man's desire to link the locale with the name of Christopher Newport. What puzzles me is why anyone put up with such foolishness."

From Joseph Major: "Louisville was named after Louis XVI of France. Originally our founder, General George Rogers Clark, named the base 'Beargrass Settlement'. One of the streams around here is Beargrass Creek. The base, that is, that he had set up in 1778 to cover his forays into the Northwest Territory. When he re-emerged from the wilds of Indiana and Illinois after his victorious campaign, he was informed of the Patriots' gallant new ally, and he decided to make a statement. That is, once he had founded the new fort on the southern, Virginia, bank of the Ohio River (Kentucky was part of Virginia until 1792; yes, we are having our own little bicentennial bash). The old fort, his original base, was on an island in the river which has since disappeared."

From Rodney Leighton: "I have no idea how Pugwash [Nova Scotia] got its name. I'm sure the story about the British dowager washing her small dog can't be true. By the way, we have street signs in English and Gaelic."

WE NOW RETURN YOU TO OUR REGULARLY-SCHEDULED ZINE REVIEWS

Picking out another perzine from my bookshelf, here is THE KNARLY KNEWS, which, I just now noticed from the editorial masthead, is a genzine. But it certainly reads as a perzine, and since the cover of issue #34 announces the

arrival of a bouncing baby Welch, I feel I am safe in this regard. Various articles and comments by the proprietors, con reports and pseudonymous articles. Of particular delight is an report of how to get even with a bank that refused to waive a \$15 service charge on a closed account. The person decided to withdraw the \$12000 in cash, so the bank ended up paying far more to hire a security guard to watch the cash overnight than what it would have cost to have waived the \$15. Even funnier was the reaction of the people who were getting the \$12000 (it was for a house) and were expecting the usual cheque, not actual pieces of legal tender.

All for The Usual from Henry and Letha Welch, 5538 N. Shasta Drive, Glendale, Wisconsin 53209.

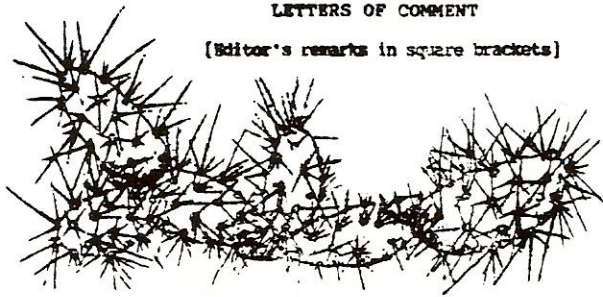
AND FINALLY, A SEMIPROZINE

Damon Knight is the editor of MONAD, a critical review of SF written only by SF authors. No fans or academic types wanted, on the grounds that they are outsiders, and only insiders really know what SF is about. This is, as you might expect, a controversial approach. I suppose I could argue that only people who earn their living from horticulture, such as myself, are entitled to write about gardening. It has always been annoying to have middle-aged housewives writing articles about how to grow roses, or some clergyman rambling on with pruning advice. I only have the first issue of MONAD, so perhaps Knight may have softened somewhat or perhaps restated his idea more diplomatically.

I don't know the current subscription so you can send an SASE to Pulphouse Publishing, Box 1227, Eugene, Oregon 97440, and ask for details.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Rodney Leighton

R.R. 3

Pugwash, Nova Scotia, BOK 1L0

1992-5-22

An interesting coincidence is that I just read BLOOD SUCKING MONKEYS FROM NORTH TONAWANDA a few days ago. Thought it was kind of cute. Haven't read the other stories in the book yet. Of the Kilodney stuff I have heard or read, about half is very good and the other half is pure crap.

Didn't understand Mark Manning's comments. I hope he never becomes a reader for a publisher; lots of fantastic authors were unknowns at some point. In writing reviews, I recommend items which I find to be good, irrespective of whether I ever heard of the people involved, or the works, or whether I personally like it or not.

FROM: Steve George

642 Ingersoll Street

Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 2J4

1992-6-9

Your comment about fan pubbing being a hobby and something that should be done for pleasure, and done well, is the best I've seen it put. It's so easy, as a faned, to get caught up in 'regularity' and 'page count' and 'reader enjoyment' and 'loc hooks' that you forget that you are doing this for the pleasure of it, that it might just be the one area in your life where you can take the opportunity to do things as well as you'd like to see them done, and that any effort to cater to tastes or pressures outside your own desire for pleasure will only ruin the fanzine in the long and perhaps even the short run. I think back on my own fanzine pubbing days and it depresses me to remember how much I published simply to get reaction, how much I said because I thought others would like to hear it, how much I typed to fill pages. Fanzines should never be a duty, they should never be published to fill a perceived need but should simply be a pleasure for the faned. When fanzines meet that simple criterion, they become a pleasure for others too.

I, too, find the whining over the decline of mimeo to be annoying. Most of the fanzines I published were mimeoed, but if I'd had access to cheap and easy photocopying, I'd never have looked twice at my A.B. Dick or Gestetner. The key words are easy and cheap. Fanzines have to strive for a balance between the two, and mimeo now goes off the scale on both. Then again, I guess it goes back to the pleasure it delivers to the faned. Some faneds take great pleasure in having complete control of the creative process from writing, editing, through printing, collation, and mailing. You lose some of that in photocopying. Still, for others, the printing process is just a chore, and the pleasure is found elsewhere; photocopying makes the most sense.

