

OPUNTIA

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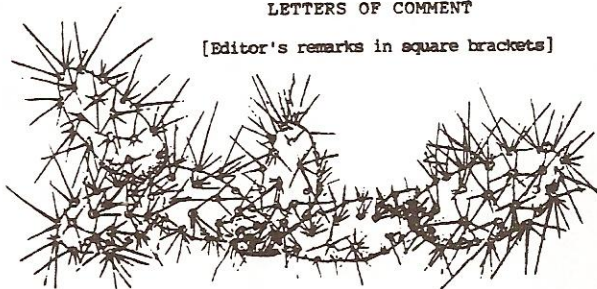
OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. Available for \$3 cash for one-time sample copy only, otherwise by zine trade or letter of comment on a previous issue.

ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia hickenii, by an unknown artist in THE CACTACEAE, by N.L. Britton and J.N. Rose.

WORLD WIDE PARTY #4: At 21h00 your time on June 21st, raise a glass to your fellow fans around the world. Get a wave of good cheer circling the planet. Be sure to write OPUNTIA or some other zine and tell how you celebrated. Let the Papernet know what went on at your node.

TORONTO IN '03: This WorldCon bid now has a web page at <http://worldhouse.com/worldcon-2003> or can be reached at Box 3, Stn A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1A2. A pre-supporting membership is C\$20.03/US\$15, payable to "Toronto in '03". As we go to press we learn that the mascot of this bid is not, fortunately, a squirrel but rather a beaver. Still a rodent, but a dignified rodent, albeit wearing a propeller beanie. At least it wasn't a loon. There is a competing bid from Cancun, details c/o Teddy Harvia (address on next page). I've no idea what their mascot is.

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Robert Lichtman
Box 30
Glen Ellen, California 95442

1997-2-19

In response to Garth Spencer's call for comments on his fanhistory, let me offer that Norm Clarke was a founding member of Lilapa, which will have its 500th mailing this fall. Norm's ex-wife Gina Ellis is still a member, as am I, though not founding. There were at least five issues of HONQUE, and their longest-lived zine DESCANT saw at least 23 issues between 1959 and 1973.

[Re: round robins] The Fantasy Amateur Tape Exchange, operated in the late 1950s until, as legend has it, the tape disappeared into someone's collection. According to Bill Rotsler's TAPEBOOK, a one-shot published February 1959, members of FATE included Wrai Ballard, Dean Grennell, Charles Burbee, William Danner, Boyd Raeburn, and Rotsler himself. Outside of FATE, taperespondence (as it was called at the time) was a popular fannish activity in the late 1950s. We're talking reel-to-reel here. TAPEBOOK reports that of 58 respondents to a poll about taping, thirty owned tape recorders and another dozen had good access. Three dozen were involved in tape correspondence.

FROM: Teddy Harvia
701 Regency Drive
Hurst, Texas 76054-2307

1997-2-23

The impressions of the World Fantasy Con in Garth Spencer's article parallel my own, derived from the 1978 event held in Fort Worth. Its continued success seems to come from the elitist attitude of some fans and pros.

If Canada ever issues a J.R. Hooper commemorative stamp send me one on OPUNTIA. Just check that prussic acid isn't mixed in with the adhesive before you lick it.

[No stamp yet, but a few years ago Canada Post had him on a prestamped envelope, long since sold out.]

So tell us, what is the mascot of the City of Calgary?

[I phoned the Information Desk at City Hall. The lady didn't know but said she'd check into it. A few hours later, she called back and said there wasn't one.]

FROM: Sheryl Birkhead
23629 Woodfield Road
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

1997-2-25

Do you intend to gather up a series of articles on Canfanfandom? Done an episode at a time, it might be fairly easy to gather up a respectable coverage of fanhistory. Any intention to run photos?

[Garth Spencer, I'm sure, wouldn't refuse a financial angel to publish a consolidated Canfanhistory. He can be reached at Box 15335, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5B1. I'm not in a financial position to publish it myself yet.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

1997-3-9

The fanhistory of Ottawa reads well, and I don't have much to add to it. Yvonne and I ran the consuite for Maplecon 10 in 1988, Yvonne ran the masquerade for Maplecon 7 in 1985, and we were the MCs for Maplecon 13 in 1992. I remember that a few Ottawa fans were perturbed that Toronto fans had to be imported, so to speak, to fill gaps on the committee, but those complaints evaporated once the con was on and we were all enjoying ourselves. For other Ottawa cons, we were the Fan GoHs for Pinecone 1 in 1988, and ran their green room at Pinecone 2 the next year. We've been guests at Convallescence in 1990 and at Concinnity '96.

