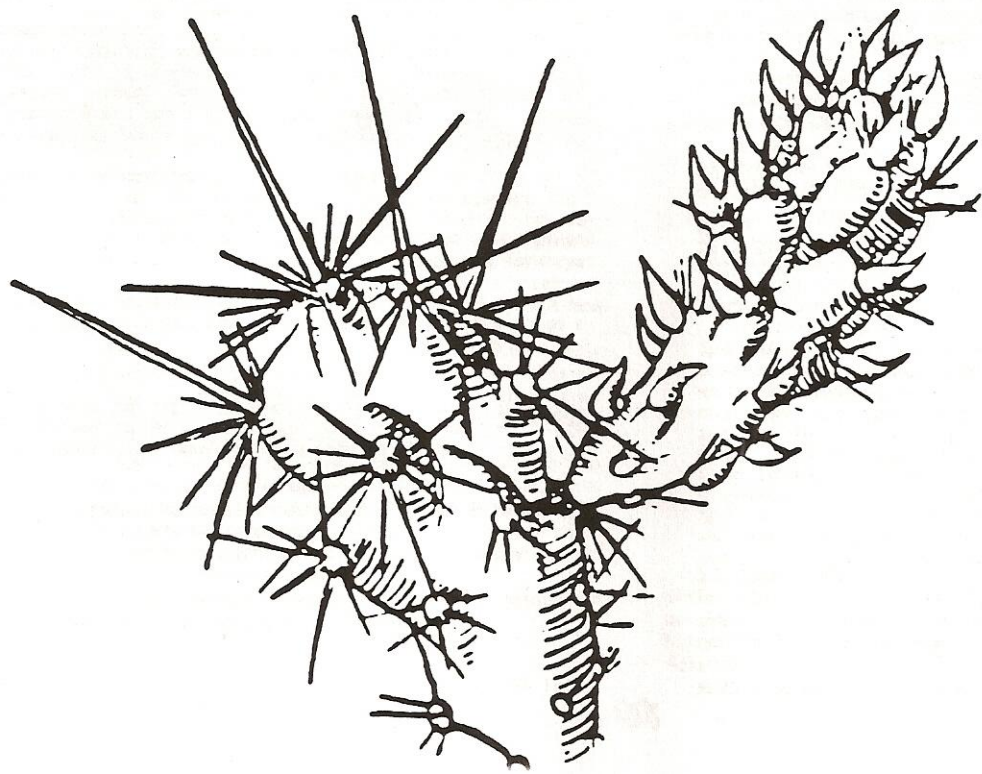


OPUNTIA



OPUNTIA #10

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

ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia schottii, drawn by an unknown artist for the 1920 book THE CACTACEAE. DESCRIPTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF PLANTS OF THE CACTUS FAMILY.

EDITORIAL: Here are some ideas for anyone wanting to do a genuinely Canadian SF novel.

1) A system of inhabited planets in a remote arm of the galaxy. The people there spend most of their time bickering over constitutional amendments instead of taking action to stem their economic decline. Other stellar systems in the neighbourhood are passing them by.

2) A planet keeps throwing out demagogues who disrupt the other planets for a while, then fade away. This planet has the natural resources in the stellar system, but the population is concentrated on the other planets, making it difficult for the demagogues to implement their economic theories.

3) A martyr who led two rebellions more than a century in the past is now a hero of the people who opposed him back then, and is ignored on the planet of his birth. His attempt to set himself up as Pope of a New Jerusalem is quietly ignored by historians who prefer to remember him as a liberator of his people.

WHAT NEWS FROM MUDDY WATERS?

Canadian, a.k.a. Worldcon '94, has just issued Progress Report #2, dated August 1992 and received by me on September 25. A nicely done bulletin via computer and photocopier (The mimeo is dead! Long live D.T.P.!) Pretty much the usual reports one expects to see. The membership total at time of printing was 2459, of whom 269 are Canucks, 2120 are Americans, and the rest from elsewhere. Ontario has the largest contingent of members, Manitoba is next (no surprise there), then Alberta. I'm surprised there aren't more people listed from British Columbia. In looking over the list of committee personnel, I only recognize a couple people as being connected with fanzinedom; the rest are complete strangers to me. This brings home how far apart the two solitudes have drifted.

Membership is US\$75 or C\$85 until year's end, in 1993 it goes up to US\$85 or C\$95. Children 12 and under at US\$30/C\$35 all times. Supporting memberships are US\$25/C\$30. Remit payment to Canadian, Box 2430, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 4A7.

Winnipeg, by the way, is from an aboriginal word for 'muddy waters'.

It is also the final resting place of a martyr who led two rebellions more than a century ago, and wanted to set himself up as Pope of New Jerusalem.

And this zine is published out of a province that puts out a demagogue every few decades or so, but who find it difficult to implement their theories because most of the population is concentrated in other provinces.

And the one about people bickering over constitutional amendments is, of course, purely fictional.

ON THE BONNY, BONNY BANKS OF THE FRASER

(PART III)

Garth Spencer

From here on this is more of a personal account, as I was present in Vancouver fandom from late 1987 onward. Necessarily I skip a lot that happened, due to things I just didn't hear about.

Let's pause and take a look at Vancouver fandom at the time. Such information as I have focuses on BCSFA, from which most V-Con committee members were drawn, and offers very little information on the other clubs in town; but there are today several Star Trek clubs, a Dr. Who fan club, the Gamesters of Triskelion gamers at SFU, and the UBC SF Society in the Lower Mainland, each with its own publication. Of these, the UBCSFS *Horizons SF* zine made an occasional appearance to BCSFAns. (It took a few years for someone to say that this was a biennial SF revue, not a clubzine or genzine; or to establish that someone in UBCSFS thought BCSFA fans were feuding with them.)