FROM: Harry Andruschak 1992-6-11
Box 5309
Torrance, California 90510-5309

Certainly I have never faunched over the good old days of mimeo. Pooh. As a spirit-duplicator, I sneer at mimeo users. Give me that old-time purple stain on your fingers! Grotty purple printing! Limited print runs! Bleed-through and paper curl. Yah. That is the real old-time fannish tradition. Hark! Is that a heckto pan I hear rattling in the background?

FROM: Buck Coulson 1992-6-18
2677W-500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

THROUGH THE ALIMENTARY CANAL WITH GUN AND CAMERA is by George S. Chappell, copyright 1930. Dover put out an edition in 1963 but it may well be completely out of print by now. Constable & Co. put out an English version, but I have no date on that one. Our copy is filed in the humour section and it was but the work of a moment to rush to the upstairs bathroom and check out the humour book-case installed there. A very funny book.

[Chester Cuthbert also wrote in with the author name for this book.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney 1992-6-13
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

Fandom is a wider arena than it was back in the Thirties. Perhaps the Trekfen and gamers are everywhere, the filkers make demands, and the costumers want more space. However, the majority of these groups have their origins in

the reading of SF. Costumers read voraciously in order to get ideas for the marvellous costumes they make. Filkers write songs based on novels and short stories. I've discovered how many Trekfen love Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, Niven, etc., even the fervent Trekkies who ask me in all reverent sincerity if I knew that Robert Bloch wrote three Star Trek episodes. The boundaries between SF and fantasy, gaming and comics has blurred so much as to be nearly non-existent. I find enough common ground with many of these people to enjoy their company and discuss their interests intelligently.

FROM: Ned Brooks 1992-6-20
713 Paul Street
Newport News, Virginia 23605

I see you mention the demise of a zine called XENOFIL. Bud Webster asked me on the phone last night whatever happened to XENOPHILE and its editor Nils Hardin, but I couldn't come up with anything. This must be a different zine.

[Yes. The one with an F instead of PH was put out by a Calgary concon. The con society, ConVersion, is still going; the zine was just a sideline.]

Just got in the mail today the MEMORY BOOK from the 1989 Worldcon, NoreasCon. Less than three years, that's not so bad.

FROM: Ken Cheslin 1992-7-1
10 Coney Green
Stourbridge, West Midland DY8 1LA, England

A CHILD'S GARDEN OF OLAF as a title is ended, but the OLAF ALTERNATIVE, which is the same thing under a different name, is being run off now, which means I'm rather

busy. The way you followed on from the demise of ACGOO to my remarks about fanzine fandom rather gave the impression that the state of fanzine fandom was a factor in folding ACGOO. Correction though, not "partly because of the cost" but overwhelmingly because of the cost. I would say my remarks were grumbles about the relegation of fanzine fandom, rather than wholehearted condemnations of the present state. I don't know if there is a difference as you see it, but myself I feel that there is a significant difference.

FROM: Joseph Major 1992-6-30
4701 Taylor Boulevard #8
Louisville, Kentucky 40215-2343

The subtle retitling of THE DOOR INTO SUMMER which Boris Sidyuk has revealed as DOOR TO THE SUMMER is, I guess, a sign of the old saying that a translator is a traducer. I wonder how the translators dealt with the US-Soviet war that forms part of the background? If memory has not failed me, Heinlein had the war taking place in the Sixties. Of course, when you are listing the technological predictions of SF, you can put THE DOOR INTO SUMMER on that list. The way Heinlein describes the Thorsen Memory Tubes, there is a remarkably close parallel in some ways to the way Programmable Read-only Memories (PROMS) work. Tim Lane has a program which installs programs on these by burning in the specific circuits for the program. He calls it "Carrie"; after all, it does burn PROMS.

FROM: Joseph Nicholas 1992-6-26
5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill
London N15 6NH, England

Boris Sidyuk's criticism of [MARXISM TODAY] struck me as both unfair and unfounded, not least because (as he admits) he's never seen a copy and thus can't know that the

magazine had long since ceased to have much to do with Marxism. It was still officially associated with the Communist Party of Great Britain, which has now ceased to exist as such and has reconstructed itself as the Democratic Left, with an agenda that more closely resembles an extraparlimentary pressure group than a political party. Its life commenced as an organ of theoretical and ideological debate of the problems of Marxism, and was as dull and as uncompromisingly Stalinist as this might suggest. With the capture in the mid-Seventies of the party's central committees by the Eurocommunist faction, however, the magazine underwent a rapid transformation to become a journal of more broad-ranging political debate, securing national distribution via the news trade in the early Eighties. Although it ran on a shoestring and never paid its contributors, it pushed its audience profile and market penetration to heights hitherto undreamed of by any publication with nominally socialist aims (never mind with the dread word 'Marxism' in its title), exceeding even the sales figures of the Labour Party's NEW SOCIALIST. One index of the respect and attention the magazine commanded at its peak is the number of Conservative MPs who appeared in its pages, and another is the number of times it was denounced by Labour MPs and other left-wingers who felt that it had abandoned its roots and moved too far to centre ground. It closed at its peak, as a response to and part of the general reconstruction on which the European Left embarked following the collapse of communism, rather than being forced out of business on purely financial grounds.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Chester Cuthbert