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

1997-2-23

The World Fantasy Con is a misnomer; it was never a convention except in the most liberal sense. It's a professional assembly for writers of fantasy and SF. There is nothing wrong with the term 'World', as professional writers from around the world are quite welcome. The problem word is 'Convention', and even that's technically correct. 'Seminar' might have been a better choice for the culling of amateurs. [In] the concom, some pros were more anti-fan than others.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Alison Scott, Ken Faig Jr, Joseph Major, Murray Moore, Henry Welch, Scott Crow, Chester Cuthbert, Robert Lichtman, Ned Brooks, Michael McKenny, Harry Andruschak

HEKTOGRAPHS AND DAMP LEAFs: CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY
by Dale Speirs

In OPUNTIA's #24 and #28, I have discussed the coming together of new technologies to create a faster and better communications system. I am speaking of course about the 1880s. The typewriter, carbon paper, mimeographs, hectographs (also spelt 'hektograph'), copier machines were all just being born. Since my last article, I've found some additional items of interest in the development of this new technology.

The hectograph is basically a flat pan with a layer of gelatin solidified in it. A master copy done in aniline inks is pressed down against the gelatin, leaving an inked imprint in the gelatin. Blank sheets are then pressed against the gelatin and copies made as ink is picked up. A skillful operator can do up to 100 copies, hence the rootword 'hecto'.

The exact origin of hectographs is unknown but has been traced back to at least the early 1870s in Europe. Like many inventions, it had several fathers. Some were a bit more insistent than others about their paternity, as witness the advertisement shown below, which I found in the 1880-7-17 issue of HARPER'S WEEKLY, page 463. The ad says the process was patented that year, and warns that anyone trying to sell their own version will be prosecuted. One can just hear the respondent's lawyer chanting "Prior art! Prior art!".

On the next page is a later ad by the same company, the same periodical but dated 1880-12-11, page 798. I am at a loss to think what this ad is talking about. Was a polka really written in honour of the hectograph, copy of sheet music to be had for 15¢? Or was this rather overblown praise and the money was for a hecto kit?

[continued next page]

HARPER'S WEEKLY.

HEKTOGRAPH

Dry process of Copying. Patented May 18th and June 1st, 1880. One Hundred Copies of any writing or drawing made in 20 minutes. Patents for this process having been issued to us, the manufacture, use, or sale of any Gelatine Copying Pad other than the Hektograph is illegal and will be prosecuted.

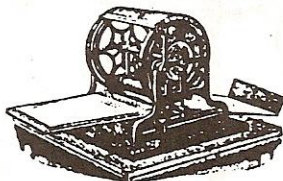
HEKTOGRAPH CO., 22 and 24 Church St., New York.

STRAUSS'S LAST. THE HEKTOGRAPH SCHNELL POLKA

pronounced by critics as unrivalled, the rage at balls and parties, sent on receipt of 15 cts. Hektograph Co., Pub's, 22 Church St., N. Y.

Eighteen years later, other kinds of duplicating devices were winning the field but hectographs could still be found. The ad shown at right is from the Montréal trade journal THE STENOGRAPHER'S COMPANION, November 1898, page 12. Mimeographs and typewriters were the Pentiums of their day, but the Hektograph was still listed in the ad, middle column, last paragraph.

Cheap printing presses could do thousands of copies, a hectograph could do up to 100, but if you only needed one or two copies, there was damp-paper copying. The original letter or document was pressed hard against a damp piece of transparent paper, leaving a mirror image that could be read through the other side. The lack of any way to print one or a few copies was the reason why handcopying survived on a large scale until the 1890s.



THE ROTARY NEOSTYLE

The Perfect Duplicator.

QUANTITY:

5,000 Copies from one stencil.

SPEED:

35 to 50 per minute.

ECONOMY:

25% saved on supplies—No porous paper or varnish required.

We are Headquarters
—FOR—
Neostyle, Mimeograph,
—AND—
Typewriter Supplies.

THE

Universal Neostyle

The best form of Hand Duplicator in existence. Always ready for use—No table space occupied—It stands on its own pedestal.

Also always on hand all sizes of the ordinary "Box" Hand Neostyle, the "Simplex Printer," the "Hektograph," etc.

Best
—OF—
All..



THE

Underwood TYPEWRITER

Writing Visible from start to finish.
UNEQUALLED SPEED.

PERFECT ALIGNMENT.

Type cleaned in five to ten seconds.

Handsome Catalogue sent to those interested.

Call and try the UNDERWOOD.

CLEMENT & CLEMENT,

IMPORTERS AND MANUFACTURERS.