Steve Forty wrote in *BCSFazine* #218 that FRED, the weekly pub gathering, dated back to '78 or '79, and that after it moved to Friday nights in 1986, attendance approximately doubled (peaking at 30 - 40 fans). From the time I moved to Vancouver I saw FRED move periodically from place to place.

I have a note that the Ether Patrol, the SF radio show on CFRO community radio, drifted out of the hands of BCSFAns and by 1985 was being hosted by Michael Dean and Kyle Kirkwood, members of the UBC SF Society. They knew Len Wong through the Vancouver Comic Book Club, and later got into contact with him independently.

By 1987, the major activities of the club were holding the annual V-Con, and publishing *BCSFazine*.

This Will Be On The Exam

It is also worthwhile to look at the WCSFCCA constitution and bylaws, which were in place from 1981. A key provision in the WCSFCCA bylaws is that regular financial reports from a V-Con committee are to be made to WCSFCCA executives; another is that, if the committee's performance does not measure up, WCSFCCA can step in, remove them from their positions and take over.

Minutes of the Dec. 4, 1984 WCSFCCA meeting (from *BCSFazine* #140, Jan. '85) read: It was agreed that strict guidelines should be drawn up on 'convention benefits'.

Mike Bailey has suggested that a permanent WCSFCCA audit committee be formed to examine the books of all conventions, regardless of profit or loss. This was agreed to, with Ed suggesting that the wording setting up the committee be amended to include the phrase, 'headed by the WCSFCCA treasurer.'

Al Betz went a bit further in *BCSFazine* #147:

- "1. WCSFCCA is to provide a buffer between BCSFA and the legal consequences of a disaster at V-Con.
- "2. WCSFCCA is to promulgate rules for the organization and running of V-Cons which will maximize the probability of returning a profit to BCSFA, to be used for BCSFA's own purposes, which are entirely beyond the purview of WCSFCCA's interest or control.
- "3. WCSFCCA is to approve the use of the V-Con trademark only by those convention committees which agree to abide by its rules for the responsible running of conventions."

— • —

V-Con 15 was held May 1987 at Gage Residence. This year's theme was the history of SF; the program book was laid out like a classic pulp magazine. Guest of Honour was Sam Moskowitz; FanGoH (unfortunately absent) was Forrest J. Ackerman; ArtGoH was Alex Schomburg; TM was Michael

Walsh. Ray Beam contributed an article on First Fandom in the program book.

It was largely due to the welcome I received at V-Con 15 that I moved to Vancouver, when I left Victoria. The fandom I entered was at this point a "general-interest" SF group; members participated in club meetings, some annual parties, a long-running monthly clubzine, and a convention. There was one bimonthly apa (BCAPA) and a writer's group. I joined BCAPA in September and moved the following month to Vancouver. (I started by serializing an earlier version of this fanhistory.)

It was in BCAPA (in January 1988, from Ed Beauregard) that we heard that Donna McMahon would be moving to Calgary, and probably her V-Con 16 chairmanship would be delegated to him, though he didn't look forward to it ...

V-Con 16 was held in May 1988 at Gage Residence. This year's theme was "The Science in Science Fiction"; the Guest of Honour was Hal Clement, the Toastmaster was James P. Hogan, and Science Guest was John G. Cramer. The con received a decent writeup in the May 88 *Discorder* (the U.B.C. radio station magazine), which may or may not indicate where we are best advised to go for coverage.

Dave New informs me that about 1988, the social aspects of UBCSFS, off-campus, began to dominate over its on-campus activities. Then, in 1989, all but two members graduated (or flunked out of U.B.C.).

In July of 1988, Fran Skene returned from Westercon 41 in Phoenix, with a proposal to bid for Westercon 44. She quickly gathered a core group of old and new Vancouver fans, including some well-known and experienced fans, and began producing flyers announcing Vancouver's bid to hold this

Westercon, at U.B.C.'s Gage Residence on July 4-7, 1991. Our opposition was Sacramento, which (I was told) has several times bid effectively for Westercons, and enjoyed San Franciscan support; but other congoers (e.g. Angelenos) were unhappy with the actual conventions they held.

I detail all this because, in later correspondence with Jan Howard Finder, I discovered that rumours were going about that this was merely a Los Angeles bid to run against Sacramento, with no local support. Later still, it developed that some fans thought Vancouver won the Westercon under false pretences ... when we had been advertising U.B.C. and Gage Residence all along.

At first the Westercon 44 bid promotions played off of nearby Wreck Beach, the clothes-optional beach near the U.B.C. campus. Later, the emphasis shifted to "The Future Is Here. Now.", and sought to promote Canadian literature and SF in the program.

Fran Skene persuaded me to join the Westercon bid committee in charge of publications. We produced one bid report, which I based on our answers to the kind of questions Bruce Farr recommended (in *Con Games*) be asked of Worldcon bids.

The Westercon 44 bid obtained \$1500 in seed money from WCSFCCA for promotions, on the agreement that WCSFCCA would share in Westercon 44 profits, if and when.

V-Con 17 was held May 26-28, 1989 at Totem Residence, with a theme of "Humour and Satire in Science Fiction". Guests of Honour were Robert Sheckley, Spider and Jeanne Robinson; Toastmaster was Bob Shaw; and Desert Peach Guest was Donna Barr. The con made a decent profit.

V-Con 17 promotion was distinguished by some good flyers — for a change, they included a brief explanation of fandom and conventions for people who just read the stuff.

It might have been about now that Fran decided who would chair *Westercon*, if we won our *bid*. People have since

criticized her choice. But, to my knowledge, only one person volunteered to succeed her; and Fran was undergoing domestic difficulties, and was contemplating a work-study librarianship program overseas (which subsequently evaporated).