Business Offices—15, 16 and 17 Street Railway Chambers.
Factory and Repair Department—613 LaGauchetiere St.

Telephone Main 2065.

" " 3170.

The ad below is from BOOKS & NOTIONS (Toronto), May 1886.

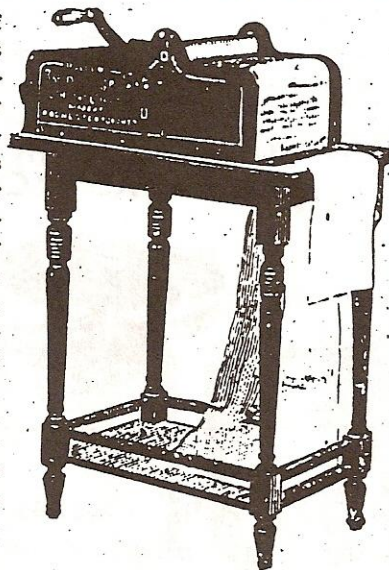
The Roller Rapid Damp-Leaf Copier

PATENTED.

NOW ON EXHIBITION AT THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION.

The advantages of keeping damp-leaf copies of all manuscript papers sent out from the office or warehouse are acknowledged by all business men. The delay and expenditure of valuable time connected with the old-fashioned process have rendered a more rapid and easier method of obtaining good copies an absolute necessity, "a consummation devoutly to be wished." This great desideratum has at last been attained by the invention of the New Patent Roller Rapid Damp-Leaf Copier, now being manufactured by Messrs. Schlicht & Field.

It consists of a combination of rollers, which dampens and prepares a continuous web of copying-paper, and also copies thereon any manuscript written with a pen and ink, copying pencil, or the type-writer by simply turning a crank handle.



As many as eight or ten good copies can be taken off one writing, if copying ink be used.

Accompanying each machine there is a cutting-up apparatus, with which the various copies can be cut up into any desired size.

This machine can accomplish in five minutes as much work as would occupy an hour with the ordinary letter-press, and the after-process of cutting up and filing away, properly indexed, compared with other systems, can be accomplished with the same relative saving of time and labour.

Copies of outgoing correspondence can be filed away with the incoming.

The SCHLICHT-FIELD CO., (Limited),

MANUFACTURERS OF OFFICE LABOR SAVING DEVICES,

31 ADELAIDE STREET EAST, TORONTO.

ROCHESTER N Y CHICAGO ILL

Mention Books and Notions

THE CHILDREN OF CRONOS:
Fandom in Ottawa
(Part III)

compiled by Garth Spencer

NOTICE: a fanhistory article like this is in the nature of a draft; comments and corrections are expected and encouraged. GS

(This version dated December 6, 1996.)

OSFS President Thomas Wray wrote:

There seem to be two schools of thought on the subject of dead-dog parties ... Which school is correct is beside the point. The point is, simply, that enough people have come to expect an open dead-dog at conventions that to attempt to silence them with bluster only compounds the PR damage that has already been done ... My purpose in bringing the matter up was to make the Maplecon committee aware that there were serious gaps in their PR image. As I said in my column, and neither Joe nor Glenn acknowledge that I said it, I have no objection to a committee having a private party at their own expense. What I, the people who complained to me, and Lloyd, Garth, and the *MLR* in what they wrote, object to is that the consuite was taken over for this private party instead of having it somewhere else and leaving the consuite still open for attendees to have their dead-dog. If there were complaints, as there were, it is because the complainers were voicing an opinion that is

commonly accepted outside Maplecon, and was even accepted in previous Maplecons.
(*Ottawa SF Statement* #136, Oct. 1988)

PineKone I

PineKone I was held Oct. 14-16 at the Holiday Inn Market Square. Guests were Barry B. Longyear, Will Shetterly, Emma Bull, Bob Eggleton, Lloyd and Yvonne Penney, and something called "Gravity's Rainbow."

(*Ottawa SF Statement* #129, March 1988)

PineKone I was reported as a "successful first try", although later its financial loss was reckoned variously at \$3,500 or \$4,000+. It developed that Paul Valcour absorbed this loss.

PineKone seems to have been a success as far as being fun and meeting people went. Several of the panels died for want of attendance and rescue parties got lost looking for them; others were overfilled and overran their time. A small and well stocked art show; small and well filled parties; even the dance drew a fair crowd.

("A Worm's Eye View of Recent Meetings",
Ottawa SF Statement #137, Nov. 1988)

The Montreal Star Trek (later SF and Fantasy) Association was organizing about this time, and as one member reported,

"quite a few of our executive managed to attend PineKone I in Ottawa ... I think we learnt a great deal from watching what they did right and most importantly, what they did wrong! ...

PineKone wasn't all that bad, although the situation in the dealers room was a mess and disorganized (I

know from experience, since I had three tables and wall space ...)

Besides that, they had a very good con suite and some really good parties; I finally had a chance to talk to some of my con friends that I am usually too rushed to sit down and talk with.

(Capucine Plourde, undated personal communication, received Oct. 1988)

MLR 11 (April 1989) reported that, on top of everything else he was doing, Paul Valcour volunteered as the OSFS archivist/librarian.

PineKone II won its bid for the 1989 Convention at Keycon, in May. As several out-of-towners heard about it, the PineKone bid won on the strength of Paul Valcour's presentation at Keycon. Jean-Louis Trudel wrote later that in fact,

the bid papers were partly, if not entirely, the work of Joseph Casey, Andrew Farmer, and Sian Reid. As a member of the CASPER Awards subcommittee, I can state that I was first approached by Joseph Casey. The bid papers themselves included the names of the subcommittee members: Marjorie McKenna, Madona Skaff, and myself. To say that Paul Valcour won the bid singlehandedly is to exaggerate a bit. Of course, afterwards, Paul worked very hard on Convention and was a big part of the reason why Convention 9 was one of the best ever.

(Jean-Louis Trudel, in *Xenofile* 1:6, early 1990)

Maplecon 11

Maplecon 11 was held July 28-30, 1989 at Carleton. Guests this year included Andrew Porter, Larry "The Doctor" Stewart, Michael Lennick, Charles de Lint, and Al Mag; yet to be confirmed in spring were Hal Clement and John Rumita.

Maplecon in 1989 lost two GoHs, comics GoH John Rumita (his house burned down) and Michael Wallis (former chair of Ad Astra). The new comics GoH announced was Mike Carlin (Superman comics line editor).

(*MLR* 12, May-June 1989)

Charles Mohapel, programming chief for PineKone II/Convention 9, announced in *MLR* he was looking for archival/historical pictures, especially of previous Conventions.

It was later announced that PineKone II, in October 1989, would feature an "official publication" (rather than a program book) containing writing by many of the guests. "Paul Valcour is having about 700 copies printed up, and the extras will be made available for sale across the country," Michael Skeet wrote.

(*MLR* 13, July-Sept. 1989)

There was a note in *Con News* (a Denver-based fan newszine, since deceased) that Paul Valcour and Larry Stewart (a well-known Dr. Who fan) held a convention workshop in Ottawa, on April 1st, 1989. Participants came from Montreal and Toronto as well as Ottawa.

(*Con News*, August 1989)

By issue #136, Paul Valcour was doing a news column, and chairing PineKone II.

PineKone II/Convention 9

PineKone II was held October 13-15, 1989 at the Skyline Hotel. Guests included Greg Bear, Raymond E. Feist, David Cherry, Michael Skeet, John Bell, and Larry "The Doctor" Stewart.

(*Ottawa SF Statement* #137, Nov. 1988)

This con committee compiled a very extensive list of eligible works for the CSFFA nomination ballot.

Some of the OSFS activities this year included members' volunteering to read short stories onto C-90 tapes for the blind, a contribution to the CNIB Readers' Programme.

(*MLR* 11, April 1989)

Robert Runté wrote of Pinekone II/Convention 9:

Somewhat to my surprise, Easterners actually attend the opening ceremonies at their conventions. There were easily 60 people listening to speeches by the Guests of Honour explaining how glad they were to be there. This all seemed rather redundant ... When eventually called upon to speak myself, however, I provided a brief explanation of the function of CUFF. To whit (sic): that I was the one fan Westerners were most anxious to ship east, presumably because they had not understood that it was intended as a round trip. This seemed to be well received, and I sat down again ...

... The artshow was quite good, and while there were a number of familiar prints and the usual assortment of dragons and spaceships, at least most of the artists were new to me. I think a number of

eastern artists could do quite well at conventions in the West and vice versa, simply because they would be reaching new audiences. David Cherry's work also helped to raise the tone of the artshow ...

The dealers' room, while small, had some interesting displays. There was one of the best tables of Lovecraft, *Weird Tales* and so on that I've ever seen, though I'm not into such things myself. The second dealers' room was for fan stuff, where I picked up a subscription to the *Ottawa Statement* and various back issues.