The new chair acknowledged being relatively new to fannish conventions, and made a concerted effort to get to a lot of conventions to learn everything possible. This included not only trips to Northwest conventions but to Windycon, Baycon, and SMOFCon in Orlando.

Down to a Sunless Sea

Vancouver won the Westercon site selection for 1991 at Anaheim in 89. Our committee underwent the first of several reorganizations immediately following the Anaheim Westercon; William Lowe stepped down as Acting Treasurer, new members were added, and some positions were shifted around. The new chair started holding formally-organized meetings, and drew up a Table of Organization (the first of several).

This Westercon faced several unforeseen challenges, mainly the changes in provincial and federal legislation that all came about at this time. As it worked out, the creative rumours about Westercon 44 were not important. More serious were the first implementation of the Canada-U.S. "Free Trade" Act, affecting Customs duties; the new federal Goods and Services Tax; and (in early 1991) the sudden appearance of new B.C. liquor legislation. We were told this meant that Westercon had to have licensed bartenders handling liquor, with up to a million dollars' worth of insurance. (This last turned out to be in error.)

The Mythopoeic Society held Mythcon XX (that is, their twentieth conference) at U.B.C. on July 28-31, 1989. Author Guest of Honour was Guy Gavriel Kay; "Scholar Guest of

Honour" was Raymond Thompson; Musical Guest of Honour was Loreena McKennitt.

In fall 1989, David New writes, the Gamesters of Triskelion at SFU started publishing *Revolutions* (Marcie Lynn Tentchoff editing), featuring game and club news, fiction, poetry and art.

By sometime as early as that fall, the Westercon chair persuaded me to move up from Publications to Secretary of the Westercon. I felt doubtful at my increased responsibility but, like everyone else, I did not measure my time or energy; so it was hard to say no and justify it. It was also hard to refuse when, from time to time, the chair asked me or the treasurer, Jackie Wilson, to sign some cheque blanks to save time in making expenses.

The chair of Westercon 44 also proposed to hold V-Con 20 in May 92, and to hold it at the Sheraton in Burnaby. At the time (they now tell me), some people thought this was a poor idea. One or two people told me specifically that V-Con is popular *because it's cheap*, being held at a university residence. (Others have since told me that this applies more to Canadian fans than to Americans, who pay taxes earlier. More mixed messages.) Others told me that the chair was taking on far too much workload.

The chair of Westercon 44 kept on coming up with ideas. One was to produce a video to promote the Westercon. Another was to break up the long gap in February between Northwest cons with a relaxicon (Sanctuary), since V-Con would not be held in May in 1991. This idea got the go-ahead from WCSFCCA and was planned for the Relax Plaza in Richmond.

About the first I heard of L.A.'s Westercon bylaws was in spring of 1990, when Westercon 43 (Portland) sent out their

Progress Report #4. I studied these and made copies for the committee, noting down a timetable for the sequence of tasks demanded by the bylaws; mostly this document concerned site selection procedure, but some measures applied to Registration and Security departments.

V-Con 18 was chaired by Lisa Smedman. The con was held in May of 1990 at Totem Residence, with a theme of the fantasy in SF. TM was Elizabeth A. Lynn; Artist Guest was Roger Raupp; FanGuest of Honour was "Vincent"; "Canadian Guest of Honour" was David Duncan.

On their own initiative, Smedman and her treasurer Con Hiebner did something WCSFCCA did not hold them to — they kept monitoring their financial state, and reported back to WCSFCCA, well before V-Con 18, when they anticipated a low profit or even a loss. The co-chairs presented their differing financial projections at a WCSFCCA executive meeting. They got help, and in the end turned a decent profit.

Westercon promotion continued through V-Con 18, and shooting on the video continued during the con. The chair noted at the June 10, 1990 Westercon meeting there were strange rumours circulating about our con, and that American fans expected things of Westercons which were not to appear at ours — free pop and liquor and full-meal spreads, for example. (We believed at the time that some things just weren't legally available, like complimentary beer from local breweries. So it appeared to us that American fans wouldn't accept a lot of Canadian facts of life.)

This must have been about the time that conflicts between what we could do, and what was expected of Westercon, started to emerge. What also emerged for me was the vagueness of what was expected of a Westercon, even when we had the Westercon bylaws.

I think it was largely due to the nebulous "something extra" to Westercons, which Westercon regulars could not be bothered

to define, that the Westercon 44 chair kept adding special features to the program. Trying to add something extra to our con, whatever it cost.

In August of 1990 I resigned as Westercon, BCSFA and WCSFCCA Secretary, mainly due to excess (and fruitless) committee work.

Sanctuary (V-Con 18.5), the limited-membership con, was held Feb. 15-17, 1991 at the Relax Plaza Hotel. The flyer (doubling as program book and pocket program) listed Eileen Kernaghan as Relaxed Guest of Honour, Constantine Hiebner as Relaxed Fan Guest of Honour, a 24-hour video room, one meeting room for readings and other programming, pool party and two hospitality suites. The convention took a three-figure loss.

Westercon 44/V-Con 19 was held, as advertised, in July at U.B.C. By many accounts it was a fun con to attend; fans and writers alike made a lot of contacts.

But, also by many accounts, this event was troublesome for dealers, costumers, artists and program participants, and the program participants and committee are still trading horror stories. Volunteers were at a premium, and were not well treated.