Somewhat to my surprise, I was invited to the banquet and seated next to Michael Skeet at the head table. I thought the food rather better than typical for such functions, and enjoyed the usual upbeat, congratulatory banquet speeches. ... Realizing somewhat belatedly that I would probably be called upon to speak, I wrote a few notes on the general theme of 'Fandom Is a Family' and awaited my turn. I was somewhat dismayed to hear Michael give his speech on the theme 'Fandom Is a Family' a couple of minutes ahead of me, and so switched to a few brief comments on 'The Purpose of CUFF.' I was therefore definitely dismayed to hear the MC explaining 'The Purpose of CUFF' as he introduced me. I ended up extemporizing something on the 'Ecology of Fandom' theme. ...

Some of the behind-the-scene operations of eastern conventions strike me as very bizarre, particularly in the way they are financed. I'm still a little vague on some of the details, but I take it that wealthy

conventions invest in smaller ones as a sort of corporate diversification strategy. And I was amazed at the size of the personal financial losses individuals (called 'patrons') were prepared to accept as a routine element of running a con. I mean, sure, any con can miscalculate and lose money, and it's great when people chip in to bail them out (as happened with ConText '89), but it seemed to me that some of the patrons went in *knowing* they were going to lose *thousands* of dollars. This is nuts.

(I'm Not Boring You Am I? #7, fall 1989)

It took a while for an explanation to appear of the "corporate diversification" reference. What Robert was referring to was PineKone II (1989), the second Ottawa Convention, and an entirely new convention in that area. Being a new convention, perhaps the concon had to solicit startup funds from other groups in the area; at any rate, Ad Astra apparently had lent money to Pinekone. "Patron" may have been a concept Paul Valcour came up with on his own, like "private con."

Paul Valcour wrote of Pinekone II in *Con News*:

The Canadian National SF Convention portion of the con was perhaps the best ever seen in its history. The con established an all time record for Casper Awards nominations (68 valid ballots received) and vote (98 valid ballots received). By comparison, the previous year's national convention in Winnipeg, Manitoba had approximately 15 nominations and 40 voting ballots received (admittedly low by Canadian standards). the Casper Awards ceremony

was held during a banquet at the top of the Skyline Hotel, Saturday evening, October 14th. It was very smoothly and professionally pulled off. The Toastmaster was local fan artist, Larry 'The Doctor' Stewart and the awards were ably presented by the 1989 Casper Awards subcommittee members: Marjorie McKenna (chairman), Jean-Louis Trudel and Madona Skaff ... I might as well admit it. I won one of the bloody awards. (You asked me for news!) last year was the first year Convention expanded the awards to nine categories. It had three prior to 1989. Convention's programming, though not spectacular, was notably more focused on Canadian SF writing, history and fanzines. It also accommodated the second meeting of the newly formed Canadian professional SF writers group, called SWAC: the Speculative Writers' Association of Canada ... The down side to Pinekone II/Convention was the local portion of the con. The organizing committee had broken down in chaos; attendance was disastrously lower than expected (despite the excellent guests of Greg Bear, Raymond E. Feist, David A. Cherry and Judith Merrill); internal con com bickering dampened the atmosphere of the con's festivities; and Pinekone lost a lot of money. The con is officially dead now. It is noteworthy that creditors have been paid.

(Con News, Jul/Aug 1990)

Questions of Procedure

It developed after Pinekone II that the 1989 Convention had taken a four-figure loss, like Pinekone I, and as before it was absorbed (at least mostly) by Paul Valcour (the treasurer). With hindsight it appears possible that he overestimated his financial ability, or overrepresented it, but of course this is speculation.

It is gratifying to see the fundraising activities across the country to help alleviate the financial burden (of debt). Fan organizations in Vancouver, Calgary, Waterloo and Montreal have been (or are) organizing auctions. Two Toronto cons have generously given monetary concessions in my dealings with them ...

(*Con News*, Jul/Aug 90)

As most of fandom should be aware by now, Ottawa was the sight (sic) of three conventions last year. Whether it was the good weather, a decline in interest or the mere fact that "three's a crowd", none of the conventions did well. The large debt left in the hands of Paul Valcour you already know about. Maplecon, too, lost money; our official audit shows a loss of approximately \$5,000.00, although due to intensive fundraising, and renegotiation with Carleton University over its submitted invoice, Maplecon should be able to meet those debts. Maplecon 12 plans to return, in new hotel facilities, in October 1991.

(Janet Hetherington, *XenoFile* 1:6, early 1990)

It seemed to be agreed later that one of Pinekone's several problems was shared by other Ottawa cons that year - there were

rather many cons, scheduled rather closely together. *MLR* 14 reported that Boréal 11 (that year's francophone convention) was held in Ottawa *the week after* Pinekone. About 90 people attended. The chair, Jean-Louis Trudel, reported it went off without any hitches.