A hoax version of the daily convention zine tells its own story:

Opening Night Jitters

"Help us," read Patrick Nielsen Hayden's handmade sign, surreptitiously flashed at the audience. The audience already had been sitting for thirty minutes staring at the mute assembly of guests and committee. The guests had sweated off five pounds waiting for the multimedia extravaganza to begin. Throughout the room the technical staff scurried making last-minute arrangements with all the

precision of the Three Stooges stealing televisions from a motel. ...

The six people sitting in the front row who could see the monitor really enjoyed the special effects.

Meanwhile, William Gibson made notes toward a new book, about a dank, festering world of data pirates who convince hundreds of people to buy expensive airfares and room reservations to attend the setup of a VCR.

There was some disorganization of the program. It developed later that the only up-to-date file containing the program was on a computer whose hard disk crashed.

An extraordinary number of people got free memberships — program participants and even guests of guests were labelled "Professional".

The Westercon chair made a number of comments in the enlarged BCSFAzine (#218) that are worth examining.

"Chairing Westercon and facing V-Con has made me think long and hard about the whole notion of volunteering to do **what is essentially a business** [My emphasis -GS]. One serious problem I have had repeatedly with Westercon is Attitude. For example, 'I'm a volunteer, I don't have to work if I don't feel like it' or 'I have volunteered and so I can do what I want and you can't tell me what to do', or 'This is good enough, it's just for fans'. Then there are the passive aggressives who sign up for things, and then drop out after the due date, tasks undone, leaving someone - usually me - to pick up the pieces ..."

In this issue, which was enclosed with the rest of the package given to Westercon members, the chair printed these remarks and published six resolutions, later to be submitted for administering WCSFCCA conventions.

"1) Being a volunteer means that one is doing work without expectation of remuneration. Signing on as a volunteer for the purposes of running a convention is a

contract with all the members of the Convention Committee. There shall be a job description signed by the department heads, one copy kept by the member, and another given to the chair. Volunteers to each department should also be given a job description and have it orally verified that he or she will be able to do the job.

"2) All those who volunteer must be approved by majority vote by the other members of the Convention Committee, including the executive who have been previously approved by majority vote at the duly posted WCSFCCA meeting.

"3) Failure to complete an assigned task on time, or in the approved manner, will automatically take that person off the Convention Committee. If that person does this three times, that person is barred from future convention committees and his or her name posted in the BCSFAzine.

"4) If a volunteer is unable to perform assigned tasks for legitimate reasons, that person is required to report that state of affairs to the chair as soon as possible, and assistance is rendered or the task is reassigned, as appropriate.

"5) All reports must be in writing and submitted to the chair. The secretary should collate all reports and minutes for a committeeazine to be distributed prior to the next meeting.

"6) The volunteer is a member of a team, and is not autonomous. All tasks, assigned to, or initiated by the committee member, must be authorized by the committee and/or the executive before being put into action. All publicity must be proofread by the committee and/or the executive before printing."

The fallout from this convention is interesting. The article in *File 770:59* (Feb. 92) is a good summing-up:

"Red Ink Flows in the Humboldt Current

"The average attendee of this summer's Vancouver Westercon thinks of it as a pleasure-shrouded memory, if at

all, but for many conrunning fans in British Columbia it is a living nightmare. Westercon ended \$11,500 in the red ... Since the WCSFCCA started out with a \$5,000 reserve, and raised another \$1,130 at an auction, the group must now raise nearly \$6,000 to finish paying for the party."

Let's hear first how the chair saw things.

... I need to point out several things. Steve says that he thought that it was inappropriate to have the letter in the zine that was being handed out at Westercon. But the situation was quite extreme and there was no time to waste. BCSFAzine is primarily our clubzine, and what was I to use as a means of communication? In addition to chairing Westercon, I was Acting Chair for V-Con 20 due to the Chair gaffiating after launching the process. The serious lack of cooperation and a lack of organization on the part of certain department heads would result not only in serious screwup at Westercon, but they were the same people who would be on the V-Con Com. The time was very short for V-Con 20 planning, in spite of my trying to get planning off the ground. I had been carrying the ball singlehandedly for V-Con, as I had for Westercon for the first year, because people did not want to discuss or plan for the con that was after the current one being worked on.

I wanted to positively frame the problems I had faced, and wrote them out of my experience with V-Con and Westercon. I do not believe in despotism never mind how benevolent; I wanted to take my concerns to the membership. If it passed, then we had something concrete to work with, and if it did not, then I was not the person to be the chair for a collective of anarchists, and I had a clear mandate to step down, rather than just disappear like so many others.

Steve says that I had the right to run a concom any way I like. This is not true. I introduced very early on, an organizational chart (which is not as complex as the one Westercon 46 just published in their PR 1) which was

immediately shot down by Steve, Fran, and several others. This chart showed a chain of command, and the fact that all team leaders would have at least 3 shift leaders to recruit and train. The only one who complied with that was Hospitality. If I were to have enforced my will on the committee, I would have been considered dictator. What I tried to introduce was the team concept, and tried to involve all members, especially the team leaders in the decision making process. That didn't work. I was told one thing in the meetings, and I would later find out that other things were being told behind my back. I would like to know just how any chair could "run the committee". The committee runs the chair in this case. The ideal is an interactive process, but that requires maturity and an ability to pre-plan. A very basic rule about management is that there must be bi-lateral agreement between the manager and the managee or else there are serious problems. In addition, people (poor mugs like me) have a right to know what they are getting into.

(BCSFazine #225)

The Westercon 44 chair came up with some big ideas, which maybe was good for P.R. But ... nearly ten years before, I had seen a mediafan possessed of big glossy ideas (and not much else) try to set up a big convention in Victoria, and instead created a fiasco. However, since the Westercon chair was a mature degreed professional, I could not quite believe there was a parallel.