This argues that there is a rough maximum annual convention attendance to be expected in a given population centre - modified by factors such as how much disposable wealth to expect from people that year; the age and interest group to which a con appeals; how much clientele has been built up over the years, and how much fun they had - and it was exceeded in 1989. Which is not very helpful to concons, if the maximum can't be estimated in advance to help them plan successfully.

A Failure to Communicate (III)

The immediate problem, though, was the general impression that sprang up out of town, that Pinekone had twice gotten into financial trouble and Paul Valcour was left holding the bag. This was spurred by editorial pieces in Robert Runté's trip report, in *MLR* and in *Xenofile* (e.g.):

I was shocked, for example, to discover that some attendees still expected us to receive a slick post-con publication, even though they knew the con was already in debt and that the \$2500+ required would have to come out of the personal finances of one or more committee members. While I certainly understand the disappointment of contributors when a publication which has accepted their submissions fails to materialize, the best laid plans of mice and men oft gang astray (sic), and maturity is learning to cope with these little disappointments. For every zine that fails, there are another ten to

which material can be submitted. Yet I watched several people give Paul a hard time over the cancellation of this project. I was not impressed.

(Robert Runté, *I'm Not Boring You Am I?* #7, fall 1989)

The editor of *MLR* wrote:

After having driven PineKone II more than six thousand dollars into the hole, the other members of the concom quit, ran away and hid, leaving treasurer Paul Valcour holding the bag and fending off angry creditors.

... It would be nice to be able to report that Eastern fandom rallied around one of its own, the way Western fans did with the ConText concom. It would be nice, but it would be a flaming lie.

Five months after the PineKone debacle, the extent of support Paul has been given by Eastern fandom is: Ad Astra has agreed to waive the usurious interest rate levied on a loan it made to PineKone; and the Toronto Trek con has offered him a free membership and dealer's table this year, so that he can pay off his debts by selling his book and magazine collection ...

Now, an argument could be made that Paul Valcour is in a sense the author of his own misfortune, or one of the authors at least. After all, PineKone I lost money, too ...

Several years ago, a V-Con out in Vancouver was mismanaged in so spectacular a fashion that there was talk V-Con might have to be shut down. The chair who'd done such a spectacular job ... was not particularly highly regarded. It would have been

easy to let that chair swing in the wind, carrying responsibility for this failure forever. But Vancouver fans, with help from their friends in surrounding provinces and states, rebuilt V-Con's finances ...

After the PineKone disaster, though, the con was simply allowed to shut down. ... Don't Ottawa fans care at all about their reputations?

(*MLR* #14)

Now, understand that both these faneditors were writing in all good faith. Michael Skeet particularly was doing precisely his self-assigned job: acting as a reporter on fannish events. And out of town, it looked like you could best defend your reputation in a dispute by getting your side of the story out. Because they did *not* communicate to Michael Skeet from the outset, it looked mightily to out-of-towners as if OSFS members were trying to cover up a mess, by being tight-lipped, when everybody *already* knew about it.

This wasn't actually the OSFS agenda; but it took quite a while for them to speak their piece. As the OSFS members saw it, they were trying to *repair a divided fandom* by not talking about PineKone. But even when they did speak up, this wasn't the point they addressed.

The first reaction from Ottawa was an outcry, on the order of "No fair!", which came across as abuse to Michael Skeet. This reaction was strangely out-of-tune with the rather thick-skinned give-and-take in most letter columns.

I believe the reaction to Michael Skeet's coverage of the PineKone II affair exasperated him. He was already becoming more interested in professional writing; this was one more

inducement to announce in *MLR* 9 that he would fold the zine. (The last issue of *MLR* was #14.) Michael Skeet is now pursuing professional fiction writing.

The story that emerged from Ottawa, when OSFS members felt inclined to talk about PineKone, was that:

Financially, not all committee members could assume a significant share of the accumulated debt. Legally, I don't know if any committee member who didn't sign anything can be held accountable. PineKone was unincorporated. Morally, that depends.

At no meeting that I attended did Paul Valcour, the treasurer, indicate that he foresaw a serious shortfall. A member of the steering committee tells me that no firm numbers were ever revealed at steering committee meetings, either. Though Paul Valcour should in no way bear the blame for all the mistakes that were made, can committee members who never got a real inkling of the extent of PineKone's financial problems be expected to shoulder them?