The chair kept reorganizing the committee. Also, it seemed to several committee members — Dave New, Michael Jackson and myself — that the chair kept changing our job boundaries, moving our objectives, and withholding information needed to do the jobs demanded. It began to seem to the committee as though competent people, or people who ever told the chair anything unwelcome, found themselves demoted or edged out. Fran Skene found herself moved from programming, with Con

Hiebner, to childcare, to opening ceremonies ... Finally, she quit.

Normally V-Con committees hold a post-mortem meeting/party a month after the con. None was held after Westercon. Yet the reactions of Westercon veterans seemed pretty uniform: we kept trying to figure out what had happened and how it happened; and many of us, apparently, descended to laying blame, or even going I-could-see-it-coming. (Nobody asked, "So why didn't you *do* something to prevent this?") I saw most of us laying blame on the chair, and the chair laying blame on everyone else (sometimes at great length, as in *BCSFazine* #222).

Frances Higginson may have been the only member to come up with a series of suggestions for raising money pay off the Westercon debt. I haven't seen much action on her ideas.

At a WCSFCCA meeting later that fall, the Westercon chair insisted the "six points" be made mandatory for future V-Cons. When WCSFCCA declined, the chair resigned from the chairmanship of V-Con 20 "on a point of principle."

In Feb. '92, Mike Bailey's final loss statement for Westercon 44 came out. He calculated total accountable revenue at \$99,774.46, and total expenses at \$115,230.92 (plus (\$1,137.60 U.S.). This included C\$1,328.10 and US\$1,008.69 in unknown or unvouchered debit memos/ cash withdrawals; \$3,413.77 in trips/accommodations/ meals, etc.; \$15,210.38 in postage; \$598.74 for the first promotional video; C\$5,769.02 and US\$120 in returned cheques. Much overspending and misapplied funding was attributed to the chair, in the areas of: the chair's transportation, meals and memberships, for many cons; the first video's cost overruns; and in 341 free memberships to Westercon 44 (152 "guests", 97 guests of guests, 52 complimentary, 11 children, 11 press and 18 SCA). It appeared

that U.B.C. and the A.M.S. had not been paid, and neither had several artists.

Mike Bailey asked — quite rightly — why the treasurer and I signed so many blank cheques and gave them to the chair? (Well ... the chair talked us into it. It just sounded reasonable and we could not come up with real strong arguments to dissuade the chair.)

It was noted in *BCSFazine* 223 and the Feb. '92 *File* 770 that neither the chair nor treasurer showed up at the Nov. '91 WCSFCCA meeting. (They did attend a later "*in camera*" meeting.)

It developed later that Mike Bailey had neglected to renew WCSFCCA's non-profit registration, with the result that maybe we no longer had financial protection.

Sweetness and Light

R. Graeme Cameron perceived a split developing in the club after Westercon ... if not along the lines I perceived (the chair on one side, everyone else on the other). Like Jim Welch before him, Graeme decided it was his obligation to stop the controversy. In *BCSFazine* #226 he declared an end to printed discussion of the Westercon.

I wrote in that issue that I felt several real, crucial issues were being missed in all the incessant Westercon talk. 1) How did a normally competent fan community produce such an event? 2) What went right and what went wrong and why? 3) *What could we do now, or at least what could we learn for next time?*

Graeme replied that more than one BCSFan told him they didn't need more Westercon flogging while two cons were being prepared; the Westercon flogging was mere self-flagellation, and people didn't have time for it; the Westercon lessons were already learned; the chair was gone, therefore the problem was solved; and, he said, I implied a conspiracy to hide the full story. The full story, he said, was merely that we

spent too much money. The chair, he said, had felt Westercon was subject to greater expectations than V-Con, therefore our promotions *had* to be greater. A rigorous preventive financial policy was in place for 19.5 and 20; therefore, he said, the problem was solved.

Jackie Wilson and Vickie Oates held "V-Con 19.5" in May '92 at the Relax Plaza. Their avowed purpose was to hold a cut-down, limited-membership con, supported entirely on its own income — and if it looked like it would take a loss, then it would fold and refund the preregistrants. Con Hiebner acted as Treasurer. This convention of less than 200 members raised a little over \$900, which went to service the debt.

(to be continued)

ALTERNATIVE HISTORIES FOR CANUCK AUTHORS

by Dale Speirs

Continuing on with suggestions for SF authors, I'd like to suggest a few alternative histories. For my part, I'm rather tired of the same old what-might-have-beens based on the dead Kennedys or the American Civil War. So I suggest a few alternative alternatives.

1) Louis Riel led two rebellions in western Canada in the late 1800s. The first, in 1869-70, was successful, and resulted in the formation of the prov-

ince of Manitoba. The second, in 1885, in Saskatchewan, was a failure, and resulted in Riel being hanged for treason. But suppose that he had won the Battle of Batoche so decisively that the federal government sued for peace? Or, if he had lost, he went into exile and returned years later when the heat had died down a bit?

2) Social Credit was a radical-right party arising in the 1930s that advocated monetary reform. In our timeline, they only had success at the provincial level. However, monetary matters are the prerogative of the federal government, so the Socreds were never able to implement their ideas. But what about a Canada where the Socreds won a federal election during the Great Depression and put their plans into reality?

3) Suppose John Diefenbaker didn't bow down to the foreign government and not only kept the Avro Arrow aircraft project in production, but started up a space project with the intent of putting a Canadian on the moon before the decade was out?

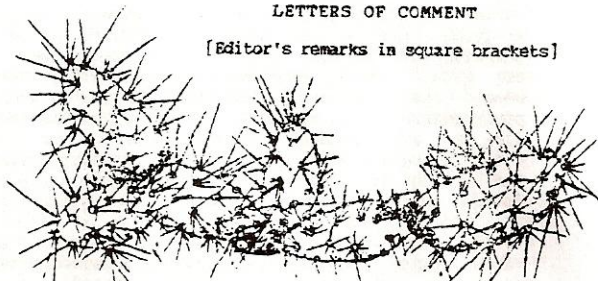
4) Suppose the WW2 referendum on bringing in conscription was massively rejected across Canada. The Prime Minister runs out of personnel to send over there, and Canada becomes a neutral nation.

5) Suppose the English had lost the Battle of the Plains of Abraham? Québec not only keeps its present territory but hangs on to the French lands in the USA.

6) Suppose Amor de Cosmos, the eccentric premier of British Columbia, had become Prime Minister? This novel would be written as humour, almost out of necessity.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



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

1992-8-4

A problem with fan history is that it doesn't have the drama of national histories. Set out in print, it often seems akin to the squabbings of the Wednesday Sewing Circle. Harry Warner is right about one of the problems of the fan historian. "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything" is okay for personal encounters, but in histories it leads to saying nothing, and having the individual complain that he was ignored. This never bothers me, since I never claimed to be impartial, but it would affect Harry, who tries to be reasonable.

Good advice to Boris Sidyuk. Write what you do know, because nobody else is going to do it. Write even what you aren't sure about, because it may lead someone else to correct you, and otherwise it wouldn't be written at all.

FROM: Garth Spencer

Box 15335

Vancouver, British Columbia V6M 4G9

1992-8-6

In response to Steve George: You grasp just one of the reasons why I do a fanhistory; it's useful to refer back to it. There are things people are liable to do, that they can't afford to do; they can be perceived in a historical record. A small leisure-interest group tends to fall into the same patterns of behaviour repeatedly.

But some of the mistakes that people make are unaffordable. This is what I am trying to tell people. Fans can (and will) use their initiative to try out new ideas but there's a skeleton, an internal structure of things you must do, if you insist on doing conventions at all. And among some repeated behaviours of naive fans are some 'new' ideas which turn out to be mistakes they cannot afford. Like tacking on neat idea after neat idea that a con cannot afford, apparently in the hope of drawing a paying crowd. Like misusing and exhausting the available volunteer enthusiasm, the will to put in some effort; we keep burning out and turning off people faster than they come in. If a con's Artists', Dealers', GoHs', or the Hotel Liaison are snowed under with work, or realize a little too late they don't understand the job, and quit rather too late, and neglect to tell you they quit, you begin to wonder why the convention was started in the first place. You have to let people know how much work and what kind of tasks are involved. And you have to back people up, not cut them and their work to pieces, once they're in place. I keep hearing about cons that fail to do this. If modern cons generally demand more than people have to give, if they're literally more trouble than they're worth, it's about time we took a long look at this sort of clambake and asked ourselves why and how we're doing this. I begin to believe this is the state we're at now.

FROM: Sam Moskowitz
361 Roseville Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07107

1992-6-5

I read with interest "On the Bonny, Bonny Banks of the Fraser" by Garth Spencer. I applaud his interest in the history of Canadian fandom and hope he keeps at it.

When he wrote "the earliest, and rather isolated, mention of Vancouver is in Donald A. Wollheim's 1936 report in ASTOUNDING, on something called THE CANADIAN SCIENCE FICTION FAN ... which has not been attested to by any other source", I realized there was something wrong about that statement, so I checked the letter column of ASTOUNDING for 1936. Wollheim had no letter or letters there at all, nor none ever afterward. All his letters appeared in 1934 and 1935. However, I did mention that fan magazine in THE IMMORTAL STORM (page 47 of the hardcover edition) where I wrote, in a write-up of an early fan magazine published by R.M. Holland Jr., of Owensboro, Kentucky, named THE SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW: "Holland finally ceded all rights to THE SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW to Wollheim. Wollheim turned out a single carbon-copied number, which is of interest only because it referred to THE CANADIAN SCIENCE FICTION FAN, produced by 'a chap in Vancouver, B.C. where we least expected a fan to live! A fair little magazine.'"

Since I still have my sources available, I pulled out my file of THE SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW to see if there was any further information. The first issue was dated July 10, 1935, and contained four hektographed pages of very minor material. The first five issues were hektographed and judging by the quality, the editor would have been fortunate to produce twenty readable copies. With the sixth issue it went carbon-copied. Judging by internal evidence, among those who received copies beside Wollheim were Julius Schwartz, editor of FANTASY MAGAZINE (whose copies I purchased), E.H. Lichtag, a movie columnist for the paper, George Gordon Clark, who reviewed it in his early fan magazine THE BROOKLYN REPORTER, Forest J. Ack-

erman, and Oliver M. Davidson Jr., a radiotelephone operator, and with the possibility that Jack Darrow and Bob Tucker, both very prominent at that period, may also have received copies.

However, the fact that the 'magazine' was able to go carbon-copy reveals a meagre circulation. If one has a good typewriter and uses thin paper, six copies of a typed sheet can be made at one time. If one wants to increase circulation, he can type the entire magazine twice and make twelve copies. It is scarcely likely a carbon-copy fan magazine would enjoy a circulation much larger than that.

The one issue that Wollheim published was the June 1936 Vol. 1, No. 7 issue, and it was the last. It was carbon copied, four pages, half letter-sized. Judging by the type font, the heading and running heads were printed by Jim Blish, who used the same type on the unfinished issue of THE PLANETEER, though I have not confirmed this. Wollheim had published two issues of at least one carbon-copied magazine in 1935 called CURIOUS STORIES. In this issue of the REVIEW, he announced that the next number will be letterpress and given away free to friends. Since Blish never finished the last issue of THE PLANETEER which would have been dated September 1936, this never happened. There was, in the writeup of the Canadian magazine an item that added to the information about it. According to Wollheim, it was mimeographed. This meant that the editor could have produced some fifty copies did he desire to do so. Since no copy of the magazine has shown up to date, he evidently did not print that many. To judge by Wollheim's writeup, such a magazine did appear, but why was the information so scanty without even the name of the editor included?