(Jean-Louis Trudel, *XenoFile* 1:6, early 1990)

In *Xenofile* 1:6, Sandi McLaughlin, then the president of OSFS, wrote that Valcour "*shut out* others from the financial burden of *PineKone II*" (my emphasis - GS); and that OSFS members had raised some money to support PineKone I fundraisers and both cons' monetary prizes, which was matched by the club. She wrote that little had been organized to help out Valcour, but also wrote that several measures taken *did* constitute financial support.

I'm sure you've heard about the ratio of DOERS:DON'TERS; it's considered to be 1:9. ... The ratio is no different in this town. We aren't as big as Montreal or Toronto but we have a lot of very ardent DOERS, so 2 cons were undertaken in the same year. PineKone I lost money so many fundraisers were undertaken. OSFS, under my Presidency, donated money to fund the fundraisers and donated monetary prizes for the literary awards at both PineKones (which went unacknowledged until we complained on the last day of P2). These monies came from direct donations from club members matched \$ for \$ from club coffers. These dollars were put in the hands of the treasurer of PineKone. This, Mr. Skeet, constitutes financial support. This also gives us a vested interest in the financial state of PineKone, if only on a courtesy basis.

Remember, DOERS are not an unexhaustible resource. We attended, we gave, we helped out, and the more we tried to help clear the debt, the bigger the debt got. Paul announced a national convention (Convention 9), a bigger hotel, a better programme book, better guests for PineKone, and lots of guests for Convention. All this against the advice of more experienced DOERS. He was going to show how it should be done. He had a DREAM.

A curious thing began to happen here in Ottawa. As the obligations got bigger, the attendance at the fundraisers dropped. ... It is a well-known fact among con organizers that the pre-reg. numbers have a definite ratio to con attendance. The pre-reg.

was low, yet another indicator, but Paul, the treasurer and primary financier, had committed himself to an irreversible path ...

I wish to tip my hat at this time to the brave souls who actually, for whatever personal reasons, stayed with PineKone II to the bitter end, despite rumours and slanderous remarks when they showed opposition to the status quo. Convention information gathering, balloting and awards were the work of Margery McKenna, Madona Skaff, and Jean Louis Trudel. ...

All of this leads to burned out DOERS. These DOERS stayed even to the post mortem, at which time they were denied financial information. The term "PRIVATE CON" was coined by Paul. When OSFS, as a concerned supporter, asked how things had fared, when our editor tried for an interview for the *Statement*, we met a stone wall labelled "PRIVATE CON".

... Yes, the con was financially inept, yes there were accusations and hot tempers back and forth between concom and its principal financier-treasurer. We could have printed all the fuss. BUT, other things were true also. A man had a dream; that man is a friend and fellow club member. We decided the financial burden, from which he had shut us out, was difficult enough. A mud slinging campaign would not change anything other than to titillate some people. ... All of Ottawa fandom agreed to let it pass. I can't recall any other occasion when Ottawa has thought as with one mind.

(S.M. McLaughlin, *Ottawa SF Statement* #155, May 1990)

Margaret M. Currie wrote a letter stating that "conventions that self destruct result from poor planning, and incompetent and ineffectual financial management", which is true enough, and claimed that she couldn't respond to Michael Skeet's remarks, as he had quit publishing his newzine. Actually, this appeared not to be the case; *Xenofile*, a Calgary fanzine, was now publishing Canadian fan news. (Did Ottawa fans not know that?) André Lieven blamed the financial loss entirely on Valcour because "... a treasurer's job is to allocate and be responsible for the money situation." The *Xenofile* article then went on to say, "No mention is made of the concom's role in controlling expenses."

Robert Runté, himself one of the first critics, observed that

in criticizing Ad Astra and Toronto Trek Con, Dean [Rolcot, in *XenoFile* 1:5] is ironically attacking the two groups of Eastern fans who have actually made some financial contribution to help PineKone. ...

I also think we have to give some credence to Sandi McLaughlin's argument in *OSFS Statement* [sic] that Ottawa fandom is simply burnt out. ... I also have to point out that Ottawa fandom (via auctions at PineKone I and II) has donated more money to CUFF than any other city to date. ...

I also think it's important that we all learn from PineKone's mistakes. (1) Never start or work on a convention without the protection of incorporation as a non-profit society. (2) Never try to pay off convention debts by holding an even bigger convention to "make it back" the following year. If you lose money, fold the con, or fund-raise until seed-money is at hand. (3) Never borrow money

from outsiders, or in amounts the lenders can't afford to write off; if you don't have the cash to do the con, don't do the con. (4) Exercise stringent cost control. Cons grow and prosper by building on their successive profits, not by mounting lavish conventions on borrowed money and expected revenues. PineKone wasn't the first con to learn these lessons the hard way, and unfortunately, it probably won't be the last.