Who, besides Wollheim, received this publication? Jack Darrow, Ackerman, Bob Tucker were around and prominent. Nils Frome, whose fan magazine SUPRAMUNDANE STORIES is the first Canadian effort that can be documented, lived near Vancouver, but he never mentioned such a publica-

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tion, and I corresponded with him for years. Leslie Crutch was a prominent Canadian fan letter writer in 1936, but he is now dead. J.J. Johnston once wrote to ASTOUNDING from Mowbray, Manitoba, in 1936. Chester Cuthbert, who had two stories in WONDER STORIES in 1934 and collected SF fanatically (and still does), was a Winnipeg resident and never received a copy.

Now it is possible for fan magazines known to have been published to disappear without a trace. In 1984, an old-time Pittsburgh fan, out of the kindness of his heart, sent me two fan magazines I had never heard of from The Junior Scientific Association of San Francisco, titled THE METEOR and THE SCIENTIFIC MAGAZINE respectively. They were from 1931 and THE METEOR, without doubt, was the very first hektographed fan magazine. Yet all those years though THE IMMORTAL STORM had been serialized in a fan magazine, published in mimeographed and hardcover form and stayed in print to this day, no one had ever written me saying "Sam, you left two very early fan magazines out of your history". Evidently no one but the fan who had sent them to me, Albert H. Hirschmiller, either knew about them or remembered them. So fan magazines can be very ephemeral indeed.

FROM: Joseph Major 1992-8-4
4701 Taylor Boulevard #8
Louisville, Kentucky 40215-2343

"Corwin Amber" indeed! Some conwomen really like to take risks, but to mention being cruel. But then perhaps she was betting on the general lack of knowledge among fans of their past. And there was the recently caught pseudo-Diane Duane ...

Being that I have heard two radically different descriptions of a conversation from the two people involved, suddenly Harry Warner's historical problems seem more

plausible. Did the fan who told Harry that Harry had been married know the lady's name?

It would be nice to have a history of Louisville fandom, but there are so many distinct and distant factions that one would be hard put to list them, much less put down their history. Objectivity? Try not to ask for a flower on lofty heights.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr. 1992-8-1
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Garth's fan history ... I'm sure a lot of the information he has put together would be permanently lost if he'd waited ten years or so longer to make the attempt. I was tempted to add a mild query on the question of whether convention matters should dominate quite as much as they do. But then I realized that fanzine publishing wasn't very prominent in that area during most of the period covered, and there weren't many local clubs outside the biggest cities, so cons probably deserve to occupy most of the space. I think Garth covered Susan Wood's last years and death in the proper manner. I hope that when Garth finally finishes his historical research and publishes everything on hand in fanzines, some way will be found to reprint the whole works in a single volume, hopefully with an index.

FROM: Lloyd Penney 1992-8-8
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

Garth's history and Steve George's letter indicate that while it would be a good idea to pass on lessons of convention management to the next bunch, there

often isn't any effective way to do this. Any guide he could put together would probably not make it into the proper hands, namely the new chairmen and managers of the conventions. Any list and description of past problems and experiences pale in comparison to actually performing the particular tasks and learning the lessons firsthand. A Chairman Emeritis on the committee could help, but nothing teaches like experience, which, I suspect, will be the only way to learn. It's not that the mistakes are continually made, but that different people are making them.

Some objectivity in fanhistories is certainly desirable, and fannish journalists will know, but some of the fan-histories I've seen here are enormously subjective, and end up being listed personal attacks on groups of fans the so-called fanhistorian didn't like. Any resemblance to objectivity is purely coincidental, and probably unintentional.

FROM: Chester Cuthbert 1992-7-29
1104 Mulvey Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 1J5

Please take seriously Harry Warner Jr.. I cannot even recall the names of many of the local fans who attended meetings of our Winnipeg SF Society in my homes over a period of more than twenty-five years. Fortunately I still have in my files the attendance records of early meetings for reference to assist me.

FROM: Brian Earl Brown 1992-7-14
11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, Michigan 48224

You write in OPUNTIA #8 "Editors don't want to come out and admit that many items are purchased for the name of

the author and would have been rejected if sent in by J. Blow from Piapot, Sask.". True enough and one must remember that any active editor will deny buying stories just for the author's name value, lest they imply that said Big Name Author writes crap and alienate the author from said magazine.

Howard Browne, who edited AMAZING, FANTASTIC STORIES, and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES during the early 1950s, tells an amusing story of how he got Mickey Spillaine to write a fantasy story for FANTASTIC. Browne had just launched the magazine, which attempted to get stories from all sorts of highbrows instead of the contract hacks Browne had writing AMAZING for him. Word came that Spillaine, who was at the peak of his popularity at the time, had a fantasy story available. Browne goes into negotiation for it and when the manuscript finally arrives discovers it's a dog, some early juvenila that Spillaine had never been able to move. So Browne, who was a decent writer, wrote something and put Spillaine's name on it. Spillaine dare not complain because then it would come out just how bad a story it was he had been peddling. So sometimes editors are more than just a little desperate for those BNAs.

Harry Andruschak suggests Harry Warner send his fanzine collection to Forry Ackerman. This makes less sense than it seems because Ackerman simply does not have the financing to ensure the preservation of his collection after his death. Harry would be better off willing his collection to someone like -- well, me -- someone who has shown a longterm involvement in fandom, a longterm interest in fanzines, and is young enough to preserve and maintain Harry's collection for another twenty or thirty years. Libraries and universities have had a shocking number of incidents where they have either just thrown someone's collection away or sold off parts of it or just allowed the whole thing to rot from lack of interest or funds.

FROM: Dave Panchyk
9022 - 92 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T6C 3R2

1992-8-5

When I entered fandom in 1987, and probably much longer ago than that, there were complaints about the fractious fandoms that have infected and somehow leached the strength of 'true' fandom. I can't say when these complaints originated, probably the first time someone wore a wacky costume at a convention. In fact, I'm not very confident one could identify the characteristics or even the existence of a true fandom, but that's not the point of my letter.

Attending my first Keycon [Winnipeg] in 1987, I saw a lot of different interests reflected by the attendees. There was a sercon group, a Dragonrider weyr, Elfquesters, and even some pagans (a fairly major group whose significance to fandom should not be overlooked). There were some who never seemed to leave the folk-music room, or who sat all night at the tables in the gaming room. I was struck by what a colourful, active mosaic it was.

Mosaic. Remember that word? It's one of the ones we sometimes use to set ourselves apart from Americans: we are a mosaic, they are a melting pot. Since 1987, I have seen each of these fandoms grow into independent communities in what I think of as the balkanization of fandom. This is, of course, the process by which smaller states form from a larger nation. Each subtype or offshoot begins to develop a support system for its fans: newsletters, conventions, and the like.

Case in point: ESFACAS. This was, at one time, the be-all and end-all of Edmonton fandom. It wasn't even an umbrella group because there weren't any other groups to be an umbrella for. But over the years it lost various fans to groups like the SCA, which had a more specific appeal for a number of the club's members. Other special interest groups formed, and some people came to know Trek fan-

dom, for instance, while having little or no contact with fannish fandom. Right now, the Campus SF club, the official front for ESFACAS, is being managed by a live-roleplaying society.

Behind this balkanization I see a trend, one that does have a mirror in our consumer society. It is towards specialized interests, and these fandoms grow up around the very narrow special interests common to members of a fannish nation. In the 1990s, we are seeing catering to specific interests. This is the way our marketplace and lifestyles will be for the next while and interestingly, it is a way of avoiding Toffler's "over-choice".

As an illustration, I've become more active in gaming, which tends to ignore some fannish ways but still has conventions of a sort, as well as fanzines. There is a fanzine devoted purely to play-by-mail gaming, and I am in an apa that is devoted to one particular role-playing game system. This apa is also one of the most focussed and active I've encountered in a while.

Is this balkanization necessarily a bad thing? I say not. It is something that just is, and reflects the way we do things these days. In fact, it may be a good thing for fannish fandom, for those fans who have other interests will be drawn off into them without sticking around regular fandom for a while, being unhappy, and spreading a little of that dissatisfaction around them.

It is certainly a good thing for me and for other fringe fans. At that first Keycon, I was overwhelmed by the size of this fandom thing I had come across. I wanted to expand until I could encompass all of it, to do and know and see all things in this new world, but I knew I would surely explode in the attempt. By the wonders of our information society, the choices are laid out before you, and you can reach out and connect with whatever it is you feel at home with.

FROM: Don Fitch
3908 Frijo
Covina, California 91722

1992-8-14

Garth Spencer's history of some aspects of Canadian fandom continues to be fascinating and illuminating. It's always seemed to me that Canadian fans, and Canadian fandoms, have been somehow slightly different from their USA counterparts, and Garth's account encourages that impression, without enabling me to figure out the precise differences. I'm looking forward to the continuation of this series.

I've been helping with the Fan Lounge and the Minneapolis in '73 Party Suite at Magicon, and now have a much better idea of how to get things done at conventions. You approach the Chair (and the appropriate Dept. Heads, if it's that late in the game) with a package listing:

- 1) The Concept, fully worked out.
- 2) The subset and number, only slightly exaggerated, of fans it will please.
- 3) A list of the names and addresses of the people, including backup in case of gaffiation, who have agreed in writing to do the work.
- 4) Firm dates for the completion, by various stages if applicable.
- 5) A firm quote of what it will cost the Con Budget, and realistic estimate of any income (including goodwill) it could generate.

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

1992-8-26

The rapidfire presentation of names, places, events, and dates make the Vancouver fanhistory hard for me to follow. Not to belittle the effort, but I find it very difficult to relate to people and events that I have no frame

of reference for. It is very important to keep up with the past history of a convention. At this year's X-Con I was significantly misinformed regarding the past useage of consuite supplies. As a result, I tied up half of my budget in 'returnable' items that we never used. So instead of providing the best consuite I could, I ended up limping by on essentials.

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

1992-8-28

Your zine is certainly doing a valuable service to fandom with Spencer's history of the V-Cons. Many other series of cons could use this treatment. I am thinking of LOSCON, our now annual convention held the weekend after Thanksgiving in the Los Angeles area. As far as I know, nobody has done anything like a history of this series of cons. A few reports have appeared in APA-L and LASFAPA. Most of the cons have had daily newsletters, but I know of no central file of these newsletters for future fan historians. And no, I doubt if I have the time and ability to do such a job. For one thing, I have not attended many of the LOSCONS due to job conflicts.

Still, some sort of oral history might be attempted with a tape recorder. But I wonder who would have the time to do such a job? We have had eighteen LOSCONS, although the first few had slightly different names and weekends, and at first were relaxicons before transforming into a bog local con.

[Does anyone know if even just a straight checklisting of all SF cons has been attempted? I wonder how many cons have been held with no record remaining and are gone even from memory.]