(Robert Runté, *XenoFile* 1:6, early 1990)

Ottawa Fandom Inc. *became* Ottawa Fandom Inc., a non-profit corporation so that yes, indeed, no one person would be responsible for a loss incurred by Maplecon. We know all about running conventions off of one person's credit card. The very first Maplecon was done that way, and after the next few conventions, the need for incorporation became apparent. But, believe it or not, it's as difficult for a non-profit organization, especially one run by volunteers, as it is for any individual to raise large sums of money.

But, you ask, what about poor Paul? He's been left with a dead convention and *personal* debt, to boot. My only answer can be that as President of Ottawa Fandom, Inc., I have to think about Maplecon first. You may or may not be aware that Paul was Vice-Chairman of Maplecon 11 and past Treasurer of Ottawa Fandom Inc. If you ask him, he'll tell you that he understands and supports this view.

But, you respond, that's even worse! You're abandoning one of *your own* to the wolves! What

are you doing to help? My answer is that Maplecon has forgiven several PineKone debts, such as use of our pegboards during the Art Show; that Maplecon has offered to purchase leftover PineKone stock and materials; that Maplecon has taken in donations for PineKone; and most importantly, that Maplecon has supported Paul publicly when others have not.

... As for Ottawa Fandom Inc. and Maplecon, I can say quite honestly that if we had dollars to share, we would share. As it stands right now, we are opting for survival....

I would also like fandom to think about this: despite the grand notion that we are all one big, happy family, you and I know that fandom endures its share of back-biting, in-fighting, and politicizing. It is not really fair for other individuals or organizations to make value judgments on the actions of this organization. I particularly resent being put in a defensive situation. Technically, PineKone was created as direct competition to Maplecon. PineKone was to be "literary" while Maplecon plodded along on its "media-saturated" way. I suppose I should be gloating over the demise of PineKone; instead, I find the circumstances extremely saddening.

And it makes me all the more determined to fight for the survival of Maplecon.

(Janet Hetherington, *XenoFile* 1:6, early 1990)

Paul Valcour wrote in *Xenofile*, taking some but not all responsibility for the Pinekone II losses. He wrote at some length about financial items, talking a good deal about interest rates. He

still did not explain *why* PineKone remained unincorporated. He thanked at length various financial contributors, but withdrew his nomination for the upcoming CSFFAs.

... Michael Skeet's editorial (in *MLR*) tends to let me off the hook. ... I knew PineKone's weaknesses and the direction it was headed. I could have pulled the plug; yet I stayed with a sinking ship.

Robert Runté is right; I should have sought advice from CSFFA.

... I view the donations and fundraising in Canada as akin to friends helping me out of a tight spot. I did not deserve the entire debt load.

(Paul Valcour, *XenoFile* #1:6, 1990)

After PineKone II, Valcour announced plans to launch a new zine, *Canadian SF Quarterly*. Valcour's *Quarterly* ran into financial difficulties, and never appeared.

Convalescence

XenoFile #7 (August 1990) reported that Convalescence, a three-day relaxicon, was being held October 26-28, 1990, in Ottawa. Guest of Honour was to be Larry "The Doctor" Stewart (a well-known Dr. Who fan). Membership was limited to 100.

John Mansfield printed a report from the Convalescence committee:

Convalescence did not have a committee structure. We were four people, some with very little experience in running conventions, who each had a job to do, and the authority to make a unilateral decision for the rest, should the need arise. We went

out on a limb, and worked without a corporate net. We were determined to fly or fall all on our own....

After much deliberation, we have decided to donate to Maplecon the sum of \$100.00. Maplecon was chosen because it is a living breathing concern ...

The convention was held in a three room suite at the Minto Place Suites hotel, which the Concom had rented. These rooms are to die for!! Imagine a consuite with a full kitchen, two full bathrooms, a boardroom, and laundry machines. Every possible detail you could think of was covered, there were phones in the bathrooms, dishes in the cupboards, an ironing board and iron, and an ice machine right outside the door that could literally fill the tub with ice. Minto also gave us an incredible rate on the rooms ... Other rooms in the hotel were just as big and well laid out, and they were going for anything from \$75 to \$95 a night.

As it was, we got the hotel to disconnect the cable guard, and we used the bedroom in the suite as the video room. We used the boardroom as main programming, and the living room as consuite. It was cozy, but overly crowded. Had the convention run over 100 people, we could have added another suite to the convention for more space. Each of these rooms also included the parking of one car in the underground parking garage for free. ...

(*Con-TRACT* #2:6, December 1990)